The Human Word:

Rhetorical Thought in Classical Antiquity and the Arts of Language

Raymond D. DiLorenzo

Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Dallas

For Nancy
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Prologue**

**PART I: Peitho’s Eyes—Rhetorical Thinking in Classical Antiquity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Homer: The World of Strife, Delusion, and Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aeschylus: <em>Eumenides</em> and a Symbolism of Rhetorical Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gorgias: <em>Kosmos</em> in <em>Logos</em> and <em>Eros</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Plato: A Winged and Daimonic Rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aristotle: The Derhetorization of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cicero: <em>Ornatus</em>, Wisdom, and the Philosophic Organization of Rhetorical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Virgil: The <em>Aeneid</em> and the Resistance to Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ancient Rhetorical Thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART II: Peitho’s Lips—Rhetorical Expression (A New Version)**

Introduction: Eloquence and Babbling

**Section A. Memory and Invention: Rhetorical Inquiry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rhetorical Memory: Intelligence, Polymathy, and the Muses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rhetorical Proof by Argument: Facts, Enthymemes, and Paradigms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Topics of Testimony: Authority and the Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Common Topics: Tragedy and Rhetorical Humanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Special Topics: The Rhetorical Treatment of Psychic Distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Special Topics: Rhetorical Encyclopedism: A Speculum of Sciences and Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section B. Disposition, Style, and Delivery: Rhetorical Use of Words and Imagination

Chapter 1  Disposition: Receptivity and the Parts of the Discourse

Chapter 2  Style: Persona and the Philology of Clarity and Purity; Imaginativeness and the Philology of Master Figures and Tropes

Conclusion: Appropriateness and the Offices of Style

Epilogue
Prologue

As its subtitle indicates, this book, in the first of its two major parts, treats types of thinking, first developed by select authors in the ancient Greco-Roman world, about rhetoric—that is, verbal suasion or psychagogy. (The term, meaning the verbal guidance of soul, is Plato’s.) Homer, Aeschylus, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Virgil have fashioned the types of rhetorical thinking this book examines and, to be candid, promotes as beneficial and necessary today. To avoid confusion for the reader in the pages to come, the word “rhetoric” will usually mean thought about verbal psychagogy and all related to it, which, as we will see, includes the basic concerns of human welfare. A second, more restricted sense is the art of managing language for the purpose of psychagogy in any verbal form whatsoever, written or spoken, as, for example, in the rhetoric of the memorandum, love letter, lyric poem, novel, lecture, public speech, or conversations of all sorts. These will be the two primary senses of the word in this book.

There are other senses of the word also. That rhetoric means only civic oratory (public speaking) or the art of oratory is common today and was so also in antiquity. But this very narrow sense of the word will be of only minor importance, and the introductory remarks below will show the reader why. Of course, rhetoric can also mean self-serving or partisan speech, often involving verbal duplicity and fraud. These pejorative senses of the word were very common both in antiquity and in modern times.

Considered overall, the book presents a basic claim: that the rhetorical thinking of these ancient writers, though not in all respects the same, differed in two essential
ways from the thinking of most other writers in the ancient rhetorical tradition and nearly all in the contemporary world of scholarly academics and educators. First, their thinking differed in that for the ills of life caused by strife, delusion, and deceit, all of them sought a reality-based verbal remedy, often called truth or wisdom or justice or right when recognized and spoken. Some (Homer, Aeschylus, and Vergil) sought the remedy through their life and work as poets. Others (Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero) did likewise by participating in a way of life and speech they, with various understandings, called philosophy. Second, in spite of the complicity of speech in the ills of life, these writers showed an exceptionally keen valuation of human language owing to what in human nature came to be called psyche or soul—what made human beings distinctive among all other beings in the world in using and responding to speech.

In the contemporary world, rhetorical thinking of the ancient types treated here is nearly moribund because a real, common wisdom or truth upon which to draw is discounted as culture-bound and thus cannot be common at all, and because psyche (usually “soul” in English) is thought of as a fiction for brain function, thus not as the non-material source and ontological basis of humanity that functions as the internal governor of human life and that, because non-material, suggests also what our relation to higher “divine” beings may be, and what consequences regarding our relations to such divinity may follow. As a result, the types of rhetorical thinking treated here are strangers in the land of contemporary higher learning. The wisdom sought here combines many academic disciplines (as they are conceived today), is identifiable with no one of them, and moves thought about language and its effects on human behavior in a metaphysical and theological direction rejected by the physical and social sciences and many contemporary understandings of philosophy. In fact, both contemporary paradigms of academic thought and many of the persistent realities of human nature and history are powerfully antagonistic to the types of ancient rhetorical thought this
But there is one field of bright flowers in this rough contemporary landscape. There does exist today a great deal of academic scholarship about ancient rhetoric as a legitimate field of historical study, even if it is dismissed in the end as a curious intellectual tradition of little (economic) value. This historical scholarship, although sometimes nearly lifeless, has made it possible to revive phoenix-like from the ashes of irrelevance and dismissal a new and deeper understanding of the great, if limited, hope ancient rhetoric offers. Such revival is the chief reason for this book. These matters will be again discussed later in this prologue and elsewhere in this book.

What follows is some introductory information about the subject of the book, rhetoric (taken in its two primary senses); the parts of the book; some of the important tenets connected to its basic claim; its form or genre as an essay (and not a history); and a fuller statement of why it was written—that is, the hope represented by the rhetorical thinking this book examines.

The Subject Matter and Parts of the Book

Aristotle (according to Diogenes) claimed that Empedocles, a Sicilian poet-philosopher, discovered rhetoric. Aristotle also claimed (in the report of Cicero) that the first manuals to conceive of and present rhetoric as a set of techniques to manage language to make it suasive and effective were developed also in Sicily by Corax and Tisias, Syracusans of the fifth century BCE, apparently as practical help for litigants in regaining property confiscated by a tyrannical regime. So began a cultural tradition of preceptive rhetorical teaching, including the writing of technical manuals and model speeches and school exercises. The tradition would extend far beyond the fall of Rome, conventionally put at 476 CE. The ancients did not write a history of rhetoric, but some moved in that direction. Aristotle collected the manuals written before him, and, much later, in his Brutus
and *Orator*, Cicero introduced a general sense of historical development in his rhetorical thinking about the kinds of style in the speeches of past and present orators. Later still, Quintilian (c. 35 – 90’s CE) tried to summarize both the technical developments of rhetoric in oratory and its cultural significance in his *Institutes of Oratory*. But around the same time, Tacitus (c. 56 – c. 118 CE), a Roman historian and rhetorician (theorist of rhetoric), claimed in his *Dialogue on Oratory* that in his time, under the imperial rule of the Caesars, the great tradition of political eloquence that flourished in the past and especially in the time of Cicero (d. 43 BCE) was in decline; Caesarian rule did not permit its flourishing.

Tacitus may have been right about public political discourse (Latin *oratio*); but notwithstanding the Caesars, some important rhetorical thinking was done. In the years called the Second Sophistic by L. Flavius Philostratos, a Greek rhetorician—the first sophistic having occurred in the time of Socrates and Plato—there was considerable literary activity by rhetors (here meaning writers conscious of the suasive power of words) in the eastern empire. His *Lives of the Sophists* was a kind of catalogue of noteworthy rhetors. The Caesars, residing in the West, even established chairs of rhetorical study. There was also continued interest in technical aspects of oratorical expression, very evident in the many extant preceptive manuals and their emphasis upon declamatory rhetorical exercises, called *controversiae* and *suasoriae*.

Moreover, the power of verbal psychagogy in forms of discourse other than public oratory began to attract more and more attention. One of the earliest and greatest works of the so-called Second Sophistic was a treatise called *On the Sublime* produced by an unknown Greek writer. Much more ambitious than the usual preceptive school manual, this work attempted to understand in any genre of writings, including poetry and history, what in given instances of a discourse gives it an extraordinary psychagogic power he considered much greater than mere oratorical persuasion. There will be a fuller discussion of this important work when in Part II the whole matter of style is taken up.
Rhetorical thinking about psychagogy and certain allied verbal techniques also underwent development in the Latin poetry of Ovid, Horace, and especially Vergil. All these poets were well schooled in the rhetorical arts taught in contemporary schools. In his *Art of Love* (*Ars Amatoria*) and *The Remedies of Love* (*Remedia Amoris*), Ovid deliberately imitated, parodied, and cultivated what Plato in his *Gorgias* condemned in the language of the early Greek sophists: the powerful psychagogy of verbal flattery and vituperation without regard for the rationally established truth or the pieties of religion. In his famous *Letter to the Pisones*, called *Ars poetica*, Horace recognized verbal psychagogy as the power of what he called the “sweetness” of a poem. And in his *Aeneid* Vergil, one of the select authors discussed in this book, developed one of the greatest poetic analyses from the classical world of the impediments in the structure of reality and human nature to responsible verbal psychagogy of any sort.

Besides moving in the channel of poetry, rhetorical thinking in imperial times also developed in personal, private forms of discourse jointly called *sermo* in Latin (the contrasting forms of public oratory were, as mentioned, collectively called *oratio*). The best example of such rhetorical thinking about *sermo* is the Moral Letters of Seneca the Younger, one of the greatest rhetorician-philosophers of the ancient world, although much neglected today. These fictional letters present his thoughts about verbal psychagogy in personal counsel as well as about its appropriate verbal techniques. For Seneca, philosophy itself was such sermonic discourse.

Although the writing of technical rhetorical manuals continued in late imperial times, something of the ancient philosophical character of rhetorical thinking was also perceptible in an occasional work, for example, the commentary of Marius Victorinus, a contemporary of Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), on Cicero’s *Two Books on Rhetorical Invention* (*De inventione*). The esoteric mythologizing of Martianus Capella in his *Marriage of Mercury and Philology* was taken by some to express a version of Ciceronian rhetorical thinking.
Then too, some years earlier, Macrobius, a neoplatonic thinker and man of letters, perpetuated something of the mythic side of Cicero’s rhetorical thinking in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, which was the sixth and last book of Cicero’s famous dialogue *De re publica*, itself conceived by Cicero as a counterpart to Plato’s *Republic*. Not to be overlooked, Boethius in his *Consolation of Philosophy* re-expressed, if rather clumsily, something of the Platonic understanding of the rhetorical character of philosophy, which will be discussed later.

The story of the transformations of ancient rhetorical thinking in the Middle Ages goes well beyond the present subject. In the twilight years of classical antiquity, rhetorical thinking about verbal psychagogy, such as was found in Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, was being slowly transformed by Christian thinkers such as Gregory Nazianzus, St. Basil, Augustine, Lactantius, Gregory the Great, and others in the light of biblical writings, the development of religious penance, and the necessities of liturgical preaching. But I should also mention that Boethius, Macrobius, and Martianus would influence such later Christian rhetoricians as John of Salisbury (in his *Metalogicon*), Brunetto Latini, and the poet Dante, who was apparently taught rhetoric by Brunetto. Dante seems to have rediscovered in his *Convivio* a sense of the ethical and political seriousness of ancient rhetorical thinking and linked it to his reworking of the Sicilian and Provençal tradition of amatory lyric.

The ancient rhetorical tradition was both long and complex, and I will not try here to summarize its teachings as Quintilian did. Nor will I try to describe it here as many contemporary historians have. One fine historian, for example, following the usual scholarly paradigm for understanding the history of ancient rhetoric, sees in its overall course three strands of development: the preceptive (technical manuals), the sophistic (both the first and the second), and the philosophical, this last being the class to which belong several of the ancient writers I consider in this book. And all this is fine, as far as it
But the history of ancient rhetoric is not the history of ancient rhetorical thinking, which is the prime subject matter of this book. That history has yet to be written. If full justice to it were to be done, it would have to include more than the usual ancient rhetorical treatises whose teachings about expression are described and interpreted according to the social and political contexts of their authors. It would have to bring into consideration several things that modern historians of rhetoric neglect: the overall sense of the realities, much of them given mythic and symbolic expression in poetry, to which ancient rhetorical thinking responded; its deep involvement with philosophy as a way of life; its sense of the human psyche in the cosmos, and, only afterwards, the sorts of extensions of such thinking into practical arts of expression as may be found in a preceptive manual.

What that sense of reality included, which constitutes the core of all ancient rhetorical thinking about verbal psychagogy, may be briefly and tentatively sketched here. It included, as I see it, the experience of and subsequent reflection on the many forms of strife (Greek eris; Latin discordia), deception (Greek apate), and delusion (Greek ate) in existence. These experiences were the warp and woof of Homer’s epics, Iliad and Odyssey. They were also given mythic genealogical expression by the poet Hesiod as baneful children of Nux (Night). We may without much distortion say that, in such genealogical mythologizing, Eris clearly symbolizes or personifies human conflict, from personal quarrels to wars between peoples. Apate, deception or deceit, referred, again by personification, to a deliberate evil done to others, while Ate, delusion or folly, referred to an evil suffered because of others or the constitution of the real world. Later writers imagined that the goddess Eris brought on a personal quarrel among goddesses, leading to the so-called Judgment of Paris, then to the Trojan War, and its many subsequent tragedies. Thus, the epic poems and the dramatic tragedies associated with the great
Trojan War— all of them involving experiences of *Eris, Apane,* and *Ate*— are the imaginative symbolic background of rhetorical thinking.

As such poetry attested, speech (oral or written) was complicit in the evils of life. So complicit was speech that in fact it seemed no more than the hapless and malleable instrument of those who were hubristic and malicious. But still more important than the complicity of speech in the evil of the world was the recognition of the potentially transformative power of human words for the better and truer, usually newly recognized only after meditation on tragedy and, it sometimes seemed, only with the aid of inspiration by some benevolent divinities. This potential of divinely aided words could, so some ancients thought, lead toward new hope in whatever it is in humankind (the ancient rhetorician-philosophers called it psyche [in Greek *psuche* or in Latin *animus* or in English “soul”]) that responds to words and that could lead to a truer and better sense of the reality of the world and human life in it.

The ancients meditated on the causes of *eris, apate* and *ate* in several different contexts, most of them showing tragic or harmful patterns. They appeared among gods and men (the epic poets Homer, Hesiod, and Virgil), among the constituents of all things (the physicists Heraclitus and Empedocles), among the bodily constituents of man (the physicians Hippocrates and Galen), among the powers of human psyche relative to the being of all things and to their representations in words (the ontologists and psychologists Parmenides, Gorgias, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero), among cities and countries (the historians Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus), among individuals (the poets of dramatic tragedy like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides), and within individuals (Epictetus and Seneca). Each in his way also perceived that their resolution (and the possible avoidance of harm or catastrophe) may follow a sort of comedic pattern which could be described, and each contributed in his thinking something that increased understanding of how concord or harmony (the opposite of strife) and
enlightenment (the opposite of deception-delusion) could be assisted by human speech, which is the inner significance of the rhetorical tradition of the classical world. The texts of these thinkers and writers, taken as meditations on the causes and the remedies by words of strife, deception, and delusion in their different concerns, constitute the proper matter of ancient rhetorical thinking and its still unwritten history.

This book, however, is not an attempt to provide that history. It offers a much shorter and select version of ancient rhetorical thinking by concentrating on only a few of these ancient writers, those I have named above. In the pages to follow I will often call their rhetorical thinking responsible, to distinguish it from irresponsible forms, like that advocated by Gorgias of Leontini, one of the greatest of Greek rhetors (those who use suasive language) and rhetoricians (those who reflect on such language). Gorgias plays the heavy in this book. (I am also aware that he may not be as deserving of this role as I think he is and for reasons I will make explicit.) He is taken to represent much of what is irresponsible and culpable in the uses of the power of the human word. But “responsible” and “irresponsible” are my words, capacious surrogates used to include certain poets among the authors of responsible rhetorical thinking. Homer, Aeschylus, and Virgil did not write about rhetoric in any explicit sense, but these poets knew much about the deceptions and delusions of the human psyche and the forms of human strife in which speech was complicit and for which responsible suasive speech (their own poems) stands implicitly as indications of possible remedies. And what these poets knew and embodied in their fictions is, I believe, in great part still true of us and the world we live in.

Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero did write explicitly about rhetoric. They would likely have called their rhetorical thinking philosophic, not responsible. But what they meant by “philosophic” was not in all respects the same and, for almost everyone today, needs a good deal of clarification. One point of clarification is essential. The ancients did not
think of philosophy as it is usually presented in the lecture halls of modern universities. Moreover, they were not overly enchanted, as modern thought is, by the example of the experimental methods and mathematical reasoning used in the physical sciences, if only because such procedures in the physical sciences had not yet been fully developed. Even so, ancient philosophy was less a set rational doctrines than ways of living; and, let it be noted, these ways of living necessarily involved forms of rhetorical (verbally psychagogic) discourse that proceeded from some fundamental outlook on man in the world that the so-called philosophical dogmas helped to rationally delineate. (Modern academic conceptions of philosophy and of its ancient history totally ignore the deep involvement of rhetoric [responsible verbal psychagogy] with philosophy. Perhaps it would be better to say that philosophy was deeply engaged with rhetorical thought.) Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, although they differed in many things, shared the belief that rhetorical thinking and expression had to be philosophic to be responsibly psychagogic. Such psychagogy was less a matter of verbal and rational techniques used effectively than the communication of a transformative outlook requiring a new and truer way of living (as well as writing and speaking!) in the world. Showing the different ways philosophical thinking is involved with rhetorical thinking is a necessary task in a reconsideration of these three ancient philosophic rhetorician-philosophers. In this book, what the eyes of the Greek goddess Peitho (whose name means “suasion”) see symbolizes the rhetorical thinking, irrespective of their differences, of these ancient figures, the poets included. Discussion of them is the matter of Part I.

Part II of this book treats the traditional arts of rhetorical expression with a view to providing the contemporary reader a version of them that reflects much more of the select ancient types of rhetorical thinking than do preceptive manuals, both ancient and modern. Given the unusual and often misunderstood sort of thinking these arts did, a few remarks about Part II may here be helpful. There is much in it about writing (little
about speaking). But it is not a textbook for teaching composition in writing or speaking. Some or all of it may well be put to pedagogic use. However, the presentation of the process of writing is intended to be only a way of enabling the reader to engage practical rhetorical thinking imaginatively and concretely, not just to learn some abstract conceptions about it. Writing fixes the flow of speech and gives its airy sonic substance visible shape in letters. Thus, writing makes easier an examination of the processes of mind (including imagination) engaged within discourse that is psychagogic. Even so, it is all too easy to examine techniques of writing (or speaking, for that matter) without connecting them to the imaginative, cognitive, social, and—let us not be timid to admit—the spiritual and religious dynamics of verbal psychagogy. In fact, such disconnection is typical of the Western rhetorical tradition itself both in the rhetorical handbooks of the classical world, where the art of rhetoric was conceived, and in those of the contemporary world, where its techniques are more or less still the substance of most college textbooks of composition. In such handbooks, rhetoric has been reduced to a mere set of “effective” logical and verbal rules abstracted from the interconnectedness of words and things and people—of human psyche engaged with and responsive to the world, to self, and to others. The rhetorical handbooks of schools, both past and present, contain only the dry bones of the tradition.

All three rhetoricians I have selected also gave some explicit consideration to practical matters of expression. The traditional five “parts” of rhetoric that became established in late Hellenistic times—invention, organization, style, memory and delivery—are, as Cicero noted, five distinguishable arts involved in suasive oral communication (see *Brutus*). But when these arts are detached from responsible rhetorical thinking, they still retain a practical teachability and a psychagogic power that have from the first proved very seductive. Today the so-called five parts of rhetoric have suffered reduction to practical tricks in the management of words, at best to a
method of debating anything pro and con, for the sake of effectiveness, which is not to be identified with the responsible suasion that Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero as well as Homer, Aeschylus, and Vergil sought to develop in their different ways. Nevertheless, the old archetypes set in motion a dynamic toward realizing a more authentic and more responsible practical version of the traditional rhetorical arts of expression. This task, in Part II, is symbolized by Peitho’s lips, if I may put it so—how and what she speaks.

Some Important Tenets

The fullness and worth of responsible rhetorical thinking, which is broader than the traditional art of rhetoric and should inform all suasive or psychagogic discourse, whatever form it may take, not just public oratory, have seldom been represented adequately; not even, I must add, by my chief classical models, who mostly thought of the rhetoric of public oratory. In fact, certain revisions and extensions of ancient rhetorical thought and expression are attempted in this book. Two of them deserve mention here. One concerns the so-called topics of invention, the other the role of imagination in the figures and tropes of style. But these revisions flow from what ancient rhetorical thinking really was.

And what it really was is a major tenet of this book: the usually unrecognized verbal correlative or intrinsic constituent of the ancient conception of philosophy as a way of living, for individuals or for peoples, that consists basically in the verbal therapy or care of psyche (soul). Even some modern historical scholarship about rhetoric entirely dismisses such conceptions, misled by the customary depreciations of rhetoric voiced by philosophers, who, however, are rejecting in these depreciations only the empty pandering by rhetors and rhetoricians to what conventionally passes for truth and true goodness. At the moment, however, it is important to mention several allied matters about the rhetorical thinking done by the ancient writers selected here.
For the explicitly recognizable rhetoricians among them, the defining object of concern was verbal suasion or, to use Plato’s term, psychagogy, which, as I have noted, means the guidance of psyche. For him the major questions, which remain major today, were how and where psyche should be guided by words. Responsible and irresponsible psychagogy here indicate, although vaguely for now, necessary ethical and cognitive distinctions among verbal forms of suasion. Those distinctions will be clarified in the course of the book. (Suasion, I should add here, is the less common but, in most contexts, the term more apt than persuasion. Persuasion and dissuasion are etymologically perfective in meaning and will be restricted to contexts that refer to fully accomplished suasion.) The thinking of each of the ancient rhetoricians examined here revolves around the issue of responsible rhetoric or verbal psychagogy. But there are significant matters that surround and occasion this issue of responsible rhetoric.

One of the recurrent tenets of this book is that it is almost always tragic experience involving strife, deception, and delusion that occasions the need for thinking about responsible psychagogy and suasive expression. The works of Homer, Aeschylus, and Virgil are richly significant for rhetorical thinking because they represent poetically the tragic catastrophes that strife, deceit, and delusion may cause. Such is the implicit imaginative background of all explicit rhetorical thinking. These poets reveal the persistent obstacles to responsible verbal psychagogy. The sad truth is that actual tragedy remains what usually makes some modification—through the use of words, of understanding, attitude, intent, or actions—appear desirable in others or in self. Otherwise, no modification will usually be tolerated. Still, rhetorical thinking and its allied arts of practical expression represent a possible alternative, one that is not tragic but comedic, in the sense of promising real hope for a good outcome. Rhetorical thinking and expression are essentially comedic, not tragic, in character.

If the verbal suasion of self may seems an odd thing, we should recall that we
commonly talk to ourselves in order to change our attitudes or actions, though the developed habit of doing so is as rare today as it was in the past. Its closest contemporary analogues are kinds of penitential examen urged within Christianity and Judaism, the religions I know best. Contemporary forms of psychotherapy may also develop the personal habit of self-reflection needed for personal changes of heart or behavior, though such reflection will, of course, have nothing to do with religious repentance. But ancient rhetorical thinking, inseparable from the self-reflexive imperatives of philosophical thinking, required self-knowledge, which meant knowledge of psyche, often within a cosmic and religious outlook. The rhetor had to be in some perceptible way a witness to or an example of the new outlook. In the final analysis this outlook is the primary agent of verbal psychagogy. Much of its power comes from perception of the speaker or writer. He, the exemplar, not just his words, is psychagogic.

But the greater concerns of rhetorical thinking, once the self is oriented anew, involve others in negotiating the many forms of strife in life and in exposing, as one can, the many delusions and deceptions in the world. This sort of thinking often leads to consideration of the many genres of personal and public writing and speaking; for instance, the love letter or the public lecture, or the many kinds of personal counsel. Most often in antiquity it led to considering forms of public oratory and to issues about the institutions of education and politics. So it was in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Such institutions are essentially rhetorical ones, carrying on a kind of thinking that extends responsible verbal psychagogy from one or a few individuals to the many that constitute some social group or even a political community. But the core of all such thinking, no matter the genre of discourse or the institutions concerned, is always the psychagogic power of words or, as the case may be, their lack of power. Institutions and laws are the alternatives to the limitations of verbal psychagogy,
spoken and written.

Some readers may suppose that responsible verbal suasion or psychagogy remains a way of exercising personal control of others. The desire to control bedevils the entire rhetorical tradition whether ancient, medieval, or modern. In his City of God, composed in the early fifth century CE, Augustine of Hippo, an expertly trained orator and rhetorician before his conversion to Christianity, called it the libido dominandi, the lust to master, which could be seen at its worst in political and religious propaganda that usually masks the bloodshed and coercion of tyranny. The truth, as I see it, with much help from Augustine and Plato, is that no one masters responsible rhetoric. One reason, perhaps the greatest one, is that the scrutiny of one’s own psyche is inextricably involved in its exercise. Far from being a way of getting other people to think as we do and so to manage them, rhetorical thinking is a matter of energizing, by a “vision” of the real goods of human psyche in the world, the deep core of freedom in both self and others, despite all that may overlay and suppress it. And much does: the seemingly intractable perversities of human behavior and intent as well as many questionable socio-political arrangements. They are all very suasive, often because, being so pervasive and environmental, they are unperceived. But suasion, however powerful, is still not force. Alas, police and armies remain necessary in the actual world. Matters that may require the regrettable use of force fall within the scope of rhetorical thinking and expression. Recognizing and treating them when necessary are difficult issues in responsible psychagogy. Coercion from the law, the police, or the army is not founded on the psychagogic power of words. Force substitutes for words when they cannot do their suasive work. The pen may be mightier than the sword, but the sword is often the only alternative to the failures of the pen. Simply recognizing such matters as these should make clear to readers that the concepts of rhetorical thinking and expression described in this book go well beyond what “rhetoric” usually means in a college
 curriculum of today, namely, an advanced form of literacy. In fact, this book presumes literacy, however advanced. It aims at making accessible a kind of mental and verbal competence along with a kind of knowledge and imaginative vision that colleges do not really teach at all—to their discredit, in my opinion.

Another important tenet to note here is that responsible (that is, philosophic) rhetorical thinking does not involve matters of cogent rational proof only, as scientific philosophic thought does. Here there arises the issue about the nature of philosophy in the ancient world, best perceived, as it will become clear, in the differences between and among Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. And this issue affects several other tenets developed in this book, especially about the interdependence of rational argument and figuration in rhetorical discourse of whatever sort. That interdependence was, again as will be shown later, something Longinus perceived. In their education many people today have become acquainted with the kinds of ratiocinative thinking called philosophy by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Such philosophy did often aim at establishing general rational truths deservedly called science (Greek: \textit{episteme}). (The contemporary meaning of science clearly differs. It refers chiefly to the empirical and experimental treatment of material reality in its quantifiability, as in physics, chemistry, or biology. Contemporary social sciences are called sciences because they try to adapt empirical quantitative techniques to human behavior.) Nevertheless, among ancient classical thinkers philosophy had still another and broader meaning. It meant desire for or friendliness to wisdom (Greek \textit{sophia})—sapience, if I may try to rehabilitate this word in English, a sapience about living well and happily in a world characterized by much strife, delusion, and deception. This sapience did not exclude scientific knowledge, but it did not depend on it, however broad or ultimate or first some form of such knowledge may be.

But almost no one today by his or her education comes to learn that within this
sapiential, amatory, and less exclusively scientific form of philosophy, rhetorical thinking of the kinds I call responsible emerged in the ancient world. In contemporary usage outside the universities, rhetoric usually means irresponsible, highly emotional, biased speech, if not verbal chicanery or duplicity; it is also called spin, self-serving talk, or, at best, market-driven speech aiming to sell, where effectiveness, not some real good, is the prime criterion. Within the university, ancient rhetoric is studied in various departments, but rhetoric usually means skill in writing or speaking and seems to be thought of either as an advanced form of literacy or at best a minor psychological and political concern of the social sciences. Rhetorical thinking as discussed in this book has no standing among university departments of knowledge and appears inconceivable today as a major goal of education at all levels. A way of thinking called pragmatism, a diluted form of which many Americans today find attractive and which informs much educational practice in universities and in the lower schools, is built on the primacy of effectiveness, not on the discovery of the true or truly good, and turns educational goals more and more toward economic activity. But all this, however justifiable it may in part be, is the very opposite of the broad sapiential sense of philosophy in the ancient world. And even there, rhetoric was criticized for being dangerous because its psychagogic powers were not always allied to real knowledge (philosophical science) and thus tended to become the servants of the lust to control and dominate. We will confront such issues in the chapters that follow this prologue.

Establishing the points or tenets of a rational argument as well as possible, sometimes even by a scientific demonstration, may on occasion be necessary. But it is neither always necessary nor always possible in given cases. And even when it is adequately provided, rational science of whatever kind is not always sufficient to make discourse responsibly psychagogic. That may require something more, a force in discourse that affects the living springs of personal or corporate desire and imagination,
activating and energizing them, even redirecting them if necessary. In short, responsible psychagogy not only provides the rationally true but also engages psychic desire or love, the love both for needed goods of self and for the goods of others, perhaps to the point of self-sacrifice. In other words, it may consist of appeals not only to human reason but also to what has been called the human will, however its freedom may be performed for good or ill before its mature (rhetorically informed) exercise. Verbal psychagogy may also have to deal with matters of religious belief, for religious beliefs affect thinking and acting. Religion is a matter that, in fact, often becomes the central issue of rhetorical thinking. This too is a matter shunned in contemporary academic circles.

Thus, responsible rhetorical thinking considers verbal psychagogy aiming not only to illumine and liberate the mind by knowledge, including theological knowledge at times. It also aims by the right uses of imagination to affect desires or loves and to empower psyche through hope, sometimes, as in the best sorts of poetry, by the probative resources of imaginative mind without recourse to forms of rational science. In any case, hope is the powerhouse of what used to be called the human free will, something much in doubt today. In another metaphor, hope is the heart, if not the mind, of responsible psychagogy.

What once gave the tradition flesh and life, and can do so again, is the need for, and reality of, verbally suasive interaction, a way of being among others in the world, involving care for words and things and others according to a communicable vision of the welfare of human life. Suasive interaction, I must stress, should not be taken to mean some peaceable verbal exchange among reasonable people. That happens, but not very often. The ancients conceived of verbal suasion as the human alternative to what usually happens, the recourse to force or deceit. But even when force is eschewed, verbal suasion can involve an intense psychic struggle for all involved, including the
speaker. The reason? Unresolved issues of emotional investment and personal, even cultural or racial, identity are usually at stake. Many times, consequently, it can devolve, if not into violence, then into inveterate hostility, quarreling, or hatred—lengthy, tedious, and unproductive. It may end in a hardening of opposed thoughts and feelings. Verbal suasion in fact often fails. That’s the sorry truth. A happier truth is that it can do what violence cannot: alter mind and heart.

An important tenet of this second part of the book is that for suasion to occur—and here as almost always in this book I mean responsible (or philosophic) suasion—rhetoric, traditionally defined as the verbal art of persuasion, had to be part of something greater than the mental faculty or the set of practical verbal and logical techniques that even some of the best (the philosophic) ancient thinkers thought the art was. The verbal and logical techniques of the art had to be guided by a sense of actuality—by some knowledge, perhaps even ontologically justifiable knowledge, of the actualities of life and of the world involved in the process of verbal suasion. But this knowledge includes all that impedes as well as all that promotes responsible persuasion. Such rhetorical knowledge, as a matter of fact, cannot be prepackaged. It is still developing. Thoughtful history and poetry assist that development. But such knowledge is not all that is needed. Also important, maybe preeminently important, is an imaginative, visionary factor in psychagogy, since hope depends on the visionary. A description both of the kinds of thinking leading to such knowledge and vision and of the verbal arts that are inseparable from them is another expression of my aim.

An Interpretative Essay

I call this book an essay. It is an interpretative one, and not a history. It is moreover an interpretative essay about the rhetorical thinking of only some of the classical rhetoricians (theorists of rhetoric)—the best ones, in my opinion. An essay
implies that however long a book it may be, it is only an attempt to treat the subject as well as its author can within the genre. In one sense, then, the genre of this book is limited; in another, because the boundaries of an essay are looser than those of a history can be, the essay permits me a certain personal freedom to select and engage my classical authors, reconsider them, to adduce related matters, even, perhaps, to suggest revisions of their thought-provoking legacy in ways, of course, that I trust are justifiable. The presence of poets in this book is one sign of the latitude permissible in an essay.

However, to speak of types of rhetorical thinking may not really be the most accurate formulation of the subject matter of this essay. More accurate still may be to speak of a way of life, about a way of being with others in the actual world. And, apropos of this point, one of the somewhat hidden tropes of this book is that life, a process of moving through all sorts of strife and delusion both in private and, very often, in public demands a kind of thinking like that involved in writing a responsibly suasive text. Both require rethinking and re-expression that may be hard. The text is finished only when life is finished.

An essay is also, ineluctably, personal. I was academically trained as a medievalist and became by necessity something of an amateur classicist. The encounters of Christianity with non-Christian cultures, especially with the extant texts and traditions of thought from the classical world, stimulate much of the expression of high culture in the Middle Ages. This phenomenon first turned me many years ago to the study of the classical rhetorical tradition when I was exploring how it was used, criticized, and transformed in the Christian literature of late Latin Antiquity and the Middle Ages. My studies became focused on Augustine, Dante, and Chaucer, all of whom leave the prescriptions of rhetorical manualists far behind them in their highly original uses of the ancient tradition. (This is a subject yet to be treated adequately in
contemporary medieval studies.) Thus, I enjoy something of an outsider’s perspective on the classical as well as the modern rhetorical traditions, all of which eschew not only Christianity and Judaism but also much that was important to the ancient philosophic theorists of rhetoric this book is about.

**Beyond Ancient Rhetorical Thought**

Why this book is focused on certain classical theorists should become clearer in the course of the book. But a summary sense of the reason why may be provided here. The gist of it is that their rhetorical thinking, when responding to the need to be responsible—that is, philosophic—implied a view of the human being in the world as an agent capable of rational and imaginative speech and of morally conscious, free actions taken in the light of suasive discourse. This implication took a while to develop during the ancient world, and the development continued in the Middle Ages. To the ancient authors discussed in this book, what this implication means, when it is reduced to the essential factor, is that that there is in human beings something they called psyche or, more commonly, soul in English. Plato, Aristotle and Cicero do not share the same understanding of psyche. But they agreed that psyche summarized the human capacity, enlivened by desire (*eros* in Greek; *amor* in Latin) for the better and truer, to generate suasive speech and to be moved by suasive speech. This was the great hope. The speakers and addressees of such discourse had to have psyche if verbal suasion was not to be reduced either to deterministic forms of what today is called psychological conditioning or to the tyrannical will to power in private and public life.

Medieval and renaissance rhetorical thinking largely accommodated the classical rhetorical view of language and man to the biblical view of God, who is in fact represented both as a suasive speaker with a love of his creation and as the fundamental personal reality sought in human *eros*. Psyche became his image in man. Modern
rhetorical thinking largely rejects such classical and biblical views in favor of scientific or so-called postmodern views of mankind and the world. Scholarship on rhetoric has flourished in the last fifty years in certain sectors of many modern multiversities: departments of speech and communication, some English departments (especially of poststructuralist leanings), classical languages, and medieval and renaissance studies. There are now lots of books entitled The Rhetoric of (This or That or Somebody). And, just as for everything else, numerous queries about rhetoric can be googled or yahooed. However, another of the chief tenets of this book is that the paradigms of most modern rhetorical scholarship, in many crucial ways similar to those of the sophistic rhetorical movement in the classical world, have significant limitations, no matter the contemporary discipline in which rhetoric is studied. The greatest of the sophists in fact attempted to do what poststructuralists do in newer ways: they subordinate human judgment to larger deterministic forces of language and culture. Neurobiology today is rashly taken by many to do away entirely with psyche and the measure of freedom that was said to inhere in it. All this tends to demote man, his actions, thinking, and speech, to determined effects within various biological, physical, linguistic, or cultural systems that operate impersonally or conventionally. In short, there is no place for psyche and psychagogy or philosophy as they were conceived in the ancient world within contemporary rhetorical thinking. They seem outmoded.

To my mind, and I am not alone here, modern rhetorical theories have proven unable to cope with the troubles of strife and deception in our times, and for a simple reason: none allows that there is a vantage point beyond the conflict or that there exists a real common ground, a common actuality to appeal to. Medieval Christian forms of rhetorical thinking, all ultimately theological, cannot be directly used as archetypes by us because even when we today are religious in outlook, we are not all Christians, and seldom are we responsibly rhetorical in our religious thinking, no matter the religion,
Christian or not. The fact is that without rhetorical thinking, most religiously committed theologizing cannot escape its own boundaries or plausibly argue that all others fall within it or in a friendly association with it. We again lack what the classical tradition first developed, however imperfectly: some viable sense of a common purchase of the real upon us all, including a sense of a common humanity or humanism, to use the nowadays very unfashionable word. Such humanism is not a package of prefabricated ideas already fully worked out. It is the seemingly endless project of rhetorical thinking. Hence this book begins at the beginning of such thinking, the classical world. To travel the road through that world will be a journey long enough. But the road beyond it is very long indeed and increasing daily.

But this brings me to a point that helps explain in a preliminary way both the hope within the best of ancient rhetorical thinking and the intention for which this book is a vehicle. The hope is to acquire what the Greek tragedian Aeschylus called the eyes and (in my addition to him) the lips of Peitho—the goddess of Suasion or Persuasion (Romans called her Suada). As I have indicated in several ways, what she sees is a new desirable possibility, based in the actuality and nature of human psyche in the world, for an enlargement and enrichment of our common humanity and way of life. The augmentation and enrichment of humanity and life are, in fact, the perennial tasks of rhetorical thinking. Its most visionary and extensive forms of exercise are political and religious. But there are humbler forms, lots of them—, too many to be counted—, as, for example, when a man and a woman, usually after some harm has been done, talk out their “issues,” as it is often put. Self-improvement, marriage, and parenting are rhetorical exercises. But in whatever form of exercise rhetorical thinking appears, the argument here is that within it several things are always interacting: rhetorical knowledge derived from meditated tragic experience, which is either personally suffered or mimetically considered in thoughtful history and poetry. Intellective
imagination, rational argument, and hard work with words—all are needed to produce
the several features of discourse that make it responsibly and suavely communicable.
In short, Peitho’s lips must be made to articulate well what Peitho sees.

Rhetorical thinking may well take on larger tasks in the contemporary
intellectual world by making evident its disposition in regard to the problems of being,
knowing, and speaking, or those of economic, psychological, sexual, linguistic, and
socio-cultural determinisms, all of which have been circulating today in several
scientific and poststructuralist forms. However, these very ivory-tower problems,
though important, are not in fact central. Rhetorical thinking does not depend upon
resolution to any of them, though it may have to contend with them, as the ancient
tradition shows. It depends, as already suggested, upon the possible resolutions by
means of words to strife, delusion, and deception suggested by tragic experience.
Within the innermost being of human psyche, such experience arouses *eros* for what is
true and good or, at the least, what may be truer and better. Harmful or catastrophic
experience is paradoxically not always tragic. It only becomes comic, however, when
the beholders or survivors of tragedy, unable to undo harm and suffering, find in them
occasion for new insight, new composure, and the suggestions of new hope.

Even though this book may help to make ancient rhetorical thinking better
known, the ineluctable and discouraging fact is that each generation has to relearn what
it involves through the educational institutions of the culture. Responsible rhetorical
thinking cannot be inherited. Educational reform is, however, too large a topic to be
treated here. I admit, nevertheless, to suggesting often and without subtlety that unless
rhetorical thinking, which subtends the arts of the mortal human word (the Greeks
called it *logos*), becomes a goal of instruction in contemporary culture through our
educational institutions at all levels, from grade school to university, the hope for the
betterment of life that such thinking fosters, as well as for cooperation with
contemporary science and the religions of the divine word, all of which badly need a new consciousness of and respect for rhetorical thinking, has little or no chance of being realized. Teaching the uses of language solely in the context of self-expression, which is the agenda of contemporary education, is to foster romanticist egoism in thinking. Rhetorical thinking inclines one to a verbal altruism (usually called decorum or propriety in classical rhetoric but in Christian rhetoric charity through the Spirit). It is not an easily acquired mode of thinking and expression. Aside from lack of institutional support, the forms of egoism and factionalism that work against rhetorical thinking are strong and aggressive.

This book aims to enable its readers to participate in the tradition of the best ancient theorists of rhetorical thinking and, perhaps, even to enrich their venerable legacy in new ways. Once a book is written and published, its readers may give it new life and put it to uses no author can anticipate. So this book has been designed to address individuals of a certain sort, those who have a little of the autodidact in them: adults, whatever their professions, university students, whatever their fields of interest. It is for those who are already literate and old enough to have sensed in the contemporary world the influence of the terrible goddesses Eris, Apathe, and Ate. They will have gained some sense of life’s actual and potential tragedies; from the ashes of which, however obscurely, there may arise some longing and hope for the better. By longing and by hope does rhetorical thinking and expression, like the phoenix, gain wings again.
PART I

Peitho's Eyes

I am deeply grateful to the eyes of Peitho

because she has watched over my speech and words

to these wildly resistant Furies. But Zeus,

who guides the assemblies of law, has gained the

victory.

Athena in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus (ll. 970-973: my trans.)
CHAPTER 1

Homer (fl.700-750 BCE):
The World of Strife and Difference

Rhetorical thinking has been informally described. However, we must now try to cross the threshold to penetrate the essentials more deeply. For that, we must look back to the recognizably best ancient theorists to discover what they thought of it. What they thought of it, as should now be evident from previous remarks, includes what the poets Homer, Aeschylus, and Virgil had to say about the experience of tragic human conflict. From the perspective they provide, we can see, or so I maintain, that the notion and the need for an art of responsible psychagogy originate in the ineluctable and universal human experience of tragedy, which may be said to develop along a spectrum from personal quarreling to war among peoples, the most destructive form of human strife. In addition to the raw universal experience of strife, delusion, and deceit, the Greeks were fortunate to have Homer’s epic poems, which are meditations upon the human tragedies they cause and whose importance for understanding verbal psychagogy and the psychagogy it involves cannot, therefore, be underestimated. Let us first turn to Homer.

The Iliad

Homer’s Iliad is a story of the worst sort of strife, war, specifically the legendary Trojan War, whose first cause lay in the anger and deception of the goddess Eris (strife) that in turn led to the disastrous erotic affair of Paris of Troy and Helen, wife of Menelaos
of Sparta. But the focus of Homer’s story is not on these remote matters but on the personal strife of the terrifying Greek warrior Achilleus with the warlord Agamemnon and the devastation it caused among gods and men during the tenth and last year of the war. And their quarrel, like the myth of Eris, involves, among other things, the personal pleasures and honor of warriors from their possession of captive war women. In this poem we see the terror and pity of an imagined heroic age in which verbal suasion is subservient to ideals of manly excellence and war glory shaped by the forces of tribal affiliation, personal identity, and many quarreling, vengeful, and deceitful gods. The *Iliad*, in short, presents a world without responsible suasion. At that world we must look intently. In essential ways it still images our world.

And we may begin with the clearest (and very famous) representation in the poem of an attempt at verbal suasion. It occurs in *Iliad* 9, where three ambassadors from Agamemnon try to convince Achilleus to put aside his anger with the warlord and return to the struggle against the Trojans. But words fail miserably in this scene, and they fail because they issue from speakers who, having participated in the rupture of communal bonds of trust among warriors, are motivated by egoistic benefits, especially the one who has moved these men to speak, though he is absent. Still he, the hateful Agamemnon, is sensed by Achilleus as if present in their words. Bribes, personal loyalty, exhortations concerning glory—all fail to persuade Achilleus to return.

However, in showing the failure of verbal persuasion, this great poem, I suspect, does two other things. It intensifies what I take to be already in Homer’s readers (us included): an experientially derived consciousness, however vague or suppressed, of the need for verbal suasion to resolve strife apart from violence and force. It also intimates, by way of the tragic events it narrates, an actuality that, if fully recognized, is potentially generative of responsible psychagogy in persuasion: the mortality of human beings in the world. Mortality is, I take it, what in Homer’s view can defer all tribal and personal
differences. From a sense of it can evolve both compassion and a consciousness of justice, even for hated enemies. In the *Iliad* compassion and justice are possible responses, occasioned by tragedy, to the connectedness of humans in the world by their common liability to death.

But let us return to Achilleus to go deeper into this story and the rhetorical significance of mortality. Achilleus (the Greek version of “Achilles”), the greatest warrior of the Greeks, is the son Peleus, a mortal man, and Thetis, a goddess and thus an immortal, whose immortality, however, is not shared by her son. Disgraced by Agamemnon in a personal quarrel involving their concubines and their honor among warriors—sex and women and status are powerful interests among males—Achilleus becomes enraged and withdraws from the war. He begs his mother to make Zeus punish not only Agamemnon but also all the other Greeks for disgracing him. When they in fact begin to suffer losses in battle at the hands of the Trojans, who are led by Hektor, they who are terrified by the prospect of being slaughtered turn to Achilleus for help. When Agamemnon’s ambassadors attempt to persuade him to return, he rejects all pleas. He senses duplicity in them, a self-interest masked by their words. But most of all he feels that Zeus, the most powerful of gods, is on his side, vindicating his honor by their sufferings.

But Zeus has in fact other intentions, and events do not turn out as Achilleus expects. His friend and lieutenant, Patroklos, moved to pity for the Greeks, persuades Achilleus to allow him enter the fray while wearing the armor of Achilleus. In this way, Achilleus thinks, his honor will be maintained. But Patroklos is killed by Hektor. Achilleus, stirred by vengeance, returns to battle, in spite of being warned by his mother that he will die if he does so. But he cares not. Enraged, he slaughters Trojans pitilessly and even recklessly challenges a river-god in battle. But his brutal and savage vengeance (Homer unmistakably represents it so) does not bring him satisfaction, even after he kills Hektor and disgraces his corpse by dragging it behind his chariot in front of the walled
city of Troy. The anger of Achilleus maddens him, making him both bestial and
inconsolable. Unable to sleep, he maniacally drags the corpse around the tomb of
Patroklos. This is the scene that opens the last book of the *Iliad*.

In the eyes of some of the gods, Achilleus has become unjust in his pitiless
treatment of Hektor. To other gods, who have deep personal grievances of their own
against the Trojans, because Achilleus is the son of a goddess and thus superior to other
mortal men, he is in the right. (In this poem, Homer clearly indicates, strife, deceit, and
delusion exist among the Olympian gods as well as the mortals on the plains of Troy.)
Zeus, whose own regime is threatened by the conflict among the partisan gods, then takes
steps to resolve their conflict—risky steps, I stress, because he has previously done much
to bring this conflict to a critical point, including allowing the death of Patroklos, which
has driven Achilleus to mania, and open warfare among the gods themselves on the plains
of Troy. Through Thetis, the mother of Achilleus, Zeus, the most powerful of the gods but
also the most devious, commands Achilleus to return the corpse of Hektor to his father
Priam, king of Troy. Achilleus agrees to obey. (Obedience from fear is, of course, not
persuasion but a form of coercion lessened by future self-interest.)

Zeus then miraculously transports Priam within the Greek camp to the tent of
Achilleus. His presence comes as a wonder, the last in a series of wondrous events that has
taken place during his return to the battlefield. These events have slowly, very slowly
brought Achilleus to the point of recognizing that his interests do not determine the course
of the world. Astonished at the presence of Priam, Achilleus listens to the father of his foe
and the king of his enemies as he pleads for pity: “Achilleus like the gods, remember your
father” (*Iliad* 24.485), he says, adding that Peleus may one day rejoice to see his son return
to him, something Priam cannot do because Achilleus has killed Hektor and his other
sons. Priam’s first words of address are significant. Although he may well be like the gods,
the extraordinary Achilleus is not a god. The words of Priam stir in Achilleus the memory
of his mortal father—rather than his goddess mother—and make him doubly aware that Peleus will never see him return from the war. Achilleus weeps, but in him there now arise new thoughts of his condition and, by extension, the condition of all other mortals under the gods. In a remarkable passage, Achilleus utters something of a newly imagined theological parable to make sense of his sorrows. Speaking to Priam, he says,

There is not
Any advantage to be won from grim lamentation.
Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals,
That we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows.
There are two urns that stand on the door-sill of Zeus. They are unlike
For the gifts they bestow: an urn of evils, and urn of blessings.
If Zeus who delight in thunder mingles these and bestows them
On man he shifts, and moves now in evil, again in good fortune.
But when Zeus bestows from the urn of sorrows, he makes a failure
Of man, and the evil hunger drives him over the shining
Earth, and he wanders respected neither of gods nor mortals. (24.525-533)

Of course, Achilleus has never seen such urns at the threshold of Zeus. They are symbols he has invented to make sense of his harsh experience. It is also noteworthy that Achilleus never mentions the possibility that a man would receive only blessings from Zeus. Achilleus then agrees to return Hektor’s body, thus obeying Zeus. But his obedience is now a willing one. He has been persuaded, it seems, by the course of events in which Zeus has played a decisive role, to a new sense of compassion and justice founded on recognition that he shares the lot of mortal men, despite his martial excellence and his goddess mother, and, through her, special status with Zeus. His former presumption that he has been favored by Zeus, the most powerful of the gods, has been shown to be a delusion.
Homer’s Achilleus clearly embodies all that personally impedes both persuasion and, let us note, wonder, the recognized ignorance that later Greek thinkers called the beginning of philosophy (perhaps also of theology, as the passage above indicates). His sense of personal superiority is based on factors of personal identity. He is son of a goddess who has powerful allies, Zeus in particular; he is the greatest of warriors; and he lives for glory (the praise of others). Only the tragedies of personal disgrace, loss of friends, ignorance of the lot of the dead, and bestial degradation in violence, unsatisfying vengeance, and reckless impiety, bring him to see things anew, himself included. Superiority residing in the personal factors composing who we are cannot erase the actuality of what we are. Here, in the intuited actuality of what we are, lies the basis for the possibility of compassion and justice among those who die. Here is a glimmer of a kind of light, and not simply the light of funeral pyres, in the environing darkness.

Thus, Homer’s epic cuts through the traits of difference and singularity among people that are embodied both in the figure of the wrathful and vengeful Achilles and, more broadly, in the long and destructive Trojan War. The poem stresses the mortality and limitations of all under the sway of the gods in the world, those beings in Homer that, however like mortals in their antagonisms, do not die, and so, though they suffer, they do not suffer mortal tragedy. But the reconciliation between Achilleus and Priam, based on an inclusive sense of human mortality and achieved by verbal suasion with circumstantial aid from the god Zeus, comes too late to rectify all the tragedy that has already occurred and has yet to occur. For the war does not end with the end of the Iliad. Hektor’s funeral brings the poem to an end, and we know that Achilleus will also die soon.

The Odyssey

But Homer did not stop with this tragic epic. His vision was double, like the shield of Achilleus described in Iliad 20. On it are depictions of activities of those in two cities,
one at war and the other at peace. In the *Odyssey*, the story of Odysseus’s wanderings, his homecoming, and the restoration of his household and kingdom, Homer amplifies his sense of the fundamental actualities of human psyche in the world, symbolizing for us in much detail what does and does not contribute to the welfare of human life (and by implication human psyche). What does not is symbolized best in the rotted culture of Ithaka which permits the outrageous actions and murderous plotting of the Ithakan suitors of Penelope (see *Odyssey* 1-2). To the minds and behavior of the suitors, Homer subtly likens the exotic ways of thinking and acting Odysseus experiences in his ten years of misadventures among certain monsters, mortals, and goddesses who live on islands out in the great and mysterious (Mediterranean) sea. These beings are isolated (significantly) from the landed social world of mortals and from the home of the gods on Mt. Olympos. Odysseus’ misadventures among these island beings constitute a sort of anthropological poetic survey of forms of living that, in Homer’s view, do not befit “mortals,” his word for human beings.

Ithaka, the island homeland of Odysseus, is more than a place: it is the symbol of the necessary structure of mortal human life, recognizable by contrast both with the outlandish ways of human and divine life witnessed by Odysseus in his wanderings and with the behavior of the suitors of Penelope. This constitutes Homer’s cultural anthropology. And what does this Homeric anthropology come to? Only a reading of the poem will suffice, but here is a short list of the results. Mortals should not live like sea-roving pirates who plunder cities for food and sex, as in fact Odysseus and his men do on the island of Ismaros, the first place they land after sacking Troy (see *Odyssey* 9.40-66). They should not live like the drug-bemused Lotus-eaters (Odyssey 9.83-104) or like the impiously anti-social and monstrously gluttonous Cyclops Polyphemos (Odyssey 9.105-566). Nor should mortals be like the cunning chameleon cannibals called LystrYGONians, nor like the incestuous household of Aiolos, nor like sorceress-druggist Circe. Mortals
must not forget the pathetic existence of the dead, mere shades without real bodies, who
treasure physical life in sunlight and the familial bonds of their former lives above all else.
The disasters with the monsters Skylla and Charybdis and on the island of Thrinakia—
where to avoid starvation, the men of Odysseus kill the oxen of the god Helios, thus
violating a warning not to eat them—indicate a Homeric rule of life. If mortals are to
survive, they must have due regard for the admonitions given them by the gods. They
should not act solely according to their own sense of bodily necessity and expedience.
And they should not uncritically admire the seemingly ideal people called Phaiakians.
Their extraordinary productive island makes them prosperous. But it also makes them
soft, given to baths and feasting, impious to Poseidon who enables them to travel over the
seas in thought-driven ships, and, worst of all, incapable of imaginative empathy for the
sufferings of mortals as reported in bardic poetry, which is for them mere entertainment.
Nor should mortals adopt the fantasies of sexual pleasure and immortality offered to
Odysseus by Kalypso, who ignores her own divinity and ties to the gods of Olympos in
seeking out mortal men for husbands. In sum, Homer’s cultural anthropology serves to
bring into focus the fundamentals of a general human economy.

But it is the tragic condition of the homeless wanderer and beggar, the brutish
condition of bodily neediness and intellectual resourcelessness to which Odysseus is
reduced when he returns, that provides the clearest perspective on the economic tragedy
of Ithaka during the years of Odysseus’s absence. Once the cunning destroyer of cities,
Odysseus, has been made helpless, needy, and nostalgic during the wanderings, and now
that he has returned, thanks to the help of Athene, the goddess makes him an agent of
divine retribution. Her plan is to destroy the reckless princes on Ithaka who by their
eating, drinking, and carousing in the royal household are thoughtlessly consuming its
substance as they seek the pride of the kingship by marriage to Penelope. By her divine
magic, Athene turns Odysseus into an old beggar, the symbol of a mortal’s actual status in
the world, to test and to expose the corruption of the people of Ithaka by their reactions to him. The Ithakans have lost respect for the structure of familial affection and economic and political responsibility that enables mortal humans, all helpless at the core, to prosper in life. The Homeric narrative of the encounters of the disguised Odysseus with the suitors is sprinkled with commentary about the ills of martial adventuring, piracy, wandering, and homelessness, when mortals are reduced merely to satisfying the impulses of what Homer calls “the ravenous belly.” The poem clearly portrays an island economy corrupted by the arrogance, reckless consumption, and murderous maliciousness of the suitors whose prosperity blinds them to the actualities of mortal life and death.

But there is also a political dimension to the corrupt Ithakan economy. The outrageous, hedonistic behavior of the suitors is, Homer shows, only a result of the deeper corruption of Ithakan culture and politics as a whole, and those chiefly responsible for its corruption are the elders who should have restrained the suitors. No form of life, human or animal, can flourish on Ithaka. The royal house still looks splendid on the outside, but it is anything but splendid on the inside. The old, like Laertes, Odysseus’s father, have been cast out of the royal house. Even the animals, like the dog Argos, have been expelled. Uncared for by household servants, Argos is allowed to go blind and is now living his last days on a dung heap. The noblest man on the island is Eumaios, a swineherd, whose care for the pigs and livestock paradoxically indicates that he possesses a right mind, one attuned to economic necessities, unlike the suitors who eat, drink, and carouse shamelessly. Their slaughter by Odysseus is a bloody purgation. And it almost brings the island to civil war. Only the intervention of Zeus and Athene, whom Zeus must also restrain, prevents it. They encourage a negotiated settlement to end the strife. Thus, the Odyssey, though it contains a tragedy of Ithakan life, ends well, hinting that verbal negotiation and pacts made in fear of the gods may end strife. It is true that violence in the Odyssey has a somewhat constructive purpose in being an unavoidable means of justice,
but the means is very dangerous. And the fact is that it is the fearsome power of the gods, not the words of mortals, that leads to the signing of a peace treaty and prevents the unleashing on Ithaka of the terrible destructive effects of martial strife, vengeance, and mania as they are shown in the *Iliad*. (The adequacy of such a solution is treated in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which we will discuss later.)

Homer’s epic poems, then, show us force, tribalism, and socioeconomic arrogance regnant among men—not responsible verbal suasion. But they do not leave us without some sense of the possibilities within the powers of words. The poems themselves are works of words. They are verbally suasive indications, although negative (tragic) ones, of the fundamentals of mortal welfare (its proper economy and politics) in the world and hint at the potential of verbal suasion to displace egoistic and tribal force in the resolution of conflict. The word for fool or simpleton in the *Odyssey* is *nepios*, a word compounded of a negative particle plus the word for tale, *epos*, the kind of tale of the war and of homecomings that the inspired bards in the poem, Phemios and Demodokos, tell. These tales establish a sense of reality, of what befits mortal and immortal life, and the sorts of concerns that contribute to human welfare politically and economically. Telemachos needs such tales in order to become the kind of man his father Odysseus was, ruler of a household and a kingdom. Hearing the tale is an education in the realities of life, and he who neglects the realities indicated in the tale is a fool, a simpleton, and so exposes himself to tragic possibilities. Such is the implication of psychagogic importance of the Homer’s own tales. Not to heed them is folly. By implication, the opposite is wisdom.

These poems excavate imaginatively the fundamental strata of a rhetorical humanism, a sense of human psyche in the world that makes responsible persuasion possible, although unrealized within the poems. Homeric humanism may be regarded as a vision of the lowest *common* denominator among humankind, of the fundamentals
of human economy and politics by which mortal life can flourish; and they, when shown in speech as by a light, make the verbal resolution of strife, deceit, and delusion at least thinkable.
CHAPTER 2

Aeschylus (525/4-456/5 BCE):

_Eumenides_ and the Symbolism of Rhetorical Consciousness

But to understand in greater depth the nature of rhetorical thinking, we must become better acquainted with the actuality of verbal psychagogy. If we consider for a moment only the relation between rhetoric taken solely as a verbal art and the allied arts of grammar and logic that also deal with words and thinking and things, it is clear that, among these three governing arts of verbal communication, the magisterial place must go to rhetoric. It must because it includes the other two and employs them for a purpose greater than linguistic correctness and intelligibility, which are the practical aims of grammar, or a sequence of valid assertions, which is the aim of logic. That purpose, to give it its ancient name, is psychagogy. As already indicated, a responsible verbal psychagogy involves the guidance of psyche not by force or fraud, but, because philosophic, it looks to articulate a viable common humanism, a sense of the actuality of the world and of the real goods of human psyche, no easy accomplishment when “tribal” interests are furiously aroused. Nor is it easy even when they are not aroused, for the matter is difficult, as history has proven.

If we think of psychagogy as mere effectiveness, as reducible to formula, gimmickry, salesmanship, to arousal by tribal drums, or if we think of it as effectively moving large crowds of listeners in fluent speeches or large numbers of readers by fluent writing, we will miss the mark. Responsible persuasion, I have noted, is usually a halting, error-filled verbal process that has no immediate grand effect upon the millions. It is often
frustrated and often fails, for it is neither force nor mass deception. It often takes a great deal of time and a great deal of reconsideration by the rhetor, if only to appreciate the full extent of the problems involved, both his own and those of others. In the end, responsible persuasion aims to liberate and to empower. But its real nature defies complete understanding.

A Mysterious Experience

Persuasion or verbal psychagogy is, in this context, one of the central mysteries of human experience and verbal communication. For, while clearly a phenomenon involving words and things and persons, it has always defied full explanation and control in seeming to be at once awesomely powerful in transforming minds and hearts and ruefully weak in overcoming opposing forces coming from custom, culture, habituation, angry resistance, or the many perversities of human nature. The Sicilian sophist Gorgias, spokesman in his time of a new rhetorical consciousness, tried to envision the art of rhetoric and the rhetorician in terms of personal mastery of the power of human logos. In his Encomium of Helen, he compared it to a great lord ruling over others as do poetry, incantations, magic, drugs, and erotic love. But, as I will argue in the next chapter, his promotion of this ideal of mastery of the power of logos was false advertising, exalting the techniques of mere effectiveness that have always been the poorest part of the long tradition of the rhetorical handbooks. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero were wiser, sensing that a philosophically responsible persuasion was preferable to the hokum of mere techniques, and that such persuasion, though hardly irresistible, could, when imaginatively potent, do what even compulsion could not do, move the human psyche to willingly and knowingly change.

Later, Christianity, heir to a Hebraic rhetorical culture founded on the power of the divine word, entered into the Greco-Roman world and encountered there its rhetorical
culture. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures portray, when considered from a literary standpoint, a grand divine comedy of hope. But Jewish and Christian thinkers who pondered the “graces” of divine power represented in the Tanakh and the Bible also found divine persuasion mysterious. They were compelled to imagine in human events and the human psyche a deeper communication, a secret and surprisingly free interaction, only occasioned by human speech, of the luminous and powerful divine “word” with human understanding, liberty of choice, and the humanly experienced world of created things in the course of personal experience and corporate history.

The divine word could do anything. It could create and redeem, as the Scriptural record of its many miracles attested. But both that record and historical human experience also attested that the divine word exercised its power over its creatures restrainedly, often to the point of frustrated incomprehension in them. And it seemed to prefer the persuasions resulting in conversion, fidelity, steadfastness, and trust to any egregious repetition of miracles or to self-interested obeisance. In truth, for classical, Jewish, and Christian thinkers, the persuasion of the divine word implied some real role for human judgment and choice. For without some liberty of choice, there can clearly be no responsible persuasion, only the force of God, necessity, deception, or, in a more modern and scientific outlook, animal-like conditioning. The suasion of the divine word involved an empowerment of humanity that paradoxically was not domination but an increase of liberty. Responsible persuasion is not cultural and political propaganda. Nor is it a form of determinism—verbal, scientific, cultural, or divine. If such forms of determinism are true, persuasion is itself a grand delusion, and the writing of this book is vain. That is a dark vision, but in my view an incorrect one.

The word “persuasion” comes from the Latin verb persuadere, whose etymology suggests effecting change through the taste of some inward sweetness. What is the secret of Peitho’s powerful inward sweetness? As we will see, the secret had something
to do with things available only to an imaginative rationality that expressed itself in a sweet, new, and reasonable sense of things. The full meaning of this statement requires a brief review of how the ancients experienced and spoke of human speech. And they started with a simple fact of experience. The Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero, in the judgment of some the finest orator of his time, once wrote, “I think that men, although lower and weaker than animals in many respects, excel them most by having the power of speech” (De inventione [On Invention] 1.4.5). There is nothing new or extraordinary in this remark, obviously. However, of obvious facts like this one, there are three kinds of knowledge. First, there is knowledge of the fact itself. Then there is knowledge of the reasons for the fact. And finally there is knowledge of its significance. The first sort of knowledge is empirical, based upon ordinary experience, requiring only the use of our eyes and ears. The second sort of knowledge, which grasps the reasons for the fact, is scientific or historical; that is, it is always the result of some sort of reasoning about the remembered data of experience. Another sort of knowledge is imaginative or, in the ancient sense of the word, poetical, which means made-up. A fiction, something that is made up, is untrue to fact, but that does not necessarily imply that it is untrue to actuality, if its making is guided by rational imaginativeness in making symbols responsive to real possibilities. Cicero indicated an empirical fact: human beings speak. Is there more to this empirical fact that would lead us to a better understanding of persuasion, that greatest and most mysterious effect of the distinctively human capacity to speak?

Long before Cicero, indeed before the development of rhetoric as a verbal art of persuasion in Greece, the Greek tragedian Aeschylus had indicated in a myth developed within three plays that, in the power of verbal suasion to overcome tragedy and transform life and thought for the better, there is something poetical and visionary, indeed divine. As I have mentioned previously, Aeschylus gives us the first poetical and symbolic
expression that explicitly turns to responsible verbal psychagogy to resolve tragic conflict.

From Tragedy to Comedy

The Oresteia is the only complete ancient trilogy to survive to modern times. The first play, called Agamemnon, depicts the murder of the Greek warrior-king Agamemnon by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. The second play, Choephoroi, which means “libation bearers,” recounts another murder. Agamemnon’s son Orestes, ordered by the god Apollo, stabs to death both his mother and her lover. Even though the god Apollo has given approval to the matricide, other and older gods, called the Furies, seeing the horror of matricide and, crying out for vengeance on Orestes, torment him continually. The last play of the trilogy is called Eumenides, and it dramatizes a trial on the Areopagus outside of Athens to resolve the conflict of justice between Apollo, who approved what Orestes did, and Orestes’ tormentors, the Furies, who did not approve of it. Athenian citizens constitute the jury. Athena, the divine patroness of the city and daughter of Zeus, acts as judge.

During the trial, the Furies speak on behalf of the ghost of Clytemnestra. They claim that the horrible violation of sacred familial bonds justifies the torments they inflict upon Orestes, murderer of his own mother. However, mindful of Clytemnestra’s violation of the bond between husband and wife, Apollo speaks on the young man’s behalf. The issue of the trial is whether the Furies should liberate Orestes from continual torment. Apollo argues his case, the Furies theirs. Apollo, who claims to be supported in his opinions by the will of his father Zeus, argues in terms of history, the past facts, and of dialectic, the superior worth of the male and father to the female and wife. His most potent point of argument is that the true parent of a child is the male, for he provides the productive seed. The female is only the receiver, its custodian and nurturer (Eumenides 658-661). His point is not so much based on biology—bad biology in truth—as upon the
extraordinary fact that his sister Athena was not nurtured in the womb of a female but in the head of her Father Zeus, from which she was born (Eumenides 662-666). Athena agrees with Apollo and in general commends the masculine in all things, except in marriage: “For mother have I none that gave me birth, and in all things, save wedlock, I am for the male with all my soul, and am entirely on the father’s side. Wherefore I shall not hold of greater account the death of a wife, who slew her lord and the lawful master of the house. Orestes, even with equal ballots, wins” (Eumenides 736-741). But marriage is precisely a part of the issue. And, though Athena votes in favor of Orestes, she clearly recognizes some kind of equality in marriage that cannot be understood in the terms of the issue. Murder of father or mother is evil, and, whatever the decision, only more evil seems likely if the desire for retaliation is not deterred. The actuality of the law of retaliation is that it only invites more retaliation, an evil it presumably would eliminate. But unlike Apollo, she does not affirm the principle that the father is the real parent. She commends the masculine not because Agamemnon is male, a husband and father, but because, as lord of the house, he stands for a principle of rule or government. It is patriarchal rule, yes, but Athena seems concerned to protect it, for it affects the principle of government in the sociopolitical order of Athens itself. She then submits the dispute to the judgment of a mortal jury composed of Athenians. Not surprisingly, these mortals fail to reach a verdict. They are evenly divided on the issue, thereby indicating to us that they see real justice on both sides of the issue. Thus, Athena’s prior vote breaks the deadlock. Orestes, despite his crime, should be liberated from further torment. The torment already inflicted is penalty enough.

But that decision is not the end of the passionate dispute. Feeling that the real justice of their claim continues to be slighted by younger gods, who claim the backing of the powerful god Zeus, the Furies become even more furious. Without much subtlety, Athena says she may use the force of Zeus against them if they do not relent. But her threat is futile. The Furies threaten to send a deadly pestilence upon all of Athens. Thus,
Athens, a city established to be ruled by a deliberative form of justice, which this first trial on the Areopagus represents, may become part of the horrible history of the house of Atreus, Agamemnon’s father. Somehow the conflict has to be resolved and the bondage of a lamentable legacy broken by being newly imagined and newly reasoned. The situation is dire.

Still, Athena does not weary of the attempt to persuade the Furies. She argues that retaliation against Athens is truly futile, and so she tries to get the Furies to imagine retaliation in a new and better context, the context of civil justice through rational deliberation and the promise of Athenian civil life. The Furies resist, but she is undeterred. At one point she says to them:

“I will not weary of telling of my boons to you, that you may never say that you, an ancient goddess, were by me, a younger goddess and by the mortal guardians of my city, dishonoured and strangered, cast from out this land. No! But if you hold sacred the majesty of Suasion [Peitho], the soothing appeasement and spell of my tongue—then you will, perchance, abide. But if you are minded not to abide, then surely it were unjust for you to bring down upon this city any manner of wrath or rage or harm unto its folk. For it lies with you to hold an owner’s portion in this land justly enjoying full meed of honour.” (Eumenides 881-891)

As Athena speaks of the foreseeable greatness of Athens and invites the Furies to become a part of its great promise, the Furies slowly relent, affected by the holy majesty of the goddess Peitho (Suasion), the sweet enchantment of Athena’s own lips. The Furies finally agree to reside in Athens with Athena and her mortal citizens as spirits of benevolence, who will be called Eumenides and who will exercise their old function in a
new way better for all and truer to the world—the way of Athens. Then, after they agree, Athena speaks in praise of Peitho and attributes the victory, we should note, not to herself but to her father Zeus: “I am deeply grateful to the eyes of Peitho because she has watch over my speech and words to these wildly resistant Furies. But Zeus, who guides the assemblies of law, has gained the victory” (Eumenides 970-973: translation mine). The Furies respond to these words with an outpouring of new feeling excited by a new imaginative vision:

“May faction, insatiate of ill, never raise her loud voice within this city—this I pray; and may the dust not drink the black blood of its people and through passion work ruinous slaughtering for vengeance to the destruction of the State. Rather may they return joy for joy in a spirit of common love, and may they hate with one accord; for therein lies the cure of many an evil in the world.” (Eumenides 976-987)

Athena marvels at the transformation her words have brought about in the Furies, and, urging her Athenian citizens to pay them homage in their new duties as Eumenides, she projects before all the imagined vision of a glorious and great new city: “From these appalling visages I foresee great profit in store for these my burghers. If kindly, even as they are kindly, you pay them high worship evermore, you shall surely be pre-eminent, guiding your land and your city in the straight path of righteousness” (Eumenides 989-995).

The play Eumenides will reward careful study, for it dramatizes the full phenomenon of verbal suasion. Though rational argument, which is both dialectical and historical, is part of the argument of Athena, that argument alone is not what transforms the Furies. Athena’s words to the Furies also suggest an imaginative vision of a new civic order of justice in Athens, a new way of life. The Furies are slow to discover it. But once they do, they envision a new and respected role for justice and themselves in it, and they
alter their former ways of thinking and feeling. But the credit for the change of heart goes to the eyes of the goddess, Peitho. So it is in the Greek tragic poet and playwright Aeschylus that we first discover a positive sense of verbal suasion, symbolized in the goddess Peitho, as the way of future possibility for mortals and the gods.

Now we need only emphasize that in it Aeschylus not only expresses the possibility of a new way of life within a city-state, or polis, but also imaginatively extends the possible beneficent scope of such persuasion to matters within the psyche. It reaches back into the personal and private lives of people, into the horrific historical legacy of interfamilial strife within the infamous house of Atreus. Aeschylus, in other words, gives persuasion a psychotherapeutic role. But the play also reaches beyond the house of Atreus and beyond Athens in expressing the hope that Athens will illumine for all mortals the way of responsible persuasion within a framework of civil justice.

**A Symbolism of Verbal Psychagogy**

It is possible to see in this play of Aeschylus a set of symbols expressive of the structure of rhetorical consciousness from which a more conceptual sort of rhetorical thinking can develop. (And there will be more to say about this more conceptual thinking in the rest of the book.) In Aeschylus’ symbolism, the rhetorical mind is imaginatively identified with a court of law—the whole court, let us note—the advocates of prosecution and defense, the judge, and the jury of citizens, not just the advocates of one side or the other. This legal metaphor of suasion and its arts is a central one in the Western rhetorical tradition, for it translates to an order of words the strife endured from the order of experience. The court on the Areopagus attempts to resolve a long history of tragic strife. And we should note that the jury and the judge introduce an element of disinterestedness, essential to any rational consideration, into the potential means of resolving conflict. Without attributing all the details of the analysis made here to Aeschylus and by taking
thought of the later and more globally humanistic tradition of rhetoric that Cicero’s myth of the view from above earth (in *De re publica*, VI) expresses, we may say that the jury of mortals symbolizes ordinary human judgment, but in this case it cannot select the better between the powerful but conflicting claims of the disputants.

Recourse has to be made to another level of awareness: to what is symbolized by those gods and goddesses who are also present in the court of the rhetorical mind. Zeus, who is not physically present, is yet there as if through the representation of his children, Apollo and Athena. Zeus, who is called here the god “who guides the assemblies of law,” symbolizes one major object of rhetorical awareness and thinking: powerful authority. His son Apollo symbolizes rational argument, a second object of rhetorical attention, and a source of authority in itself in determining the real justice of the matter in dispute. The Furies symbolize the force of tradition and custom, the inveterate resistance to change that is often based on real-world experience, a certain practical wisdom, and strong feeling, but which sadly and all too often gives rise to fixed ways of tribalized thinking. Athena is the sister of Apollo and the daughter of Zeus. She symbolizes rhetorical attention to the personal, emotional, and imaginative context that surrounds all opinions, whether true or not. According to Greek religious story, she was not born of woman but sprang into existence from the brow of her father, thus suggesting that she is not subject to the dangerous passions of the female Furies, although she is herself female. She is a singular figure, if not an oddity, and so is the rhetorical attention she symbolizes something singular, an oddity among the modes of human consciousness. Her attentiveness is directed not only to the lordly authority and power of her father and to the rational argument of her brother, but also to the Furies who passionately resist her judgment. The very personification of what makes rhetorical consciousness distinctive, she is an unusual combination of masculinity and femininity, the hard and the soft, the resistant and the pliable, the abstract and the concrete—indeed, the list of opposites may be easily extended.
The combination of such qualities in one person is extraordinary, since in a marriage of mortal men and women they often conflict.

But besides her unusual androgynous nature, which distinguishes Athena from Zeus, Apollo, and the Furies, we should emphasize something else that sets her apart: her words and her imaginative vision, called in the play the “gracious gifts of the goddess Peitho.” These gifts enable her to project before the Furies the hope of a new and beauteous, hence attractive, way of life and thinking. Thus, Athena’s words have great psychagogic power. But the real psychagogic power of Athena’s words lies less in the arguments expressed or their manner of expression than in the outlook they communicate. It is what Peitho envisions that changes the Furies; this is the decisive psychagogic factor. What philosophy will later contribute to rhetorical thinking is not so much a set of teachings but an outlook of transformation, a new vision of the world that involves new thinking, new believing, and new behaving. As the wildly resistant Furies begin to listen and catch sight of the vision Peitho offers through Athena, they begin to feel its attractiveness, then to re-imagine and rethink their role within a new civic order. By her words, Athena opens to the Furies the prospect of a new way of life in the world.

The word “communicate” derives from the Latin verb *communicare*, which means “to make common.” Actual communication, rare as it is, is nevertheless always persuasive. It forms community. Rhetorical consciousness, then, symbolized by the court assembly, is structured by attentiveness to several things interacting: to the history of conflict, to the need for disinterestedness in judgment, to the just in the claims of both parties in dispute, to powerful authority, to rational argument, to long experience and custom, and, above all, to a new outlook, an imaginative vision of possibility. The *Oresteia* moves from tragedy to a possible comedy. The movement dramatized within it, its poetic action, is a representation of verbal psychagogy, a rhetorical event, even if not so termed by the poet. And whatever we may think of the rational clumsiness or shortcomings of the
representation, verbal psychagogy is the basis of the comedic movement toward which the trilogy in fact moves.

The poet of the Oresteia did not think of verbal suasion (or psychagogy) as a mere extension of the verbal skills of literacy. Responsible suasion, which is not to be equated with effectiveness, is the consequence of words informed by knowledge founded in tragedy but energized anew by a free rational, historical, and poetic vision (Peitho) of the possibilities in the actual world for the benefit of the human psyche. Persuasion, we may say, requires creative imagination and personal attentiveness (Athena), powerful authority (Zeus), the rationality of argument and the facts of history (Apollo), and a sense of moral injustice and outrage when the customary order of deep natural affections is violated (the Furies). However, to separate any one of these gods of rhetorical attention from the others is dangerous.

The dangers are not difficult to recognize. Powerful authority alone (Zeus) tends to become harsh and impersonal and inclined to tyrannical force. Rational argument alone (Apollo) easily becomes belligerent or cynical rationalism if it avoids the greatest danger: transformation into willful partisan ideology. Such thinking disparages whatever is actually reasonable in customs and traditions, for it resists the need to be disciplined or tempered in any way by long historical, often tragic experience of the real that has settled into customary ways of thinking and acting. The natural affections alone (the Furies) tend to harden customs and traditions and locate personal identity in them; and when that identity is challenged or seemingly violated, the affections become mad, resistant to reason, and retaliatory. Imaginative sympathy and attentiveness to others (Athena), when they operate alone, lead too often to ineffectual softness or to a cunning desire to please by words that, lacking the orientation of disinterested judgment and reason and so pandering to the natural affections, become imaginative sophistry, cosmetic deception, masking all too often self-interested exploitation and fraud. These are the dangers, and recognizing
them is half the battle of overcoming them in the real rhetorical care of words and things and persons. But there is an even greater danger than any of these.
CHAPTER 3
Gorgias (c.485-c.380 BCE):

Kosmos and Eros

The standard contemporary histories of ancient rhetoric do not set the story of rhetoric in the context of human tragedy, actual or poetical, as the former considerations of Homer and Aeschylus suggest they should. Instead, they point only to the immediate historical occasion that gave public speaking a new importance in the ancient Greek world: the development of ancient democracy in the early fifth century BCE. The need to speak in law courts and public assemblies whose decisions were made by consent of citizen juries or legislators clearly puts a premium on the ability to use words. The first attempts to turn persuasion into a verbal technique (rhetoric) to assist litigants in practical disputes were probably made in Sicily by Corax and Tisias, who flourished in the late fifth century BCE. Their idea caught on. A class of itinerant teachers of rhetoric and politics called sophists continued their legacy by accenting the power of words to alter and establish in new conventions (Greek nomoi) what seemed by nature (Greek physis) inalterable, thus making rhetorical skill necessary for those who would be successful in the public forums. The most famous of the sophists were Protagoras of Abdera and Gorgias of Leontini. But their relativistic representations of the real to enhance the power of the art of words seemed to some gravely dangerous.

For the earliest effort to develop what I am calling a responsible or philosophic rhetorical thinking, we must turn to Plato, the famous Athenian who wrote dialogues about Socrates, his wily teacher, and, as Plato represents him, an inveterate opponent of
the sophists. Plato treated rhetoric as a psychologist and political reformer interested in scientific knowledge, unlike the politicians and sophists of his time who, enchanted by the power of speech, were interested only in effectiveness. Let us try to examine what danger there was in the sophistic movement. Here I am not going to attempt any survey of the writing and thinking of the sophists, the best of whom is probably Isocrates, a pupil of Gorgias. About Isocrates, more will be said when we come to Aristotle. In our shortened version of ancient rhetorical thinking, we will concentrate on Gorgias.

**Gorgias: A Myth of Enlightenment**

For the history of classical rhetorical thinking, Gorgias is, in my judgment, the most important of the sophists. We know only a little about his writings. There are two doxographic accounts of a lost treatise called *On Not-Being or Nature* and two extant orations, *Defense of Palamades* and *Encomium of Helen*. The mythological subjects of these orations suggest that they may have been intended to be models or illustrations of Gorgias’s rhetoric. The treatise *On Not-Being*, however, seems unambiguously serious. Unhappily, it has survived only in the accounts of two doxographers who summarize its argument. Gorgias argued that nothing exists (or has being); and even if anything did, it would be unknowable; and if anything were knowable, it would be inexpressible to another. Gorgias seems to allow that sensible things of nature exist. They simply do not have the being that would make them knowable and speakable. Nor do human thought and speech have such being. It is difficult to know exactly the historical circumstances that might clarify Gorgias’s intent and the meaning of his argument.

But one may reasonably conjecture that he was attempting to oppose the famous Parmenides of Elea, often regarded as the founder of metaphysics or ontology. However, in this study, he may also be regarded as the founder of a myth of enlightenment that rhetorical thinking had to assimilate in order to become fully
responsible to the harsh actualities of the world and the possibilities of delusion through language. In a poem representing a revelation to him by a goddess, he learned that the source of delusion and strife in the world of mortals was the neglect of the pervasive, common being of all things, the only foundation of truth, in their thinking and speaking. The poem expresses a myth of enlightenment by representing an ascent of poet in leaving the realm of night and being drawn up to the realms of light and, once there, instructed by a goddess, learning both the way of truth and the opposite way of delusion in the world of appearances in which mortals live. On this matter a little context is required.

In the genealogical myth of the *Theogony*, Hesiod says that Night is the mother (with no father) of *Eris* (strife) and *Apate* (delusion or deception). From them come a host of other baneful deities that afflict the world:

Baneful Night bore Nemesis, too, a woe for mortals,
and after her Deception and the Passion of lovers
and destructive Old Age and capricious Strife.
Then Strife bore Ponos, the ringer of pains,
Oblivion and Famine and the tearful Sorrows,
The clashes and the Battles and the Manslaughters,
the quarrels and the lies and Argument and Counter-Argument,
Lawlessness and Ruin whose ways are all alike
and Oath, who, more than any other, brings pains on mortals
who of their own accord swear false oaths. (*Theogony* 223-232)

I should mention that in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod indicates that there are two kinds of Strife, one bad and one good, the latter being the sort of competitive strife that encourages men to work the land. But this meaning of Strife is not the one we are concerned with.
For Parmenides, being raised to the realms of light by a goddess—his version of enlightenment—provides a way of thinking that permits escape from or, at least, provides amelioration of ills caused by the offspring of Hesiod’s baneful Night. In Parmenides’ poem, persuasion is linked to truth: his phrase is “persuasive truth”—it is the truth that is persuasive—or to what he also calls “true belief” (pistis). Delusion (or deceit) is linked to the world of appearances (doxai). These lead the opinions and talk of mortals astray. Mortals in their turn build up in speech a delusory world. What concerns us here is not the argument of Parmenides about being but the poetic myth of enlightenment through a divine revelation of the source of delusion: the verbally constructed world of human language that, looking only to doxai, does not take into account the being of things.

At one point in the poem there appears a significant transitional verse: “Here I end my trustworthy account and thought concerning truth. From now on learn / the beliefs of mortals, listening to the deceptive order [kosmon . . . apatalon] of my words” (Frag.VIII, l.52). Kosmos is the term that makes this statement significant, for it is central in the rhetorical thinking of both Gorgias and Plato, as we will see. (From this point on, the Greek word transliterated as kosmos will be used to refer to the construct of words in discourse, and the usual English word “cosmos” to the actual order among existing things.)

By taking the opposite stance from Parmenides and disconnecting completely the being of things from knowing and speaking, Gorgias could well be providing a rationale for ceding to rhetoric the power of constructing the world and determining how people think and act. Thus, Gorgias is a figure historically important not only for classical rhetorical thinking, but also for medieval rhetorical theorists, who, unlike Gorgias, acknowledge in their thinking the priority of being to speaking and knowing, in great part owing to Scriptural accounts of a God whose very name was He Who Is (at
least in one reading) and whose verbal acts of creation necessitated theological reflection on being. In fact, Gorgias is an important precursor of any contemporary account of rhetoric or rhetorical thinking that— influenced by the anti-metaphysical views of Kant, Nietzsche, Marx, and the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, to name only the most famous of them— elevates the seductive power of words either by negating or neglecting what stable grounds of thought, action, and speech can be found in metaphysical reflection on the being of things.

*Kosmos in the Encomium of Helen*

The *Encomium* may be mythological and playful in subject matter. It suggests clearly enough, however, that the sort of rhetorical thinking Gorgias promoted within it was maintained seriously and was consistent with his anti-metaphysical views. It begins with a statement that may be called the prime principle of his rhetorical thought. The key to its meaning is the first word of the very first sentence, *kosmos* in Greek. The rub is that the word is very difficult to translate. Almost every translator I have consulted proposes a different meaning. I take *kosmos* to mean a fitting ornament or cosmetic that elicits praise for something because it has been made attractive through a conscious organization of its matter or parts. “*Kosmos* for a city is outstanding manliness, for body is *kallos* [beauty], for psyche *sophia* [wisdom], for a deed is *arete* [excellence], for logos [speech or discourse] is *aletheia* [truth]. The opposite of these is *akosmia* [lack of ornament or of a fitting and attractive ordering of its matter or parts; hence, blameworthy]” (*Encomium* 1: translations are mine). Gorgias adds that it is necessary to praise the praiseworthy and blame the blameworthy, and that in the case of Helen, the poets have created an erroneous belief about her in those who have listened to them. Thus, Gorgian rhetorical thinking starts from prior cultural opinion that was created by the makers of a public medium, here poetry. And, I suspect, one of the poets whom Gorgias has in mind is the Aeschylus of the
Oresteia.

The intent of Gorgias, he says, is, “by reasoning in speech” (2), to expose as liars the poets who made Helen infamous and “to show what is true” (2) and end ignorance. What Gorgias does not mention here, however, is a feature of his discourse apparent to everyone who once read or recited this speech or can read it now: his discourse not only contains a little reasoning, but also exhibits a style so full of rhyming words and parallel and antithetical phrasings that it is as noticeably artful as the metrical verses of the lying poets would be. In other words, the discourse of Gorgias is as poetical as it can be without being poetry, the difference being that “reasoning in speech” that he is adding to his own discourse. How, then, does he carry out this intention to show what is true about Helen—the truth about her that is, as he put it, a kosmos for logos? And what exactly does a kosmos for logos mean?

By the truth about Helen Gorgias seems to mean that things are as they are represented in the verbal kosmos, which includes here, apparently unlike poetry, some reasoning in speech. Falsity is, by implication, the opposite. So what is the reasoning of Gorgias? He says that Helen left her husband and went off with Paris, the Trojan prince, for four possible reasons: wishes of a god and necessity, force (seizure or rape), persuasion by words, or eros (sexual desire). The first two reasons are clearly exculpatory. The last two, verbal persuasion and sexual desire, are not, and Gorgias obviously knows that. Most of the short speech is given over to his discussion of the final two reasons. His argument comes down to this: both logos (speech) and eros (sexual desire) are too powerful for people to resist (presumably excluding Gorgias who is aware of the causes for their power). Clearly his intent is to show that logos and eros are as irresistible as are the gods or necessity or rape.

Gorgias claims that Helen must be excused if logos did the “persuading and deceiving” (9) of the psyche. We should note that he is apparently thinking of peitho
(persuasion) as a way of *apate* (deceit or delusion). The reason is, in the most famous sentence of the *Encomium*, that “Speech [logos] is a great overlord . . . accomplishing divine works” (8). And to prove how masterful an overlord, Gorgias cites several instances of its power. The first instance is poetic speech. He claims that “poetry is only a logos having meter” (9). He speaks next of the fear, pity, and longing poetry arouses in its hearers, adding that, through speeches (probably in poetic drama or rhapsodic recitations), the suffering of fictional characters of poetry becomes a suffering in one’s own psyche, apparently by a sort of imaginative identification. Here both the metrical organization of poetry and the emotional effects of its verbal imaginative representations of people are being emphasized as parts of the powerful verbal *kosmos*. He then passes on to another form of speech, incantation or charms. They enchant and persuade the beliefs in the hearer’s psyche like sorcery and magic (10). So, in these instances, *logos* is again shown to be powerful by a patterning of its sound, as in incantation and charms.

Then, another point is made to prove the masterful power of *logos*. Because so many people cannot remember the past, do not perceive the present, and cannot foreknow the future, they can be persuaded by “false speech” (11). Deceptive “belief” [*doxa*] becomes “the counselor for psyche” (1). Even non-poetical speeches like those of astronomers and lawyers form the psyche in any way desired by a speaker. Beliefs are changed, and the obscure made clear by the “quick wit” of these speakers. Again, in speech contests, one speech will please the crowd because it “written with skill, not spoken with truth” (13). Philosophic speeches show also that quick wit can easily change opinions of belief. Thus, “the power of speech has the same relation to the ordering of psyche as the composition of drugs to the ordering of bodies.” Some will give life, others cause death. So too some will cause fear, others confidence. Some persuasions will “drug and bewitch the mind with evil” (14). In the light of these instances of the power of *logos*, the pertinent conclusions are stated. Persuasion does not appear to be compulsion. But it nevertheless has “the same
power” (12) as compulsion has. So the persuader is the guilty one (Paris), not the persuaded (Helen).

Eros in the Encomium

The same point is made about the power of eros, only now Gorgias emphasizes the power of things seen, not heard as in speech. He observes that things do not have the nature we wish them to have but the nature they actually have (15). But what does Gorgias mean by this statement? As we will see, it does not mean what philosophers like Plato or Aristotle meant by the nature things actually have. To clarify his meaning, Gorgias says that things seen form the beliefs of the psyche according to the nature of the things seen. For example, one sees the “array” (16; kosmos, only the second use of the word in the speech) of an enemy army in war gear, and the fear it evokes compels the psyche more than training, honor, or the law. Some people, Gorgias remarks, have even been driven mad by images. Painters, for instance, make something unified of many colors and give pleasure or distress to the psyches of others. Thus, if Helen’s eye caused sexual desire in her psyche (Paris was famously handsome in appearance), that happenstance, says Gorgias, should not surprise anyone (18). And if love is a god, why blame Helen? If love is not a god but is rather some human illness, she should again not be blamed. Then, with a short summary of his argument, Gorgias concludes his speech, adding that he personally considers his discourse a playful exercise.

Playful it may be in its mythological subject matter. But it does not seem playful in meaning. We may well wonder whether Menelaos, who was Helen’s husband when she left him for Paris and became Helen of Troy, would have accepted any of Gorgias’s arguments had the Encomium been sent to him. Would any husband, ancient or modern, accept them? (Perhaps genes would be a good contemporary excuse.) Gorgias probably anticipated that not many husbands would, but the internal kosmos of his discourse,
including its reasoning, is working hard to overcome any resistance to its paradoxical assertions. And if we believe Gorgias’ representations of the power of logos, it will in fact overcome any resistance. Why? Gorgias indicates that logos is often powerful because of some deficiency in the hearers to judge otherwise. However, whether the hearers are deficient in some respect or not, the kosmos of logos has a power, according to Gorgias’s argument, to determine the hearer’s psyche accordingly.

If the Encomium is not serious, then we need not be discussing it here at all. If, however, it is indeed serious and it is set within the context of the treatise On Not-Being or Nature, it acquires import and interest for the history of rhetorical thinking precisely in stressing the kosmos-based power of logos and eros. Truth, accordingly, is a kosmos for logos. Yes, indeed. But there is nothing, we should observe, beyond or outside the discourse by which to test the truth of its reasoning. There is only another discourse with another powerful internal kosmos that will compel the psyches of its hearers, as if it were another powerful sexual urge inflamed by another kosmos of appearance. In this case, one can plausibly claim that those mastered by the power of logos and eros are not blameworthy at all. Gone is responsible human agency. Why? The reason is that there is no way to resist the deceptive and seductive power of speeches and images artfully designed by having recourse to the actuality of things, including consideration of their being.

We seem close to a world that has been envisioned by contemporary poststructuralists, who admittedly are more sophisticated than Gorgias but for whom Gorgias looks like a prototype. But saying this is not to suggest that rhetorical thinking like Gorgias’s, including the thinking of contemporary poststructuralists, does not in fact show how powerfully seductive speech and imagery can be for many, if not for most people, though presumably excluding those like Gorgias who have both the knowledge of the causes of their power and the art to give a kosmos to logos. Although denying the validity of ontology and human free agency, the ancient sophist, like the modern poststructuralist,
highlights the many ways—linguistic, political, ideological, cultural, and religious—that deeply influence and habituate the human exercise of choice and judgment about things.

But this benefit does not depend at all on the dissociation of words from world, language from being. Human language is full of purpose and a drive not only to meaning (individual applicability), but also to the truth of what is meant, however difficult establishing the truth of some matter may be. I take this fact to be self-evident. For is not the truth (or what is thought to be the truth) of discourse the prime thing that makes any discourse psychagogic for anyone? Equally self-evident is the sense that verbal suasion apart from truthfulness of being is irresponsible. The reinforcement of this intuition is the fundamental and abiding legacy of Plato and Aristotle, the greatest of the Greeks sages, to rhetorical thinking.

We move now from Gorgias, in whose rhetorical thinking, the metaphysics (or ontology) of things, including the human psyche, plays no role, to Plato and Aristotle, in whose rhetorical thinking there is a strong and positive role for metaphysics because the truth of things, which is founded in their modes of being, must not be divorced from persuasion. Granted, they differ in their metaphysics. Still, for both of them things have natures, the human psyche included, that the human mind can know. And to the truths of things the kosmos of words and their meanings are responsible, even beyond general acceptance or the consensus of the majority. Truth and the truly good—not power nor acceptability nor majority opinion nor the power of a kosmos of words taken in themselves—are by the greatest of the ancient Greek thinkers, ranged against deception (apatē) and strife (eris).
Chapter 4

Plato (c.429-347 BCE):
A Winged and Daimonic Rhetoric

Plato’s version of rhetorical thinking, like Gorgias’, is centered on the notions of psyche, kosmos, and eros in verbal psychagogy. But these notions are understood in a new way—as involved in a divinely inspired (daimonic) form of verbal discourse in which philosophy is in fact none other than rhetoric, the verbal psychagogy constituting the true therapy of psyche or soul. In fact, the two dialogues of Plato that are about rhetoric, Gorgias and Phaedrus, are extended considerations of the notions of kosmos and eros that appear in the Encomium of Helen. But before explaining the notions, as I believe Plato reconsidered them, I must emphasize several things that should be kept in mind by the reader.

This will be the longest chapter of this book, for several reasons. First is the difficulty of representing Plato accurately, particularly in resisting any rash impulse to identify him with the Platonists that have followed him in this or that respect over the course of many centuries or with the general modern code word “Platonism,” which stands for a metaphysical dualism of matter and spirit, which, as I see it, is not at all true of Plato. I have done my best in this respect. But there is another problem. The body of contemporary scholarship about Plato is enormous, and much of it I cannot claim to have read, let alone mastered. But I have read Plato’s dialogues, and I must be content with that. Then there is the matter of approach or orientation in studying the dialogues, another difficulty. Where to begin? My approach will be to view Plato’s writings on rhetoric from
the perspective of what are conventionally regarded as his latest dialogues, not the early or middle dialogues, of which The Republic is one. It is usually taken to be the touchstone of Plato’s thought, and for most purposes that is perfectly adequate. But it is not adequate for the purpose of highlighting what I claim to be the rhetorical nature of Plato’s philosophy and writings. But more on that shortly.

Thus it is not the Republic but the Timaeus and Laws that are the better context for reading Phaedrus and Gorgias, the two dialogues explicitly about rhetoric. And it is from these two of Plato’s last writings that the earlier dialogues are regarded, particularly those concerned with the question of the treatability of virtue. This issue, which bears on the questions of whether and how men can be made better by speech, is a fundamental one in Plato’s rhetorical thinking. But this issue leads to others: the nature of psyche and its relation to the body in the cosmos and among provident and benevolent beings called gods and daimons (and here Timaeus is my rule of interpretation). We should also mention the issue of the uses of psychagogic speech among individuals and then finally the imagining of its persuasive role within legislation that makes a paradigmatic city. Here the rule of interpretation is the Laws).

The Tragedy of Athens

Another matter of importance is that Plato’s rhetorical thinking is developed in the context of an historical tragedy he never forgot, the condemnation by an Athenian court of one of the most eccentric citizens of ancient Athens, Socrates. In his Apology of Socrates Plato raises to our awareness that in this particular tragedy, involving a failure of Athens to heed Socratic verbal psychagogy or rhetoric, there is a matter of very great importance for rhetorical thinking. It is the strife between inquiry into the truth of world, self, and polis and a politically established form of culture. The furies of resistance will be strong.
When Socrates was seventy years old (in 399 BCE) and already a controversial figure in Athens because of his investigative conversations with young aristocrats, he was charged by several of his enemies with atheism (disbelief in the gods of the city) and with the corruption of the young by making the worse seem to them the better thing. A slight majority of Athenian jurors, composed of 501 men, agreed, sentencing him to death. In that jury, apparently, was Plato. (See Apology 28.38B; the section number precedes the usual Stephanus numbers here and elsewhere.) It was Plato who later acted as both reporter and, very likely, redactor of the original speech, if he did not make it up entirely. Unlike the English word, “apology” means a speech of self-defense. In the trial of Socrates, the speech was delivered before the verdict (1.17A-24.35D). But it also included some other remarks of Socrates after the verdict of guilty was given (25.36A-33.42A). In these subsequent remarks Socrates made his own estimate of the proper penalty for being found guilty (he thought he deserved only a fine: see 28.38B). Then, addressing in particular those who voted in his favor, he discussed his views of death and a possible afterlife (32.40C-33.41D). At no time during his apology does Socrates plead for his life, admit wrongdoing, or express fears of being condemned to death. He vigorously, almost defiantly, defends his way of life in making inquiries. It seems no matter to him that his inquiries often destabilize or overturn common opinions. Although he claims that the Delphic oracle called him the wisest of men, Socrates insists that the wisdom attributed to him is in fact only his apparently singular awareness, which he says comes from a warning inner spirit or voice (see19.31D), that neither he nor anyone else is wise, especially about matters of good and evil (see 5.20C-9.23C). His chief point of argument is that by arousing a sense of this lack of wisdom in any and all pretenders to wisdom, as if he were a gadfly of the city (18.30E-31A), he benefits both himself and Athens. The care of the psyche is his aim; service to the gods and to the city, not money or power, is his motive. And should the city demand his life
for not ceasing his mission of inquiry, he will give his life without fear. For death, he argues, is either the cessation of all troubles or, as he thinks possible, a passage to another life in which he may continue the same inquiry with the famous men of the past (see 32.40C-32.41C).

Any culture may resist being put to the test by philosophy, understood as inquiry about the truthfulness of accepted beliefs. Philosophy in this sense has a transcultural and transpolitical dynamic. At best it makes possible an escape from the cultural cave, for it seeks disinterested contemplation of the realities of life. At least, it is a defense against presumption or power that suppresses or undermines all threatening inquiry into questions of what is truly right and wrong, beneficial or harmful. If philosophy cannot escape culture, philosophy ineluctably becomes just another form of cultural or political will to self-preservation or to domination of others. Philosophy then becomes a servant of politics and economics or an ideology, in the pejorative sense of blind and willful adherence to specific doctrines. Gone in the general cultural dough is any leaven to transform it from within, to modify it for the better, or to change it altogether.

This fact does not imply, as it did for the eighteenth-century political rationalists, that one must ignore culture to construct the enlightened city of men according to the dictates of a kind of reasoning that imitates the empirical sciences of the physical world and, as a result, suppresses other forms of reason and enervates the imagination and the culturally formed loves for one’s own things. That enlightenment project for the most part collapsed in the twentieth century, unable to withstand the nineteenth-century Romantic reaction against it that exalted the alterity and predominance of cultures or, in a second form, of individual genius over the demands of scientific empirical reason. Even after two destructive world wars, the contest between forms of enlightenment rationalism and cultural romanticism has persisted. But, as a matter of rhetorical
thinking that would be philosophic in the ancient senses, neither must be resistant to purgation by critique. And the purgation must come in the form of philosophic rhetorical thinking that expresses a fuller rationality and imagination than the enlightenment, enchanted by empirical science, or romanticism, enchanted by imagination and culture, permitted. We should add that it must come in the form of a fuller rationality and imagination than apparently the historical Socrates permitted, given his enchantment by a dialectical questioning that, understandably dismissive of the sophistic rhetoric of his time, deconstructed much of Athenian cultural values and mores.

The *Apology* of Socrates came from the pen of Plato, not the historical Socrates, who left no writings by which to teach others. He was a talker, not a writer. Plato himself tried to teach by talking. He taught students in his school, the Academy, and, as we have mentioned, he tried to teach a true politics to tyrants like Dionysius of Syracuse. But, like Aristotle, who tried to teach Alexander of Macedon how to govern well, Plato failed as a counselor of men whose psyches were inclined to tyranny. In their own circumstances in different times, the Roman philosophic rhetoricians Cicero and Seneca also failed to alter the psyches of the tyrannous men like Caesar and Nero. Here are sobering facts for meditation about ancient rhetorical thinking.

Nevertheless, unlike Socrates, Plato also taught by writing. His written dialogues turned Socrates into a tragic hero of the rational quest for a culturally purgative wisdom that many Athenians and tyrannically inclined individuals rejected. The dialogues also contained a vision of philosophy that went far beyond Socrates’’. One can take heart that the example of Plato’s Socrates has endured as an ideal figure in the minds and imaginations of others, though not without undergoing modifications. All the ancient philosophers, whatever school of thought they adhered to, attempted to follow Socrates and to imagine the perfectly wise man—a perfected Socrates, so to speak, the ideal one
who would embody the fullness of their teachings and thus personify their concept of
philosophy. This is the testimony of Boethius, a Roman and Christian thinker, in his
*Consolation of Philosophy*, composed in Latin in the sixth century CE. Of this ideal wise
man and the concept of philosophy-rhetoric he embodies, we will hear more in the
chapter on Cicero.

**Socratic Rhetorical Legacy**

What makes Socrates important for Plato’s rhetorical thinking? It is simply the
typical discourse and way of life of Socrates. Of the three best places in the dialogues to
see how Plato describes the Socratic way of life and discourse, one, the *Apology*, we have
mentioned already. There is another, a late dialogue called *Theaetetus*. In a long
digression from an argument about what knowledge is, Socrates is said to have
contrasted the way of life of the clever and successful man of the city to the life of the
philosopher—that is, to his way of life and speaking. That philosophic way of life
includes pursuing scientific interests in mathematics and astronomy. Such interests are,
clearly, what Plato added here in the *Theaetetus* to his picture of Socrates in the *Apology*,
which, as we have learned, also involved a discourse consisting of questioning others as
if a gadfly. That same discourse, the Socratic philosophical rhetoric, is described in
another famous digressive passage of the *Theaetetus*. Socrates there says he practices an
art of midwifery, not on the bodies of pregnant women, but on the psyches of men
pregnant with an unfulfilled desire to know. As in the *Apology*, this maieutic art falls
under the supervision of a *daimon*. The aim of such maieutic and daimonic rhetoric is to
enable one to see the difference between deceptive images and real things. The art,
broadly considered, contrasts two models or paradigms of human living, one of god
and the godly and the other of no god and the godless. It is the rhetorical task of
Socrates-Plato to introduce by words more of the godly into the life of men.
But what originally led Socrates to the practice of a maieutic rhetoric? How did that happen? Plato’s answer comes when he has his Socrates make a famous “autobiographical” digression in the dialogue *Phaedo*, the third source for understanding the Socratic rhetorical legacy. Here Socrates describes an experience of intellectual frustration in understanding the causes of things of the world, why they come into being and why they perish, or why things happen as they do. Socrates had trouble understanding the usual way of explaining the causes of things by employing number and quantity. He could not understand number and quantity themselves. But then he heard someone reading a book of Anaxagoras. The famous philosopher claimed that mind arranges and causes all things. And mind always looks to the good or best for the things it brings about. But then Anaxagoras did not make use of mind as cause but spoke of air and water and other material things as causes. It seemed to Socrates a great mistake to talk this way, to say, for example, that he does whatever he does because of his bones and joints but not the decision of his mind. In other words, the mistake is not to distinguish a real cause (the mind that looks the good or best) from the things that are the necessary material conditions of mind as cause. Mind implies responsibility; matter implies only randomness or necessity.

He then took up a new way of inquiry, “a second voyage” in search of cause, one concentrated not directly on the causes of things as they are, but upon their representation in the speech of those who supposedly know the things they are talking about. In other words, his frustrating inquiries into nature led Socrates to turn toward conversation (*dialexis*) about the rationally discernible good or best in human affairs individually and politically. It is a turn that highlights the role of mind, as the great philosopher Anaxagoras had emphasized, during interrogative conversation. What is good or “best” (*to beltiston*) in human behavior is the leading question. And what is best is none other than human excellence or *arete*. *Arete*, usually translated “virtue,” is what
makes men better. And if one is to make men better, then one must teach *arete* as one can.

The Socratic turn to conversation (*dialexis*), as I call it here, is the first rhetorical step toward what will lead to the full form of Plato’s rhetorical thinking and expression: his own dialogues. They incorporate the Socratic questioning but turn it toward both a science of the Existents and the suasion of psyche, not only by interrogation but also by continuous discourse, though still within the dialogue form, in increased measures. The newly accented rhetorical fashion of continuous rhetorical discourse is most fully exemplified, as I will explain later, in the late dialogues called *Timaeus* and the *Laws*. But let us return to Plato’s reception of the Socratic rhetorical legacy.

Essential to Platonic rhetorical thinking are certain tenets developed by Plato’s Socrates (and probably in some measure by the historical Socrates) in the dialogues *Protagoras* (named after the sophist who declared he could teach men virtue) and *Meno* (named after a disciple of Gorgias, the great sophist, whose speech made men enamored of wisdom). And what are these tenets? The key ones are that all virtue is knowledge of the good (wisdom or *phronesis*) and that as knowledge (*episteme*) virtue is teachable, if rare. Such real knowledge is based on one’s recognition of causes, the reasons why. It is not mere opinion, which, although it may be true, is not a stable possession because one cannot produce the reasons why for oneself or for another. The fact that one has true opinion, that there have been wise men in the past but unable to teach that wisdom, is accounted for by the inspiration of the gods. These wise men have done much good, but not one of them has been able to pass it on to others, not even to his sons. This point is important in Platonic rhetorical thinking.

But is true knowledge possible? Plato’s answer is a yes qualified in several ways. The first is that one learns true knowledge either by inspiration or by inquiry revealing causes. The latter way is difficult, the way to intuition of the Existents or Ideas. Another
qualification is the speech of one who knows or knows vaguely—in other words, a teacher only guides another, through questioning, to a recollection of the basis of knowledge already within his memory. (This is the meaning of verbal psychagogy.) When the other sees the reasons why it is what it is, then only does he know it. The questioning may lead the other to the experience of being numbed by difficulty, as if stung by a flat torpedo fish. More important still is the mysterious fact that one, so to speak, already carries the basis of real knowledge within himself in the state of unknowing that Plato calls true opinion. An implication is that no one really teaches another by words; one can only move another toward the recognition of something already vaguely cognized. This implication leads to an issue about the psyche, it nature, and its relation to the gods and other divine beings in the cosmos who inspire true opinion in some men and grant the light of true knowledge. (See Letter 7). The digressions of the *Theaetetus* are on the horizon. But we are here getting a little ahead of ourselves. Let so much suffice as a summary of the legacy of Socrates to the rhetorical thinking and practice of Plato.

**Philosophy as Rhetorical Thinking**

For now, before going any further with issues about psyche and the gods in rhetorical thinking, let us attend to a more fundamental issue: What relation does Plato’s rhetorical thinking have to the ratiocination in the written dialogues? The answer is crucial. The one proposed here, I expect, will surprise most readers: rhetoric and philosophy are in fact two aspects of the same thing, the two sides of the same coin, so to speak. How is that to be explained? We have to take a somewhat circuitous route to provide a sufficient sense of Plato’s answer to our question.

As any reputable history of ancient “philosophy” will indicate, aside from the example and teachings of Socrates, Plato’s thinking follows in the wake of teachings
first developed by Parmenides of Elea, by Heraclitus of Ephesus, and by Pythagoras and related Orphic traditions. Like Parmenides, Plato seeks to relate the truth of speech to the stable being of things. Like Pythagoras and the Orphic tradition, Plato sees a geometry of mathematical proportion known by the mind as the key to the physical world. The key to mankind involves mind. It is what Plato calls psyche. In man it is an entity capable of surviving the death of the body but subject to periodic transmigrations into other living beings, or so say the wise of old. Like Heraclitus, Plato regards the cosmos, the sensible world of material things, as constantly in flux, thus constantly changing. For this reason, it is incapable of being the foundation of truth. Plato’s response to this fact is not at all Heracleitian: if knowledge and discourse are to escape constant flux—and the delusion, deceit, and strife that accompany it—there must be the stable and unchanging being of what he will call “the Existents” (Greek: *ta onta*) or, often, the Ideas or Forms. These Ideas are knowable only by the mind of psyche. But Plato’s Ideas are not, as in English, products of the mind. They are impersonal entities that exist both outside the mind and the visible cosmos. The human psyche, which has rationality and mind, can in this life vaguely recognize them by a process called recollection because, as Plato surmises, they have been already seen by psyche during its pre-embodied life. (See *Meno* and *Phaedrus*.)

The Ideas or the Existents are the basis for the common features among both conceivable and sensible things because, as it is suggested (see *Parmenides*), both kinds of things somehow, like images, participate in or represent the ideas, though very imperfectly. Such participation enables sensible things to give access to the Ideas they participate in through the questioning and answering of oral inquiry, a process called dialectics or in other contexts recollection. By this means sensible things are divided into classes based on the similarity among them (later called genera) and within the classes are again divided into subclasses (species) according to their remaining
differences. As we will see, dialectics—a kind of dividing of things from other things until the “whatness” of something is clearly marked off, thus indicating its Existent or Form or Idea—is an essential part of Plato’s rhetorical thinking. But so is mythmaking.

A sober mythmaking, somewhat like poetry but free of its irrationality, becomes necessary when ratiocinating about some conceivable and non-sensible things whose qualities and existence, which are beyond definition, defy adequate human comprehension. One of these things, perhaps the most important of them, is psyche. For example, in a famous passage in the Phaedrus, psyche is defined as “that which moves itself” (and hence is alive and since self-moving is also immortal); to say more than this, which touches on the Idea or Form of psyche, would require a long and suprahuman discourse. So there is need for the use of likenesses, myth being but a narrative amplification of such likenesses, that lie within general human capacity:

about its form [the Idea of psyche] we must speak in the following manner. To tell what [sort of thing] it really is would be a matter for utterly superhuman [literally: divine] and long discourse, but it is within human power to describe it briefly in a figure [literally: what it is similar to]; let us therefore speak in that way. We will liken the soul [psyche] to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the horses and charioteer of the gods are all good [yes, the gods have psyches, in fact are psyches!] and of good descent, but those of other races are mixed; and first the charioteer of the human soul drives a pair, and secondly one of the horses is noble and of noble breed, but the other is quite the opposite in breed and character. Therefore in our case the driving is necessarily difficult and troublesome (Phaedrus 246A-B. Loeb, bracketed comments mine).

Myth, in which only likelihood is expressed, is again required in portraying the genesis
and composition of the visible cosmos because the cosmos has only the reality of things in the process of becoming and perishing, not the stable unchanging being of “the Existents.” The *Timaeus* puts the matter in this way:

> What is that which is Existent always and has no Becoming? And what is that which is Becoming always and never is Existent? Now one of these is apprehensible by thought with the aid of reasoning, since it is ever uniformly existent; whereas the other is an object of opinion with the aid of unreasoning sensation, since it becomes and perishes and is never really existent. (27D-28A)

By themselves, apart from knowledge of the Ideas or Existents, sensible material things of the cosmos can generate within psyche only unreliable opinion and speech. The Ideas or Existents are, then, the stable foundations of truth, found weakly reflected or represented in speech, in thought, and in the becoming of sensible things. Still, they appear absolutely needed, even in these weakened appearances, to account for intellectual knowledge and verbal communication that is not based on potentially deceptive opinion (*doxa*).

There is in Plato, we should note, nothing like the contemporary empirical and mathematical sciences of the material, sensible world and their practical extensions in medicine and engineering. For us, these are the very models of scientific rationality. Plato too was impressed by the science of medicine in his day and by the technical knowledge involved in crafts and practical skills. He tried to model his own science of psyche-in-cosmos on these arts insofar they all involved real knowledge that could be taught. Medicine loomed especially large in his mind. Still, in a dialogue called *Charmides*, medicine’s power to cure the body was dependent on the condition of psyche. (See Entralgo.) Moreover, though Plato conjectures about the material cosmos of sensible things in terms of geometrical figures and proportions, as did the Pythagoreans, there is no attempt to prove by measurement and experiment that these
conjectures are actually true. Rather, Plato thinks that there can be no real science of the material cosmos. The best that can be done is a highly probable mythic account, as found in the *Timaeus*.

Such myths are, I am urging, meant seriously, as complements to what reasoning cannot establish definitively, but are nevertheless recognizable. Plato has been read in ways that depreciate or ignore his myths. For example, in two recent and popular works by Alan Bloom (see *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Love and Friendship*), Plato’s thought, when its supposed contradictions are followed out, becomes reduced to a steely recognition of the annihilating power of death, despite all that is seemingly said to the contrary by Socrates. Accordingly, mythical talk is a needed and emboldening anodyne for those who would grow faint and feeble in knowing the full harsh import of ineluctable human extinction and, as a consequence, who would forsake philosophy and the pursuit of its virtues. But Bloom’s books are not singular. Much contemporary commentary ignores or depreciates Platonic mythmaking and concentrates on promoted doctrines. But such a demythologized Plato is a result of a prior interpretative bias that philosophy is rigorous rationality only and needs no recourse to the affections and the uses of the imagination, a bias to which the Platonic critique of the poets and poetry, as in the *Ion* and the *Republic*, has in fact contributed.

But mythmaking fits a broader and more accurate view of Plato’s thought and writings as more rhetorical or psychagogic in nature than modern academic conceptions of philosophy, which eschew both imaginative myth and religious piety, or more than the opposition of the categories *logos* and *mythos* (or reason and myth) allows. The schematic application of these opposed categories falsifies history. Although it is true that Plato evinces a search for scientific truth and true benefit in all his dialogues, his overarching aim, we must note, is not purely to develop philosophical science. It is eminently therapeutic or, better, sapiential: to care for psyche (understood
in a particular way as an immortal entity), to cure its ills both in the individual and the
polis, and thus to promote its welfare or happiness. Thus, the overall orientation of
Plato’s thought is much less contemplative and scientific than it is reformist or
therapeutic. But it is a therapy that is based on the truth of things as much as is possible.
His written dialogues accordingly have, for their readers, including us today, a
psychagogic purpose, to move us to recognize and love the true welfare of human psyche.

Plato is first, last, and always a rhetorician, a theorist of verbal psychagogy in a
psychotherapy, which may simply be called philosophy, involving both rational science
and imaginative myth. The inseparability of rhetoric, that is, verbal psychagogy, and
philosophy in Plato is, to my knowledge, what much modern scholarship misses,
misled by Plato’s critique of contemporary sophistic rhetoric and epic poetry, into
believing that philosophy and rhetoric, which in its true form is not the rhetoric of
sophists, are incompatible.

The Aim of Discourse in the Dialogues

Within the corpus of Plato’s writings, the welfare of the human psyche while in
an embodied state seems developed in three basic ways, two of which are clearly
matters of verbal psychagogy. The first means is not: it is inspiration from the gods and
daimones. As already mentioned, it creates in human psyches of men what Plato calls
true opinion, a sense of the truth but without the warranting causal reasoning that turns
opinion into knowledge and makes teaching possible (see Meno). This notion of
inspiration is the work of a theologically purified sense of gods as provident of
mankind. (See the Laws, Book 4.) There is then an ineradicable religious component of
Platonic rhetorical thinking, and any reduction of his thought to a rationalism that
eschews such inspiration as well as the religious response appropriate to it is not true to
the evidence of the dialogues.

Second is the special psychagogic talk of a few exceptionally inspired individuals like Socrates who desire wisdom for living in the world and city. They promote an examined life among men by questioning their customary thinking, thus moving them beyond custom and tradition if necessary. But this can be done only by attracting and moving individuals suited by nature to make philosophy a way of life. Absent the Socratic individual, the third means becomes necessary. It imitates the second: certain kinds of psychagogic writings of which Plato’s dialogues are the prime examples. They construct rational and imaginative models of individual and of political life for those who cannot be philosophers but can to some extent be philosophical. But these written dialogues, just as conversational encounter with a man like Socrates, are designed to lead beyond reading texts. The text is not the location of wisdom. It must lead to a living conversational and psychagogic speech about wisdom for life in given circumstances.

Plato’s philosophizing, because it aims to be a kind of therapeutic verbal psychagogy, is, as I have argued, a kind of rhetorical thinking. It is a recurrent theme in the dialogues that the study of psyche and the verbal treatment of its ills in individuals and in the polis are in fact the more important counterpart of bodily exercise and medicine. (See Gorgias, Phaedrus and Timaeus for care of the soul.) But in the absence of inspired men like Socrates, the written dialogues, the chosen literary forms of Plato’s thinking, are the best available means of promoting it in the world. These dialogues, as noted, suggest a need to go beyond the works themselves in seeking any resolution of issues raised. But they are nonetheless indispensable in redirecting eros, which begins in perception of bodily beauty, toward the true good. In this less customary but, as I think, more accurate view of Plato, the dialogues of ethical and metaphysical speculations, like Philebus and Parmenides, which do not seem concerned with rhetoric at all, in fact serve
his psychagogic and therapeutic aim. Thus, Plato is not only a rhetorician, one who theorizes about rhetoric and science, but also, as a writer, a rhetor, one who practices a verbal psychagogic art by designing, with full awareness of the limitations of writing as a rhetorical medium, written imitations of oral discourses. Let us look more closely now at the speech represented within the dialogues.

We attend now to the general forms or types of discourse used to carry out the therapeutic aim of the dialogues, not to the particular features of organization and style in any one dialogue. We are here trying to identify the rhetoric (verbal psychagogy) of the dialogues of Plato, not his views about style in rhetoric taken as public oratory. His views about persuasion by political oratory (or rhetoric in a restricted sense) are clear. Political rhetoric is an aid to true statesmanship, which in fact governs whether to use political oratory or not (see Politicus 304A-D). In the dialogues, there is a verbal psychagogy that we the readers experience in one way or another and whose fundamental direction, that to which we are being led, is clear, the therapy of psyche.

The imaginative representation of conflicts of opinion among men is one mode of psychagogic (rhetorical) discourse in the dialogues. Plato the writer was surely something of a poet of the theater in this respect. As author, he does not speak in any of the dialogues. He makes fictions of conflicting verbal interaction among people. Among them are such figures as Socrates and his admirers, the most important of whom is probably Alcibiades in the Symposium. Then there are the sophists Gorgias and Protagoras, the rhapsode Ion, and all their admirers, and, last but not least, such fierce, incisive opponents of Socrates as Callicles and Thrasy machus. It is true that such characters and the conflict of opinions they voice do not appear in the later dialogues where even Socrates disappears, he who is Plato’s greatest character, the embodiment of a type of philosophizing and rhetoric. That type tends to be dialectical (a form of eros through refutative question and answer). In Gorgias it is called brief speech, or, because
usually refutative, *elenchos*. This is probably the rhetoric of the historical Socrates mimetically incorporated into Plato’s written dialogues. Occasionally long speeches occur in these dialogues but they serve to set up *elenchos*. But *elenchos* gives way to other forms of discourse and imagination, some of which I have already mentioned.

In the middle or late dialogues a form of discourse more like uninterrupted public oratory becomes dominant. *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, for example, contain large discourses, the kind Socrates does not like but can deliver. It is called large or long speech, and it often includes *elenchos* within itself, but again in the manner of continuous speech by a given speaker to one or more others. This discourse becomes dominant in the later dialogues of Plato, and significantly the role of Socrates disappears in them. Another kind of discourse is, of course, mythical, sometimes more allegorical than narrative, and among these myths, the most important are those concerning life after death. But in the case of *Timaeus*, myth extends to the entire dialogue, combining with large discourse, or *macrologia*. I have already said enough about these myths. There is still another way, one which often encompasses all the others within it. I call it idealizing discourse or idealization. And in this we come to the very heart of Plato’s rhetorical mode of philosophizing. There are, then, five modes of discourse in the dialogues, and the discourse of idealization is the most important of the five because it can encompass all the others.

Idealization moves in several ways in Plato’s dialogues. There is a movement by procedures of definition called in the *Phaedrus* division and collection, which lead the intellectual psyche toward intuition of the Existent or Ideas as the best (the truly good or beautiful). For example, in the *Republic*, Plato’s best known dialogue, idealization occurs as a movement of psyche up the grades of reality represented in the famous divided line in order to apprehend the best life for the individual by examining the best city or polis for men living together. Sometimes as in the *Laws*, the movement of
idealization does not move directly to and then from the Existents but from some secondary approximation of the best that is available both from present instances or history and, as is usually the case, from the sobering fact, evident from tragedy, that the best may not be completely realizable because there is no one who can directly grasp it, no true philosopher. Sometimes it moves by some mythic retrieval of origins, as in *Timaeus* and *Critias*, to explain present realities and thus to explain also what may possibly improve them. Whatever the way, in its overall rational or imaginative movement toward the Existents or Ideas, idealization means attempting to find the truth by constructing paradigms for application to the actual human condition of psyche in the world. The *Laws* puts it this way, a way that may be a punning on Plato’s name: to find such paradigms is “to model [plattein] the laws in speech.”

But the condition of human psyche in the world is never idealized in Plato. That must be underscored. For example, in the *Republic*, the paradigm of the polis is seen by a looking up to the Existents (Forms or Ideas), but this must be followed by a looking down to the actual present conditions of human beings (6.501), which is far from ideal. A fuller representation of this looking down is made in the *Laws*.

Thus, idealization, which is the best English word I can think of to name the fifth mode of discourse in the dialogues, is meant to indicate an effort to express the reality and need for the Existents (Ideas, Forms) and the adjustments they necessitate when one tries to imitate their being in the condition of the embodied human psyche in the cosmos. Idealization is thus an effort to establish by a kind of intellectual imaginativeness a scientific knowledge of what is the truly good or best in short or long discourse about it. It is not just wishful thinking. Nevertheless, in being based on an effort to determine by rational and imaginative speech what the Existents indicate to be the true good, such speech, while scientific or as scientific as possible, only indicates what may be known of the Existents as paradigms for human beings, though the
condition of men in the world is far different from them. The paradigms are indeed based on the Existents. They found the truths of psyche and cosmos, but they are, as it were, pure and non-human realities. The actual conditions of embodied human psyche in the cosmos are not pure, and, as I said, they are never idealized in Plato, who is no utopian fool. He knows what he is up against. The experience of tragedy and the failures and follies of psyche in the world are presupposed and always examined. (See the Laws on the sources of disagreement and crime in Book 9.) But idealization is the sine qua non of responsible rhetorical thinking for Plato.

Another way to understand idealization as a general type of discourse is to see it as Plato’s alternative to the typical sophistic discourse, often called epideixis, a show speech in praise or blame of something. The Encomium of Helen by Gorgias can serve as the archetype of the epideixis that Plato’s idealizing mode of speech in the dialogues is meant to oppose. There are other representations of such sophistic epideixis in the Gorgias, Protagoras, Phaedrus, and Symposium. Like the other three modes of discourse, idealization is designed in general to lead psyche toward a justice that will ameliorate or cure the ills of psyche that are responsible for eris and apate. Thus, words of praise and blame, guided by the paradigms conceived and imagined in a divine eros, are expressed in the hope of arousing the same eros in others. The epideixis of Platonic rhetoric, namely what I am calling idealization, will be designed to envision individual psychic ideals (the virtues or internal kosmos of the psyche) and, most famously, political ideals (the cities of the Republic and Laws) that function as paradigmatic guides, realizable in some degree or other, for living according to justice in the world as we know it. This concentration on a reasoned justice is the distinctive mark of the Platonic type of rhetorical thinking and practice. Still, to repeat the point, the reality of human psyche in the physical cosmos, granting the kinship of the human psyche to the Existents, is not the reality of the Existents. The conceived paradigm and whatever
imaginative discourse may be appropriate to it are, nevertheless, “the medicine” of psyche needed to cure its ills and guide it toward its welfare both in the individual and in the polis.

**Psyche in Cosmos**

The precise sort of therapy involved in this surprising identification of Plato’s philosophical thinking with his rhetorical thinking becomes clearer by noticing in the dialogues his strenuous effort to make psyche central, especially the human psyche, not the human body (*soma*), from which psyche is sharply distinguished although profoundly related. So let us reconsider psyche in cosmos to gain a better understanding of its nature and condition and the limits they place on rhetorical idealization in Plato. We will see somewhat later that in the *Phaedrus* Plato’s Socrates defines rhetoric as an art of leading *psyche* by words in both private and public matters. With rhetoric so defined, rhetorical thinking clearly must include an account of psyche, again within its cosmic context, to understand how it may be properly treated or, to keep to the implied metaphor, where it may and should be led. And where does Plato think it should be led? The short answer is to the truth of justice and the living of the just life that in fact is the happy life. This is the fundamental and, to many, the paradoxical tenet that in the dialogues expresses the cure for the psychic ills caused by *eris*, *ate*, and *apate* in personal and political human life.

That there is something called psyche in man as in all other things that are alive and that the human psyche may survive death are traditional strains of Greek thinking, evinced, as we have seen, even in Homer but also in Pythagoras and Empedocles, reputedly the teacher of Gorgias. Plato will extend such thinking about psyche beyond anything thought previously. For him psyche, its nature, its kinds, and its intermixture with matter become the key to understanding the cosmos, which also has a psyche, and
all that is living in it, gods and daimons, who are also psyches, plants, and animals, and especially man, who has in fact three kinds of psyche. Psyche, then, is a real entity determining the nature of the cosmos, the nature of the gods, and the nature of man. Psyche and its mixture with matter are the keys to the human reality envisioned in Plato’s rhetorical thinking because they underlie and make intelligible eris and apate, the ills of human individual and political life, and the possible cures for those ills.

I cannot do justice to all he says about psyche here, which would ideally require a full interpretation of all the dialogues. I simply refer the reader to Plato’s Laws, Book 5, which contains an encomium of psyche, and to Book 10, a long rhetorical discourse on psyche that establishes that the gods exist, that they are provident, and that they cannot be bribed. Here is a summary text from the encomium in the Laws:

“Let everyone who has just heard the ordinances concerning the gods and dear forefathers now give ear. Of all man’s own belongings, the most divine is his psyche, since it is most his own. A man’s own belongings are invariably twofold: the stronger and better are the ruling elements, the weaker and worse those that serve; wherefore of one’s own belongings one must honor those that rule above those that serve. Thus it is that in charging men to honor their own psyches next after the gods who rule and the secondary divinities I am giving a right injunction. But there is hardly a man of us all who pays honor rightly, although he fancies he does so….Thus we declare that honor, speaking generally consists in following the better, and in doing our utmost to effect the betterment of the worse, when it admits of being bettered. Man has no possession better fitted by nature than the psyche for the avoidance of evil and the tracking and taking of what is best of all, and living in fellowship therewith, when he has taken it, for all his life thereafter.” (Laws 5. 726-727 and 728D)
So much will, I hope, serve as a summary of the importance of psyche.

But what is it that is being praised here? It may be helpful first to ask what lies at the basis of Plato’s understanding of human psyche. Did anything in particular shape and direct his understanding of this praiseworthy but still mysterious reality? Aside from mythic and religious cult traditions, there was something that, in my opinion, that is still recognizable by anyone from experience, the working of craftsmen. Plato again and again refers to craftsmanly work to establish important points of argument about the nature of psyche and its excellences (or virtues) in the dialogues. No reader of them can fail to miss these references. And what does craftsmanship involve? Allow me to describe what observation of the product of craftsmanship suggested to Plato as well as what it still suggests to us. There is first the perception of something having order and beauty that leads to the inference of an intelligent cause, a maker like the perceiver or observer himself, who is not to be confused with the material and its condition from which the product has been made (see the Phaedo and Laws). Why? Because matter and its conditions are different from the craftsman who makes something out of matter. The craftsman takes up some already given raw and unformed material. Then moved by a desire (eros) to make something fine, guided by his knowledge of the materials and processes involved, and envisioning always the best outcome or product possible, the craftsman introduces some new order and appearance (kosmos) into the material. Psyche is the name Plato gives to self-initiating and self-governing craftsmanly cause that, because it shapes and forms matter according to desire and knowledge, makes it unlike any other cause found in material things that do not think or desire (see the Phaedo).

Plato would have it that psyche can mold and treat not only material things, as craftsmen evidently do, but also itself by a verbalized and hence teachable know-how. When attending to itself, human psyche can modify or govern itself by its capacity to acquire self-knowledge, to guide its appetites and actions by words and designed
institutions that lead, as they can, to the real and true existents as well as by such words to be guided and to guide the psyches of others. In this respect, human psyche is a principle of self-motion, taken in the broadest sense. All the other attributes of human psyche follow from its character as an intuited causal and craftsmanly power that is “logistic,” a power that involves rational knowledge and speech as well as desire, especially eros, as we will see.

The genesis, nature, and relation of human psyche to the existing visible things in the cosmos, including the human body, are given their fullest treatment, though only in probable and mythical fashion, in the Timaeus, which I can merely sketch here. The existing cosmos—the earth, the heaven of stars that surround it (called astral gods) and all that exists between them—exhibits a perceptible order and beauty that make of it a kosmos, a beautiful order, despite the evident disorder and ills that attend human life on earth. But the visible cosmos, taken as a whole, is supposed by Plato to be the effect of a good, intelligent, and craftsmanly cause that must be greater and other than the cosmos itself because the cause is responsible for the cosmic order. (The rational plausibility of this myth simply projects on a grand scale all that is involved in simple forms of good craftsmanship or skilled activity observable by anyone: a craftsman who has knowledge of a craft, his raw materials, and models for making desired and envisioned by the craftsman.) Plato thus imagines the cause of all that comes to be and passes away as necessarily opposite in nature to those things; it is thus a craftsmanly reality, eternal, immortal by nature, always desirous of the good, intelligent, and called Demiurge (worker of, or for, the people).

Now there existed along with the Demiurge both the Existents and a chaotic matter in motion—three things, then, in the beginning. Because he was good, the Demiurge looked to the best of beings, the eternal Existents or Ideas, the true and unchanging beings, as the plans or models for the things immortal (the astral gods and
the traditional poetic gods) as well as the things mortal and temporal that he would make from the eternal chaotic matter in motion (a chaos), which, of course, has no beauty or order within it. Insofar as the cosmos is a product of a craftsmanly mind, it is a *kosmos* and exhibits a visibly Beauteous, attractive order among the ceaseless coming-to-be and passing-away of material things.

But, as Plato makes clear, the cosmos is not totally and thoroughly ordered or beautiful, which would make it fully intelligible as science or fully controllable by human psychic or “logistic” powers. It stands to reason that Plato hardly needs to make this point clear since anyone can testify that the world and the mortals in it are not perfect. The visible cosmos can only be an imitation or representation of the whole realm of the eternal existents that the good Demiurge looked to and desired as his models. Thus, there remain in the present cosmos random irrational motions of matter, called necessities, which the Demiurge could not subject to order (*Timaeus* 30A; for “necessity” see 48A). Such randomness in things plays an important role as a condition of evil and tragedy in the lives of mortal men, a subject to which I will soon return. As we will see in the *Phaedrus*, in the appetites of human psyches, even before embodiment, there is also an irrational motion causing psychic strife for which the body is not, then, responsible.

It is important to emphasize here that all kinds of psyche made by the Demiurge—cosmic, divine (remember that for Plato, the astral gods are psyches of a kind!), the three human psyches which in degenerate forms are women, birds, and animals of land and sea—all psyches are made out of matter in chaotic motion in some measure. There is no purely immaterial or spiritual notion of psyche in Plato. The cosmic psyche or world-soul has the least measure of chaos in the matter of which it is composed. There is a little more of this chaos in the matter of which the gods and daimons are composed, and still more in the matter of the human types of psyche, the
most imperfect of the three. But these are all intellectual psyches, unlike those of animals. The human body is not yet even in consideration. The world-psyche, the gods, and the intellectual human psyche are indeed immortal and rational, but they enjoy immortality only by the will of the Demiurge. They are not immortal by their nature. This is made absolutely explicit by Plato. The Demiurge is alone is immortal by nature. Perhaps the Demiurge is purely immaterial, but Plato stresses that its nature is past finding out and inexpressible (*Timaeus* 28C).

We can say, it seems to me, that the Demiurge is Plato’s chief “god,” a sort of maker of all. Because he is an imaginative projection of the key intellectual factor in craftsmanly artistry or, in the wide Greek sense of the word *poiesis* (making), which means, as suggested before, the introduction of a desired beautiful order (*kosmos*) into some raw unformed material, the *poiesis* of the Demiurge is the unexpressed archetype of all *true* human arts, including, as we will see, the art of responsible or philosophic rhetoric. But the Demiurge is not a god like the traditional gods of the Greeks. These gods, the stars of the sky and the mythic beings whose genealogies and deeds the poets and diviners speak about, are only psyches that the Demiurge in fact fashions for no other reason than his goodness and wills for the same reason to be immortal and providential. He also fashions (orders) the human psyche, immortal and intelligent as he is, though it must endure being affected by a greater mixture of matter in chaotic motion. These human psyches the Demiurge attaches to the god-stars of the visible cosmos, where they may see the whole of all, including the immaterial Existents. But the making of human bodies is a task the Demiurge gives to the astral and traditional gods, who fit them together with intellectual and immortal psyches the Demiurge has already made. The gods place that intellectual psyche in the head and add a mortal irascible psyche in the breast and a concupiscent psyche in the abdomen. Thus the human being is, in this cosmic mythic context, composed of three psyches, but, to repeat
the point, even the immortal one is neither purely spiritual nor purely immortal by nature. Only the Demiurge is alone immortal by nature.

Other dialogues contain more about the human psyche in different contexts. The reason may well be what Plato emphasizes often; it is the difficulty of speaking of psyche. The full reality of psyche, its different kinds (cosmic, divine, and human), its manifold qualities, the shifting circumstances of embodied life in which human psyche is involved, and its possible afterlife and liability to justice and reincarnations make any extensive and direct discussion very difficult. But apart from craftsmanship, there is one thing in life that always occasions some thought about psyche, and that is death. And that is the subject of an entire dialogue.

**Ills of Psyche: Death and Desire**

In *Phaedo*, a dialogue which is set in prison after Socrates has been sentenced to death, there is much talk of psyche, as may be expected. Psyche here is immortal, something very different from sensible things, something separable from the body and akin to the existents, to which it is drawn and which it can see after being released from the body. It exists before being joined to the human body as if imprisoned within it. After death psyche is capable of transmigration into other kinds of bodies in accord with the character of its prior embodied life. Thinking about psyche in this context, which is perhaps the chief way of approaching the questions of the truth about psyche, is described in the *Phaedo* as philosophy itself.

This connection in experience between death and psyche is a point that cannot be overemphasized in Plato’s rhetorical thinking. Because there is death, there is need to think about something called psyche. And if there is something called psyche, it must be investigated because the issues of life are connected to it. Furthermore, if there is something called psyche, there is also rhetoric, an art of verbal psychagogy in matters
public and private. Rhetorical thinking is, then, rooted in the human experience of death (leaving aside craftsmanship at the moment) and its potential either to reduce all human endeavors to vacuity or, as in Plato, to lead to some conspectus about psyche and its proper mode of treatment. The overall view of reality and the role of psyche within it generated by Plato’s meditations on death may not be quite the same those found in Aristotle’s or Cicero’s works, as we will see, but they agree on the importance of psyche.

But in this respect, the concern about death and psyche, the rhetorical thinking of these ancients differs from any done today. Death remains a reality deep in the background of contemporary rhetorical thought, to be sure, but psyche has been banished as a reality that may survive death’s predatory power. Contemporary rhetorical thinking seems founded on a view of reality that, for the role of psyche, substitutes either the neurobiology of brain function in the context either of evolution or of conventions based on powerful sociopolitical structures in a given culture. (There is no entry in the index of *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* under “soul.” The article “Persuasion” is conceived as “a road map to social-scientific work concerning persuasive communication.”)

However, in the Middle Ages and up to the ascendancy of modern scientific thinking, there is still another view of reality that will affect and alter the ancient view of psyche and rhetorical thinking: its creation and its redemption through the psychagogy of the biblical God. For Christians, obviously, this God appears in the human nature of Jesus the Christ, with whom, in his risen state after his death by crucifixion, human creatures can now be united in body and soul and by whom they and the entire cosmos are now being, and will eventually wholly be, re-created and renewed as the Kingdom of God. Human psyche and human verbal psychagogy cannot be fully be accounted for unless the reality of human death is related to the deeper
reality in which there occurs a prior and encompassing divine rhetoric—creative, therapeutic (redemptive), and re-creative. There is, one may see, something akin to Plato in this Christian scheme of psychagogy. And the Christians who are called the Fathers of the Church knew it.

Apart from Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*, the tenth book of Plato’s *Laws* is the most revealing and important place in his dialogues about psyche and the view of reality that it belongs to. The entire work called the *Laws* is a grand illustration of Plato’s idealizing rhetoric or verbal psychagogy, but the grandest part of the *Laws* is the tenth book. It is the easiest place to see the difference between Plato and contemporary rhetoricians because it is expressly aimed to overturn a view of reality from which human psyches as well as those divine psyches called the immortals (the astral and traditional gods) are absent. In other words, Plato is fully aware of a solely material view of reality that owes nothing to psychic making or intelligent artistry and that recognizes only the workings of chance combinations of material elements in motion. Socrates is not present in this dialogue, so it is usually thought to be Plato’s last work.

The tenth book is one of the many long rhetorical “proems” of legislation that are formulated for a new fictitious city, which is called Megara, and whose purpose is to persuade people to follow the laws, not merely to coerce them by force. The prelude in Laws 10 is aimed at men of impious behavior and atheistic thinking who believe that the cosmos and all in it are a result of matter and chance. To change their minds and so confirm the laws against impiety by persuasion, the prelude must show that the gods exist (in fact, the gods are psyches of a kind), that the psyches called gods govern wisely the whole material cosmos, and that they are just and cannot be bribed. In developing his discourse, the Athenian, the chief interlocutor in the *Laws*, acts like a doctor who not merely prescribes and commands but indeed explains to patients their illness and the appropriate treatment. Here, then, is the Athenian’s diagnosis of the outlook of the
impious. It is followed by a discourse designed to lead to new awareness of the therapeutic truths:

Let me put it more plainly still. Fire and water, earth and air [the four traditional material elements]—so they [the impious] say—all owe their being to nature and chance, none of them to art; they are the agents, and the absolutely soulless agents, in the production of the bodies of the next rank, the earth, sun, moon, and stars. They drifted casually, each in virtue of their several tendencies. As they came together in certain fitting and convenient dispositions—hot with cold, dry with moist, soft with hard, and so on in all the inevitable causal combinations which arise from blending contraries—thus, and on this wise, they gave birth to the whole heavens and all their contents, and, in due course, to all animals and plants, when once all the seasons of the year had been produced from those same causes—not, so they say, by the agency of mind or any god, or art, but, as I tell you, by nature and chance.... Then they actually declare that the really and naturally laudable is one thing and the conventionally laudable quite another, while as for right, there is absolutely no such thing as a real and natural right, that mankind are eternally disputing about rights and altering them, and that every change thus made, once made, is for that moment valid, though it owes its being to artifice and legislation, not to anything you could call nature.... Hence our epidemics of youthful irreligion—as though there were no gods such as the law enjoins is to believe in—and hence the factions created by those who seek, on such grounds, to attract men to the “really and naturally right life,” that is, the life of real domination over other, not of conventional service to them [the Sophists].”
In my view there is no better summary of what Plato’s rhetorical thinking opposes than this passage.

As Plato insists, psyche may be so mysterious an entity that it defies full comprehension by mortals, since it is both a cosmic and a theological principle. Even as an anthropological principle, it is very mysterious, as recourse to the myth of the charioteer and his horses indicates. But craftsmanship and death are not mysterious. Nor are the ills of human life. They are all matters of common experience. And they have to be accounted for in order to appreciate well not just Plato’s rhetorical thinking but any form of rhetorical thinking in any age by anyone. Doing this amounts to foregrounding for better attention the causes of eris and apate in life personally and politically.

The Ills of Psyche: Folly and Ignorance

For Plato, the ills of life are caused by the tensions of psyche within itself and the interaction of human psyche with body, which involves the necessity of liability to the intrinsic randomness of all matter in motion. The Timaeus has shown that the chaotic motion of matter, which is called necessity, is inherent in everything made by the Demiurge, and toward the end of the dialogue its ill effects on psyche are described in this way:

[F]olly is a disease of the soul; and of folly there are two kinds, the one which is madness, the other ignorance. Whatever affection a man suffer from, if it involves either of these conditions it must be termed “disease”; and we must maintain that pleasures and pains in excess are the greatest of the soul’s diseases. For when a man is overjoyed or contrariwise suffering excessively from pain, being in haste to seize on the one and
avoid the other beyond measure, he is unable either to see or hear anything correctly, and he is at such a time distraught and wholly incapable of exercising reason. And whenever a man’s seed grows to abundant volume in his marrow, as it were a tree that is over laden beyond measure with fruit, he brings on himself time after time many pangs and many pleasures owing to his desires and the issue thereof, and comes to be in a state of madness for the most part of his life because of those greatest of pleasures and pains, and keeps his soul diseased and senseless by reason of the action of his body . . . . And indeed almost all those affections which are called by way of reproach “incontinence in pleasure,” as though the wicked acted voluntarily, are wrongly reproached; for no man is voluntarily wicked, but the wicked man becomes wicked by reason of some evil condition of body and unskilled nurture, and these are experiences which are hateful to everyone and involuntary. And again, in respect of pains likewise the soul acquires much evil because of the body . . . . Furthermore, when, with men in such an evil condition, the political administration also is evil, and the speech in the cities, both public and private, is evil; and when, moreover, no lessons that would cure these evils are anywhere learnt from childhood,—thus it comes to pass that all of us who are wicked become wicked owing to two quite involuntary causes. And for these we must always blame the begetters more than the begotten and the nurses more than the nurslings. (85B-87B)

One may be tempted to think that the proper therapy for the two kinds of folly, madness and ignorance, would then be bodily gymnastics and medicine chiefly, because both forms of folly are caused involuntarily in us by the body (remember the
randomness of matter in everything in the material cosmos). Our contemporary world would, I suspect, largely agree that the causes of evils are bodily conditions and that their cure is medicine. But such bodily therapy would not suffice for Plato because the principle of bodily order or health is not in the body or the matter of which it is composed but in the human psyche, the source of self-motion and self-governance. It is psyche alone that may introduce, like the Demiurge, a kosmos into the disorderly, chaotic motion of matter exhibited in excessive bodily appetites, and such kosmos is the effect on body of a kind of psychic governance called philosophy and the ideal virtues of personal life and the ideal laws of philosophical political governance philosophy promotes.

In the Phaedo, the ills which psyche suffers because of the body are described in this way for all who love wisdom:

[S]o long as we have the body, and the soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never attain completely what we desire, that is, the truth. For the body keeps us constantly busy by reason of its need of sustenance; and moreover, if diseases came upon it they hinder our pursuit of the truth. And the body fills us with passions and desires and fears, and all sorts of fancies and foolishness, so that as they say it really and truly makes it impossible for us to think at all. The body and its desires are the only cause of wars and factions and battles; for all wars arise for the sake of gaining money, and we are compelled to gain money for the sake of the body. We are slaves to its service. (66B-D)

In this way, Plato presents the general causes of the ills of human life, and we may call his general account of these ills his rhetorical nosology (account of disease). Of course, as long as we are in the body, we, like the Demiurge, cannot entirely eliminate them. But we must go a little further in his nosology before the specific psychagogic means of
therapy, the proper use of speech, can be considered.

As has been already suggested, the major issues in Plato’s psychic nosology are what to think of death and how to control of the wantonness of desire in the individual and in the city. Let us consider these issues a little more but now in the light of rhetorical idealization; first the issue of death, but now in the light of the reality of psyche. No matter how it may be regarded, death deeply affects human ways of living and thinking. The harsh fact of death tends to make execrable and nugatory any way of life in this world other than the pursuit of pleasures and the power to pursue them. Consequently, Plato’s myths indicating both that psyche exists after death, when immortal psyche separates from its dead body, and that some sort of justice is meted out to it in accord with its life in the body are vital to Platonic thinking both for the individual (see, in addition to the Apology, the Gorgias and Phaedo) and for the polis (see Republica and Laws). Consider, for example, this passage from the Phaedo (113D-114D).

Concluding his description of the areas, rivers, and lakes of the underworld, where psyche goes after death, Socrates says this to Simmias, one of his interlocutors in the dialogue:

But those who are found to have excelled in holy living [before death] are freed from these regions within the earth and are released as from prisons; they mount upward into their pure abode and dwell upon the earth. And of these, all who have duly purified themselves by philosophy live henceforth altogether without bodies, and pass to still more beautiful abodes which it is not easy to describe, nor have we now time enough. But Simmias, because of all these things which we have recounted we ought to do our best to acquire virtue and wisdom in life. For the prize is fair and the hope great. Now it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is
true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth while; and he ought to repeat such things to himself as if they were magic charms, which is the reason why I have been lengthening out the story so long. (114C-D)

Thus, as in the Bible, the Tanakh, and the Quran—indeed as in the Oresteia, though admittedly in a lesser degree—so here in Platonic rhetorical thinking, idealization generates a mythic and eschatological faith, full of hope, and surrounds it with urgings to do one’s best to acquire virtue and wisdom. For after death, says Socrates, “the prize is fair and the hope great.”

We cannot overestimate the psychagogic power of such idealizing mythic thinking either in positing some sort of justice after death, as here in Plato, or not. For the denial of the reality of psyche, the gods, and of any justice after death is also a powerful form of mythic thinking, and Plato was aware of this fundamental alternative in rhetorical thinking, as we know from the passage of the Laws quoted above. It goes without saying that, in any type of rhetorical thinking, the character of its eschatological mythologizing, whether of one sort of another, must be known or sensed for its psychagogy to be understood. But the fundamental issue, when opposing myths conflict, remains clear: Which has the greater claim to truthfulness that can be validated by anyone willing to make the rational effort? For Plato, hic opus, hic labor est. This issue today is still vital, given the conflicts between the claims of the religious and those of atheistic materialists, for whom any religion is folly and disease of mind. But the issue extends even to conflicts between and among the religious, now being most widely experienced in the words and deeds of Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The second issue of nosology in Platonic rhetorical thinking is the irrationality and wantonness to which human desires are liable. In the Phaedrus, we are told that the
psyches of the gods enjoy an immortal life and can periodically ascend above the cosmos to behold the realm of the Existents (or the ideas). Human psyches, however, are not the same as those of the gods, for, although they are also immortal and exist before becoming joined to a body, thus becoming mortal men, these psyches are liable to an internal strife, even before embodiment. This is a key point. It is not just the human body that causes psychic ills.

To explain this internal psychic strife, Socrates compares the human psyche to a winged chariot, pulled by two horses and guided by a driver. They struggle to follow one or another of the gods in their periodic ascents to the realm of the existents. The driver represents rational control, the horses the desires of psyche. One of them is white, lovely, modest, and responsive to the driver. The other is black, ugly, demanding and unruly. It requires much taming, but the taming process causes much strife, rivalry, and jostling with other psyches as they try to follow the gods upward, leading to a loss of wings and a fall into bodies. Thus they become living mortal men. And all this occurs before embodiment in this world. Thus, there is strife in psyche itself that is not attributable to the body. Only in the Timaeus is the unruliness of the black horse of eros explained. The cause is the mixture in it of chaotic matter when first fashioned by the Demiurge. The problem of eros becomes more difficult still when psyche becomes embodied. But eros is not only a problem. It is also part of the solution to the problems it presents.

A Winged and Inspired Eros

According to the process described in Phaedrus, human eros is first experienced among mortals as disorderly sexual desire for the beautiful body of another. But when inspired by the gods in certain extraordinary human psyches and when managed properly (by taming of the black horse), eros may become, as it were, “winged” (pteros to use Plato’s playful pun). Eros may then evolve into a personal friendship (philia), love of
beautiful things generally (*philocaly*), mutual love of discourse (*philologia*) and learning (*philomathia*), and finally, under the impetus of these preparatory forms of winged desire, into the love of wisdom (*philosophia*). As I have said, indispensable to the critique of representation, which is therapy of the soul for Plato, is the desire to know the existents or fully real beings for orientation in life, but this desire is philosophy for Plato, a divinely inspired form of madness called love (*eros*). Socratic questioning or inquiry is simply a developed form of inspired eros, Plato often playing on the similarity of sound between the words for questioning (*erotao*) and for love (*eros*).

In *Symposium*, which was likely composed before *Phaedrus*, the nature of divine *eros* is more fully developed. Basically the dialogue is a series of rhetorical encomia, the last one given by Socrates, who overturns the assumption of all the previous discourses that Eros is a god, as traditional religious myth has it. He claims that the true procedure of an encomium is to define adequately what it is that one praises, not simply to ascribe to some hasty and assumed notion of it all the fairest qualities. (In this complaint we hear what Plato regards as the fundamental flaw in all sophistic *epideixis.*) In addition he says he will relate only what he has been told by the seer Diotima. Thus, a religious character is given to the discourse. He says that Eros cannot be a god because it implies some lack or deficiency that no god could reasonably be said to have. *Eros*, in fact, is a *daimon*, a kind of spirit, neither human nor divine, that transmits communications between gods and men. Such *eros* also implies a desire to beget on the beloved, but not children of the body. It will beget children of psyche, like inspired writings and utterances. Such discourse, presumably like the true encomium of Diotima being related, has a distinctive psychagogic power. It is represented by the figure of the motion of psyche up a ladder of love, beginning from the perception of bodily beauty and ending in the intuition of the beautiful itself, the ultimate existent to which eros can lead. In the perspective of *Symposium*, then, true rhetoric is an inspired art of
psychagogy, a daimonically mediated communication from gods to men. The inquiring discourses for which Plato’s Socrates is famous are in fact expressions of inspired *eros*, a seeking for the true and the truly good. We must not overlook inspired eros. It is a fundamental component of Plato’s rhetorical thinking.

Unhappily, only the few fortunate men like Socrates are suited by nature and by daimonic inspiration for the “pterotic” search for knowledge, virtue, and wisdom in this life via the perception of beauty, and they can attain only a little of these things while still in this life. Most men cannot attain them at all. Thus, the great need for the philosophic few to bring to the many, including those inclined to become political leaders, whom the sophists claim to train, something of the wisdom that should command their thinking, behavior, and legislation. In the *Phaedrus* (278D), Plato stresses that men like Socrates are called by the modest name of philosophers, lovers of wisdom, not wise men. Their love of wisdom implies that they do not yet possess it fully and never will in this life while the psyche is conjoined to a body. In this fashion, Plato continues, as mentioned, the effort of Parmenides to establish truth on real being, not on mere opinions (doxai) arising from the haphazard thinking and speaking of mankind and the fluctuations of sensible things. In this perspective the reason that Plato is an inveterate opponent of the sophists becomes very clear. Their rhetorical thinking, as in the archetypal instance of Gorgias of Leontini, denies the importance of being and allows a designed *kosmos* of words having great affective power to establish a kind of bogus truth for psyche and thus for ethics and politics. Instead, the proper psychotherapy or care of one’s own soul, if it happens to be of the right nature, is philosophy encountered in the person of a Socrates-like figure.

*Gorgias*

But let us turn more directly to Plato’s rhetorical thinking in the *Gorgias* and
Phaedrus for the last of the crucial issues in Platonic psychagogy, the right use of speech in psychagogy. Like the Sophist and Symposium, they are indisputably concerned with proposing an alternative to the rhetorical thinking and practice of the sophists of his time. They also share the same view of the reason for the irresponsibility of sophistic discourse, often called epideixis, a showing in which one receives a feast of words. Sophistic epideixis goes awry in its tendency to override the question “What is it?” for considerations of worth, which answer the question “Of what quality is it?” In being so oriented to praise or blame of something, no matter the subject, which is thus made lovely or ugly, desirable or repulsive, sophistic discourse undeniably becomes psychagogically powerful. The problem is that such psychagogy neglects the rationally prior matter of defining the true nature of the subject matter, as has already been pointed out in Symposium. In Platonic rhetorical thinking this rationally irresponsible but powerful orientation to praise or blame is the most deceptive feature of all sophistic verbal representations. But such is in fact the suasion exercised over human psyche by all present political regimes, their laws, the religion they promote or discourage, and their modes of education. The verbal ambience of psyche in the world is a construct of praise and blame. And the effect of it is deeply but irresponsibly psychagogic. And its seductive image-making power is the chief enemy of Plato’s rhetorical thinking.

In the Gorgias, Socrates discusses with Gorgias of Leontini and a young disciple of his named Polus what rhetoric is and what its subject matter is. Gorgias and Polus are shown to praise rhetoric in their responses before examining its nature. Later he discusses the way of life rhetoric implies with a man named Callicles, who is a sort of proto-Nietzschean figure living in accord with what we would still call “the real world”—the world where a struggle for power, wealth, and prestige dominates life. Socrates claims that rhetoric, as practiced by the sophists, is not a rational art at all. It is merely a knack for flattery, that is, for giving verbal pleasure without a rationally
considered view of what may be best. For example, there are flattering forms of caring
for the body, cookery and cosmetics. They aim to please without a view of what is best
for the body. But these knacks merely imitate in poor fashion the real rational arts of
bodily care, medicine and gymnastics, which often involve pleasureless restraint and
painful exercise. So too there are flattering knacks for the therapy of psyche in the
many, rhetoric and sophistics, which are poor imitations of arts of justice and
legislation, the true therapy of psyche.

With Callicles, the final interlocutor, Socrates also argues the paradoxical thesis
that a life that is given over to philosophy means that one must be willing to suffer
wrong rather than to do any wrong. Such a life is in truth far superior to any given over
to the pleasurable gratifications that come with worldly power and prestige. To
Callicles such a life is clearly contemptible and foolhardy, suited only for the unmanly
and the weak. But to reinforce his argument that virtue is the real strength of men in
this life, Socrates proposes a myth, which he insists is a true, not a false fiction, of just
rewards and punishment in the afterlife. Again, what comes into play here is the
rhetorical necessity of a myth of justice in the afterlife to complete the affirmation of
paradoxical tenets that contravene the opinions most people live by. In the Sophist,
which is devoted to the definition of the rhetor and sophist, a lengthy discussion
concludes that the sophist practices, not a real art, but “[t]he imitative kind of the
dissembling part of the art of opinion which is part of the art of contradiction and
belongs to the fantastic class of image-making art, and is not divine, but human, and
has been defined in arguments as the juggling part of productive activity” (Sophist
269D). It is quite a sentence and evidently quite a put-down of the sophists. Both Gorgias
and the Sophist deserve more attention than is possible here. They are very important.

But so are the Republic and the Laws. These dialogues extend the therapy of
psyche into the polis. As the Gorgias indicates, the true matter of rhetoric is justice
which is the theme of the Republic, and the true sophistic is the legislation of the Laws. For the care of those who cannot be philosophers or charmed by personal encounter with a philosopher, there remains the ethical teaching and political order described in its ideal but extraordinarily difficult teaching and order in the Republic. Politics is yet again represented in the Laws but now in the more likely and humanly realizable approximation of the full and relatively harsh rational ideal, which grants so little to the imperfect but commonly experienced bodily desires, comforts, and ordinary human attachments of family and sexual pairings.

The Laws is more important than the Republic for Plato’s rhetorical thinking. For the work of persuasion is in this work central. It is integral to legislation as a discourse and surpasses the coercive power of law in guiding the souls of men. In fact, the majority of this long dialogue is rhetorical prelude to the laws themselves. Moreover, the discourse of legislation presumes the context of strife, war and, most baneful of all, internal faction as the ills of political life, as it is in the individual psyche. But we must always remember that rhetorical idealization is merely a guide that must be adjusted to particular actual life, both for the individual who is oriented to the just life as the happy life by the dialogues and for the polity of cities and their government, which are not to be encountered as if each was a tabula rasa, as they can be in establishing by rational imagination the psychagogic ideals for them in speech.

**Phaedrus and the Ideal Rhetor**

All that I have discussed so far is, in my judgment, the best or proper context for interpreting the dialogue Phaedrus. Here the center of attention is not political justice or political legislation, the concerns of rhetorical thinking about those who cannot be philosophers. The center of attention is the conversion of the individual from the allure of sophistry to the role of the philosopher-rhetor, his psyche and eros. But such personal
conversion provides the model for the right use of speech in psychagogic discourse of any sort, private or public. This fictional dialogue between Socrates and a young man named Phaedrus, who is an admirer of Lysias, a famous contemporary rhetor and speech-writer, is a difficult but rewarding work. I will try to do no more here than describe its general structure and then highlight those things important to rhetorical thinking as Plato presents it.

The dialogue has two parts. In the first (227A-257C), there are three speeches about love (eros) given. The first is recited by Phaedrus. His discourse is, in fact, the expression of a discourse he had heard: a show speech (or epideixis) orally delivered by Lysias. So charmed was Phaedrus by the oral performance that he obtained a written copy of it and memorized it before reciting it to Socrates. (Lysias, I should add, may be the author of the speech Phaedrus recited, but I suspect that Plato’s real target is Gorgias whose Encomium of Helen, as we have seen, exalts the bewitching, erotic power of a highly stylized kosmos of written words.) The speech of Phaedrus maintains the paradoxical thesis that in homoerotic relations a young boy or man ought to prefer the patronly but non-erotic lover to the erotically maddened lover. The argument consists, as is typical of sophistic discourse, of praise and blame. (The sophists loved paradoxical theses too.) It blames the faults of the erotically maddened lover, who is inclined to nearly insane bouts of self-interested jealously, recklessness, and emotional instability. It praises the patronly lover who will indeed give and take sexual pleasure but who will in addition provide very practical benefits, long-term friendship as well as social and monetary advantages of many kinds, all of them improving the worldly welfare of the beloved. Sober, utilitarian self-interest involving sex, yes, but not reckless sex, as well as money and all its advantages, is the primary psychagogic motive in this first discourse.

This first discourse by Phaedrus is, I take it, a type of verbal psychagogy. It uses homoerotic love as a metonymy for a varied multiplicity of rhetorical suasions exercised in
discourses both private and public. Here accommodations to self-interest are the rule. This is the realism that thoughtful people even today recognize as the primary way of negotiating conflict if not of motivating human behavior. The world still moves rhetorically according to this type of psychagogy. And it is a fact about the way of the world that Socrates, as we will see, not only admits but also amplifies extensively in the next speech, the first of two.

Before Socrates speaks, he pretends to be inspired to almost poetic rhythm by the person and interests of his listener Phaedrus and the rural place where they converse. (This is not the sort of inspiration Socrates will later praise.) He claims that, by this inspiration, he is able to make an even better speech that maintains the same thesis about the non-lover. But as he develops his argument against the maddened erotic lover, Socrates also explains a key failing of the first discourse. It is the lack of a definition of eros. (In fact there is a second failing, pointed out and developed later in the dialogue, a lack of rational organization in the blaming of the lover’s faults.) In short, this first speech of Socrates has an even better verbal kosmos. Socrates then announces the major tenet of his speech. In general, two things move or lead psyche: The first is an inborn desire for pleasure; the second is rationally acquired opinion about what is best. (The dialogue Gorgias has already presented traditional rhetoric as a form of flattery, which is giving pleasure without a view to what is best. Here it is the second motive that receives attention.) These two motives, he says, are sometimes in agreement, sometimes at odds; sometimes, the one sort of motive or the other governs psyche. When opinion about the best rules, it is called rational self-restraint. When the desire for pleasure rules, it suppresses reason and becomes wanton. Wanton desire leads to many vices, but eros is defined as a wanton desire for bodily beauty. The faults of the erotically maddened lover are then listed according to a division that groups some as violating the proper care of the mind, others the proper care (therapeia) of the body, and some others the care of
possessions, which include here family, friends, wives, children as well as property of money and valuables. A powerful simile is the conclusion of the discourse: just as wolves show fondness, so do the erotic befriend a boy.

Here is a second type of psychagogy, one focused on the faults of the erotically maddened lover, a kind of *eros* or egoistic desire that seeks the satisfaction of appetite and does not look to the good of the ones desired more as prey than as loved ones. The rational self-restraint of the non-lover here is self-protective because fully aware of the egoistic desires of the wanton lover, but presumably the non-lover is no different in this second speech by Socrates from the non-lover in the first speech by Phaedrus (and Lysias). He is, by implication, a model of rational restraint, yes, but of a thoroughly worldly and self-interested form. It is a self-interest that is better than the egoistic rapaciousness of the wonton lover, but it is rational self-interest about what is considered better here nevertheless.

Then Socrates, claiming little need to move on to praise the non-erotic lover for the things opposed to the erotic lover’s faults, which presumably means his virtues or the forms of self-interested rational restraint, Socrates says that he hears a daimonic voice warning him not to depart after making such a speech. (It may be that eighteenth-century rationalists like Adam Smith never heard this warning voice.) Apparently, *eros* is not just a sickness and problem; it may be part of the remedy and solution, which is the proper care of the soul by speech. This is the unexpected turn of the dialogue’s internal psychagogic movement.

Socrates now makes another speech, a recantation of the former, in which he claims that not all *eros* is harmful. For if *eros* is a god or something divine, as mythic tradition affirms, it cannot be something evil. The previous speeches had left the impression that all *eros* is madness and leads to much harm if not tamed by self-interested rationality. Phaedrus’s speech clearly subordinated the wild pleasures of passionate *eros* to a sober
calculation of worldly advantages provided by the non-lover. Worldly advantage was shown to be a psychagogic motive that may supersede or even disguise pleasure seeking. Socrates’ first speech goes even farther in its account of *eros* and the bodily and psychic harm *eros* does in violating rational opinion of the best, taken here as mutual self-interest. But this speech, though only by implication, for it does not get around to praising the “virtues” of the non-lover, still puts mutual worldly advantage over egoistic exploitation. And there is clearly much truth in this second speech as there was in the first speech.

However, not all madness is harmful. Both the first and the second discourse fail to recognize this point. In fact, Socrates proposes in the third speech that there are four forms of divinely inspired but beneficial madness. There is oracular, cathartic, and musical madness—that is, a madness “of the Muses” that makes the best poets; inspired erotic madness is the fourth form of madness. So, then, while neither denying the evils caused by wanton *eros* nor the relatively better but still inadequate benefits of worldly self-interest, this third speech presents us with an erotic madness that, because it is divinely inspired, can confer benefits much greater than those conferred by the sane and worldly rationality of the non-erotic lover, the man of “virtuous” self-interested rational restraint.

Now begins the account of a third type of verbal psychagogy. Socrates says that the normal beginning of *eros* for all in this world is the sight of a beautiful body. (Plato is thinking of the beginning of homoerotic love primarily, probably because such love does not involve problems of marriage and children and because woman, alas for Plato, is a being decidedly inferior to males. Socrates’s own wife and children are mentioned but play no role in the dialogues.) Then those by nature fit to be philosophers (and rhetors) feel the stimulation that may lead to the growth of whatever is left of their wings. (The implicit analogy is to sexual erection.) And if these are inspired by the gods whom their psyches have followed in the prior life, they shudder in vague recollection of the sight of beauty itself as an existent and seek out a youth they can benefit “by persuasion and
education” (253 B). If the lovers can turn from sex (or, as the Symposium notes, in heterosexual pairings, from bodily begetting)—that is, if they can tame the unruly black horse of their psyches—they can become a potential source of the greatest benefits for each other.

The capture of the beloved, which is here an imaginative way to think of the process of the best type of psychagogy, is then described. The lover’s goodwill generates friendship. His eyes stimulate and water the wings of the beloved who then begins to love, but the beloved knows not what he loves. And if, which is a very big “if,” they can avoid unruly sexual passions, they may turn to other loves, the love of discourse, of learning, and perhaps also of wisdom. And so they will live and die, Socrates says, as light and winged, adding that “neither human wisdom nor divine inspiration can confer upon man any greater blessing than this” (256B).

Thus, inspired eros can, as if “winged” (in Greek, pteros), lift one to other, higher, and finer forms of desire in friendship: philology, and philomathy and, even for a blessed few, philosophy itself, which, to the extent possible in this life, concerns an ever-so-brief intuition of the existents. In this way, the erotically inspired philosophic lover will be a source of the greatest of all possible benefits in his relations with the beloved. There will be no question now of niggardliness or cool selfishness in the motives of such a lover. As mentioned before, to be understood fully, this transformation of sexual eros to pteros, its winged or inspired form, requires knowledge of the immortality of psyche and a myth that explains several other things: the life of psyche among the existents before embodiment, the strife of desire and rational control within human psyches leading to the loss of wings (again before embodiment), the potential for the growth of wings in some who are fit for philosophy, the types of human psyche, and a description of how the beloved is captured and benefited, this last matter being, as mentioned, a mythic account of true and ideal psychagogy.
Let us consider for a moment Plato’s brief attempt at a summary of the types of human psyche, a general social psychology, if you will, based on a decrease in the recollection of the existents. A few mortals whose psyches in their pre-embodied life have seen the most of the existents retain something of their wings. After embodiment and if inspired, they can still vaguely recollect the existents. These are the lovers of beauty, the philosophers, and these are the highest type of human being, the first of nine types. The rest, divided into eight general types, have little or no capacity to rise up by recollecting the existents: these are (2) lawful kings and warrior rulers; (3) politicians, businessmen, and financiers; (4) the gymnast or one who cares for the body; (5) the prophet or leader of mystic rites; (6) poets and imitative artists; (7) craftsmen and farmers; (8) sophists or demagogues; and (9) tyrants. Presumably these non-philosophical types are moved somewhat toward what is better and truer only by direct inspiration of the gods, by the personal verbal psychagogy of a philosopher like Socrates, by writers such as Plato, or by philosophically guided legislation. At this point only the words of Plato’s Socrates will do:

For, as has been said, every soul of man has by the law of nature beheld the realities, otherwise it would not have entered into a human being, but it is not easy for all souls to gain from earthly things a recollection of those realities, either for those which had but a brief view of them at that earlier time, or for those which, after falling to earth, were so unfortunate as to be turned toward unrighteousness through some evil communications and to have forgotten the holy sights they once saw. Few then are left which retain an adequate recollection of them; but these when they see her any likeness of the things of that other world, are stricken with amazement and can no longer control themselves; but they do not understand their condition, because they not clearly perceive. Now in the earthly copies of justice and temperance and the other ideas which are precious to souls there is no light,
but only a few, approaching the images through the darkling organs of sense, behold in them the nature of that which they imitate, and these few do this with difficulty. (249E-250B)

Thus, the inspired philosophical psyche alone is in a position to become a true and ideal rhetor, a psychagogue capable of benefiting others. So the first part of the dialogue concludes.

Then, in the second part of the dialogue, Socrates and Phaedrus descend from these mythical and idealizing flights of intelligence and imagination to discuss the question of what makes for good and bad writing. Here using the recantation speech, the third one of the dialogue, as a positive model, Plato’s Socrates presents a critique of the first two speeches and of the teachings of contemporary rhetoricians.

Allow me to summarize the major points in this second part, beginning with the definition of what rhetoric is. It seems best defined when Socrates asks Phaedrus this leading question: “Is not rhetoric in its entire nature an art [\textit{techne}] which leads the soul [or, more literally, ‘a certain psychagogic art’] by means of words, not only in law courts and the various other public assemblages, but in private companies as well? And is it not the same when concerned with small things as with great, and, properly speaking, no more to be esteemed in important than in trifling matters?” (261A-B). Plato’s Socrates clearly thinks that rhetoric as an art pertains not only to forms of public oratory but also, to the surprise of Phaedrus, to any and all personal and private discourses as well. The reason for this extension of rhetoric to virtually the entire range of discourse is that Plato very likely has in mind the conversational (or dialectical question-answer) discourse he is at the moment having with Phaedrus. The unexpressed but clear implication is that all Plato’s dialogues are forms of rhetoric: they all fall within the scope of rhetoric defined as psychagogic speech. Philosophy is rhetoric—verbal psychagogy, sometimes oral, sometimes, as in the dialogues, written.
Now the basic thesis in this second part of the dialogue is that psychagogy in speaking and writing is truly good (not merely powerfully effective) only when it is philosophy and, as a corollary, that writers or speakers are truly good only when they are philosophers. And this means that rhetoric and the rhetor, whether a writer or speaker, must be understood in the context of the inspired *eros* of psyche. Such *eros* leads one, a lover, to engage another, the beloved, in kind of friendship that, if rightly managed, although stimulated by physical manly beauty, can lead away from sex to philology (a liking for conversational discourse, dialectical or oratorical), philomathy (a liking for leaning), and to philosophy (a liking for wisdom). Readers of *Phaedrus* will see that, while Socrates is evidently attracted to Phaedrus, the *eros* that binds them is already chiefly philological, not sexual. Psychagogy (or persuasion) is here understood as a form of non-sexual erotic interaction initiated by philocaly (love of beauty) and moving from there to philology and to philosophy. (The only writers to carry on this sort of thinking are the medieval writers Martianus Capella and, much later, John of Salisbury.)

This thesis entails several other tenets, which lead up to it and together help us to round out Plato’s rhetorical thinking regarding the right use of speech. The first is that because the force or function of all speech is psychagogy, which means the leading of psyche, one must know what its motives are and where to lead psyche—and, need we add, where to lead psyche if it is to avoid strife, deception, and deceit. Psyche must be led to the truth. We already have been told what two things move psyche in the speech of Phaedrus: the innate desire for pleasure stimulated by the perception of beauty and the acquired rational opinion of what is best, which is worldly self-advantage, the conventional opinion. In the second speech, given by Socrates, the same thesis is developed further. The desire for mutual satisfaction of self-interest is better than egoistic and rapacious *eros*. But the better *eros* for the satisfaction of mutual self-interest guided by what is thought best is not sufficient. In the third speech, still another *eros* appears, an
inspired desire for the truth that is wisdom. _Eros_ motivates psyche, and there are different forms of _eros_. But as the third speech of Socrates have shown, there is an _eros_ that becomes winged, takes on other forms—philocaly, philology, philomathy, and, in some people at least, philosophy, which means attempts to know “the existents” (_ta onta_) or the real things. They provide the greatest benefit of psyche. So, then, rhetoric is an inspired leading of the soul in _eros_, knowledge of soul and _eros_ as a source of thought and action, good and bad, inspired and wanton, and it must be led toward the true and the truly good for psyche. This answer of Plato, we recognize now, involves ontological issues about the really real things involved in discourse, the truly good and the truly beautiful. That is, all responsible rhetors must be lovers of a divinely inspired sort. Thus the second motive, rational sense of mutual self-interest, is elevated to a new plane.

The second tenet is this: to insure progress in beholding the truth about the matter of speech, it is necessary to employ the dialectical reasoning procedures of definition and division. The first synthesizes the many perceptions of particular things in one group (a genus) and of division that distinguishes the differences among the members of the group (the species of the genus). This art of love, which is a way of understanding philosophy, is, in fact, the beneficial psychagogy of the art of rhetoric.

The third tenet is that in a true rhetoric, speeches must be adapted to the kinds of soul possessed by the listeners, just as in a medicine drugs are adapted to the bodily conditions of the patients. As mentioned, the kinds of _eros_, which differ according to the degree of contact with the ideas by psyche in its pre-corporeal life, have been used to distinguish different classes of men by, let us say, their dominant desire. The charter for psychology in rhetorical thinking is here established.

The fourth is that good speeches, like the parts of the living body of a man, have an internal structure or _kosmos_. Now it is important to note that Plato does not bother to describe the techniques of rhetorical verbal management here in _Phaedrus_ or in any other
dialogues. Aristotle and Cicero will. Plato’s critiques of the untenable philosophic vision of sophistic rhetoricians made their concentration on verbal techniques of expression in rhetorical handbooks appear nugatory. Still, he might have provided an idealized conspectus of the laws of suasive verbal expression as he did for the laws of Megara in the *Laws*. But he did not. There is no sure telling why. Maybe all he felt obliged to do was leave the verbal artistry of the dialogues for us to seek out and imitate as we please. The fact remains he did not do it—to our present knowledge at least. My own sense of the matter is that Plato avoided the technical treatment of language management because, as the next section of the dialogue points out by implication, true rhetoric and the language it employs do not themselves grant the possession of the truth. Rather, the inspired speaker can by words only lead another to the goal, the truth, though it may have a bewitching power to enchant another, as the speech of Lysias enchanted Phaedrus—or as the speech of a Gorgias and sophistic rhetoricians can enchant others.

The fifth and last tenet of the dialogue is that, in the search for the truth, writing has serious deficiencies when compared to oral discussion. The dialogue concludes with a depreciation of writing. Socrates claims that written words have only minor worth. The reason is that they cannot alter as needed to clarify themselves to one who does not yet understand. However, in the oral exchange of question and answer in philosophical conversation (or dialectic), such alterations can be made. Unlike writing, oral dialectics allows the exchange of questions and answers. (This is a subject we will return to in later chapter in Part II on memory and invention, but presumably Plato’s own dialogues are a somewhat acceptable form of writing since they may stimulate oral dialectics by imitating it.) Here, we should realize that sophists like Gorgias often circulated written models speeches for their students to memorize and imitate, like the speech of Lysias that Phaedrus repeats at the beginning of the dialogue. Plato obviously preferred oral dialectics involving at its best the recollection or intuition of existents to the memorization and
imitation of speeches composed by professional sophists for those who would succeed however they might in public life.

**Conclusion**

As mentioned, Plato did not present in *Phaedrus* or in any other dialogue an analysis of the management of rhetorical expression in words like those provided in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, in several dialogues of Cicero, and, of course, in the rhetorical manuals of the classical tradition. Plato makes no such effort and depreciates those made by others. He could have done so in the *Phaedrus*. But we get instead his warning about written speech. The fact that both Aristotle and Cicero include detailed treatments of the techniques of managing words is an indication of differing sorts of rhetorical thinking. These will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Let us here attempt a quick summary of Plato’s rhetorical thinking.

For Plato, rhetoric is a psychagogic art of words, used in discourse public or private. (Note the private scope allowed to rhetoric.) It is an art identifiable with philosophy both as therapy of the psyche or soul and as a daimonically inspired form of winged eros (pteros is Plato’s word). Pteros leads the inspired psyche to the Existentes as the basis of imitative verbal idealization in leading others toward true justice in both individual life and in the corporate life of cities, but always to the extent allowable in specific and limited human situations. Idealization is the chief verbal form of rhetorical thinking and expression within the dialogue, oral or written. But as *Phaedrus* indicates, the written dialogue, like any form of discourse within it, is limited as a psychagogic medium of inquiry and discovery. This limitation is also responsible for the depreciation in the same dialogue of the techniques of language management in discourse.

Now all these notions are developed in the context of Plato’s reflections about psyche, the true center of his rhetorical thinking, as a self-moving, hence immortal entity
needing justice in this life for a good life here and hereafter among the gods. The gods, like men, are psyches, but they are purer sorts, not mixed with the amount of matter in human bodies. Thus, death and the ills of life fall within the scope of Plato’s rhetorical thinking (and his philosophy). But if psyche is the central reality of Plato’s rhetorical thinking, justice is, according to the Gorgias, the true subject matter of rhetoric. For justice, a form of kosmos like other virtues, is the remedy of the strife, deceit, and delusion within the individual psyche (see Phaedrus and the Republic), within cities (Laws), and within the conflicting elements of the cosmos (Timaeus). It is the key to the grasp of truth and the issue of human death and its allied religious and theological implications.

In sum, during life in the world, the specific means of remedial verbal therapy needed for human psyche is, according to Plato, a rational critique of representation or imagery—the images or likenesses of the existents that sensible material things are and those that are opinions generated in common speech about conceivable things like justice, virtue, and piety. The critique is needed because of the deceptions and strife that the representations, which necessarily fall short of the model existents, can and do cause. Its most familiar instance, which I have not stressed here, is the critique of poetry and poetic entertainments like rhapsody in the Ion, Republic, and Laws.

Granted all this, there remains, in my judgment, an unresolved, perhaps unresolvable, difficulty at the core of Plato’s rhetorical thinking. The rationally knowable good comes to be known by an intuition granted by divine gift or inspiration to only a few exceptional men, the philosophers. That good is not fully realizable for all other mortal men. Why? The reason is the impediments to realization owing to the presence of matter in the constitution of all things in the cosmos, including the human psyche. Still the important point here is that the critique of the knowledge of things opined by most all men and of their ways of life is not possible without some access to the rationally true good. Thus, there remains only the possibility of approximating it in lesser ways in the
personal and political life of men in this cosmos.

In a situation like ours today, where speech and vision are transmitted through electronic means of many sorts and for many motives—not only in political talk, but also in the commercialized and politicized image-making of movies, plays, and novels, and the choristry of singing and dancing—such a mode of rhetorical thinking as Plato’s, in which an orientation to true good is fundamental, seems absolutely necessary, whatever we may think of the ontology of “the existents” or the specific forms of rational and mythic idealization formulated by Plato to combat strife and deception in politics, which for him includes theology, ethics, and psychology.
CHAPTER 5

Aristotle (384-322 BCE):
The Derhetorization of Philosophy and the Triumph of
Formalism in Rhetorical Thinking

With Aristotle and his rhetorical thinking we can be briefer than we can with Plato. Aristotle’s thought is much less complex than Plato’s. Moreover, Aristotle’s thought is much better known and thus more easily summarized. But we are concerned here only with Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking, not the thought of his entire extant writings.

Aristotle was for many years a member of, not just a student in, Plato’s Academy. But as all classicists know, however much he owed to Plato, he proved to be a thinker different from the master and developed his own understanding of philosophy. It should not surprise us that as Aristotle differed from Plato in his concept and methods of philosophy, so he differed in his rhetorical thinking. But here lies an undiscovered, or, at least, insufficiently explored country: the whole depth and range of the differences in their rhetorical thinking and what significance those differences had and have still. These are the key issues of this chapter.

My basic response to them may here be previewed by the reader. I have tried to show in the previous chapter that the Platonic critique of rhetoric was a critique of sophistic rhetoric only. Far from being an inveterate opponent of rhetoric, Plato was a champion of a new sort of rhetoric. Plato made rhetoric integral to philosophy as a therapy of psyche. The integration was accomplished by interrelating notions of psyche, kosmos,
and *eros* in a conception of being that, when daimonically led in conversation, led others to intuitions of the Existent or Ideas, not always clearly but always under the general aspect of the Existent or Idea of the Good or the Beautiful. From these intuitions, now taken as paradigms of verbal idealization, there comes a written representation of oral dialectical or dialogical discourses, concerned with matters of justice and legislation as the resolution of strife, delusion, and deception. The dialogues seem designed to encourage others to adopt virtues (excellences) in both private and public matters and in both this life as well as in a life after death among other men and gods. And in these dialogues there is a verbal artistry of language management at once clear and logical, poetic, imaginative, charming, and often sublime. For Plato rhetoric was the verbal psychagogy of philosophy itself and could in principle be used, *mutatis mutandis*, in any form of public or private discourse. Thus were rhetoric and philosophy integrated. But Plato did not produce a special rhetoric of oratorical forms of discourse, though he left scattered throughout his dialogues many examples of oratorical address. Nor did he produce an analysis of language management, though again the language of his dialogues is there for any reader to analyze for himself.

Now there is an opinion, not infrequently encountered, that Plato left us a destructive critique of rhetoric but that Aristotle countered Plato’s negative views and gave us a constructive and philosophically positive analysis of rhetoric. This is as wrong a view of Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking as is the usual view of Plato’s hostility to rhetoric. But let us try to get a fuller sense of what the issues concerning their differences are and what they involve—the “undiscovered country” I mentioned—before offering such claims and arguments as the title of this chapter hints at: Aristotle’s derhetorization, if one will permit this word, of philosophy and the means he observed of securing belief in public discourse; that is, his formalistic analysis of the patterns of reasoning, emotion, and expression in civic oratory, rhetoric being for him merely the acquired mental power to perceive which of these patterns is applicable in a given oratorical situation.
The Aristotelian Corpus and His Rhetorical Thinking

Aristotle wrote much that has not survived. One of Aristotle’s early matters of inquiry as a young member of Plato’s Academy was rhetoric and those matters of inquiry Plato closely allied to rhetoric. These are (in the catalogue of Diogenes Laertius as found in the Oxford translation, now also available in a convenient two-volume edition published by Princeton U. Press and edited by Jonathan Barnes): four books On Justice, one book On Rhetoric or Grylus, two books On the Statesman, one book On the Sophist, one book called Menexenus, one book called Eroticus, one book called Symposium, one book On the Soul or Eudemus, and one book called Protrepticus. And all of what has survived of his works was apparently redacted by others. Among the lost works were dialogues, nineteen of them according to Diogenes Laertius. The written dialogue, we know, was designed by Plato to make known his rhetorical-philosophic thinking and to encourage the imitation of its practices by others in their own circumstances, public or private. Aristotle’s use of that literary genre would by itself seem to indicate that he attempted something like Plato’s rhetorical project as I have described it in the previous chapter. The indication of likeness seems even stronger when we take account of the subjects treated in these lost dialogues. Here is an array of topics that are central to Platonic rhetorical thinking.

To assume that Aristotle’s lost dialogues were an integration of rhetoric with philosophy such as is found in Plato’s dialogues is probably too much. And though they cover some of the same subjects as Plato’s dialogues did, that does not mean that Aristotle’s dialogues offered the same tenets regarding those subjects. Nor does it imply that Aristotle managed the form of dialogue as did Plato. The likelihood is that Aristotle may simply have shown his differences from Plato in these dialogues. But one thing is sure: the differences in their rhetorical thinking are made clear in the extant treatises of Aristotle. And what do these treatises, as genres of writing, tell us? (I am now speaking
The basic thesis of this chapter is that these so-called acroamatic treatises of Aristotle appear to be of a form of writing that indicates a complete derhetoricizing, if I may so put it, of the philosophizing done within them. And this goes for the Rhetoric. Unlike a dialogue of Plato, the Rhetoric of Aristotle seems not to be psychagogic. It is a special sort of scientific treatise, as I will show. Moreover, in Aristotle’s Rhetoric there is no daimonically inspired eros that leads one by verbal means toward ontological knowledge. For Aristotle philosophy has a different meaning. It is a way of life leading to science, and science is threefold—theoretic, practical and productive. These distinctions are found in Plato, but they are interrelated rather than distinguished, and they are expressed together in a single verbal form, the fictional psychagogic dialogue. In Aristotle these sciences are kept distinct, and while the theoretical sciences are nobler than the practical, and guide them from afar, the practical and productive sciences have their own very different methods and aims. For Aristotle rhetoric was an art rather than a science, yes, but it was the art of civic oratory, and he sought to found rhetoric in tested but merely probable credence or belief about fundamentally disputable matters of practical life. And while correlating its rational methods with his version of dialectics and analytics leading to the sciences and in restricting rhetoric to matters of public oratory, he sought to root the art in the common knowledge of practical affairs of the polis but governed by the practical sciences of ethics and politics, Aristotle in these ways removed rhetoric from scientific knowledge altogether, making of it a capacity for noticing appropriate means of securing belief. Although his former master Plato made rhetoric integral to the philosophizing in his dialogues, Aristotle certainly did not. Philosophy for him, at least as the extant treatises exhibit it, expels rhetoric, and this expulsion requires a little commentary. The basic explanation is that Aristotle does not have the same notion of philosophy as Plato because he does not share the same notions of verbal psychagy and eros.
How, then, does Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking in the *Rhetoric* differ from Plato’s? In three ways. The first way requires that we look Aristotle’s conception of psyche in his so-called *De anima* (*On the psyche or soul*—the Latin title is traditional), including his understanding of *orexis*, the internal desire that moves the human psyche.

To Aristotle, as we will see, the psyche is so closely linked with the body that it has little likelihood of surviving death in another life among the gods. His hylomorphic approach to the psyche, which we will explain shortly, does not allow it to be liberated as an entity itself from its bodily condition. The result is that Aristotle cannot give religious or theological scope to his rhetorical thinking, as Plato does. It remains thoroughly confined to life in the polis. The polis and politics are the true sources of psychagogy for Aristotle; rhetoric is a minor instrument of politics. A possible life after the death of the body and outside of the polis is integral to Platonic rhetorical thinking in its mythical expressions, but not to Aristotle’s. The sort of knowledge of soul developed by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* is, in fact, a practical by-product of the thinking in *De anima* and is filtered through his scientific understanding of ethics and politics. In fact, the knowledge of psyche in the *Rhetoric* seems rather like an early form of the modern social sciences, without the empirical techniques of measurement, of course, but which exclude religion and rational theology or metaphysics from its boundaries as a science. Interestingly, Aristotle never makes explicit the derivation I am claiming of the practical psychological observations in *Rhetoric* from the often tentative speculative teachings of *De anima*. Perhaps there was no need since the human psyche does not survive death. Perhaps the same reason accounts for the fact that no modern treatment of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* I know of understands the type of thinking done within it as determined by his view of the human psyche in *De anima*.

Another major difference is a consequence of the first. And this feature of Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking is what most modern treatments of his *Rhetoric* do
recognize. Aristotle conceives of rhetoric as a developed logical faculty or capability of psyche, which has nothing to do with science and philosophy, a sort of useful art but not a science. Rhetoric is merely the ability to notice the appropriate means of securing credence from others by means of spoken words, in principle about anything, but, as a matter of fact, in one or another of three forms of public oratory found in the polis. In this treatment, rhetoric essentially is a matter of forms of reasoning (Books 1 and 2) and language management (Book 3). In this last book, Aristotle makes clear that matters of style are a regrettable but necessary matter, owing to the corruption or defects of the hearers. And in this respect it is like poetry in the Poetics. Poetry indeed has a cognitive character but apparently of a low sort and mixed with the emotions. Thus, Aristotle’s rhetoric does not deal directly with things. The sciences do that. The context here for his thinking about rhetoric is his treatment of dialectics and analytics, which deal with forms of words and reasons, not things. Rhetoric has no definite subject matter, as it does in Plato, for whom rhetoric is concerned with eros, justice, and legislation, as in his Gorgias and Phaedrus. Rhetoric is not, as in Plato, a philosophic verbal psychagogy leading to intuition of the Existents, thus to real knowledge, and to the verbal expression of the appropriate form of imitation, as, for example, in the Laws. There is no imitative idealization in the Rhetoric. The standard of rationality or desire for Aristotle comes not from the Existents, which Aristotle does not accept, but from generally approved opinions (endoxa) of the majority, of the majority of the wise, or of the wisest of the wise. This is a standard that is relative and practical and culture bound—bound to the culture of the polis, unlike Plato’s true Existents.

Nevertheless, Aristotle thinks there is a loose connection between rhetoric and the practical sciences of ethics and politics. Aristotle calls rhetoric an offshoot of these sciences and what he seems to mean is that these sciences reveal important matters that ought to guide the general knowledge required by undertaking one or another of the basic forms of
public oratory, in the law courts, political assemblies, and in ceremonial ones. Philosophy for Aristotle is oriented strictly and solely to scientific knowledge but not to the therapy of psyche, as it is for Plato.

In short, it may be said that the principles of Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking are the desires examined and illustrated in Plato’s *Phaedrus*: in the first speech of Lysias (desire for utility and pleasure) and in the first speech of Socrates (a sense of excesses that are the roots of evils). The second speech of Socrates, which develops the notion of a daimonically inspired form of *eros* leading to intuition of the beautiful itself, has no counterpart in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. And while it may be said that in the *Poetics*, Aristotle allowed that the verbal mimesis of tragedy had some sort of affective and cognitive psychagogic power in leading the emotions to a catharsis of pity and fear by means of an imitation of the possible or probable in human action, these suggestive notions, which are mentioned but not at all developed by him, especially *katharsis*, play perhaps a partial role as inductive examples in his *Rhetoric*. Where *Poetics* overlaps *Rhetoric* in Aristotle’s mind is the matter of techniques of language management, the tropes and figures of discourse. Neither rhetoric nor poetics has anything to do with Plato’s *Existents*.

With this outline of the differences between Plato’s rhetorical thinking and Aristotle’s in mind, we can turn now to the details. I begin with a brief examination of the rhetorically significant matters in *De anima*. Within the framework of these matters, I will then outline the rhetorical psychology in *Rhetoric*, and then finally proceed to the formalist rational context of his thinking about rhetoric in the light of forms of ratiocination called dialectics in *Topics* and demonstration (*apodeixis*) in the *Analytics* and *Sophistics*.

Part of the problem here, I am sure, has been the general failure in modern scholarship to comprehend that to Plato philosophy and true rhetoric are one thing, inseparable. Showing this inseparability was the burden of the previous chapter. The verbal psychagogy of the dialogues and the kinds of living discourse they implicitly
promote either in public discourses called oratory or in private discourses are opposed to any form of sophistic rhetorical thinking and oratorical practice. Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking also differs substantially from any previous or existing sophistic rhetorical thinking and practice. But for him, as we will see, philosophy and true rhetoric are very different things, separable, in fact, to a very large degree.

A Rival Understanding of Philosophy: the Antidosis of Isocrates

I do not wish to discuss the controversial issue whether Aristotle in these early works was or was not a follower of Plato. What is not controversial is that both Plato and Aristotle had to confront a rival version of philosophy that Isocrates had promoted in his school. (Isocrates’ school opened in 393 BCE, several years before the Academy was founded in 386 BCE, and also several years before Aristotle, then eighteen years old, became a member in 367 BCE.) That rival version of philosophy was best expressed in a discourse called Antidosis. The speech, based on a fictional legal issue that led to Isocrates’ being hauled into court for corrupting the young men of Athens, is modeled on Plato’s Apology of Socrates. In it Isocrates provides a defense of his own way of life as a teacher or sophist who became very wealthy by training many men of the future leaders of the city of Athens by instructing them in an art of discourse Isocrates calls philosophy. It seems that Aristotle’s Protrepticus, an exhortation to philosophy as he thought of it, is meant to respond to Isocrates.

The Protrepticus survives in some measure by being paraphrased or quoted by Iamblichus, a third-century (CE) Platonist who wrote a protrepticus of his own modeled on Aristotle’s now lost work of that name. From the surviving fragments of Iamblichus translated in the Oxford edition republished by Princeton, it appears that Aristotle had a concept of philosophy radically different from that of Isocrates. There is no evidence in the so-called fragments of the lost Protrepticus that Aristotle thought that philosophy involved,
as it unquestionably does for Isocrates, training in political discourse.

Isocrates (436-338 BCE) studied with some of the greatest Sophists of his day, including the two most famous, Gorgias and Protagoras. He began his career as a professional writer of court speeches for others, a career he untimely renounced. A weak voice and a fear of large audiences excluded him from public life, but he was a great champion of Hellenic culture and advocated a Panhellenic sense to philosophy as he thought of it, as a means of cultural unity among the Greek cities against the barbarians. In this respect, Isocrates is a true disciple of Aeschylus in the *Eumenides*. In writings he published, he tried to distinguish his sense of this Panhellenism and the arts by which it was to be fostered from the view of the Sophists (those who cultivated “eristics”), a group that included the members of the Academy. But his greatest initiative was to found a school in 392 which trained civic leaders who were public orators and advocates of Isocrates’ political and cultural views. (Plato opened his Academy six years later in 367.) Together with his rhetorical teachings, his political and cultural views constituted what Isocrates called “philosophy.” He and his school were very successful, and Isocrates became a very rich man: “I do not, however, think it proper to apply the term ‘philosophy’ to a training which is no help to using in the present either in our speech or in our actions, but rather would call it a gymnastic of the mind, but preparation for philosophy” (*Antidosis* 266). Isocrates has in mind here the investigations of the *physiologoi* of “Empedocles [who holds that] that the sum of things is made up of four, either strife and love operating among them; Ion, of not more than three; of Alcmaeon, of only two; Parmenides and Melissus, of one; and Gorgias of none at all.” He then clarifies what philosophy is:

For since it is not in the nature of man by to attain a science by the passion of which we can know positively what we should do or we should say, in the next resort I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of
conjecture to arrive generally at the best course, and I hold that man to be a philosopher who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight.

(Antidosis 27)

Clearly, Aristotle has a different understanding of philosophy. And the first expression of that different understanding seems to be a work (probably a dialogue) called *Protrepticus*, an exhortation to philosophy but now understood as the pursuit of scientific knowledge (*episteme*).

**Principles of Aristotle’s Rhetorical Thinking**

Over the course of years Aristotle composed several school “lectures” on rhetoric. Although composed at different times of his life, they were put together after his death by some editor or redactor, who then divided them into three books collectively called the *Rhetoric*. The resulting peculiarities and incongruities of the *Rhetoric* have been mentioned by many of its editors and translators. We will not go into these matters here. But all editors and commentators generally agree that Aristotle tried to give rhetoric a newly justified role in public life. Now the *Rhetoric* has been so often translated and its basic tenets so often summarized that there is no need to do so here. What is important is to discover the underlying principles that account for the rhetorical thinking the work embodies. I can summarize one of the underlying principles of Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking without much trouble, for it has been recognized by others: its logical formalism. This accounts for many familiar tenets of his *Rhetoric*.

Now Aristotle himself notes that rhetoric is concerned with forms of reasoning, not with a specific subject matter. Thus, the attempt he makes to correlate the easy forms of oratorical reasoning in logical enthymemes and examples with the stricter ratiocinative forms of deduction in the *Topics* and *Prior Analytics* and of induction as in the *Posterior*
These matters are considered in Book 1 of the Rhetoric. There are several consequences to this formalism in Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking.

One is the treatment of the kinds of hearers in Book 2 of the Rhetoric. This analysis is an early non-empirical form of social psychology. It provides no analysis of psyche itself. Another consequence of Aristotle’s rhetorical formalism is its analysis of style in Book 3, perhaps the most influential part of the entire work. It is the paradigm for rhetorical treatises all through antiquity. For to compose a “rhetoric” ever after Aristotle means to write a manual about how to write or speak. There are still other consequences of rhetorical formalism: the doctrines of genres of oratory and the three modes of gaining “credence.” In the Rhetoric Aristotle claimed that rhetoric was indeed an art; it was an art that was a counterpart (literally an antistrophe, or movement of mind opposite) to the dialectics of inquiry found in his treatises, Topics, and Sophistics. Aristotle defined it as “the capacity or faculty (dunamis) of seeing in any given case the available means of ‘credence’ [faith or trust; in Greek pistis, though many translators prefer—wrongly, in my opinion—‘persuasion’].” “Every other art,” he added, “can instruct or persuade about its own particular subject matter; for instance, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes . . . . But rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us.” (Rhetoric 1.2; 1355b 25-35: trans. W. Rhys Roberts).

However, Aristotle, it seems, must have been uncomfortable with such an open-ended notions of rhetoric. Why else does he smoothly and swiftly confine it to three forms of public civil oratory, legal, political, and ceremonial? Such confinement to these three genera of oratory is significant, for it has done more than anything else Aristotle has written to blind all who followed him, which is almost the whole of antiquity as well as we in modern times, to the wider scope of rhetoric and rhetorical thinking apparent in Plato’s Phaedrus. Aristotle has led us all into thinking that rhetoric and rhetorical thinking
concern only public oratory and not psychagogic discourse of whatever kind.

The means of gaining or producing “credence,” often translated as persuasion, were, according to Aristotle, three: the speaker, the speech, and the emotions of the hearers. In fact, there is not much to praise about the listing of these notions, clearly obvious to anyone. But they have been influential over the centuries, if only because Aristotle was the apparently the first to formulate the factors that in verbal suasion are experientially observable by anyone. What was not observed or done by anyone before him was the reflexive analysis of the sort of reasoning found in public oratory, the contrast it presents to dialectics, as noted above, and the analogy of this reasoning to his other treatises on reasoning for the sake of scientific knowledge called *Analytics*. It was in the matters of reasoning in inquiry and proof for the sake of scientific knowledge and in the formal analysis of the procedures of oratorical style that Aristotle showed himself a genius.

Now Aristotle’s contrasting of rhetoric to dialectics and analytics, his defining the art of rhetoric as a faculty or capability, his confining of it to three genres of oratory, his noting the three basic means of securing credence, and his analyzing of the reasoning done in oratory—all these things are overt signs to us of a type of rhetorical thinking whose principles are very different from Plato’s. My aim in this chapter is to make keener an understanding of Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking as exhibited in the *Rhetoric*. But formalism, while it is a basic principle of Aristotle’s rhetorical thought, is not the most important principle.

**The Treatises *De Anima* and *Eudemus***

The *De Anima* contains Aristotle’s final thoughts about the soul or psyche of human beings as well as other forms of life. But according to Cicero (*De Divinatione* 1.25.53-54), Aristotle wrote another work called *Eudemos* (now lost) about the soul. (Sometimes it was
simply called *On the soul.*) Eudemus, a friend of Aristotle, became very ill while he traveled to Pherae in Thessaly. Eudemus then had a dream in which a beautiful youth made several predictions about the future: that he would soon get well, that the tyrant Alexander would die in a few days, and that Eudemus would return home five years later. Cicero then writes, “And so, indeed, the first two prophecies . . . were immediately fulfilled by the recovery of Eudemos and the death if the tyrant . . . . But at the end of five years, when in reliance on dream, he hoped to return to Cypress from Sicily, he was killed in battle before Syracuse. Accordingly, the dream was interpreted to mean that when the soul left the body it then had returned home.” (1.25.53). Such a story, if believed by Aristotle, implies a view of the soul nowhere else to be found among Aristotle’s extant wrings. Such implied views of the soul, especially its life after death, are in fact impossible for one who finds the soul not the recipient of dream prophecies but, as the classic definition of *De anima* puts it: “[T]he soul must be a substance in the sense of being the form of a natural body” (412a20-21).

There is no need to go into the entire argument about the human psyche in *De anima*. It is merely a bodily form, not an entity capable of own life, as in Plato. What is important in it for Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking, as expressed mainly in *Rhetoric*, is the conception of the psyche as bodily form and of what moves psyche when united to the body. The natural desires called *orexseis* are what move the living material thing. Now it must be said that nowhere in the *De anima* does Aristotle think like a rhetorician, formally interested in verbal psychagogy. What he says about the essence of psyche or what moves it does not issue from an interest in psychagogically powerful speech and allied matters. His formal interest is rational science. Knowledge of the human psyche or soul is, as he says, an especially honorable and precious part of scientific knowledge, which aims solely to know without interest in some practical application. It is a part of physics, the
philosophical science of animal life in the material, visible cosmos, and extends our knowledge of truth: “The knowledge of the soul admittedly contributes greatly to the advance of truth in general, and above all, to our understanding of Nature, for the soul is in some sense the principle of animal life” (402a5-7). Nevertheless, his conclusions about what the psyche is and what moves it from within are pertinent to what the Rhetoric reveals explicitly about what Aristotle calls pistis (credence or, as many prefer, persuasion) and in what moves psyche to credence. For the belief common to both Plato and Aristotle is that the psychagogic powers of human speech, which are the defining interests of a rhetorician, are understandable primarily as matters of the human psyche. Thus, as the understanding of psyche differs, so does the understanding of responsible verbal psychagogy and its allied arts of expression.

However, Aristotle, unlike Plato, clearly tries to circumscribe the scope of rhetoric by limiting it to forms of public oratory, legal, political, and ceremonial. It is noteworthy that he does not include within the scope of rhetoric the sort of private discourses Plato allowed, including philosophical dialogues. Moreover, he clearly says that rhetoric is an offshoot of the practical philosophical sciences of ethics and politics, thus indicating a clear hegemony of these practical sciences over rhetoric. Note the role of common experiential knowledge Aristotle allows here. The means of persuasion, he went on to explain, are three: ethos, that is, the public image or reputation of the speaker or writer; pathos, or the feelings and opinions of the audience or readership; and logos, or the rational arguments about the subject matter. So, then, the rhetorical speaker or writer has to be able to think well, to understand human character in its various forms, and to understand the emotions, their names and causes (see Rhetoric 1.2; 1356a). All this is a significant advance in understanding, much of it in accord with Plato’s insistence upon knowledge of the soul.

But it is not without shortcomings. In addition to being a philosophical scientist, Aristotle, we know, was a logician, a man interested in forms of reasoning and rational
methodology. Two of his writings (the so-called Prior and Posterior Analytics) were devoted to the logic of demonstration (deduction and induction) by which scientific knowledge can be established. Dialectics, treated in the treatise called Topics, and rhetoric in his Rhetoric were not to Aristotle scientifically demonstrative. They concerned only probable reasoning about opinable matters most people dealt with. The Sophistic concerned deceptively faulty reasoning.

In the dialectical discourse usually identified with philosophy (taken in the restricted epistemic or scientific sense of the word), all conflicts of opinion involve one or more key questions about things. The question may be whether something is or is not (a question of existence or fact). It may be what something is and how it is different from other similar things (a question of nature or essence). It may be whether something is good or bad, useful or useless, etc. (a question of quality). Or it may be why something is the way it is (a question of the causes that explain its actuality or operation). Resolving one or more of these questions sets one on the road toward scientific knowledge. The “seeing” of the most fundamental answers (called principles) concerning some problem is the beginning of episteme. These principles then help to draw the mind to other conclusions that together establish the stable scientific answer to the question.

But in Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking, the resolution of problems is not simply a matter of acquiring and transmitting scientific practical knowledge. There is an important difference between the various ways of reasoning that leads to differing kinds of knowledge, which we can call the sciences, and the reasoning involved in securing “credence” (pistis). In his Rhetoric (1.1.1354a), Aristotle observed that rhetoric is the antistrophe of dialectic. This is a metaphor, identifying the rational processes of dialectic and rhetoric with the back and forth processions (strophe and antistrophe) of the chorus in Greek drama. The metaphor is insightful, implying much, some of which Aristotle himself does not explain to us but is instructive for us to consider. Rhetoric and dialectic, we may
say, move over the same ground (subject matter) but go in different directions. Dialectic, in other words, generates the many sciences and arts of things, each with special subjects, methods, and instruments. Only secondarily is dialectic or even history interested in moving the minds and hearts of others toward whatever in scientific or in historical knowledge enhances awareness of the basis of human agreement, activates new desire, and generates new hope, thus making persuasion possible. Accordingly, in his Rhetoric, Aristotle attends carefully to the reasoning of public orators and tries to relate their loose, informal modes of reasoning in oratory to the stricter logical procedures of scientific demonstration and dialectics. At the same time, he emphasizes that practical affairs usually cannot be approached in the same way as are the more reliable modes of scientific inquiry because rhetoric must deal with the attitudes and opinions of the addressees. Practical affairs, moreover, are far more variable than the things of science, and the same sort of certitude about variable things as comes from the study of invariable things cannot be achieved. Rhetoric deals with such variable matters. More, it deals with the shifting attitudes and opinions of self and of addressees. Rhetorical reasoning, thus, does not yield scientific knowledge.

Clearly, Aristotle, like Plato, is concerned with establishing the rational basis of rhetoric to make it responsible. We have seen that he is aware of the notion, which was often expressed by the sophists, that any subject calling for persuasion falls within the scope of rhetoric. But this unbounded notion appears to look dangerous to Aristotle. For he quickly restricts the scope of rhetoric to three forms of public oratory: legal (forensic), political (deliberative), and ceremonial (epideictic). This restriction clearly enables him to relate the ordinary probable opinions voiced in oratory, as distinguished from their stricter scientific verbal formulations, to the more reliable sciences of ethics and politics, which also deal with public life, while permitting him also to connect the verbal techniques of rhetoric to poetics. Nevertheless, in this attempt to make rhetoric a method of oratorical
reasoning and speaking that is dependent upon practical science for reliable content, Aristotle’s rhetorical thought, like Plato’s, tends to divorce words from things, but in a different way from Plato’s. Aristotle tends to empty rhetoric of any knowledge belonging to it alone except for the management of language and the general modes of persuasive reasoning.

Like Plato, Aristotle too disparages the care and management of words (Rhetoric, Book 3), although he grants that it has its place in the rhetorical art, which for him is chiefly about modes of reasoning. Thus, while Plato encloses rhetoric within philosophy, making the two nearly indistinguishable, Aristotle makes rhetoric an instrumental adjunct of philosophical logic; it is a faculty of mind but not a form of philosophical science. It is true that Aristotle, like Plato, considers the psychology of addressees important. But his emphasis lies elsewhere. Thus, rhetoric, like dialectics, is, in Aristotle’s definition of it, simply a faculty for producing probable arguments about things that belong to no definite science, while admitting that rhetoric draws upon the matter of ethics and politics. But Aristotle does not recognize any relation between eros and psychagogy, as Plato did. Also unrecognized is the relation of rhetoric to the knowledge to be gained from tragic human experience, which was implicit in all Plato wrote since the condemnation of Socrates and that in this book is considered the foundation of psychagogy.

There is no need to go into the entire argument about psyche in Aristotle. The De anima is important for Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking, as expressed in the Rhetoric is the conception of psyche and its natural orientations, or its basic desires shared by all humanity. Nowhere in De anima does Aristotle write like a rhetorician who is formally in verbal psychagogy. What he says about the essence of psyche and what moves it from within does not stem from interest in verbal psychagogy or in what moves it, or in allied matters. Aristotle’s interest is scientific. Knowledge of the human psyche, as he says, is an especially honorable and precious part of scientific knowledge. It is a part of physics.
without practical application concerning only the science or animal life, including humanity, while in the material visible world, and extends only to the truth of these matters: Again, “[k]nowledge of the soul admittedly contributes greatly to the advance of truth in general and, above all, to our understanding of nature, for the soul is in some sense the principle of animal life.”

Unrecognized, too, as belonging to rhetoric is something which Aristotle himself made possible: the knowledge of the interrelations of the arts and sciences so crucial in intellectual matters of dispute, for they almost always ignore the differences of object and method of study among the arts and sciences. In addition, his restriction of rhetoric to the public oratory of the Greek city-state (polis) had two decisive effects—understandable but unfortunate—upon the rhetorical tradition after Aristotle. First, the possible role of rhetoric in personal and private life, the psychotherapeutic role that Plato had allowed to philosophic rhetoric, was obscured. Second, the possible role of rhetoric for addressing those who did not live within the polis was retarded, thus making rhetoric liable to becoming the obeisant servant of civic and national interests, which remains to this day the way rhetoric is usually conceived. Ideology in this perspective rules rhetoric. In spite of all Aristotle’s efforts to rehabilitate rhetoric, he left it subordinated to ethics and politics—the politics of the polis. But the ancient polis of Aristotle and Plato was not the world. This was a basic problem. And once the enclosed worlds of the Greek city-states were replaced by a worldwide sense of human diversity in the empire of Alexander the Great, Aristotle’s rhetoric—the rhetoric of a city-state—lost its validating sociopolitical context.
CHAPTER 6

Cicero (106-43 BCE):
Ornatus, Wisdom, and the Encyclopedic Organization of Rhetorical Thinking

Many centuries after Aristotle and Alexander, Marcus Tullius Cicero was a Roman philosophical statesman and rhetorician—both a civic orator and a writer of many works. His rhetorical thinking was meant less to define and detail the expressive techniques of the art of rhetoric than to articulate the paradigm of the man who would best exercise the rhetorical art. This is the central concern of Cicero’s rhetorical thinking, which, as will become evident, ranges far beyond the traditional parts of the rhetorical arts of expression and moves into the exotic gardens of philosophy. After all, it is a particular kind of man, as speaker or writer, who commands the art. The art itself persuades no one unless actualized by someone. In this focus of attention, Cicero was Plato’s disciple.

But, unlike the Platonic rhetor-philosopher, the kind of man Cicero wanted, the perfectus orator, was to be formed above all else by the historical experiences of Rome. It was Cicero’s conviction, which was simultaneously philosophic, mythic, and historical, that Roman history was an abundant source of wisdom that neither Plato nor Aristotle, the preeminent philosophers of old Greece, knew anything about. And that wisdom involved not only a new kind of political order, called imperium by Cicero, but also a new sense of the enlarged scope of humanity, both unrecognized by the most famous of the Greeks. Empire’s scope was no longer confined to one or another of the little city-states of the Greek peninsula. It was co-extensive with the great multicultural world that had first
come in view with Alexander’s conquests. It also allowed much greater worth than did the Greek polis to the individual and to private property and embraced those who played no parts in the order of the polis—women, slaves, and barbarians. The new philosophical developments of the Hellenistic world occasioned by the new experience of cultural differences among peoples of the world, especially those of the school called the Middle Stoics, remain today under-appreciated although their relevance to the global scope of contemporary life is astonishingly apt. From innovative and eclectic thinkers such as Philo of Larissa, Panaetius, and Posidonius, Cicero inherited this global outlook and expressed it in his sense of Rome and the Roman orator.

Cicero’s masterwork, written in the winter of 55 BCE, is a long treatise in dialogue form called Three Books about the Orator (in Latin, Tres libri de oratore). In this work, through historical spokesmen who appear in the fictional dialogue, Cicero rethinks the antecedent Greek tradition of thought about rhetoric. To many of the most insightful Greeks, Plato and Aristotle among them, there appeared to be a conflict between rhetoric, as they found it practiced among their contemporaries, and the philosophical sciences—between, we might say, matters of real substance, primarily ontological, ethical, and political matters, and techniques of mere verbal form and modes of reasoning. This conflict, Cicero claims, led to a bitter divorce between words and things, between those who had skill in using words (rhetors and orators) and those who had skill in acquiring knowledge about things (philosophers). The originator of this divorce, the one who committed something like an original sin against the actual state of things, was, it is claimed, Socrates. (Not Plato, notice). The opinion of Cicero’s main character, Lucius Crassus, and the primary focus of debate among the interlocutors, is that the perfect Roman orator needs more than instruction in the formal rhetorical techniques of “effective” speaking and writing. He needs a philosophic spirit and vision based on, but not to be identified with, an education that gave him wide encyclopedic learning “in all those arts that befit a free man” (omnibus
eis artibus, quae sunt libero dignae) (De oratore 1.16.72). In fact, Crassus claims that the perfect orator is a philosopher, and the true philosopher is an orator (see De oratore 3.35.142-143). Here Cicero and Plato agree, but Plato emphasizes the man philosophic in being rhetorical while Cicero emphasizes the man rhetorical in being philosophic. Moreover, as we shall see, he attempts to bring Aristotle’s rhetorical thinking within the scope of the perfect orator.

What supports this claim of Crassus is a visionary intuition of the interconnected way all things, including mortal human beings, exist. We have already quoted the key passage in which this intuition was expressed (De oratore 3.5.19-20). In the dialogue, where this same passage occurs, Cicero represents Crassus as several times pausing in silent contemplation while his listeners wonderingly await the resumption of his discourse on style (Latin: elocutio), the part of the art of rhetoric that treats the management of words, a matter the Greek philosophers tended to depreciate as the concern of sophistic orators and formulaic rhetoricians. Then, as if trying to lift the minds’ eyes of his listeners to matters greater than those they usually consider, Crassus speaks to them of an unbreakable union of interdependence between words and things, between matters of form and matters of substance, the tongue and the heart, thinking and writing, the different arts and sciences of mankind, and, finally, among all the things that exist in the cosmos itself, none of which can conserve its own existence apart from the others. (See De oratore 3. 5.19-6.23.) This is the context in which Crassus goes on to assert his basic view: the true orator is also a philosopher and vice versa. This claim, which would have given Plato some pause and Aristotle would have only ridiculed, is just another instance of the intuited cosmic interdependence. It is the inference that wisdom implies interdependence and ornatus.

This extraordinary vision of interdependence has not only an importance for a theory of style in the rhetorical art of expression, which is the concern of Crassus in the dialogue, but also a greater social and political significance noticeable but never explicitly
discussed in the dialogue *De oratore*. It was, however, overtly expressed in several of Cicero’s other works. Three of them deserve mention here; one was called *On the Laws* (*De legibus*); the second, *On the Republic* (*De re publica*); and the third *De officiis*. In *De legibus*, the laws (*leges*; the singular is *lex*), which undergird rights (*jura*; the singular is *jus*), and justice (*justitia*) come up for discussion, and in it the following remarkable passage occurs, an expression of a new sense of human interconnection:

> But out of all the material of the philosophers’ discussions, surely there comes nothing more valuable that the full realization that we are born for Justice, and that right is based, not upon men’s opinions, but upon Nature. This fact will immediately be plain if you get a clear conception of man’s fellowship and union with his fellow-men. For no single thing is so like another, so exactly its counterpart, as all of us are to one another. Nay, if bad habits and false beliefs did not twist the weaker minds and turn them in whatever direction they are inclined, no one would be so like his own self as all men would be like all others. And so, however we may define man, a single definition will apply to all. This is a sufficient proof that there is no difference in kind between man and man; for if there were, one definition could not be applicable to all men; and indeed reason, which alone raises us above the level of the beasts . . . is invariable. . . . In fact, there is no human being of any race who, if he finds a guide, cannot attain to virtue. (*De legibus* 1. 10.30; see 1. 10.28-12.34)

The dialogue *De re publica* asserts that Rome, the center of world rule in Cicero’s time, and the Roman orator, the key player in the rule of Rome, are not the accidental results of military conquest and economic dominance, as they may seem. Rome is not a construct of force and greed. It is, in Cicero’s eyes, a requirement of nature (*natura*), that is, the requirement of a real and perceptible dynamic in human association underlying but
never fully realized in the history of mankind and the world as Cicero knew it. Cicero’s intuition of the real meaning of Rome as the rhetorical center of worldwide government is analogous to Aeschylus’ poetic vision of Athens as a model for the world in the *Eumenides*. But as we know, dimming this Ciceronian vision of Rome is the actual historical tragedy of political power struggles that put an end to Cicero’s life (he was assassinated by henchmen of Anthony) and put Rome on the path of imperialism without responsible persuasion.

But for us to recognize the nature and range of Cicero’s rhetorical thinking, we have to move outward from the central point, Cicero’s understanding of the perfect orator and the Rome that nurtured him, to the Ciceronian vision of psyche or soul and the Ciceronian organization of the mind, a sort of rhetorical encyclopedism of matters involved with psychagogy. What I mean by rhetorical encyclopedism is what Cicero in part intimated in the notion of rhetorical copiousness in discourse (*copia dicendi*), an abundant knowledge of words and things that was associated with polymathy.

According to Plato’s *Apology*, the wisdom of Socrates consisted in a verbal purgation of opinions held by others while he maintained (ironically, most readers suspect) that he was not wise. Socrates seemed to hope that knowledge of the truth of life would emerge from cross-examining others *if* they could be made to realize that they did not know. It is not an understatement to say that Socrates influenced the whole of the subsequent philosophical tradition of the ancient world. That tradition had to deal with him, his way of life, his method of inquiry, and, most importantly, its results. Who was wise? How is wisdom found? And what in fact is the content of wisdom? That is, the tradition had to spell out what knowledge of mankind, world, and language (of physics, ethics, and logic) composed wisdom, and it had to establish what certitude this knowledge, acquired by the ratiocinative procedures implicit in Socratic cross-examination, actually had. But it was not long after the death of Socrates that the
intellectual labors of the philosophers, like the emotional life of psyche, were also afflicted by troubles.

The tradition inspired by Socrates did not agree about the legacy of Socrates. Around different masters, different schools developed: Academics, Peripatetics, Cynics, Epicureans, and Stoics, to name only the major ones. The schools proposed different doctrines about the world (physics and theology), about virtue and happiness (ethics and politics), and about the reliability of the verbal and rational procedures of establishing their teachings (logic, which included both dialectics and rhetoric). The dissension of the philosophers both within and among the schools was the tragic scandal of the entire tradition. *Eris*, the dread goddess strife, did not fail to place among the philosophers a golden apple inscribed to the wise man. The great disturbances were polemics, dogmatism, lust for intellectual dominance, cynicism, and, worst of all, despair of the truth. If even the masters of philosophy could not agree, did anyone really know anything that could be relied upon? And if nothing could be relied upon, where did that leave the rhetor who would try responsibly to lead the psyche of both himself and others? The rhetor was accounted lowly since even the philosophers who were not hostile to the art of rhetoric did not grant it a status much higher than that of a commendable minor virtue of “the wise man.”

To Cicero, a Roman of the first century BCE, the post-Socratic tradition did not do full justice either to rhetorical eloquence or to wisdom because it ignored their real interdependence. In an effort to relate what belonged together, eloquence and wisdom—the tradition of rhetoric and the tradition of philosophy that Socrates so markedly influenced for the worse by separating one from the other—Cicero did two things. First, he elevated eloquence to high status among the intellectual virtues. Second, in order to synthesize wisdom and eloquence, he formulated a special historical and inventive method of surveying the philosophic tradition as an aid to rhetorical
invention in the search for the truth. These two things characterize the Ciceronian organization of the mind that made copiousness in discourse possible. It is the model for what I call rhetorical encyclopedism, and a few remarks about each of these features of mind are in order here.

In the third and final book of the dialogue *De oratore*, Cicero’s masterwork, Lucius Crassus, the author’s persona, asserts that among the sages of Greece before Socrates eloquence was, as he says, “one of the supreme virtues.” In the society of these greatest virtues, eloquence abides as an equal, except that it is the most beautiful of them all. I imagine that, among the philosophers after Socrates, this admission of an extraordinary beautiful and powerful newcomer (*Peitho*) to the high society of the philosophical virtues and their attendant mistresses, long accustomed to their own very exclusive company, would have been shocking. It enjoyed no such position in any of the post-Socratic classifications of virtues (most of which depend on Aristotle’s *Ethics*). Here is what Crassus says:

For eloquence is one of the supreme virtues—although all the virtues are equal and on a par, but nevertheless one has more beauty and distinction in outward appearance than another, as is the case with this faculty, which, after compassing a knowledge of things, gives verbal expression to the thoughts and purposes of the mind in such a manner as to have the power of driving the hearers forward in any direction in which it has applied its weight; and the stronger this faculty is, the more necessary it is for it to be combined with integrity and supreme wisdom, and if we bestow fluency of speech on persons devoid of those virtues, we shall not have made orators of them but shall have put weapons into the hands of madmen. (*De oratore* 3. 14.55)

In fact, Cicero usually does not aggrandize eloquence so boldly in insisting that it be
conjoined with wisdom. But in associating beauty with eloquence, he maintains some continuity with Plato’s understanding of *eros* and beauty as the key to psychagogy. In most other instances I know of, Cicero seems content to follow traditional peripatetic philosophical teachings in naming the virtues and in distinguishing between the moral and intellectual ones. He will associate eloquence with wisdom, the greatest intellectual virtue, but in a traditional way, as he does, for example, in *De partitione oratoria* (23.78), the handbook he wrote for his son. Here, Cicero speaks of oratorical virtues that, I assume, include eloquence, as “handmaids or companions of wisdom” (*ministrae comitesque sapientiae*). With such sentiments, no Greek philosopher of any school would likely disagree. Yet, in the same work, just a few sentences later, Cicero’s exalted notion of eloquence can be perceived behind the veils, so to speak, of traditional thinking (23.79): “[E]loquence is nothing else than wisdom speaking copiously” (*nihil enim est aliud eloquentia nisi copiose loquens sapientia*). Wisdom is evidently inseparable from speaking, and wisdom speaks—the adverb is important—*copiose*, “abundantly.” The implication is that wise eloquence speaks in a manner verbally wider, fuller in content, and better suited to the psyches even of commoners than do the philosophers. Clearly, Cicero is not thinking of eloquence as a moral virtue. It is, he seems to imply, an intellectual virtue, not just a logical faculty. Just as clearly, he is not thinking of wisdom as the Greek philosophical schools did. What distinguishes Cicero’s sense of wisdom from the Greek philosophical tradition is expressed best in the account in *De oratore* (3.15.56-24) of the rupture made by Socrates between eloquence and wisdom, the orator and the philosopher.

But there is another source to consider. In his dialogue *De Officiis* or *On Duties* (1.43.153-44.158), Cicero again tries to distinguish Greek from Roman wisdom. In this passage, rather than base the virtue of wisdom on the instinctive but individualistic desire to know, as the Greeks do, Cicero bases it on the instinctive sense of community
between all men and, be it noted, between humankind and the gods. An intuition of some essential interdependence of wisdom with eloquence is clearly one of the principles operative here in the Ciceronian organization of the mind. But to its second feature, just as important as the interdependence of wisdom with eloquence, is the method of inquiry that would remedy for the orator the ills of mind afflicting the tradition of the philosophers.

The outline of the method appears in a book Cicero called Academica. Since it has come down in drafts that are incomplete, we do not know what Cicero finally has to say about it. (See the introduction to the Loeb Library edition for a brief discussion of the extant manuscripts.) But Cicero has given us so many indications of the method in his other so-called philosophical writings that the lack of a completed second revised edition of Academica does not seem too troubling. Most readers regard it as offering an epistemological doctrine of moderate skepticism: Certain truth cannot be discovered; only probability, a likeness of the truth, lies within human competence; but such probability is reliable enough for the purposes of thought and action, even if not certainly true. Cicero identified these tenets with a school called the New Academy (the Old Academy was founded by Plato). It was only toward the end of his life—a few years before he was assassinated—that Cicero, no longer in public office, produced his “philosophical” works according to the mode of the Academics. His expressed motives were many, some personal, some cultural. He wanted to use his leisure (otium) well, to alleviate his personal troubles, and to enrich and enhance Latin culture by removing from it any presumed inferiority to Greek philosophical culture. But he had, I think, another, deeper motive still.

Today these works are read as if they were like those doctrinal works the philosophers had been producing for centuries. But considering his innovative sense of wisdom and eloquence, such a reading, in my judgment, misses the mark. Cicero
sometimes claimed to be doing in these writings nothing more than collecting extracts from the writing of others (the implication being, I think, that experience of the world—usually hard and tragic—is as important as the authoritative writings of philosophical masters). But most of all, it seems to me, Cicero hoped his philosophical writing would be an aid to the rhetor, speaker or writer. For he became convinced from his own experience and education in Greek philosophical schools that all particular disputes handled by the orator would engage in one way or another general questions and doctrines advanced in the tradition of the philosophers. Indeed the entire dialogue *De oratore* is devoted to supporting this notion.

These writings were Cicero’s way of *encyclopedically* synthesizing and making available to the rhetor the sort of thinking needed in a responsible rhetoric. By providing an encyclopedia of the philosophical tradition—composed according to the moderate and, I should add, not altogether unhealthy skepticism of the Academics—Cicero hoped they would contribute to oratory by making it possible for the rhetor to avoid the ills of dissension afflicting the sects of philosophers, to range freely and critically over the doctrinal systems of the conflicting schools, and to secure from the survey what was needed to speak responsibly and persuasively in particular disputes. The rhetor had to be put into a position to discover what was persuasively true without needless preconceptions and biases. One could call Cicero an eclectic. If so, his was an eclecticism that had to be submitted to the rigors of persuasive rhetorical argument. One could also debate whether in the end Cicero was a skeptic. I believe he was not. Close reading of the philosophical works suggests to me that Cicero was indeed interested in discovering the truth and thought it possible to make the truth persuasive though rhetorical discourse. But one will not be able find the Ciceronian true teaching in his philosophical writings. Yes, one can trace some of his preferences in them, but one will not discover a doctrine.
I suggest that for Cicero the greatest thing was the truth communicated, relating the applicable general philosophic truths (often called commonplaces by him) to the particulars involved in a situation for psychagogic speech. The truth of doctrines in their abstract philosophical purity was not his primary interest. It was important but not sufficient for psychagogy. Nor were their systematic relationships. Systematics in doctrines did not interest him as much as cogent argument arising from particular occasions. But the psychagogic truth, not just a systematic scientific truth, arises in a particular way. The way begins in skepticism of a programmatic kind, courteous but not uncritical, to keep open the possibilities of argument “on each side” (*in utramque partem* is the well-known Latin phrase) of the question, the better to see where the full persuasive truth may lie and to avoid the ills of dogmatic intellectual strife that so often impeded the possibility of persuasion.

A few remarks about the legacy of Cicero in the ancient world may be helpful here. The Roman Quintilian, the most erudite of the ancient rhetoricians, is an authority that deserves to be remembered in this brief survey. He simply defines rhetoric as the art of speaking or writing well (*Institutio oratoria* or *Oratorical Instruction*, 2.15.38), and by “well” he meant persuasively. Quintilian is rather more of a scholar, a summarizer and synthesizer of the teachings of his predecessors, than one of the major theorists of rhetoric. His *Institutio oratoria* is, nevertheless, a vast, invaluable synopsis of the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition as it had come down to him. We should go to Quintilian for information, but he does not, in my judgment, advance our understanding of the nature and scope of rhetoric.

Tacitus (c.56-c.118 CE), orator and historian, wrote a *Dialogus de oratoribus* or *Dialogue on Orators* (c.101/102) that we must also mention here. It marks the enfeebled position of the rhetorical arts and public oratory in the established imperial Roman regime. Though the regime ended the murderous civil strife of Cicero’s final years, by its
location of absolute power in divinized emperors, the regime in effect ended any sociopolitical role for rhetoric and persuasive political and legal oratory. The hope of realizing in actuality an ideal of empire in which the responsibly eloquent word would guide the sociopolitical order has been crushed by the will to power. A pax romana has been achieved, the goddess Eris tamed, but at what price? The central speaker of Tacitus’ dialogue, Curiatus Maternus, has, it seems, accepted the necessity of the imperial regime. Because the harsh strife-filled days of great orators like Cicero are gone, Maternus has given up the cultivation of the rhetorical arts for oratory and has taken to writing poetry in the genre of dramatic tragedy! (We should observe here that, when composing the dialogue, Tacitus would have been aware of the career of the younger Seneca [c.4-65 CE], philosopher, tragedian, and rhetorician. Under imperial conditions, Seneca tried to make a form of eloquence possible within a philosophy designed to counsel not only aspiring wise men but also the emperor himself, the tyrannical Nero, but again to no avail. Nero condemned him for conspiracy—unjustly, it seems—and Seneca committed suicide.) In a sense, the turn of Tacitus’ Maternus from oratory to tragic poetry signals, as perhaps Tacitus’ historical writings also do, that the rhetorical tradition that began with Corax and Tisias has ended in what gave it rise, the poetic and historical contemplation of the experience of tragedy. Would the classical tradition, phoenix-like, ever rise again? It would, yes, in Christian Europe, but it would begin to weaken in the Enlightenment and has endured near extinction from the end of the nineteenth century to our time.
CHAPTER 7
Virgil (70-19 BCE):
The *Aeneid* and the Resistance to Empire

The *Aeneid* may well be, from our angle of interest, the most revealing of the texts about the reality of global human interdependence and about the general difficulty of responsible persuasion that would give that interdependence voice in classical times or in any other time. The poem, which is a poetic rethinking of Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, exhibits a tragic conflict between the necessary universal order of peace and justice embodied in law and the personal and cultural pieties rooted in the love of one’s own things. Virgil’s Aeneas, unlike any previous ancient epic protagonist, is a man who learns to see beyond personal pieties to a distant future political good—the “empire,” that is, the international order of peace and justice through law and its discreet enforcement. Aeneas, in short, is a human version of *Peitho*, the vision of whose eyes has in this book been identified as indispensable to persuasion.

To understand that, however, we must know that for Virgil empire is something positive and desirable. The *Aeneid* has often been read as if it were merely poetic propaganda for the regime of Caesar Augustus, the first of the Roman emperors, who in mythical terms inaugurates a recurrence of the Golden Age in an imperial regime. Were this the case, the poem would be perhaps an admirable monument of verbal art but vacuous in significance for rhetorical thinking. In my reading of it, however, the poem is in fact a profound meditation on the greatest of imaginable human possibilities, a universal and lasting order of justice in the world. The meaning Virgil gives to empire is
expressed in a famous exhortation given to Aeneas in the underworld by the ghost of his father, who addresses his son as “Roman,” even though, at the time he addresses his son, Rome and Romans, not to mention the empire, do not exist: “You, Roman, remember to rule peoples by empire/ (these will be your arts), to impose the custom of peace / to spare the subjected / battle down the rebellious” (Aeneid 6. 851-853, translation mine). Aeneas, who must bear this ideal in his heart as he once bore Anchises on his back when fleeing burning Troy, is a new kind of epic figure, a reinterpretation on a grander scale of Homer’s epic protagonists and thus of Homer’s poems. Brave as Achilles, though no egoistic war lover, and as intelligent and enduring as Odysseus (Virgil calls him Ulysses), though no cunning and impious outlaw, Aeneas is the fiction of a man that by suffering becomes devoted to a distant future good for mankind, not for himself. He is destined not even to live to see the empire realized, except for the possibility, which Virgil allows, of Aeneas’ brief reincarnation. Homer did not, perhaps could not, imagine this possible situation and human type.

But the problems of realizing “the empire” in the actual world of men are, in Virgil, deep and potentially tragic. They are rooted in the metaphysical structure of the human being as a composite of soul with body in a world of “gods” (who, as in Homer, have a similar bodily component) that need conversion from their own partisan passions to a sense of justice that is often more nobly manifested in mortal men. The destructive passions that resist empire, law, and justice evolve from the bodily component of living beings in the world. In the underworld, the ghost of Anchises teaches this Stoic (ultimately Platonic) metaphysical lesson to Aeneas. It is a sobering addendum to the ideal of empire. Furious hostility to empire by those whose local and racial pieties are inflamed during its advent is, Virgil suggests, assured. We know today, more clearly than did the extraordinarily intuitive Virgil, that the segregation of peoples is no longer possible, that some sort of international order of law (empire) is inevitable (“fated” is Virgil’s word), and
that the dangerous tendencies of personal and cultural pieties, once confronted by the need for subordination to a greater good, have often exacted a terrible personal and human cost. We also know that the actual history of imperial Rome is not an edifying story in many if not most respects. The corruption of liberty and theology by political power is the main tragic theme of the rise and fall of the Roman empire.

The personal cost exacted by empire from Aeneas is treated in the first six of the twelve books of the *Aeneid*. They show us a painful process of cultural transformation. During years of wanderings, Aeneas, a man outstanding for his *pietas* (his piety or devotion to old Troy, his family in it, its people, and its gods), is obliged to acquire a new *pietas* directed to the future empire to be centered in Rome. Here we will only mention only a few of the wrenching sacrifices Aeneas has to make during his wanderings before the Italian war. Not only do the gods indicate by various portents and visions that he must leave his home and wife in old Troy as it is being sacked by the Greeks who were hidden in the notorious wooden horse, but they also drive Aeneas and his small band of refugees from island to island over the Mediterranean. In these years of wandering, he is harassed by Juno, who cannot put away her hatred for Trojans owing to a personal insult to her personal bodily beauty in the so-called Judgment of Paris. But although Aeneas has an ally in Jupiter, the most powerful of the gods, who sponsors the future empire, Aeneas only gradually develops a clear understanding of the divine imperative that keeps him moving toward Italy. In the most famous episode of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas becomes involved in a passionate love affair with Dido, queen of Carthage. In Dido’s love and in her thriving city, Aeneas supposes he can finally find refuge. But the great god Jupiter, who seems the only god who reads dispassionately the book of fate that discloses the future Roman empire, sends Mercury to him and demands that he leave. He does, though unwillingly. Poor Dido, understandably feeling betrayed, commits suicide, but her death, Virgil makes very clear, is the result not only of Aeneas’ departure but also of personal and ruthless
scheming by the goddesses Venus, his mother who wants to protect her own son, and Juno, who would like to destroy him. It is only during the descent to the underworld that Aeneas finally receives a clear vision of the future empire, learns its ideal role in the world, and the reasons it will be resisted. As the ideal of empire becomes real in the world, war will occur. Generations of readers have wondered why Virgil makes his Aeneas depart the underworld through the gate of false dreams rather than through the gate of true dreams. It is, in my view, singularly appropriate. The ideal of empire, contemplated in the bodiless world of the ghostly dead, inspires Aeneas; but the making real of that ideal in the world, owing to the very constitution of mortal beings as souls in bodies, necessarily and tragically leads to a war whose terrible and ironic human cost, though it is predicted by Aeneas, is virtually impossible for him to imagine before the fact.

In the last six books, Virgil gives us his story of the Italian war. The immediate cause of it is again the hostility of Juno, the vengeful goddess who has afflicted him during his wanderings even though she knows she must relinquish dreams for an empire of her own in Carthage. She summons Allecto, a fury from the underworld, to infuriate the local pieties of the native Italians and turn their rage against the Trojan settlers. In the hostility of Juno, ever pondering past injuries, and in the inflamed pieties of the Latins, Virgil is dramatizing his acute sense of the human resistance to the ideal of empire, however worthy and inevitable it may be. Can violence be used in a Herculean attempt to destroy monstrous evil? This is the question raised in book eight. In the remaining four books the question is answered. I will mention here only the chief episodes in which Virgil imagines so compellingly the human (and divine) problem of empire. In one episode, as the infuriated Latin tribes are preparing to attack the foreign settlers, two brave young Trojan men, Nisus and Euryalus, devoted friends, volunteer for a dangerous mission. It requires them to sneak through the surrounding Latin encampments at night to alert Aeneas, who, forewarned of the coming war by the river god Tiber, has at the time left the settlement to
secure an alliance with the people of King Evander. But the youthful passions of Nisus and Euryalus, the very source of their bravery, cause them to forget the purpose of their mission. Deluded by visions of glory, they attack sleeping Italian soldiers and feel the surge of blood lust within them. But then Euryalus is caught by a Latin patrol, and, though Nisus risks his life to save his friend, they are slaughtered. The poet-narrator provides these dying young warriors a moving and pathetic eulogy, their only consolation being their memorialization in Virgil’s own verses.

In another episode, Aeneas wounds a notorious Latin warrior named Mezzentius. But Lausus, his young son, rushes to his father’s defense, exhibiting in this action the same filial piety that Aeneas, the paragon of piety, has often shown Anchises, his father. Aeneas warns the young man not to attack him. But the warning is futile. Lausus, enraged, attacks Aeneas, thus forcing the great Trojan to kill one whose heart is like his own. Once again, Virgil attempts to heighten the tragic paradoxes of violence in war by having Aeneas eulogize Lausus. The war in Italy (and the Aeneid) ends when Aeneas kills his chief adversary, the Rutulian warrior Turnus.

But remaining consistent with his tragic sense of war, Virgil eliminates from this final and most important episode any sense of triumph. Instead Virgil represents the death stroke given to Turnus by Aeneas as a tragically ambiguous act making questionable the human possibility of the Roman ideal of empire in employing violence discreetly to “battle down the haughty and spare the conquered,” as Anchises had said in the underworld. Before being killed, Turnus is clearly battled down. He confesses his utter defeat, but he asks, on behalf of his old father Daunus, that his life be spared or his corpse returned for burial. Turnus clearly hopes that Aeneas, thinking of Anchises, would see that Turnus too has filial piety and does not want to cause his father needless grief. In the request of Turnus, Virgil is alluding to the appeal that Priam makes to Achilleus in the Iliad and thus brings the resolution of that poem within the scope of the Aeneid. Aeneas is moved to
spare Turnus, just as Achilleus is moved by Priam. But then he notices that the Rutulian prince wears a sword belt of a young man named Pallas beloved by Aeneas. An enemy once, Turnus, the killer of Pallas, now reverts to being an enemy still. In a rage that belies Aeneas’ words that Turnus is a criminal being justly executed, Aeneas plunges his sword in Turnus’ chest. The passions of mankind, rooted in different personal, racial, and cultural pieties, cannot easily be overcome, even in Aeneas. In this respect, the *Aeneid* is a fearful text to contemplate. Our age, afflicted by strife owing to differing ethnic, racial, and national and religious pieties, seems in many ways to validate its tragic implications.
CHAPTER 8
The Ancient Models of Rhetorical Thinking

In this brief interpretative survey certain archetypes of rhetorical thinking, what helps us to get a better sense of responsible rhetorical thinking? Three things have been deliberately emphasized: tragedy, *eros*, and philosophy. Much, admittedly, has been omitted, though not, I trust, to the point of distortion or falsification. Omitted, I repeat, has been an adequate account of the wide-ranging and pervasive sense of strife and its tragic potential that the ancients perceived not only in quarreling and war among human mortals, but also among the gods and among the elements of things in the physical world. To my knowledge, no study of ancient rhetoric has done this adequately. (In this book, the tragic epics of Homer and Virgil are the substitutes for a wider reflection on strife and deception.)

Emphasis has been given to the point that poetic tragedy, which presupposes real tragedy, suggests both the need for responsible rhetorical thinking and the difficulties that stand in the way of fulfilling its promise. Whether poetic tragedy is found in the Homeric epic or in the Greek theatre does not matter here. What does, however, is that the very expression of tragedy in words indicates, however slightly, the potential of speech to negotiate disastrous conflicts of difference by suasion—the suasion that poetry in part exemplifies in itself but cannot fully supply. For tragic poetry only speaks indirectly of actuality and of its plausible present and future potentialities in the resolution of conflict. One may say also that it is even harder for history to do so since it is so much concentrated on the past, on what did happen, not on what could or is happening. Sciences can speak of...
what is, but only at various levels of generality, and they cannot reach the core of psychic self-determination. Science reaches only what may determine psyche. Only psychagogic discourse and the rhetorical thinking that informs it—drawing upon poetry, history, and science—reaches the psychic core of liberty. Thus, the foundation of psychagogy and the hope that lies within it is not history, with all involved in its problematic of discovering and interpreting the actualities of the past, nor scientific theory, with all its epistemological and linguistic problematics of truthfulness. The foundation is tragic experience, which poetry imaginatively imitates and extends thoughtfully to all as real possibility. And since it does attempt a sort of quasi-universality, poetry provides rhetoric with the best-considered access to tragic experience itself. Tragic darkness is profound, abysmal even, but it is not absolute.

The second point emphasized in the survey is that to Plato must go the credit for stressing what is indispensable to fulfilling the hopeful promise of persuasion. It is something that Aristotle stunted, Cicero transmuted into the studium for the perfect orator, and Quintilian merely implied. Verbal psychagogy involves eros or desire, an eros that had to become “philosophic,” not just scientific (epistemic), to be responsible. To my knowledge, Plato never spoke of the goddess Peitho, as Aeschylus did. Nor did he speak of her very close association in both Greek art and literature with the ambiguous figure of Aphrodite, the goddess of erotic love. (See Barton and Entralgo.) But the meaning of that mythological relationship was never before so profoundly sensed and explicated. Verbal psychagogy, Plato knew, had to become oriented to what lay deep within psyche, to its desire (eros), perhaps stirred first in sensuality as a response to beauty of form, to know whatever may be the true goods of psyche, not just what may be commonly called so by a culture. In fact, most modern theorists of rhetoric take little or no account of eros. Their approaches to rhetoric are highly sophisticated and rationally supple in ways those of the ancients never were. But if they grant any authority to the ancient theorists at all, they look
back to Aristotle, not to Plato. Like Aristotle, they seek to rehabilitate rhetoric as rational argument and defend it before the bar of modern academic philosophers, as do the modern rhetoricians Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, and Olbrechts-Tyteca, whose work is otherwise masterful and illuminating. But rhetorical thinking is not only a matter of appealing to what is reasonable, however legitimately expanded and newly nuanced the notion may be nowadays. It is also a matter of appealing to what is plausibly imaginable, when *eros*, having become “philosophical,” moves intelligent imagination to respond to *things* in their attractiveness and desirability—or, in a word, to their true beauty.

Rhetorical thinking centers on psychagogy. But we should again stress that psychagogy implies and presumes self-guidance. What must come into play is the rhetor’s own *eros* to envision by intelligence and intelligent imagination the common goods of human psyche in the actual world. Implied in this self-guidance is that the rhetor must undergo the sort of sifting to which he would subject another in verbal psychagogy. And it may well be that that apart from criticism of self that responsible verbal psychagogy of others will not achieve suasive power. Others tend to perceive self-deception and the false authority that goes with it.

This concept of rhetorical thinking—one which stresses its self-reflexiveness, its erotic dynamic, which is both rational and imaginative, its responsiveness to beauty, its belonging to the experience of tragic strife—brings us very close to seeing through it, as if glimpsing an alluring figure or face behind a veil, the figure of the goddess *Peitho*. And so let our working definition of rhetoric be the verbal art of responsible psychagogy—responsible in the sense that it is responsive scientifically, historically, and poetically to the actuality of psyche and world.

We might call responsible rhetorical thinking the basis of leadership, if it were not that “leadership,” like the word “effectiveness,” has in contemporary usage a hollow
meaning. Leadership is usually associated with other things like charisma or success or prestige or fame, and it is imagined as a rise to the top of an organization or popularity chart or electoral poll. But leadership, as envisioned in the ancient tradition, is psychagogy, in whatever sphere of life it may be practiced, public or private. But it is leadership—psychagogy—exercised not by force or fraud or flattery. It is leadership by thoughtful and imaginative words. Such words empower readers and hearers to become free in the judgments by which they guide themselves. The surprising thing is that psychagogy aims to eliminate itself by making those who are led leaders of themselves and capable of making leaders of others.

The only legitimate reason for the use of force, which the ancients always contrasted to persuasion, is to allow this sort of psychagogy to come into being and to flourish. The reason is simple and experientially evident: force always dehumanizes, degrades psyche, undermines liberty, and stimulates revenge. It leads almost always to tragedy. It is a surprise when it does not. Words, however, can detribalize, elevate, and free psyche, when and if words and the things they refer to are cared for properly, that is, according to a responsible rhetorical art. Yet, as we will soon explain further, whatever the definition of rhetoric, the distinctive mark of truly rhetorical thinking, the key to psychagogy, whether it occurs in one’s own mind, in conversation with others, or in some printed or electronic form, is newly imagined rational and poetic vision—a new sense of hope (a much abused word in our time)—in spite of all fully realized difficulties and limitations that seem to indicate no hope. And in the rhetorical thinking, or better, in the imaginative myth—if I may use this much misunderstood word—that informs it, nothing, however difficult, is ultimately hopeless, however often we may be frustrated by all that seems intractable. The apparently dark, deep, and wild chaos of things in their relations with psyche may eventually yield to and be formed by words of light. Then the phoenix rises. But this is a point of rhetorical myth to which I will have to return later. We have to
clarify what it means to say that rhetoric must become “philosophical.”

Rhetoric, as the finest ancient theorists suggest, had to be in some way a philosophic art, not simply a teachable knack for effectively getting one’s way with others by words. Otherwise, rhetoric easily turns into the most cunning of the many flatteries, frauds, and treacheries of the tongue and pen. If there is one outstanding fact to be taken seriously from the history of rhetoric in the ancient world, it is that some of those who called themselves philosophers roughly and roundly criticized contemporary rhetoricians as well as poets. To Plato, as I have mentioned, the rhetoric of the so-called sophists of his day was charged with being no more than a verbal knack possessed by the self-interested for flatteringly gratifying others and gaining political power. To Aristotle sophistic rhetorical teaching also had a dubious moral basis. But even when considered technically, that teaching was flawed because it did not provide an adequate account of the modes of reasoning exhibited in rhetorical discourse (see his Rhetoric 1.1, 1355b 15-20). To Cicero, to train one to speak well, without teaching “wisdom,” was like putting weapons in the hands of furious madmen (see his De oratore, 3.14.55). What lies behind these notions is the awareness that, for rhetoric to be responsible, it had to be philosophic. But we may well ask what it means for rhetoric to be philosophic? In short, it meant concentration on psyche, its reality and nature, and the verbal means of leading it to a wisdom befitting its nature.

According to the testimony of Cicero (Tusculan Disputations 5.3.8-10), the word “philosophy” was first used by Pythagoras of Samos, who flourished around 540/530 B.C.E. Cicero tells us that Pythagoras was once asked to name the art that was source of his eloquence and wisdom. Pythagoras responded that he had no art, that he had no wisdom. He was merely a friend of wisdom—a philosophos or philosopher. His questioner had never before heard the term, so he asked about those who were called philosophers. Pythagoras answered by a sort of parable. The world of men, he said, is like a great festival
where athletic contests are held. Some men at the festival are competitors for the crown of glory and victory. Others at the festival are merchants who hope to profit by buying and selling things. But some others are there only to watch what goes on, not to give applause or to buy, but only to observe in the desire to understand and judge what is going on. These men seek neither glory, as the competitors do, nor gain, as the merchants do. They seek only to understand and to assess what is happening. Such observant inquiry in order to understand and judge is, says Cicero, called contemplation. The clear implication of Cicero’s story is that one cannot gain such understanding while being completely involved in the things that bring glory or gain, however useful or necessary such things may be. These things the world may applaud or reward. But they do not promote understanding, which only comes through contemplation. The Greeks called contemplation *theoria*, meaning a sort of mental gazing. Thus, philosophy is a modest name for the detached and disinterested desire to see and understand the actuality of the world and the life of human beings within it.

It is obvious from Cicero’s account of the parable of Pythagoras that such understanding implies gaining security from illusory preoccupations or mistaken opinions. Otherwise, what good was it? How could it guide practical judgment and behavior well? How could it lead to human fulfillment and happiness if it were mistaken or in error? How could it provide a reliable account of the world? Such stable knowledge the Greek philosophers called *episteme*, “science.” And, they thought, science was needed to guide human judgment whenever such knowledge was possible. But not everything was itself stable enough to be knowable scientifically, especially the changing circumstances of life and the basic unpredictability of human actions. Still, one could imagine that, when the whole of things came to be known in the ways suitable to them, whether scientifically or not, the sense of the reality thus formed was called *sophia*, “wisdom.”
Was this \textit{sophia} not something to be desired—to be loved? Was it not, perhaps, the most lovely of all human things, surpassing even the things that brought the crown of glory or the rewards of riches? For it could do what nothing else could do. It could make one truly free from deception. And if one does not possess \textit{sophia}, does not the very idea of the liberating power of \textit{sophia} seem attractive or, to use the best word, beautiful? Is not sensing the allure of \textit{sophia} what makes one a philosopher in the broad, Pythagorean sense of the word? Perhaps. The beauty of \textit{sophia}, even if only glimpsed, is enough to arouse desire for it. However, only those who in fact realize that they do not possess it can glimpse it. Here lies the difficulty. The sad truth is that tragedy is too often the only thing that awakens individuals or groups to the realization of not possessing wisdom.

Philosophy, the love of \textit{Sophia} or wisdom, begins, then, not with \textit{episteme} but with the admission of ignorance that leads to wonder or puzzlement about the why of things, including the goods of human psyche in the world. Wonder, on the intellectual plane, is based on the recognition of ignorance in facing conflicting opinions that seem irresolvable. In the experiential order, wonder is usually awakened only by catastrophe. If ignorance is not recognized, wonder cannot occur. Put another way, if ignorance is not recognized, the love for \textit{sophia} will not arise to initiate inquiry toward it. The allure of the beauty of wisdom will not be experienced. Thus, it is important to philosophy, taken in the broad sense, to awaken wonder by highlighting some basic problem among conflicting opinions. Of course, dispute need not turn into tragedy. It can be heuristic, but usually it is not because of the aroused furies.

From this starting point, which translates to the plane of reasoning the tragic experience resulting from real human difference and disagreement, the classical world developed, as mentioned previously, four kinds of discourse: dialectical, poetic, historical, and rhetorical (or psychagogic). And in order to be reliable and responsible, all four of them had become philosophic, that is, contemplative. The most famous of the four is
dialectical discourse, a ratiocinative sort aimed at producing scientific (or epistemic) knowledge of the actuality of present things, and usually identified with philosophy, as it does today in both academic and general usage. But, we know, there is also a broader sense of the word philosophy, one that accents the “philo” (love or affection) in the word and applies, as a form of contemplation, not only to dialectical discourse but also to poetical, historical, and persuasive discourse. For they too may seek “wisdom” by trying to express the actuality of things as they can. They will do so in ways somewhat different from dialectically generated science, thus providing different but not necessarily irreconcilably diverse truths. Poetry does so by imaginative fiction in highly patterned language. As Aristotle put it in the famous ninth chapter of his Poetics, poetry aims to express actuality, but only indirectly, by fiction. For it envisions the possible or probable, which is based on the actual but which is still not scientific knowledge of the universal even though poetry tends toward it. Nor is poetry the same sort of discourse as history, which is concerned with the actuality of past things. Rhetorical or psychagogic discourse aims at changing minds and behavior though a combination of means, dialectical (or ratiocinative), historical (recollective), and poetic (or imaginative), all geared to articulating the basis of agreement in the actuality of world and psyche. Again, all four kinds of discourse had to be philosophical in the broad contemplative sense of the word.

But what does this broader sense of philosophy entail in rhetoric? Psychagogy is philosophic (responsible) when it is probative, transformative, particular, and personal. It is probative not merely in some previously validated scientific way but in that it engages another’s sense of actuality as intuited in experience, as grasped imaginatively, if inchoately. It is transformative and, as the case may require, it alters or lifts that sense to a new and more compelling level of truthfulness, more compelling because newly generative of new hope. Meaningfulness is not the measure of responsible psychagogy. Truthfulness and hopefulness are. And the truthfulness and hopefulness at which
rhetorical thinking aims is always as these inhere in particular disputes, not simply in the abstracted generality of proven matters in the sciences and arts. Finally, psychagogy is philosophic when it pertains to those involved in the dispute. What this orientation to persons comes down to has been emphasized before. Psychagogic discourse when responsible is about engaging free choice in others. And that means that, unlike science or history, it must, in the particular disputes it addresses, negotiate with all the “tribal” furies and the deceptive forms of suasion that people are subject to and that impede a truer sense of the real. To do that, rhetoric had to be more than guided by the desire for scientific knowledge. It had to evoke a new imaginative sense of real possibilities, for better or worse. Rhetoric, in short, had to be poetical and historical as well as dialectical. But it also had to be conscious of the modes of expression in language. That could not be overlooked, and to that matter as well as to others, we must now turn.
PART II

Peitho’s Lips:

The Ancient Arts of Mind in Rhetorical Expression—A New Version
Introduction:

Eloquence, Babbling, and the Arts of Rhetorical Expression

The Latin word *eloquentia* is an abstract noun, derived from the participle of the verb *eloqui*, which means “to speak out.” The word in modern English usually brings to our minds the image of a fluent speaker before a large audience, but this image does not suggest the real meaning of the word. Nor does it suggest the experience from which it acquired its meaning among the ancients. “Eloquence” refers, in the first place, to easy utterance or expression of what is in the mind by words, written or spoken. Because words are uttered, they become perceptible by another. It is important to realize that eloquence does not refer to conceptions of the mind as they exist unuttered within it. Conceptions of the mind may be called intellectual or interior words, but others cannot perceive them. Thus, the medieval Italian poet Dante, who was well acquainted with the ancient rhetorical tradition, once observed in his Latin treatise *On Popular Eloquence* (*De vulgari eloquentia* 1.2) that, although angels communicate by intellectual words alone, human beings must make signs of their conceptions in sound or in writing. Only then can words really do their work, to unite a speaker or writer with another. The uttered word can bring human beings together and unite them with one another and with the real world. It can establish communion among them, bringing them within the walls, to speak metaphorically, that, except for the mediation of words, keep them apart. But mere utterance alone does not cause that dwelling together within the walls that is communication. Eloquence refers to utterance, but not to just any sort of utterance.

To indicate the meaning of eloquent utterance, it will be helpful to know of its
opposite, what the Greeks called babbling, *adoleskia*, speech that forms no communion of understanding (See Helmut Rahn, whose article first brought to my attention these ancient texts about babbling). In his *Characters*, Theophrastus, Aristotle’s pupil, both defined babbling and described the typical babbler:

>Babbling] is the delivering of talk that is irrelevant, or long and unconsidered; the [babbler] is one that will sit down close beside somebody he does not know and relate a dream he had the night before, and after that tell dish by dish what he had for supper. As he warms to his work he will remark that we are by no means the men we were, and the price of wheat has gone down and there’s a great many strangers in town, and that the ships will be able to put to sea after the Dionysia [a festival in early spring]. Next he will surmise that the crops would be all the better for more rain, and tell what he is going to grow in his farm next year, adding that... “I vomited yesterday,” and “What day it is to-day?” . . . And if you let him go on he will never stop. (3.1-5)

The babbler speaks, but he does not do so with any sense of appropriateness, length, or coherence of ideas or of imagination. His talk is chaotic. And the chaos is symptomatic of a philosophic problem in both speaking and writing.

Plutarch, another of the ancient Greeks who recognized the babbler, went further than Theophrastus in getting at the root of the problem. *Adoleskia*, he said, is a disease of the soul, one of the hardest to cure by philosophy: “For in other diseases of the soul, such as love of money, love of glory, love of pleasure, there is at least the possibility of attaining [these] desires, but for babblers this is very difficult. They desire listeners and cannot get them” (*Moralia* 502 E). Babblers, he adds, frustrate the greatest work of words, essential to philosophy, because “they do not... meet with belief [*pistis*, in Greek], which is the object of all speech. For this is the proper end and aim of speech, to engender belief in the hearer;
but the babblers are disbelieved even if they are telling the truth” (503 D, emphasis mine). What the Romans called eloquence was the capacity to engender belief through speech. Belief implies that the addressee of speech willingly entertains it. Without belief in this sense, there can be no communication, even if the speaker is telling the truth. The truth alone, in other words, is not sufficient to engender belief. It is unquestionably indispensable; but, in order to engender belief, speaking and writing must have something else.

That something else the Greeks called kosmos, a verbal order or form—attractive, interesting, hospitable, and suggestive of the mystery of things—perhaps like the mystery of order the ancients felt when beholding the motions and array of the enclosing heavens, composed of sun and cloud, moon and stars. The idea of an uttered verbal kosmos whose interdependent components engender belief includes not just what is said, not just how it is said or by whom said, but to whom it is said. This last element of the verbal kosmos brings us close to the matter of persuasion, the mysterious power of a verbal kosmos.

Cicero once told a brief story or myth to illustrate the significance of discourse that has hospitable—inventing and attractive—kosmos. Here is a summary of it. Once men, like animals, wandered at large in fields. They did nothing by the guidance of reason. They relied upon physical strength. They had no ordered system of religious worship. They had no system of social duties. No one looked upon children he knew were his own. No one knew the advantages of and equitable code of law. In blind passion, all relied on shows of force. Then a man, great and wise, became aware of a force in the minds of human beings. If only it could be developed and improved by instruction, he thought. He saw that the others were scattered in the fields and hidden in the woods. This was their way of life. He assembled them all into one place. Then he began to speak to them about things useful and honorable. The others cried out in protest. They called him insolent. But, as his eloquent speech made them listen more attentively, he began to transform them from wild
savages into a mild and gentle people. (See De inventione 1.1.2-2.3.)

In this little fictional parable Cicero expresses one of the most deeply felt convictions of the ancient world: civilized life has its beginnings in the transformations of human beings effected by the responsible persuasive power of eloquent words. The Greek rhetorician Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato, preceded Cicero in the expression of this conviction in the civilizing power of the human word, and Cicero may well have had Isocrates in mind in composing his story. But Cicero’s version has the virtue of making us aware of the psychic resistance to any transformation. And what shall we call the cause of such resistance if not cultural custom? Custom—what people are used to—resists change. In the story, what seems at first insolent to many, a violation of their customary “tribal” ways of living, thinking, and acting, became, as their attention is maintained by the eloquent verbal kosmos of “the great and wise man,” acceptable. And they changed, as a result. Without verbal kosmos, words are only babble, as Theophrastus and Plutarch indicated. Without the transformation brought about by the persuasive power mysteriously inherent in the verbal kosmos, as Cicero’s myth suggests, mankind would live brutally, not civilly. They would live without law, without organized religious worship, without institutions, without a sense of marriage and proper care for children. Between words of babble and a life of bestiality and savagery, there seems to be a very real connection. So also is there a connection between the persuasive power of an eloquent verbal kosmos and that great good of human psyche called civilization. To the ancients, an art (Greek techne, Latin ars) meant any organized body of information derived from experience and, because organized, capable of being systematically taught to others as a guide to some mode of practice (behavior) or of production (making). When regarded from the viewpoint of the learner receiving instruction or conceived a process subject to regulation of a kind to be efficacious, an art can be called a discipline. In fact, the art and discipline of rhetoric included five distinguishable arts of mind, each of them, in addition,
comprising several other subsidiary arts, all of them reflecting actual experience of the psychosocial dynamics of verbal suasion. And because the rhetorical arts intellectually translate to the plane of speech the actual experience of suasion, irregular and halting as the whole experience may be, they will always suggest the experiential realm of tragedy from which they originally derive their ultimate justification. Suasion, one should remember, is a phenomenon of life before it became conceptually analyzed into rhetorical arts.

The names of the five arts (often called the parts of rhetoric) were invention, disposition, style, memory, and delivery. As I have already mentioned, this five-part scheme of rhetorical instruction became fixed in Hellenistic times and lasted for many centuries afterwards, even to this day. However, since the scheme is analytic and tends to obscure the way the arts work together, some modifications of it will be made here in order to clarify the interrelation among the traditional five “parts” and to make the larger matter of rhetorical thinking easier for contemporary readers to grasp. In this book invention and memory will be considered together. They largely concern rhetorical thinking about things. Disposition, style, and delivery will also be considered together. They largely concern rhetorical thinking about the suasive uses of language for self and others. These groupings, neither of which is independent of the other, show better, I believe, the interrelation of the five parts.

Invention, the first part of rhetoric, treats the process of discovering a suasive thesis to help resolve a dispute or conflict. All the “parts” (that is, the component arts) of rhetoric presuppose a dispute, a conflict of differences, which also lies at the heart of strife, deception, deceit and tragic experience generally. The technical concepts and terms used here may well mask the presupposed conflict for the contemporary reader, but it is always there. Invention is, in part, an art of critical inquiry. It consists of what rhetorical theorists called topics, which, for Cicero, are ways of considering things or, for Aristotle, general
forms of reasoning about the features of the particular persons and things (including ideas) involved in a disputed matter. Some topics were common to all disputes, some others only to disputes of a special sort. The aim was to discover from the topics, common and special, the points of argument leading to a thesis of resolution to the dispute. So go the usual explanations of the process of invention. But in addition to the topics, invention also involves arts of research, as we may say today, the critique of the opinions in written testimony (pertinent authority) and in the oral-visual testimony of the cultural media. In the language of contemporary poststructuralist theorists, written and oral-visual testimony are the cultural discourses, enhanced by the structures of power, establishing the ways things are thought about by the ways they are spoken about.

It is one of the prime tenets of this book that the topics of invention are one of several parts of the classical art of rhetoric (the others are style and memory) most in need of reconsideration in order to expose the body of knowledge that properly belongs to rhetorical thinking and the range of its interests. In the disputes presupposed by rhetorical thinking, ancient theorists often distinguished between definite and indefinite disputes or issues: The definite ones involve particular persons or things; the indefinite involve broader philosophical issues any particular dispute may implicate. For example, whether I should marry or whether I should marry Mr. or Miss X are definite issues, involving particular persons. What marriage is, and what understanding of marriage contemporary culture promotes, are indefinite issues. Moving between the particular and the general was the mark of the supreme rhetor. But the movement between them is not just a matter of argumentative reasoning guided by topics. In psychagogic discourse other matters must come into play. Together they constitute rhetorical knowledge.

What is this rhetorical knowledge? In one respect, it is a substitute for the ancient theory of the common and special topics. The theory of the topics is a result of a concentration on the formality of thought that has many shortcomings, the greatest of
which is that the topics do not of themselves have any psychagogic power. What does is real knowledge arising from tragic experience, things learned from suffering. These things are what bring the actuality of the world to light, the common human foundations of verbal psychagogy. Aside from personal tragic experience that may be survived, they are, I claim, provided in their most accessible forms by the best poets and historians, though my own treatment concentrates on poetry. In a second respect, such rhetorical knowledge includes generally available intuitions of the humanly achievable goals toward which verbal suasion may be responsibly directed. These goals are part of a rhetorical psychology and ethics that contain a sense of human potential that the ancients called virtues, both moral and intellectual. But the ancient sense of virtue is a concept seldom understood today. These virtues are forms of commonly recognizable human capacity. Rhetorical psychology is also aware of all that impedes the development of the human potential, again both moral and intellectual. In short, it is aware of the intellectual shortcomings and egoistic perversities of persons, groups, and peoples. Rhetorical psychology is, thus, very sober. But there is a third part of the psychology that belongs to rhetorical knowledge. It pertains to all rhetors. They must have a disinterested attitude regarding whatever may turn out to be arguably true or better. Only that insures as much as possible against distortion of judgment by self-interest, false prejudice, fraud, or whatever else. Intransigent polemics, verbal and physical, lead only to tragic exhaustion or to burning ruins. But the other “parts” of rhetoric will show us still more about the rhetorical knowledge that informs rhetorical thinking.

Memory, the fourth part, is closely related to invention. So close is the relation that it may be better to say that memory is inseparable from invention, despite being listed as a distinct “part” of rhetoric. In antiquity, rhetorical memory was often discussed as set of imaginative mnemonic devices, still useful in fact. Its essential rhetorical function, however, was much greater than the memorization of speeches. Perhaps the most
important thing for us to know about rhetorical memory is that it was connected to an extraordinary ambition, called Polymathy. The word literally means lots of learning. Rhetors had to be polymaths of a sort precisely because the possible subjects and occasions for suasion are virtually limitless, and rhetors were supposed to be able to talk persuasively about any issue involving anything. This polymathy, however, does not mean that rhetors must possess some impossible omniscience. They will, in fact, have to learn whatever they must about the particular matters in dispute. But they must already have concerning persuasion a distinctive kind of comprehensive or encyclopedic sense of knowledge. From the standpoint of rhetorical memory, a key component of rhetorical thinking, the common and special topics of invention, regarded as bodies of rhetorical knowledge, constitute a speculum of the human potential. These topics help rhetors to learn what they do not know and to integrate particular knowledge learned within a distinctive rhetorical context of thinking. The content of memory is, then, twofold. It consists, first, in a conspectus of the foundations of persuasion (the common topics) and of what responsibly moves the psyche toward its welfare (the special topics) in what the ancients recognized as excellent human capabilities in both actions and the human “sciences” and “arts,” which is the way the world of things is contained as known within the human psyche. Thus, the rhetorical art of memory goes well beyond mnemonics or some haphazard content of information recollected from books already read or matters already experienced. Rhetorical memory consists in an ordered and comprehensive (encyclopedic) knowledge of the foundations and goals of persuasion presumed in invention.

Disposition, the second part of the art, concerns what the ancients called the parts of a discourse, and in each of them the rhetor had to perform certain functions, all of which have their particular parts to play in engaging the mind and heart of the addressee. Disposition is, in other words, an art of giving an internal structure (in Greek kosmos) to a
written discourse. However, the structure is a way of relating to the psyche of the addressees, to their verbal receptivity with regard to any matter being discussed. This structure, then, represents both a practical psychology of verbal receptivity (what makes a discourse hospitably accessible to an addressee), and, when the rhetor fulfills well all the functions of the several parts of a discourse, the broad outline of persuasive beauty—what attracts attention and illumines the matters discussed—in verbal composition. Disposition is thus very closely related to style, the third part of rhetoric, and to delivery, the last part, which are also matters of beauty, another thing much in need of reconsideration.

*Style* treats, not the overall internal structure of the discourse, but what is called the persona of the writer—the impression of himself the writer communicates through a written discourse—and what may be called the imaginative world of psyche. Closely connected to persona are the philological (in the root sense) arts of expression that give to sentences certain persuasive qualities—clarity, economy, imaginativeness, and appropriateness. The most important of these qualities, as well as the most misunderstood, is imaginativeness, which involves an art of the figures and tropes of language and things—note, of things, not just of language! The figures and tropes are not merely ways of verbally decorating the plain sense of sentences. They are expressions of the actual suggestions coming from the world of things as well as of the imaginative rationality that responds to that communication by giving a discourse imaginative extension, even sometimes a mythical vision—a vision of the beauty of hope. Hope and persuasion are, as we will see, inseparable.

*Delivery*, which treated the voice, tone, and bearing of a public speaker, is, in writing, an art closely related to style. It concerns a writer’s appropriate verbal duties, as they were called, to readers, all of them motivated by a kind of verbal friendship that aims to stimulate a special, disinterested philosophic *eros* in one’s readers. These duties, to teach, to delight, and to move, also concerned the so-called levels of stylistic address
according to the addressees and the occasion (the right time) of discourse. The overriding duty was, however, to empower readers to become freer and finer in their judgments, not simply to get them to think whatever the rhetor wanted them to think.
SECTION A

MEMORY AND INVENTION: RHETORICAL INQUIRY
CHAPTER 1

Rhetorical Memory:
Intelligence, Polymathy, and the Muses

Since the ancients were preoccupied with the needs of public oratory, they developed clever imaginative techniques to help political, legal, and ceremonial speakers memorize their speeches before being delivered. We will glance at these mnemonic techniques later. Much more important to the art of rhetoric generally was their awareness of a deep interdependence between memory and the several arts of critical inquiry collectively called invention. Its aim, practically described, is to discover, for some dispute or problem, a persuasive resolution, primarily but not solely by the development of a thesis and its supporting argument. But a persuasive resolution, we must remind ourselves, greatly depends upon an imaginative context or poetic vision of the possible, not just upon an argument composed of a coherent assembly of facts and reasons.

The business ahead will be, first, to discuss several issues involved in the important and interdependent roles of memory and invention. The contents of memory—one’s prior learning and experiences—will undoubtedly affect what a writer thinks and expresses. Once this matter is clarified, we may turn to the actual arts of inventive or critical inquiry. We will look at them not only from a practical standpoint, but also from the more important standpoint of the dynamics of psychagogy.

The ancient rhetoricians had a view of the role of memory in the work of persuasion both different from ours and, in the main, more discerning, since they had to use memory to a much greater extent than we do. We generally undervalue memory...
because books by the trillions and electronic information systems, ever expanding, have
overwhelmed our personal memories. No one seems bothered by this since the human
memory cannot possibly assimilate all the information available to it and we only need
to “look it up” either in books or on the Internet. But long before the technologies of
print and computers, Plato of Athens suggested that even writing (the use of phonetic
lettering for spoken words) would blunt human intelligence because it would enfeeble
memory, lead to its desuetude, and discourage the conversational inquiry he called
dialectic. What he would have said about printing and the Internet, had they then
existed, would, presumably, have not differed from what he said about writing since
both print media and the Web depend upon writing, the basic source of the problem for
Plato. What truth, if any, is there in Plato’s misgivings? Do they have any meaning for
the rhetorical psychagogy?

Still other issues involving memory occupied the ancient rhetoricians: What and
how much can and should a rhetorician know and keep in his memory? For the scope of
rhetoric seemed to many as broad as speech itself. Should the rhetor, then, be able to talk
about anything at all, specialized and technical matters also, in ways persuasive to
specialist and non-specialists alike? Yet despite the pretensions to polymathy by
rhetoricians like Gorgias of Leontini or Hippas of Elis, both of whom Plato satirized in
dialogues named after them, it is obviously impossible for anyone to know everything,
even in times not yet destabilized by an “information explosion.” Should one, then,
restrict the art of rhetoric to the techniques of writing and speaking and exclude from
rhetoric an unrealizable effort toward knowledge, which is better left to the scientific
specialists? This would mean that there is no body of knowledge proper to rhetoric except
knowledge of its expressive and logical techniques. Does the aspiration to polymathy by
rhetoricians, however much satirized as pretentious, have no positive significance for the
art of rhetoric?
A last issue remains, one connected with those already mentioned: What is the relationship between rhetorical memory and inspiration, that sudden synthetic insight that cannot be easily accounted for by the contents of a person’s memory and seems utterly unforeseen and fresh? A brief discussion of the answers to these questions should help clarify the nature and functions of memory in rhetorical invention.

Let us first reconsider the issue raised by Plato. It was in his great dialogue *Phaedrus* that Plato expressed misgivings about the effects of writing on both memory and intelligence. According to a myth told by Socrates, Plato’s chief character in this dialogue about rhetoric, writing (the lettering used to symbolize speech) was an invention of the ancient Egyptian god Theuth, who had also invented numbers, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and the games of draughts and dice. As Socrates tells the story to Phaedrus, one day Theuth was praising his invention of writing to Thamus, ruler of Egypt at the time:

“This invention, O king,” said Theuth, “will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories: for it is an elixir of memory and wisdom that I have discovered.” But Thamus replied, “Most ingenious Theuth . . . you, who are the father of letters, have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power the opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are
not wise, but only appear wise.” (*Phaedrus 274E-275B*)

Trust in letters weakens natural memory and encourages pedantry: these are the contentions of Thamus.

If we are to understand the full meaning of this story, some other things about Plato’s view of memory deserve our notice. To him memory included the mental ability to recognize the truthfulness of the things spoken about by comparing them to their eternal models, first envisioned in a previous existence of the human soul prior to the time when it assumed a body. (He tells the story or myth of the soul’s prior existence and its subsequent embodiment in an earlier part of the dialogue.) However, when the soul becomes embodied—so goes Plato’s myth—it loses clear vision of these models or “ideas,” as he calls them. Only certain kinds of people, those who have not completely given over the regulation of their minds to the affections of their bodies, can remember the ideas, and even these people, the real lovers of wisdom (philosophers like Socrates), only remember the ideas vaguely. Yet they feel the desire (called *eros*) to know them fully again. Clear recollection of the ideas is possible only if one engages in a special kind of interpersonal conversation, called dialectic, which proceeds toward adequate definition and division of the things spoken about by questions and answers and by the creation of myths when dialectical reasoning is unable to be conclusive. Writing, however, seems unable to duplicate the work of dialectic because, no matter how one questions a written text, it never responds to questions. It always says the same thing in the same way. If writing and the use of written texts is to be philosophic, they must somehow, Plato seems to suggest, imitate oral dialectic and myth-making, as in fact his famous written dialogues do in the conversations between Socrates and his interlocutors. Whether or not Plato seriously believed in the story of a previous existence of the soul is not the important thing here. Let us attend to his insistence upon the *eros* to seek the truth in what is said, either with another in oral conversation, or, as it more often the case with us, in reading books in
private or in the process of formal education. Nor should we ignore the fact that Plato expressed his misgivings about writing in a written story, one that recalls the past teaching of an old Egyptian god. Oral traditions may perpetuate the past, but they die more easily than written ones. So if all old books, Plato’s included, were lost, lost too, as the medieval poet Chaucer once said, would be the key of remembrance.

Is there no way to imitate in written rhetoric the living oral dialectic that Plato saw as so important to intelligence? There is a way. Rhetorical thinking was precisely designed, as Cicero once put it, to cultivate an ability to argue on each side of a dispute (*in utramque partem*). This does not have to mean that the rhetor has no commitment to the truth. The rhetor need not remain content with a general skepticism that stresses his ability to get somebody else to agree to whatever side of the issue may be advocated. For written discourse, the positive sense of this suppleness of mind to see both sides of an issue in dispute is precisely that the opposition gets a voice, just as in the oral dialectic simulated in the Platonic dialogues, those opposing Socrates have their say. The dialectical habit of mind is vital to the art of responsible rhetoric. And among the things to which it is responsive are the opposing claims, real or potential, in their full personal and cultural contexts.

We may approach the problem of what knowledge and how much knowledge may be required in the rhetorical art by noting that, like Plato, Latin masters of rhetoric also recognized the importance of memory (*memoria*), if for different reasons. They made it a part of the art of rhetoric and allied it with invention. In memory should be kept or stored both one’s personal experience and the learning derived from formal education, personal reflection, and reading. They called this learning *eruditio*, from which we derive the word “erudition.” The Latin root suggests that this stored learning helps to transform those who are “rude” (who live brutishly in fields) into civilized people. A great store of erudition they called a *copia rerum et verborum*, an abundance of words and things. But they did not
think that memory was merely a storehouse of random information.

Memory was also a component of the most intellectual of moral virtues, prudence, and, in this light, invention was the counterpart in rhetoric to what prudence was in moral deliberation. Prudence is another word that has lost a great deal of its former meaning. We think of it as a kind of caution about the future, but Cicero considered prudentia almost synonymous with wisdom, sapientia, which was necessary for real eloquence. Prudence meant to him a kind of vision that sees at once the relation of present to the past and to the possible future. In other words, prudence is a sense of similarity among different things in different times and circumstances, and it enables one to judge well about the best of possible real goods in the present or future. If wisdom involves such prudential memory, then eloquence, which should involve wisdom to be responsibly persuasive, should involve such memory also.

It may be helpful to recall here the words of a poet of our times to grasp what all this means. In his famous essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T. S. Eliot claimed that aspiring poets needed to acquire what he called the “historical sense”:

[I]f the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind adherence to its successes, “tradition” should be positively discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it with great labor. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense...and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole literature of Europe from Homer and the whole literature of his own country has a simultaneous
existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. (Eliot, 48-49)

Although Eliot is speaking of poets in this passage, his general point is fittingly applied to rhetors, not just to poets. To envision the true and truly good in any disputed matter, an “historical sense,” the sense of the presence of the past in the present, of the timeless in the temporal, is indispensable.

However, by itself broad learning is insufficient to develop prudential memory. Such learning cannot be stored in the memory as things are thrown confusedly into an attic. Nor can the memory hold all the information that a rhetor may need, for, as we have mentioned, in principle a rhetor must be in some way ready to address any and all possible problems that may arise. How then do we solve the problem of what and how much a rhetor should know without falling into a foolhardy ideal of polymathy?

One could argue that, in view of persuasion, ancient rhetorical polymathy could be seen as an effort to achieve a kind of learning neither foolish nor impossible. It is a prime tenet of this book that the art of rhetoric contains a body of knowledge appropriate to it, which we will discuss in later chapters. Still, does this knowledge imply polymathy? In a sense, yes. For example, what seems particularly needed today is a way of navigating the seas of available data flooding our consciousness, an encyclopedic vision of the outline of human knowledge, a matter completely neglected in modern education. A Zeus-like, encyclopedic vision of the kosmos of knowledge does not require an impossible omniscience. It requires only an heightened awareness of the relation of one kind of knowledge to another—of the kosmos of interconnection and interdependence among the differing arts of sciences, each one, in fact, still perfectible, still unfinished and developing
as a form of knowledge. The mind must be prepared to assimilate new knowledge in an orderly way and to distinguish and correlate the complexities of things according to the perspectives of the different arts and sciences that compose human knowledge. It is in this sense that rhetorical knowledge may be called polymathic. Mastering the whole of knowledge—all the arts and sciences in perfected forms—is clearly impossible. In that case we would have to possess a sort of mastery that transcends the present temporally restricted conditions of human life. Learning well a single and still developing science can take a lifetime. Knowing the whole suggests an omniscience that philosophically can be attributed only to God.

The important thing for rhetoric, since it aims at persuasion, is that a rhetor must never make the mistake of reducing the complexity of the ways the things of the real world exist to a single way of knowing—to a single science or art. In other words, the full reality of any one thing will require many sciences to be adequately known, not just one. But this simple truth is more often violated than observed. Those who have expertise in one science tend to regard it as the sole valid way of knowing. That is at the root of many, maybe most intellectual disputes. But persuasive resolution of such disputes does presuppose a plausible encyclopedic grasp of the different kinds of knowledge. Such knowledge would be rightly called rhetorical knowledge.

But there is yet more that rhetorical knowledge may rightly include in view of persuasion. Must it not especially include a transcultural vision of the goods of human psyche? Only in working out matters in accord with a generally accessible vision of what really does and does not contribute to psychic welfare can human concord be persuasively prepared for and developed. The Furies of culture and personal identity, accustomed to their role as supreme arbiters of psyche, must be changed into Eumenides. The Furies must be given a new, benevolent, but subordinate role in a “city of man” founded on a newly enlivened humanism regarding the common goods of psyche. The rhetor’s
memory, then, seems to require a good deal more than knowledge of verbal techniques. The rhetor’s memory must be prepared to learn what may be needed to learn by a prior knowledge of the differing ways of knowing. And it must be prepared by prior knowledge of the real goods of human psyche, for these are the grounds of human agreement. How rhetorical memory is encyclopedically prepared in these ways will be discussed when we treat the so-called topics of invention in a later chapter. But here we let us be content to see that there is knowledge proper to rhetoric and a positive meaning to the ancient rhetorical ideal of polymathy.

We must deal with a still lingering issue about the relation of memory to intelligence. Do the writings of the past—the best of the books that have been written—contain the answers to present problems? We should first recall Plato’s suggestion that, to be capable of responses to new situations and problems, written discourse must imitate oral dialectic and mythopoiesis as it can. It follows that, in rhetorical invention, what Eliot called tradition or what Cicero called eruditio does not necessarily contain the truth or true benefit sought in the spirit of philosophy. In spite of all that is stored in an encyclopedically prepared memory, a rhetor should not yield to the illusion, very common today among “conservatives” and “traditionalists,” that they will find in something already known and read what to say in its appropriate form. Wide learning alone does not—and, in fact, cannot—provide appropriate answers to many or, perhaps, most current matters of strife. The reason it cannot is that such “book” learning by itself can only present some prefabricated solution arising from a past problem to a present problem. This blindly anachronistic application of memory, which wide reading encourages, is precisely what Plato feared: the kind of memory and mind that does not investigate but merely applies. All disputes are accordingly resolved by stored “truths,” as if there were nothing new about them to be discovered and nothing old about them, no historical encrustation attending their original discovery, to be
chipped away.

In fact, a genuine argument and its thesis are often “seen,” as if by an inspired revelation or illumination. But the vision may well be at first only a glimpse, which leaves the sightings both unclear and disguised by the memory of things already read or things usually preferred. To articulate what is newly persuasive in the sightings requires sustained attention and effort to strip away the dress of antiquity or of familiarity, not only during the inventive process, but also, as we will see, during the process of writing out the discourse. (See Part 3 on style.) At any point during the investigative procedures of invention, as rhetorical memory comes into play with them, there may occur a sudden insight that, like a flash of light in a darkened room of immense size, reveals previously unseen things, things newly stimulating to both reason and imagination. When this insight comes, if it comes—and, during the procedures of invention, it does come more frequently than one may suspect—the writer will literally feel a thrill of discovery.

It is a distinctive pleasure, this thrill, and it is the most personal and secret reward (or should I say gift?) of inventive inquiry. The experience of this pleasure signified to the ancients the presence of the Muses, the daughters of Zeus and of Mnemosyne, a goddess whose name means memory in Greek. And they will lead one to the company of Athena and, of course, to Peitho. Again, as we confront persuasion, we must speak of the divine to be true to the phenomenon, however much scientific reduction of it to the interplay of organic or psychological “forces” may resist our mythology of persuasion. The advent of the divine Muses no one can predict, but when they do come, their effect is unmistakable. However, one thing about the advent of these graceful goddesses remains predictable: they will not come to those who do not want them or prepare for their society.

But how are the Muses prepared for? By the practice of the several arts of
invention: the arts of treating testimony and conducting personal inquiry, with the inquirer being always attentive to the common goods and ills of psyche and to the *kosmos* of human knowledge. To these, which in this book will be termed the common topics of invention, attention must always be given. They are the sources of human agreement or, put in another way, of a transcultural persuasive appeal. But whether one is treating testimony or making a personal analysis to discover a persuasive argument and its thesis, it is also vital in invention to consider well the opposing views. Only by giving the opinions of the Furies honest representation can a written discourse simulate oral dialectic. But no form of contemporary education provides formal training in the arts of invention, not even the so-called “great books” programs. While they aim to introduce people to the great and usually conflicting ideas advanced by writers of the past, they do not orient all to the vital work of responsible persuasion. Only an educational system that makes competence in rhetorical thinking its primary goal—which does not mean its only goal—enables students to see, through rational dialectic and mythical imagination, the “ideas,” to use unplatonically a word of Plato, pertinent to persuasion about any particular current problem. I call this vision the eyes of *Peitho*. Though indispensable in our times, it can be gotten today only by individuals who train themselves in the rhetorical arts.
CHAPTER 2

Rhetorical Proof by Argument:
Facts, Enthymemes, Paradigms

We must now say something about proof by argument, which here refers to both the overall course of reasoning (not just to the particular linked points or conclusions within it) and the pattern of imagining (the cumulative pattern of its imagery) in a discourse. Rhetorical argument, even in the expanded sense that includes the work of imagination, is only a part of rhetorical proof. Also contributing to the total probative suasion exerted by a discourse are the persona of the rhetor (the communicated impression of writer or speaker), whatever considerations about the addressees (their opinions, psychology, experience, culture, customs, political bias, etc.) that may be incorporated within the discourse, the very words of the discourse, and of course, the reality of human life in the cosmos. These other modes of proof will be considered later in connection with disposition and style. In fact, no part of the art of rhetoric is non-probative. Once we have examined rhetorical argument, the present matter of discussion, we may turn to the inventive arts of where and how to discover the points of argument by the so-called topics of invention, a process of consideration that questioning begins and that leads to argument.

If we restrict our attention to the process of writing, we can easily recognize that the chief and most vexing problem of the rhetor is to discover as good (as truthful or as responsibly persuasive) a thesis about some particular question or disputed matter as possible. The discovered thesis is clearly the sun of the verbal discourse; all else revolves
around it. But the proof of a thesis involves, among other things, making an argument through rhetorical reasoning and imagining. Such argumentative thinking is, in fact, not very mysterious, though it is usually misunderstood. It is the set of rational and imaginative ways the mind ordinarily works to resolve persuasively any problem or dispute. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that the different arts and sciences only particularize and adapt them to special subjects of inquiry while adjusting to their purposes the roles of inquirer, addressees, and language itself. But this is a subject we cannot pursue here.

What can be said is that only in very restricted cases of the physical and mathematical sciences can reasoning dispense with addressees altogether and rely on indisputable premises (conceded or proven statements) leading to irrefutable conclusions by the rules of logical deduction in the manner of geometrical reasoning. In the effort to achieve certainty of conclusion (the irrefutable truth), the misapplication of this manner of reasoning to disputes about anything has caused much trouble in the history of thought. Cicero chided the Stoics for it, and many modern historians of thought have chided Descartes, the seventeenth-century French thinker, for making it fashionable again. Reasoning in the geometrical way led in great part to the often-recognized intellectual arrogance of the so-called eighteen-century Enlightenment, which Descartes greatly inspired. In most disputes, however, it is the very premises of fact or statement that are brought into question. No logically guaranteed certainty is possible, for the very things in dispute are often changing and changeable and, while changing, exhibit multiple aspects to differently oriented people, who also change. Still, this variability is no reason to fall into a radical skepticism or nihilism. Real knowledge is possible. There are innumerable plain truths all recognize about themselves and the world. That there are disputes about many other matters should not lead to despair, for we do not lack resources of resolution. The resources, this book maintains, are the arts of rhetorical expression.
There are many ways of reasoning about disputed matters, which differ in the
different arts and sciences. But rhetorical reasoning must be adapted both to the things in
question, like the arts and sciences, and to the persons who differ about them by means of
language, itself an unruly if indispensable medium. For the reasons given, these ways
cannot be modeled upon geometrical deduction from self-evident rational principles. Nor
can they be modeled upon the empirical and mathematical means of physical science. One
of the primary tenets of this book is that the “premises” or grounds of both agreement and
truthfulness in rhetorical argument may have to be established, but they are not
unrecognizable. They lie within the common experience of actual tragedy, which, it has
been claimed, is the neglected presupposition of the entire art of rhetorical expression. In
this book they are called the “common topics” (to borrow an ancient phrase) of rhetorical
proof. And we shall discuss them as the foundation of responsible persuasion when we
come to the matter of the so-called common and special topics of invention, the art of
where and how to discover the actual points of rational and imaginative argument. As has
been mentioned, this book proposes a new interpretation of the topics of invention that
makes them contribute substantively, as a distinctive rhetorical knowledge fundamental
to persuasion, not just as formal modes of probable reasoning. In a real sense, it is the
suggestions supplied by the topics that make argument persuasive. But this matter will be
taken up in later chapters.

The topics, nevertheless, are no panacea in the work of invention of argument.
Reasoning and imagining in their light to resolve a dispute is never easy. Rhetorical
argument always involves particular matters disputed by particular persons, each
different in his or her psychology of adherence to opinions. In these adaptations, to
achieve a sense of the responsible truth, the arguable truth, reasoning must, of course, be
conscious of logic, which validates the formal connection of ideas and statements, but not,
we should realize, the premises of reasoning. All men are trees. Socrates is a man.
Therefore, Socrates is a tree. This is perfectly valid reasoning, but putting aside for a moment figurative speaking, it is not true reasoning. One of the statements of premise is not true. Reasoning must often rely on much else other than the rules of formal reasoning. It may have to rely upon the convergence of data that suggest true facts or real possibilities. It may have to rely on numerical and statistical calculations, on considerations of the many relationships of the things disputed to other things, on trustworthy authority, on aptitude to judge well gained from experience both personal and historical, on pertinent imaginable narratives from history or poetry, on new contexts or analogies of consideration, on emotional restraints that temper the furies of personal opinion, and on new points of view. And it is our contention here that the reasoning and imagining of rhetorical argument best represents the basic ways the mind works to resolve disputes.

It will not be possible here to provide a thorough account of rhetorical argument. Our sketch will follow in several respects the well-known pattern of discussion set by Aristotle, but it does not attempt historically to represent his teachings in the matter but to express (I hope, in a better way) the actuality of rhetorical argument. Rhetorical argument has several basic components: (1) facts (evidence); and (2) particular points of (pro and con) reasoning, technically called enthymemes, which are based either on the signification (meaning) of established facts or on authoritative opinion already maintained by addressees. That, however, is not all. As mentioned, rhetorical argument also includes (3) any imaginative or historical supplementation (paradigms or models) that the facts, reasons, or addressees may require and that contribute to the comprehensive imaginative context of the whole argument, to which, as we will see, (4) the arts of style and (5) arrangement also contribute.

Again, all the parts of rhetoric are in fact matters of proof in their own ways. But even if the reasoning of argument is persuasive to the rhetor, it may not be persuasive to
others. In general, the more revealing the reasoning done—and that means the more it anticipates and resolves the actual or possible objections of others—the more persuasive and the more arguably truthful it will be. Still, such insightful and anticipative reasoning may not be enough to persuade the psyche of others. An argument may also have to contend with the Furies, the culturally induced or personally acquired imaginative resistance that, by obscuring perception of what reasoning has revealed, enervates its credibility. Perhaps even the person of the rhetor, which in writing involves what is called persona, will be a problem. Sometimes only the supplementation of argument by experience over time, by historical events, or by changing perceptions about the rhetor, will be needed. In the next sections, we will examine briefly only the first three constituents of rhetorical argument: facts, enthymemes, and paradigms, each in the light of the desire for truthfulness about life in the world and, perhaps, in another after death.

Facts, Enthymemes, and Paradigms

Establishing the facts of an argument may be tricky business. But it is a business that the persuasiveness of argument often depends greatly upon, since, when we use our minds to make judgments that may persuade others, we need to start our reasoning with something as solid and as reliable as possible. Ordinarily, facts—say about some person or thing—are established by personal experience or by the trusted testimony of others. It takes no special acumen to realize that our personal experience of someone or something may be very limited or skewed by prejudice; hence, we try to supplement experience by trusted testimony—by authority, in short. The trouble is that, like experience, authority, by whatever medium communicated (say, the Internet), may also be limited and misleading. Historians, for example, must not only make the effort to work out critical methods of investigating their sources of information to determine whether the information is factual.
They must also work to insure that they personally are sensitive to differing modes of perception and judgment in their sources and to free themselves as much as possible from distorting prejudices of their own times. Physical scientists must also work out methods of experimentation to get facts. But they must also beware that the techniques and instrumentation of experimentation do not distort the things investigated and that the authority of other scientists does not distort their personal thinking. Rhetorical reasoning, as we have said, is not different in kind from much of the reasoning done in the special sciences. It becomes different in arts and sciences by methodical and self-critical applications, often involving technological instrumentation, to particular subject matters.

Consider two examples of rhetorical reasoning, one concerning persons, the other concerning things. Let’s say there is some settled opinion about a person, a certain Ms. X. The people who know her, from all they observe or have been told, think she is a very good person. But then suppose it gets around that someone has seen, heard, or was told of something about Ms. X that jars with the common, majority opinion. Thus, some little bit of suspicion is aroused. Now there is some question about her. In other words, the personal experience of most people and the accepted testimony of most others have established certain facts. They are the evidence indicating that Ms. X is a very good person. Yet some say she is not. It may be that Ms. X is, in truth, not all she seems to be according to most of the known facts. She may be, say, a malicious swindler, a female Bernie Madoff. If possible, a good deal more information—more facts—about her will have to be discovered and evaluated to establish the truth about Ms. X.

A second example, this time about a thing, not a person: the sun appears to move around the earth, regularly rising in the east and setting in the west. This is a fact of observed experience. Indeed, the scientific cosmology of the ancient and medieval worlds (the geocentric or Ptolemaic system, it is called) was essentially based upon this observable fact. But the truth this fact signifies is somewhat different than it appears to be. Thanks to
Copernicus and Galileo and some others, we know that the motion of the earth is the true cause of the appearance of the rising and setting sun, though, of course, this truth of the cosmic reality does not negate “the phenomenological truths” of the perception and all that goes with it of the sun moving around the earth. These truths have to be held in common and their different areas of application understood.

What do these examples indicate about discovery of the truth, of making reliable judgments based on facts? First, let us acknowledge that Ms. X truly does and says things indicating to many that she is a good person. The observed features and the testimony of others about her behavior are true facts. That the sun appears to move around the earth is also a true fact. However, by themselves these true facts are not sufficient to indicate the whole truth either about Ms. X or the motion of the sun. It is not that a point of view determines the truth about a person or thing. Rather, multiple viewpoints must be adopted that will reveal other true facts so that, when all the facts, from all the viewpoints, are taken together, we can make as truthful a judgment as we can in some area of concern or discussion.

However, it is not uncommon that we cannot establish all the needed facts. Nor is it uncommon that we cannot establish them precisely when they are needed to discover the truth. Time—perhaps a long period of history—may be needed to allow many facts to emerge, if they emerge at all. There may be, in short, real limits upon what facts can be established at any given time. And if our judgments cannot be delayed, we run the risk of error. What at first appears to be the whole truth may turn out to be false or only partially true in the light of additional facts. Thus, the truth may be very paradoxical, combining many seemingly contradictory facts. Ms. X may truly be a well-mannered woman whom one would not expect to be a swindler but who nevertheless is a swindler.

The possible paradoxes of the truth about persons and things lead to another matter already implicit in the previous discussion, namely, our reasoning in the light of
facts. Everyone, more or less consciously, is an inquirer, one who reasons in the light of facts derived from personal experience and testimony of all sorts, including what formal education passes on to us as scientific or historical facts. It is normal and unavoidable for the human psyche to function in a context of authoritative testimony, believing much that psyche cannot establish by its own very limited experience. But most people are less conscious of such dependence than they ought to be and all too readily yield their minds to the beliefs of cultural custom, prejudice, or ideology. This is regrettable, though not easily avoidable, because psyche can be made alert only after enculturation has already taken place, and enculturation easily lulls psyche into a lazy state of easy suggestibility. A rhetorically disciplined inquirer, however, must be something of a Socrates, one uncommonly alert to the biases of enculturation and to the signification of common things. Sherlock Holmes is a good example. But like most fictional detectives, Holmes is admittedly something of a caricature of the actual power and competence of reason to follow unfailingly the signification of the facts. Nevertheless, to a rhetorician, all things are signs of other things, which in turn are signs of still other things, also signs, all the signs composing a complicated network of signification. Rhetoricians must not only anticipate the paradoxes of fact the truth about someone or something may involve. They must also expect the opposition of the Furies that attend the hypnosis of enculturation by custom, popular prejudice, appealing ideology, education, or political regime. And let us not forget to add that they must be wary of any arrogance of rationalistic enlightenment that may be only the fictional imaginative context of their own reasoning.

A few simple but crucial matters about rhetorical reasoning in the light of facts should be understood. First, some facts point almost certainly to other things. They are virtually infallible signs. For example, Mr. Z has a fever. This is a determinable fact. He is, therefore, so we reason rightly, ill. To determine what illness exactly or what the causes of the illness are will require additional questions that lead to the discovery of other facts.
Nevertheless, that he is ill is a virtual certainty. Another example: a woman is lactating. This is a fact. She, therefore, almost certainly has given birth unless some pharmaceutical intervention has occurred. But not all facts signify, as these do, something else with virtual certainty.

Some facts signify ambiguously. The police find Mr. X with blood on his shirt cuffs at the site where his wife lies stabbed to death. To reason that he is, therefore, the murderer is not at all certain. It may be that he is. But there are other conclusions that can be legitimately signified by the given fact. Reasoning must take into account other facts whose significance make the truth more evident or, at least, make it less ambiguous by making fewer the things the first fact can signify.

How, then, should an inquirer form his thinking about established facts that, when interpreted together, have ambiguous signification? When one posits a reason for facts or draws a conclusion from them based on some general authoritative opinion, which usually involves some degree of emotional adherence, he or she produces what Aristotle called an enthymeme. An enthymeme posits a fact whose significance is expressed as a reason or consequence that is grounded in personal experience or in opinions based on generally accepted testimony. For example:

(1) x is y, because (for, since...).
(2) x is y; therefore (hence, consequently...).

Let us return to the examples above:

(1) Mr. Z has a fever; therefore, he is ill. Or, to turn it around, Mr. Z is ill because he has a fever.
(2) Ms. X is very nice to everybody, always charming in manner and appearance; therefore, she is a good person.
(3) Mr. Y had blood on his hands when the police found him at the site where his wife was stabbed to death. He is, therefore, a murderer.
We must be aware that every enthymeme implies a judgment that should be carefully examined in order to determine the truthfulness of the reasoning. In the first example, the implied judgment is that all those who have fevers are ill. The implied judgment in the second example is that all nice women, charming in appearance and manner, are good persons. In the third example, the implied judgment is that any man found at the site of a fatal stabbing and with blood on his shirt cuffs is the murderer. It should be clear, once the implied judgments have been explicitly brought out, that only one of the three is almost certainly true.

The general laws of logical validation must also be part of the testing within the reasoning done within an argument, when enthymemes, the points of argument, as they may also be called, are linked with one another. Formal logic is the systematic inquiry into the way people think in order to show why some reasoning is correct and some incorrect in the attempt to discover and establish the truth or the best possible approximation of it. There is, however, in each of us a basic sense of right reasoning that needs only to be heightened by recalling some “laws” of thought and actuality. The chief one, which is a law of the real cosmos before being a law of reasoning, is the law of non-contradiction: a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect. This is a law of reality, not merely of assertions about reality. This law was best formulated by Aristotle and remains the foundation of reasoning. The second is the law of adequate definition and division: what a thing or matter is must be specified as to its class and differentiated from other things belonging to that class. In short, we must be clear what we are talking or writing about. A lot of problems and misunderstandings may then be averted. For example, a human being is an animal, that is, a living being capable of self-motion; that is the class (or genus) of things human beings belong to. But, among animals, only human beings are capable of what the Greeks called logos, rational discourse. This is the specific difference of man among animals. The third is adequate inference or reasoning. If we pay
attention to what we are saying (inferring) as we move from one thought to another in the light of these laws of reality and logic, we will usually detect any flaws that violate them in rational discourse.

Most of the time, if not all the time, it is necessary to supplement reasoning to conclusions (making judgments) from a fact or group of facts, even in the light of all available facts. Such supplementation is an important part of proof in rhetorical argument because it is an important part of the way we all think. What do we do when there are no facts for us to rely upon or only a few whose ambiguity of signification (meaning) cannot be removed? That is, in some cases, the network of signification among established facts cannot be finally completed and a conclusion reached without assistance. Such assistance is given by what Aristotle called a paradigm or model. It is close to the broad rational and imaginative idealization of Plato’s rhetorical thinking. A paradigm is a comparison between one fact or set of facts still in doubt and another known fact in order to complete the possible signification of the first.

But to find paradigms rhetoricians are left to their own devices and (prudential) memory. The importance of memory in rhetorical thinking has been already discussed, and here is just one more instance of it, now showing how memory may influence reasoning and judgment. Aristotle noted that there are three basic sources for paradigms: (1) comparison from history, as already indicated, (2) comparison made by one’s own imagination, or (3) comparisons drawn from fictional literature.

Here is an example of reasoning, found in Aristotle, about the signification of facts in the light of a paradigm, in this case one taken from history: Dionysius, the ruler of Syracuse, is requesting a bodyguard. This is the fact. Now, in the past, Peisistratus, the ruler of Athens, asked for a bodyguard and then became a despot. The very same thing happened when Theagenes, ruler of Megara, asked for a bodyguard. Therefore, Dionysius is scheming to become a despot. (See the Rhetoric 1.2: 1357b 30-40.) That
Dionysius is requesting a bodyguard is here judged according to a historical paradigm or model of supplementary signification. The two historical examples bring to a closure, as it were, the still open possibilities of signification the initial fact allows. However, the implied judgment of the paradigmatic model is that all rulers who request body guards are scheming to become despots. It should be clear that this judgment is not necessarily conclusive, although the model does in fact lend probability of a certain degree to the judgment. But probability, whether low or high, is still not certainty. Dionysius may well have had other reasons for getting a bodyguard. What comes into play here is the supplementation of imaginative rationality by history.

History is indispensable to proof in rhetorical reasoning and to any occasion for verbal psychagogy. The simple truth is that every disputed matter has some pertinent history. Even in personal disputes, this point is clear. For example, a married man and woman may quarrel about a particular matter, say a matter of money, in which the history of their relationship and of the matter itself is implicated. What rationality contributes in the form of enthymemic argument by the disputants or of some scientific argument given as counsel by a psychiatrist may well need to be supplemented by the pertinent historical considerations.

But imagination too can provide materials of argument. Here is what Aristotle had to say about a comparison that the inquirer himself imagines making a point of argument:

The illustrative parallel [an imagined paradigm] is the sort of argument [Plato’s] Socrates uses, e.g. Public officials ought not to be selected by lot [chance]. That is like using the lot to select athletes, instead of choosing those who are fit for the contest; or using the lot to select a steersman from among a ship’s crew, as if we ought to take the man on whom the lot falls, and not the man who knows most about it. (*Rhetoric* 2, 20: 1393b 2-8; trans. W. Rhys
Plato’s dialogues are full of such paradigms when, for certain questions, there are few facts or none. A famous story, perhaps a work of Shakespeare or some other well-regarded poet or fictionist, may serve in the same way. But any paradigm must be also tested for implied judgments. The implied judgment of this paradigm—one may also call it an imagined analogy—is that all selection of public officials should be based, not on drawing lots to determine who will serve, but on pertinent competence. (The context for this paradigm is the custom in ancient Athenian democracy of making a public official out of any citizen.)

The dangers within the ways of establishing facts and of reasoning from or apart from facts should be evident. We are all familiar with the hasty conclusions about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and their consequences. Incomplete or false historical information may well infiltrate the process of inquiry through the memory of the inquirer and divert it from the truth or from the best possible approximation to the truth. So may the prejudices of the inquirer or rhetor. But the point needing emphasis here is the supplemental role of paradigms, whether based upon history, one’s own imagination, or literature. Imagination is not necessarily a dangerous distortion of argumentation. It can be a positive and necessary extension of the rationality of argument in constructing the proof of the thesis and generating its persuasive power. But there is still much more that should be known about imagination as a rhetorical art. The further work of the imagination in providing an imaginative context extending and supporting or even directing rational argument is best treated in connection with the matters of style and delivery, the final parts of the rhetorical art.
CHAPTER 3
The Arts of Inventional Thinking

We have been discussing rhetorical proof by argument and have examined the components of argument. We must now consider the invention or discovery of argument—inventional thinking. Where and how are we to find the facts, reasons, and paradigms of reasoning and imagining while simultaneously liberating ourselves from all that may keep our understanding and imagination in bondage? To the question where, the answer the ancients gave is that there are two sources of invention (discovery): what others think and what we think, that is, either the authoritative testimony of others (sometimes called extrinsic invention, symbolized in this book by Zeus) or our personal inquiry into the matters of a dispute (sometimes called intrinsic invention, symbolized by Apollo). Examination of authoritative testimony is necessary, but it is not enough. We must examine the disputed matters for ourselves. To the question how, the ancients answered that the two sources must be examined as offering the so-called topics of invention, the topics of testimony and the topics of personal inquiry, often divided into topics of persons and topics of things, since disputes concern one or the other or both. Here we are concerned with the topics of testimony. And we will be presenting a revised version that, while fundamentally true to the ancient tradition, looks to the needs of a contemporary reader as well.

But what is a topic? The word “topic” derives from a Greek word that means “place,” a metaphor for the different forms of mental attention given to the sources in order to find the components of argument. In ancient rhetorical theory, there were two
basic ways of understanding the topics. One way was to see them as general forms or premises of probable reasoning, called *common topics* if they apply to any dispute, and *special topics* if they apply only to certain kinds of disputes in legal, political, or ceremonial oratory. This is what Aristotle did in his *Rhetoric*, as was mentioned. The other was to see the topics as different forms of mental attention given to the invention sources to find the components of argument. This is what Cicero did in his treatise called *Topics*. In the Ciceronian approach, the topics are like questions. The topics are, then, a procedure of inquiry. Inquiry proceeds by attending to the sources (testimony and personal analysis of the matters involved) from different mental standpoints or, to follow the metaphor, from different mental places of interrogation. This is perhaps the more accessible of the two classical ways of understanding the topics of invention. And I will make use of this Ciceronian approach here, both in the examination of testimony and in personal inquiry.

We may summarize the whole matter of the topics by saying that they constitute a procedure of critical inquiry about disputed matters.

**Topics of Testimony: Cultural Authority and the Past**

The aim of the topics of testimony is to guide an examination of the facts, reasons, and the imaginative contexts proposed in generally accepted, and thus authoritative, opinions about a given problem or dispute. In other words, the disputed matter is examined indirectly, from the outside, as it were, through the spoken or written opinions of others—by their testimony. The finding of testimony involves minor arts of research, noted here but not elaborated, for they are subsidiary to the rhetorical topics. More important than research is the significance of authority.

Authority expresses the weightiness of received past opinion that inclines our judgments, especially in cases that cannot be conclusively proven by our own experience, knowledge, and powers of reasoning. The necessity of authority in the general process of
learning and education is clear. We all need teachers, not only in matters of personal life as we grow, but also in acquiring skills of any sort or in gaining competence in one or more of the many different arts and sciences that compose human knowledge. The teachers—the experienced or the experts—are spokesmen of the authoritative traditions that provide us answers to the basic questions we may ask or that show us the regnant procedures and the advanced developments in some skill or area of art and science. The authority of received history does this as well, as in truth it must, especially in elementary and secondary education. In addition, there is the authority of a way of life in a particular culture or a sociopolitical tradition. Its suasive power also guides much of our thinking. However, the young (and sometimes even their teachers) have neither the personal experience nor the rational arts to evaluate it. Yet there clearly will come a time when the young, because their intellectual powers are increasing, begin to question all authority. The problem of unruly teens and young adults is not merely hormonal or cultural. It is also intellectual. Sexual and philosophic eros develop concurrently, as Plato’s Socrates recognized in the Symposium. One involves the other. So there is real need, even in the early years, for a skillful treatment of authority by teachers, though they seldom provide it in secondary or university education. The notion of common or authoritative opinion recalls, in the classical myth of persuasion, the figures of Zeus (political power) and the Furies (received customs). Their rule often hardens into unquestioned and unquestionable patterns of thought and action. Any violation causes a harsh and angry response.

But the status of authority in learning and education generally is different from its status in the inventional inquiry of rhetoric. In the former contexts, authority is believed, taken to be a reliable guide. In the latter context, authority is interrogated. Rhetorical invention begins only when strife in some form, mild or severe, arises, that is, when the experts (the teachers or the spokesmen of authority), factions within a culture, or different cultures conflict. The process of rhetorical invention may indeed seek out hidden conflicts
among authorities. It is true that when faced with conflict, we may need to learn from authoritative teachers (the experts) what the terms of the conflict are, but then we are faced with the problem of constructing a persuasive argument to resolve it. We are faced, in short, with a problem of invention. From the standpoint of rhetoric, then, no sort of authority is beyond inquiry, since only through questioning it can we sift it philosophically and so confirm it, deny it, or change it for the better. Only in this way can true conservation occur, the kind that endows old truths with new life and responsiveness to present matters in dispute. Yet the implicit threat of inquiry to established authority is why the topics of testimony may well be profoundly unsettling. In some circumstances, where the law and police of a political regime strengthen authority, the use of the topics in inquiry may even be dangerous. Imprisonment, execution, alienation, or persecution may follow.

**Oral Testimony**

Some sources of testimony are oral. At times, oral testimony may be gathered formally and purposefully, through personal interviews, tapings, listening to speeches or lectures by experts, and planned conversation. But, most of the time, pertinent testimony is gathered informally, when we are interested in settling our minds about personal and public problems through casual conversation, gossip, or private talks with trusted people, and our “friends” (put in quotation marks because they are not necessarily our best teachers), and sometimes professional (paid) counselors. Clearly we “gather testimony” in this informal way all the time, especially about money, personal relationships, and illness. But few of us do it well. For we are hardly aware how much what others tell us (or what we are personally inclined to think) is conditioned by what the human cultural environment is always telling us. Every human culture is a vast sociological, educational, and political system of suasion producing beliefs in innumerable ways. This general,
almost unconscious, influence upon us, for good and ill, is always at work. In our times, the public electronic media of radio, television, and film are constantly presenting testimony about all aspects of life though advertising, movies, talk shows, and interviews. The daily news reports come to us subtly spiced by the unsolicited opinions of those attractive Friends of Everybody, the show-business broadcaster-journalists that answer to their network employers and advertisers. There is also the oral religious and spiritual testimony of religious institutions and particularly “inspired” people, the priests, preachers, seers, oracles, mediums, mystics and other spiritualists and holy ones, all of whom report how the reputed divine realities and beings of the unseen world affect the visible world of humankind.

What people say, both as individuals and as unconscious or unreflective spokesmen of the conventional historical opinions transmitted within a culture, is to be regarded in the spirit of philosophic disinterestedness, attentive to whatever may distort the truth or true good. Here are some key questions—key interrogative topics—that should inform any evaluation of oral testimony, whether found formally or informally.

Regarding what is said:

(1) Are the reported facts really the facts and all the facts?

(2) Does what is said about the reported facts conform to the general laws of making sense—the law of contradiction, adequate definition and division, adequate inference?

(3) Do the facts and reasons reported take the form of opinions that betray some concealed wish or willful interest, either of self or of some group (ideology)?

Regarding who says it:

(1) Is the speaker knowledgeable about what is being said?

(2) Is the speaker experienced enough to give reasonable opinion, even if not
expert?

(3) Is the speaker’s character reputable in the judgment of others or in fact?

(4) Is the speaker employed by or financially dependent upon some person, institution, or group whose interests and opinions cannot easily be contradicted?

(5) Are the speaker’s opinions likely to be influenced by interests of self, family, or personal friends and associates?

Examining Written Testimony: Topics of Rhetorical and Poetical Texts

Other sources of testimony are written. In school, many people are made familiar to some degree with formal research, finding written testimony in books, articles, and records kept in libraries, governmental institutions, or private housings. Such research is a minor skill that requires some experience and instruction. In general, pertinent writings are gathered by

(1) consulting library catalogues (now also on computer), encyclopedias, and general reference books and bibliographies pertaining to the subject matter in question;

(2) finding the special books, articles, or data bases on the subject; their sources or bibliographies should be noted also;

(3) gathering whatever documents or information may be available through electronic information systems;

(4) making a general bibliography of one’s own, noting all data of publication, and arranging them chronologically, thus preparing one to see any development of opinion or note any fashions of thought that the times of publication may reveal.

There are other sources of written testimony also—popular books, magazines,
newspapers, and newsletters, as well as the written texts available on the web or other parts of the internet. And we should not forget the written testimony that the people of a given culture consider divinely inspired, like the Koran, the Hebrew Tanakh, or the Christian Bible. A huge body of commentary written by scholarly and theological experts supplements these texts. They too are sources of testimony. Nevertheless, to some adherents of sacred texts, such written commentary remains nugatory, since they think the divine meaning of sacred books is communicated immediately to all readers, if only they read it devoutly. The opinions based upon the authority of any sacred writings within a given culture cannot be overlooked by rhetors. But they must also realize that such testimony cannot be the basis of persuasive argument in cases where cultural and religious differences are part of the dispute. For the teachings of these writings can and often do differ and depend upon personal acceptance in faith. The basis of persuasion can only be an inclusive context to which each belong, the most fundamental being the context of their common humanity—a defensible and generally accessible sense of the goods of human psyche, no matter what religious writings are given credence. But there is one absolutely important exception, as I have mentioned before. Should the sacred writings—and, in fact, any other writings, sacred or not—deny the validity and feasibility of such a view of the goods of human psyche, it would present a positive threat to the entire enterprise of human verbal psychagogy. Irrationality is never a good thing, even when presented as an alternative to presumptuous rationalism. Reason has its limits, which reason itself can see and modestly confess. Irrationality sees none. The denial of a real rational and imaginative grasp of the goods of human psyche is not uncommon. Still, the possibility of any such denial becoming widely accepted among humankind is, in fact, remote. For it runs contrary to the similarities of human life that are constantly intuited in experience generally and especially in tragic experience. The business of rhetoric is to articulate anew the intuited constants. And in invention thinking, these constants, as
they are here called, will be explicated later as “common topics.”

The topics must also guide the reading of authoritative written testimony. Only then can reading become beneficially critical. Non-poetical texts clearly include many different kinds, informational, descriptive, legal, and technical. In the last two instances, the language used is so highly specialized and dense that anyone who has not learned to read them will find them impenetrable. But these instances aside, it is clear that inventive reading is critical reading. It is active not passive, and, in spirit, must be philosophic. Since the art of rhetoric guides the composition of rhetorical discourse and can include within itself all other kinds of non-poetical texts, we can see that rhetoric must include a basic procedure of critical reading in inventive inquiry. The interpretation of texts is a complicated matter, treated as hermeneutics. But rhetorical inquiry need not be much involved in hermeneutical theory because the composition of rhetorical discourse of any sort will inevitably evince the arts of rhetoric. Inventional thinking needs only to look in the mirror of the whole art of rhetoric for the guidance it needs in reading non-poetical texts. Let’s see how such thinking may be employed in reading rhetorical (non-poetical) texts.

To be critical and philosophic, reading must first be accurate in understanding what is written, whatever may be maintained. To determine accurately what is written and what is implied in what is written is the first rule of reading texts. Accuracy requires more than literacy. It requires grammatical and critical skills of a very high order, as will become plain. In reading rhetorical texts, the goal of accurate reading is to determine exactly what the problems or questions in dispute are, what the basic thesis of the response is, and upon what argument—that is, upon what facts, reasons, and imaginative contexts—the thesis is based. These will have to be consciously winnowed out from a text. Very often such critical reading will expose weaknesses of thought. A useful technique is the analytical outline that formulates the problem posed, then the thesis made by the writer, and then
lists the main points of argument.

Second, critical reading must be disinterested and alert enough to perceive in the suasions of texts the signs or suggestions of possible distortions of truthfulness. Many of the critical topical questions applied to oral testimony apply also to written testimony, but with some important differences.

(1) Are the facts really the facts? Are the facts presented complete—all the available facts? Or incomplete—just a select few? Some things that pass for facts are, in fact, partial or complete fabrications of the ideology of groups or individuals. Even sources of facts, such as encyclopedias or reference books, may well be biased by their authors, publishers, or by political and religious opinions often unconsciously held. In this matter, the art of reading requires a philosophic disinterestedness that is wary not only of the anti-philosophic interests of others but of the rhetorician’s own.

(2) Are the reasons given good reasons? That is, does the reasoning which makes sense of the facts conform to the “laws” of thought—namely the principle of non-contradiction, the necessity of adequate definition and distinction, and the laws of adequate inference? Are the reasons given conclusive or necessary, or are they highly probable or only just barely probable? Or are they inadequate to support the overall thesis maintained?

(3) What historical context conditions the argument? Historical context includes the personal background and general culture of the author and addressees of a text, their ways of thinking and feeling. Much has been written in hermeneutics about the readerly difficulties of breaking out of our own points of view and interests and of reaching an adequate understanding of the meaning of texts of the past. These difficulties have been so heightened that many feel that any attempt to understand a text on
its own terms is illusory. But this position is an extreme one. It overlooks the irreducibility of the past to our interests and the disciplinary techniques devised, like the rhetorical topics, to ensure that, to the extent possible, we honestly understand the words and minds of another who belongs to a time and culture not our own.

(4) What imaginative context is stated or implied in the text? For example, does its imaginative context imply a myth or narrative of contemporary “enlightenment” that reveals the “dark-age” or “medieval” opinions of others, which are, therefore, supposed to be corrupted by prejudice? It may be so, but any such narrative may imply what cannot be reasonably maintained—that any opinion that is contemporary or up-to-date is, by that fact alone, better or truer than another that is not, whether ancient or medieval. Or is overcoming oppressive authority the implied myth? But authoritative restrictions, even if strongly enforced, are not always oppressive. A critical reader must be aware that any ideology, which is a highly willful adherence to a set of opinions, is liable to make a writer characterize his opposition, especially if it comes from governmental institutions, as oppressive? Or is the implied myth one that claims for itself divine sanction or approval? But invoking God’s will or something like it is notoriously dangerous, since it is an easy substitute for irrational willfulness. Or is the myth one of preservation of authoritative tradition? But, again, there is need for caution, for traditionalist myths suggest that what is old and customary is by that fact alone better than what is innovative. Like a myth of enlightenment, the myth of tradition is a story of time: it is good or true because it is old and venerated. Thus, it implies that experience over time is a better test of worth than rational examination. It may be so in some
instances, but stories of historical justification are just as liable to abuse by
the anti-philosophic and partisan interests of human beings as “God’s will”
is.

A text is poetical when its dominant mode of discourse is imaginative, not
ratiocinative or informational. This is the special sense of the word “poetical” used here.
Accordingly, it is not verse or rhyme that makes a text poetical. A novel, short story, or
play in prose is poetical because it is essentially imaginative. In reading poetical texts, the
first goal is again accuracy, but this time in imagining the fictive world of a work, its
characters, and their actions. This is usually harder than it may seem, since accuracy in
imagining according to the specific imagery evoked by the words of a poetical text is a
competence much less developed in education than free expression of one’s own
imagination. By accurate reading, the reader becomes involved in a fiction and, once
involved, affected by its suasive forces.

But after accurate reading comes evaluation, which presupposes a degree of
readerly detachment from the imagined world once the reader has been drawn into its
field of suasive forces. But poetical texts, including cinematic “texts” or films, make
readerly detachment difficult precisely because they are highly imaginative and so are
both highly attractive and emotionally powerful. Thus, poetical texts of all kinds, even
fictional best sellers that are read for mere entertainment, must be evaluated
disinterestedly. Only such disinterest creates in the reader the necessary critical
detachment. For our purposes here, we do not need to discuss the specialized science
called literary criticism. Nevertheless, a basic form of literary criticism, one which is
conscious of the psychagogy operating in an imaginative work, is essential to the
rhetorical art.

It bears repeating that what makes any poetical text (or film) potent, whether
intended merely for entertainment or for a more serious and, perhaps, less commercially
profitable motive, is the way it imaginatively creates and manages the reader’s thoughts and feelings, his sympathies and antipathies. Recognition of this fact—the suasive forces of a poetical text—is the foundation of the basic form of literary criticism we are interested in here. Thus, a reader needs to keep in mind certain questions about the imagined course of action and the emotions and thoughts it generates.

(1) For what or for whom is sympathy or antipathy created in the course of the fiction—for certain events and situations, for certain things done or experienced by the characters, for certain ways of thinking feeling exhibited by them?

(2) What validation does the fiction provide for its suasion of the reader’s feelings? Is the validation some popularly held opinions that are unquestioningly assumed within the text to be those of every “good” reader of the text? Or is it not popular opinion but actually some group opinions—political, ethical, social, economic, and religious—maintained by an author or, perhaps, publisher that wishes to promote them in the readers?

(3) Is the suasion of readerly thought and feeling earned by the text or not? That is, is it subjected to real contest by opposing opinions embodied in the imagined action or in the sentiments and thoughts of the characters? Or is the suasive field of force uncontested within the text—simply created and sustained but never, within the text, put on trial, as it were? If it is in fact contested, how thoroughly is it done? Is it merely given a superficial opposition in the text? Or, as actually happens in the very best of poetical works, is it well earned by an interaction of opposites that engages the reader’s sense of reality, clarifies it, widens its scope, and warrants itself to the reader? That is, the interaction of opposites within the text will be a sort
of internal imaginative argument, leading one to some \textit{warranted} preference for one or the other or, perhaps, even to some state of indeterminacy, which may well be the limitations of the author’s own creative and cognitive powers. In rhetorical texts, rational, not imaginative, argument has the lead role; in poetic texts the reverse is true. Any potent imaginative argument must be scrutinized if rhetoricians are not to be misled either by their own prior likes and dislikes or by those created and managed in the text. The same observations apply, as already suggested, to film.

(4) Finally, what kind of imaginative pattern does the entire fiction suggest? There are only two fundamental and imaginative patterns in literature, whatever genre a particular work exhibits. One is a movement toward joy—a comic pattern, but not limited to dramatic or staged comedy—and the other toward sorrow—a tragic pattern, again not limited to staged tragedy. Some combination of the two is also possible. However, the ending is always crucial because it gives final form (though not necessarily definite form) to the suasive forces a work exerts on the readers’ attitudes, if not their overt behavior. Tragedy moves one in the direction of what is to be feared, comedy of what is to be hoped. All theories of censorship rightly accent this fact. All theories of free expression accent the fact that attitude is not yet behavior. However, the real issue is what suasion becomes authoritative. Authority does powerfully affect behavior. Further analysis of these issues or of comedy and tragedy as transgeneric modes of poetic imagination and as experiential modes of actuality belong to the science of literary theory and criticism.
CHAPTER 4
Topics of Inquiry: Tragedy

We now turn to the matter of invention by personal inquiry. Like the topics of testimony, this mental rhetorical art is also in need of rethinking in the light of the purposes of this book, and the rethinking, in my view, involves a short excursus here on the relation of the topics to tragedy. Why?

There is something important about the topics that the ancient theorists did not see clearly: inventional thinking, that is, inquiry by the topics leading to the formulation of arguments, is always affected by what we presuppose about human psyche in the cosmos. It is necessary here to consider how these presuppositions may hinder or help such thinking. This is a difficult matter, but this much is certain: tragedy always makes us to some degree aware of the realities of psyche in cosmos. So this is my claim: tragedy suggests certain cognitive fields (topics) of considerations fundamental to generating responsible psychagogic arguments. Thus, in this rethinking of the ancient theory of topical invention, we should keep whatever is useful in the ancient tradition but try to go deeper than the logical formalism of the tradition and replace it with a more cognitive interpretation that grants to inventive thought its own field of knowledge through tragedy.

The revision comes down to a new tripartite understanding of inventional thinking in personal inquiry. First, there are certain prime or leading questions about disputed matters, some pertaining to persons, others to things. (And here we take what remains useful from the tradition of the topics.) Then, second, the answers to these questions must
then be meditated in the context of actual (historical) or possible (poetic) tragedy. We deal only with poetry in this book, and within the meditative field of poetic tragedy, which we will survey in five ancient works, we can discern the outline of a new kind of common topics, thus retaining ancient rhetorical terms with new and different senses. The common topics are not questions but the actual grounds of responsible psychalogy, which tragic experience (history) and tragic potentiality (poetry) make recognizable in their different ways. These common topics apply to disputes concerning both persons and things because they are realities of psyche in cosmos that underlie all human behavior and all human arts and sciences. The so-called special topics, which presuppose and build on the common topics, are to be understood as the ways of change for the better that lie within human capacity. They point out the directions or goals of argument. They give specific orientation to the eros for the better that tragedy can arouse.

We will recall that Plato assimilated to philosophy the whole effort of verbal psychalogy, thus making the philosopher none other than the best rhetor, and in doing so he depreciated all contemporary accounts of the arts of managing language. Aristotle conceived of rhetoric as a linguistic technique or faculty of mind and so subordinated rhetoric to the philosophical sciences, mainly ethics and politics. They would provide reliable content for it. Were these conceptions adequate? The legacy of the Platonic view is that rhetoric, or verbal psychalogy, was not at all distinguishable from philosophy if rhetoric was to be regarded as responsible. Left out of consideration as unworthy were all the techniques of language management. The chief ill consequence of the Aristotelian view, which haunts the entire history of rhetoric, is that rhetoric is turned into a parasitic art. Any knowledge beyond that of language management or the forms of (probable) argumentation must be drawn from the sciences and other arts. Rhetorical knowledge is, then, only a kind of verbal and logical knowledge that is guided by considerations of the psychological effects on the addressees. This formalistic way of thinking, involving a
refusal to grant to rhetoric its appropriate fund of knowledge, was, as already discussed, a reaction to the sophists’ pretensions to polymathy and their attachment to mere effectiveness. These pretensions clearly had to be counteracted. But in doing so, the best ancient theorists left rhetoric in a vulnerable position. In being conceived only as a faculty of mind, which is the Aristotelian view, rhetoric has always suffered from aspersion whenever linguistic, epistemological, and moral problems destabilized the philosophical sciences from which rhetoric supposedly had to draw. Even in contemporary times, rhetoric has never been able to escape the recurrence of the charge, first made by Plato, that it was a mere verbal knack having no respectable and responsible basis in knowledge. But was that basis in fact lacking? The claim here, as the reader will doubtless now recall, is that its basis was (and remains) tragic experience. Rhetorical knowledge, the knowledge that conduces to persuasion and that belongs to no other art or science, consists in our responses to the actual or potential experiences of tragedy—large and small, public and private—which history and tragic poetry represent. And this knowledge consists in the common and special topics to which answers to the prime questions of inquiry must attend if the resulting argument is to be responsibly persuasive.

But let us be clear about what rhetorical knowledge of the common topics does not consist in. Since any dispute may occasion the need for verbal psychagogy, there is a sense in which a rhetor must always acquire new knowledge appropriate to the specific dispute. The inventive lead questions are then guides to the acquisition of the needed knowledge. For example, in a dispute about abortion—to take a highly contentious matter—rhetors would have to acquire a great deal of specific knowledge. They would have to learn the history of abortion laws, the workings of certain drugs and devices, the religious and ethical perspectives involved, certain medical and physiological facts about conception and fetal development, certain facts about the social and political status of women and men within cultures, about the health care system and related social institutions like
adoption agencies, about human sexuality, and about the agendas of interest groups. There is no need to multiply examples like this. The important point is that such particular knowledge, which varies in each dispute, is not what constitutes the field of rhetorical knowledge. That remains the knowledge of the grounds (common topics) and goals (special topics) of psyche in cosmos and thus of psychagogy in any dispute as it is related to the actual or potential experience of tragedy. This is the gist of the new approach to the topics taken in this book.

But what do we mean by tragic experience? Tragic experience involves, when generally considered, some sort of conflict that causes harm, suffering, or even death and that tends to reveal what human psyche and the world actually are beneath, so to speak, and prior to the conflict. In other words, tragic experience reveals the suppression of what we are and what the world is by the hubristic overemphasis upon who we are. Tragedy is, then, educative and heuristic by a sort of negative movement, leading us back to a greater sense of human deficiencies and limits obscured in the conflict. Real tragedy is always to some degree dark. In its gravest instances, it is, as Aristotle said of dramatic tragedy, terrible and piteous. But real tragedy, however dark, can illumine. It illumines when it is talked through and raised to a greater level of comprehension by the survivors and witnesses of tragedy, for their minds and imaginations may then be awakened and their desire (eros) aroused for the things that were lacking and might have been done. Talking through a tragedy is the ordinary way people try to cope with it. And that is what written history and poetry help us do in their different ways.

What deficiencies and limitations we may or may not overcome is knowledge only greater experience, understanding, and verbalization can bring to what tragic history and poetry has already told us. But the most economical and ready way to such knowledge, which is, so to speak, the training camp of rhetorical thinking, is tragic poetry. From such poetry, especially when it is also given the great scope of epics, we can intuit the common
topics of responsible psychagogy. This tragic sense, or vision, of human deficiencies and limits is in fact what enables us to go further, to go beyond tragedy by imagining the actual human potential for improvement or the need for divine assistance. In this way does rhetorical *eros*, phoenix-like, arise in the city of man. And it is on what lies beyond the tragic that *Peitho*’s eyes are fixed. Such discourse, because it arises from the goddess’s inward eyes lifted to a new horizon, becomes powerfully psychagogic in its suggestions of consolation or hope. In other words, it contains a presentment of real comedy. Indeed, sensing the horizon of comedy beyond tragedy, that is, sensing a possible future means of resolution for the better, is the basis of persuasion, as the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus shows.

Our deficiencies, unlike our limits, are aberrations for which we are responsible, and our social and political laws already recognize that responsibility. By instituting compulsion, laws obviate to some extent the need for persuasion but never completely. As Plato saw, the laws, when new situations and problems arise, are never independent of being justified or modified again and again by suasive discourse about the persons and things involved. It is one thing to obey the laws. It is another and much different thing to be persuaded—to agree to them knowingly and follow them willingly. Persuasion looks to the human potential in the actual world, sometimes also with a glance toward whatever divine aid may be plausibly thought available. The rhetorical tradition of antiquity envisioned this human potential, for both good and ill, as the intellectual and moral “virtues” and “vices,” all of them allied to the emotional life of human beings. These vices and virtues constitute what in this book are called the special topics, which, then, provide a sense of what can and should be, if tragedy is to be avoided. Virtue and vice are contentious notions, for they are too often confused with morality based on religious faith. So their precise ancient meaning, which does not involve religious faith, though that meaning is not hostile to it, has to be understood and will be treated more fully later. Suffice it to say here that they refer to basic human capabilities that from
everyone knows people really do have and can improve upon. And though we may admit no one has all the virtues—all human abilities in their perfected state—we nevertheless may, to guide our improvement, imagine a “wise man,” as the ancient philosophers so often did. The most famous example of all is, of course, Plato’s Socrates, whose wisdom, possessed by no one else, consisted in knowing that he does not know or, at best, know for sure. But the “wise man” also realizes that in all intellectual conflicts dispute about things is almost inseparable from personal conflicts, dispute about persons. And all too often the dispute involves a conflict, not between truth and falsity, but between differently derived truths and their relationships. The ancient rhetorical tradition suggested but did not provide the necessary rhetorical means of resolving, a vision of the interrelation of the sciences and arts, an encyclopedia of the knowable. This vision, along with the knowledge of vices and virtues, also belongs to the special topics. For the hope of resolving such conflicts lies only in a fine sense of the differing yet related orders of knowledge.

The topics for the invention of argument, both common and special in the new senses they have been given here, have an additional cognitive value important to recognize. They indicate the factors that condition all human opinion and judgment, including the writer’s own, and that resist persuasion. As a general rule, human judgment and action are directed by a particular set of qualities that compose an internal psychic world of thoughts and emotions for a given person. This is a matter of personal psychology. But there is also what we may call cultural psychology, the surrounding world of established opinion, written and oral, and the forces of praise and blame circulating within it. And it is crucial to recognize that, caught up as we all are in the dilemmas and prejudices of contemporary cultures, there is one prejudice among them that is most insidious: that the personal psychic world must be set off against the so-called “external world,” as if one were the interpretative subjective world that paints the other, the inert and uncommunicative “objective world,” according to the psychic colors of one’s
own “point of view.” But this modern construct, as mentioned previously, is not what the rhetorical art supposes. Rather the “external” world is supposed to be very communicative and active. It is voicelessly speaking, and its speaking or discourse one can listen to and understand and then give voice to in properly disciplined human language. The discipline of the writer is, then, liberation from the prison house of psychic point of view, especially the point of view that language itself is the never-crossed barrier of consciousness between mind and the world.

But learning to listen to the discourse of the world means that we should also grasp what deafens ourselves to it. Critical self-awareness is what sparks a liberating philosophic eros for the true and the good as far as these can be determined in a given dispute. Delphian Apollo’s advice remains very good: first know thyself. Plato and Aristotle insisted that the art of rhetoric would require knowledge of the psyche, and, presumably, that would include one’s own. But, despite some insightful remarks, they did not provide rhetoric with an adequate psychology of persuasion. They did indeed provide accounts of the soul for philosophical science, but they did not think that the art of rhetoric contained a body of knowledge that properly belonged to it in matters other than logical forms and language techniques. The claim here is that the topics compose rhetorical knowledge, knowledge of the grounds and goals of persuasive proof. In short, the topics are not forms of probable reasoning or merely techniques of inquiry. We are now in a position to see even more clearly than before what persuasive discourse is and is about.

Persuasive discourse, in short, is eros-driven language, the eros arising phoenix-like from the experience of tragedy and moving toward hope for the better, real comedy. Persuasion is about the possibilities by which our deficiencies may be overcome and our human limits as we come to know them are observed. Conflicts, the ancients noted in their schoolmasterly way, are about persons, things, or both. The grounds of resolution, the only ones humanly available, are the basic actualities of human psyche in the world that
are available for all to recognize, if—and the “if” is big—they will put aside whatever tragically suppresses such recognition and turn to the arguably better.

To discern the common topics—the common grounds of persuasion—we turn again to the classical epics of Homer and Virgil, the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, and to one other text only briefly mentioned, Plato’s *Apology of Socrates*, almost a poem in being a rhetorical address Plato imagined was given by Socrates. These five works, better than most of the ancient dramas, set tragedies in broad cultural contexts that enable us to discern more easily what the common topics are and how they range from personal, to familial, to civic, and then to global concerns. In this book, then, the way of addressing the grounds of persuasion will be poetical rather than historical. This is not meant to suggest that history cannot serve well in this matter. It can and should do so. Still, poetry provides at once a more economical, broader, and a more imaginatively fertile access to common grounds of persuasion. Once again, in this book the grounds of persuasion—in technical rhetorical terms, common topics of persuasion—are not general lines of probable logic in argument. They are considerations, arising from actual (historical) or possible (poetical) tragedy, of the incontestably common realities of human psyche in the world. Because the realities are common, they will pertain to all disputes at some level, however removed from the particular issues. The texts selected here serve merely to focus consideration on the realities.

To resolve strife within a given political structure, Western societies have traditionally not looked to persuasion but to litigation within the framework of established law and custom. (What it takes to establish the rule of given laws and customs in the first place is a matter that usually involves war, as we shall see when we discuss the epics.) Law aims to fix a way of thinking and acting in a binding way, if necessary by force, which, alas, all too often proves necessary to effect stable and safe forms of social intercourse. Law requires obedience, which is usually motivated by fear of the
consequences of disobedience, a practical but an unreliable motive in the long run. And there is another drawback. Laws and customs show a disturbingly strong tendency to become thickets of formalities and rules that are manipulated by experts and obviated by the powerful while yet demanding obedience from most others. Then the sociopolitical system begins to look arbitrary and become litigious, another way of saying solipsistic and tribal. Compromise may indeed bandage the wounds of strife for a time. But beneath obedience and compromise, resentment and hostility will fester, as, for example, every parent knows whose children may obey but do so with sullen resistance. And constantly threatening everyone is the use of force by the Furies of disenchanted factionalists that regard that laws and customs as the instruments of the few to oppress or mislead the many.

*Peitho*’s eyes, unlike the eyes of governments, are focused on things beyond obedience to the law. *Peitho* would affect free choice responsibly. She seeks to change minds and hearts for the better, not to bind them. It is undoubtedly true that real persuasion can occur in litigation when it generates persuasive not legalistic argument, and the rhetorical tradition of forensic rhetoric has always seen litigation as a forum in which persuasion can occur. But the way of responsible persuasion remains independent of and considerably harder than the way of litigation. To aim at persuasion may even seem utopian, an impractical aim in an imperfect world where enforced law has its home. And such an aim would be indeed be utopian, were it separated from the context of tragic experience. But the hope of persuasion arises in the ashes of tragedy, as does its enduring if never fully attainable promise, the continual remaking of hearts and minds and the revalidation of laws and customs in the light of a deepened and truer humanism.

One way to view the basic task of rhetorical invention is to find points of argument that in some way (and, for the most part, the way cannot be specified apart from a particular dispute) brings the disputants to recognize common ground. A common
ground of agreement is a common enough notion. On the basis of some common ground, a resolution may be found. There is no mystery in these thoughts. But they mask a problem of moment. Among the indeterminate number of common grounds possible in the resolution of strife, a distinction is necessary. Most will remain contestable and, therefore, volatile. For they will merely accent some similarities of personal identity but do not supersede the remaining, differing, and contentious factors of identity composing who the disputants are. For example, an appeal to the notion that the disputants belong to the same country, that they are citizens of a one state, may be common ground. But such ground is usually not fertile enough to resolve strife when the issues involve other powerful and personal factors of identity, say, racial differences. Such common ground that cannot bury and mute the contentious differing factors of identity is, therefore, inherently shallow as a foundation for resolution. And it is possible that we may have to rest content for a time with a resolution recognizably imperfect and hope that that the ideal of toleration of differences will be enough to mollify what remains contentious.

Nevertheless, rhetorical theory is not doomed to the inherently inadequate ideal of toleration. It can look to the ideal of persuasion that rests upon the incontestable common grounds of reality—if the disputants will pay attention to tragic experience. The theory here is that the common topics show through tragic experience what the realities of human psyche in the world are. These ineluctable common realities are the stable grounds for persuasion. The special topics, which will be treated in subsequent chapters, presuppose the common one, but the special topics are considerations of human potentialities. They indicate goals for the points of argument. That is, they give argument certain specified directions—toward what the ancients called the intellectual and moral “virtues” and away from the opposite “vices.” The result may be persuasion, a unanimity that, underlying all conflicting differences, modifies or changes mind and behavior for the recognizably better.

Together, the common and special topics compose a rhetorically oriented
humanism. This was previously described as the lowest common denominator by which strife may be resolved. The lowest it may well be, but it is not, therefore, lowly. It is, in fact, indispensable. The highest considerations, usually religious ones, become dangerous only when they are used to cancel out the lowest humanistic ones from their rightful and incontestable hold on actuality. To cancel them is a procedure allowing the Furies to infuriate. It is the formula of fanaticism.

What realities, then, do these common topics entail? The potentially illuminating, if terrible, power of human tragedy results from the stripping away from human beings of much that disguises their underlying elemental condition as human beings. The elementary facts of this condition are, once the tragedy has occurred, recognizable to all who behold the tragedy, if not always to those involved in it. These elemental facts of the human condition, revealed in the tragic context of what militates against recognizing them, are the realities that constitute the common topics of persuasion, the grounds of stable agreement once they are recognized. I list them here in an order of increasing scope, beginning with personal tragedy and extending out to tragedies familial, civic, cultural, and international, though they overlap. They are (1) mortality, prompting compassion even in war, but opposed by the destructive allure of personal superiority and nihilistic unconcern for justice—the personal tragedy of the anger of Achilleus in the Iliad; (2) the psychic need for and dependence upon familial bonds, prompting trust and love, but opposed by the violent, maddening, and self-perpetuating vengeance which their destruction by some sort of infidelity causes—the familial tragedy of the House of Atreus in the Oresteia of Aeschylus; (3) bodily and psychic inadequacy, for which hospitable familial and economic structures are necessary, but opposed and masked by the arrogance bred by lofty social class and wealth—the tragedy of Ithaka in the Odyssey; (4) ignorance, for which the sciences and arts are necessary but opposed by cultural closure and fear—the cultural tragedy of Athens in the Apology; (5) human interdependence, for which
global “empire” becomes necessary, but opposed by the love of one’s own—the tragedy of ethnocentric nationalism in the *Aeneid*. Nothing can replace reading these texts wholly, meditatively, and with alertness to their implications for rhetorical thinking. How these tragic works establish, in a way, the external setting or context of occasion for rhetorical thinking has already been discussed. In this chapter, I hope that it is now also clear how these same tragic works contribute in their way to the formal and internal development of rhetorical thinking on the way to verbal expression.
CHAPTER 5
The Special Topics: Rhetorical Psychology

The common topics of invention are considerations of the basic actualities of psyche in the world. By establishing or appealing to them in some way in a particular dispute—and the possible ways cannot be reduced to a practical formula—argument (in the plenary sense sponsored in this book) can become persuasive. As noted previously, in their teaching about the discovery of a persuasive argument, the ancient theorists distinguished between the common topics that pertain to all disputes and the special topics that concern disputes about particular persons and things. The distinction between disputes about persons and those about things is somewhat artificial because one sort of dispute often involves the other. But it does permit us to see that there are appropriate questions and considerations in disputes about persons, psychological ones, for example, that differ from disputes about things, which do not involve human psychology. Thus, a dispute about a “thing,” say whether or not a certain drug will or will not cure Alzheimer’s disease or whether or not stocks in a certain company ought to be purchased, is not itself “a personal matter.” But it may well be so if a person has particular interests in the resolution of the dispute one way or another. Still, the distinction among special topics between those of persons and those of things will be useful in this rethinking of the special topics.

The rethinking comes down to a simple scheme. For disputes about particular persons or things, there are appropriate leading or prime questions needed to guide the invention of an argument. Answering them provides the data for ascertaining facts and in their light adducing reasons and paradigms to build up the argument. But the
invention of these components of argument is not sufficient for persuasion. For that, they must be developed by meditation on realities whose understanding is proper to rhetoric and persuasion. The realities involved in all disputes pertaining to persons concern the psychological pattern of responsibly persuasive psychagogy, the dynamics of the psychic movement toward what the ancients called the virtues of moral excellence. The realities involved in disputes about things, whether abstract ideas, actions, or material objects, concern persuasive psychagogy toward the so-called intellectual virtues. Let us begin with the prime questions about human behavior and actions.

**Lead Questions**

The list of lead questions that are given below is a compilation both from Cicero’s treatise called *Topics* and from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. As mentioned, they are designed, first, to help rhetors seek out the data needed to establish the facts and to form in their light the reasons and paradigms of argument and, second, to develop reasons and paradigms persuasively according to the reflections suggested in meditation on the realities summarized in common topics and in the special topic of rhetorical psychology. What is sought here is a way of leading inquiry to a serviceable sense of the attributes of persons whose psychic constitution is only made evident to others by what they do and say.

1. What was the act—something said or done?
2. What sort of act was it, good or bad?
3. When was it done?
4. Preceding events?
5. Concurrent events?
6. Subsequent events?
7. Where was it done?
8. To or for whom was it done?
9. Why was it done?
   a. By chance or accident?
   b. By compulsion of some sort?
   c. By natural inclination?
   d. By force of circumstantial conditions?
   e. By choice through deliberate reasoning?
   f. By force of emotions?

These questions need to be set in context by considerations concerning human culture and the natural conditions of bodily life to provide a serviceable overview of the attributes of persons helpful in disputes concerning persons. Human beings are born into an already established cultural matrix of life for which they are not responsible, but which, nevertheless, over the course of their development affects them deeply, for both good and ill. What is especially important to notice is the set of general opinions, attitudes, customs, values, and ways of behaving which influence personal psychic development. For these things tend to form a person’s sense of self-identity and judgment long before one is capable of self-evaluation and independent critical judgment. Our naming symbolizes our cultural condition. Who among us has chosen his or her own personal name? All of us are named by others and for reasons important to them, not to us. Later in life, people sometimes change names, thinking them unsuitable for reasons that range from euphony to social acceptability to marketability, as actors do. Nevertheless, the inheritance of names symbolizes the general condition of the human psyche—labeled long before it comes to know itself and is capable of self-direction. The importance of names given to things is capital, as advertisers know. But there are other questions to consider also: lineage (famous or obscure), the character of one’s family and familial
relationships, friends, locale of personal development (urban, small town, agrarian), economic condition (rich, poor), local community (social attitudes and values), race, education (vocational, professional, liberal), political regime, the media culture and mass entertainment, fashions of dress and speech.

A person’s natural bodily conditions are, like the circumstances of culture, not matters of choice but of genetic inheritance. Nevertheless, they too affect the individual’s psychic world, which is why they must be taken into consideration: age, gender, bodily size, agility, strength, health, and appearance. Obviously one’s thinking and behavior can affect one’s bodily conditions. For example, people may take certain actions to improve their appearance by exercise, diet, surgery, cosmetics, and so forth. Emotional states can affect the condition of the body. Stress may lead to insomnia, and insomnia to weakness and sickness. That all these matters of bettering or worsening of given bodily conditions, however, presuppose a set of natural conditions is clear enough. It is natural endowment that is particularly important. The reader is again urged to mediate upon the ways that each of these qualities may affect the thought and behavior of individuals. For example, consider age. Do the young (say those in their teens) characteristically act and think in certain ways? Do those ways differ from the ways of people in middle age and old age? How do these latter groups differ from each other? The inquirer’s own age and experience may also affect the answers to such questions.

**Rhetorical Psychology**

Rhetorical psychology is not aimed simply to know the human psyche, which is the aim of scientific psychology, a form of knowledge the ancients called epistemic. The aim is to understand better the psychagogy involved in verbal psychagogy. The list of things causing often harsh and intractable divisions both within and, especially, among people is
long and may seem hopelessly irresolvable. But rhetoric is about hope, hope that the healing of divisive strife is possible through persuasion. But on what basis? That has been, in this revision of the ancient doctrine of the topics of invention, a fundamental question. Part of the answer has been already given in the preceding discussion of the common topics. But we must extend that answer here to both persons and, in the next chapter, to our understanding of the things of the world.

The psychology that makes intelligible the psychagogic movement involved in responsible persuasion is not often explicitly treated as a rhetorical matter by the ancient thinkers I have selected as models. But the essentials of such a psychology are contained in Cicero’s great summary of ancient psychiatric theorizing called the Tuscan Disputations (indicated simply hereafter as TD). This account of philosophy as “medicine of the mind [medicina animi]”—the counterpart to theories and practices of the ancient tradition of bodily medicine initiated by Hippocrates and Galen—is virtually unknown to the general public of our time, including most university professors and graduates. Nor has this ancient philosophical psychiatry any status in the several forms of modern scientific psychology. Ancient philosophical psychiatrics is based on general tragic experience, a fact evident to any reader in the constant allusion to or quotation of epics and dramatic tragedies in the TD. And while it is certainly indebted to the philosophical doctrines of the various schools for its pathology (its account of the emotional disorders all human beings are liable to), it is remarkable in emphasizing that the treatment of ills of psyche (psychotherapy) is most properly done by personal sorts of rational and imaginative meditation and by consolatory persuasive speech, not by diet, drugs, or surgery, the principal modes of somatic medicine in the classical world. (See Entralgo.)

But the briefest and best statement of the basic pattern of psychagogy in responsible persuasion, the very core of the rhetorical psychology we are interested in here, we can find in a short rhetorical work Cicero composed for his own son:
And it must be noticed how much more energetically people fly from what is evil \([mala]\) than they pursue what is good \([bona]\). Neither indeed do they seek after what is morally excellent \([honesta]\) so much as they try to avoid what is disgraceful. Who would seek to gain honor and glory and praise and any distinction so keenly as he flees from ignominy and discredit and contumely and disgrace? But the pain that these inflict gives weighty evidence that the human race was designed by nature for what is honorable \([honestum: \text{morally excellent}]\), although it has been corrupted by bad education and depraved opinions. (\textit{De partitione oratoria}, 26.91)

The text makes clear that, although Cicero realizes that most people flee the ills of life rather than pursue the virtues of moral excellence, he does not consider the fact a reason for cynicism. On the contrary, he sees it as a reason for hope. The grave pain people suffer from ignominy, discredit, contumely, and disgrace is a positive sign that they are inclined by nature toward their opposites—in short, toward moral excellence, even though, as Cicero says, in being misled by bad education and depraved opinions, most will seek only the lesser goods of “profits and rewards, pleasures and the avoiding of pain” (\textit{De partitione oratoria}, 26.92).

Thus, in the tendency to flee the ills of life, Cicero sees the beginning of a psychic movement that, were it not for depraved opinions and bad education, is oriented naturally toward attainment of the best people are capable of. Their best is represented by the basic moral virtues that represent moral excellence \([honestum]\). And what are these virtues? They are called the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, and they lie within human capability. But these virtues as named are \textit{perfected} forms of human capability. The task of the mortal logos as a means of persuasion lies here: to encourage as much as possible in given situations and disputes the movement toward these perfected states, which can be envisioned in a fictional wise man even though he may never have
existed and the virtues may never have been perfectly realized among men. The TD is itself not simply a summary of ancient psychiatry; it is a rhetorical work founded on a hope. Cicero’s hope was that virtue was possible for men and that it alone was sufficient for the happy life. He says, “But if on the other hand virtue lies at the mercy of manifold and uncertain accidents and is the handmaid of fortune, and has insufficient strength to maintain herself alone, I fear it seems to follow that in hoping to secure a happy life we should not place our confidence in virtue so much as offer up prayers to heaven” (TD 5.1.2-3). (The whole of the fifth and last book of the TD is devoted to the thesis that virtue is sufficient for the happy life.) The hope of persuasion, then, begins with some generally accessible sense of what things are bad for all human beings, irrespective of the many things that may and do divide them. Flight from the mala of life begins, as has been pointed out, the psychic movement. Words may then promote as much as possible a further movement toward the recognizably perfectible capacities all people have for securing goods ranging from the simplest sensual pleasures and rewards to the basic virtues of moral excellence—of course, within the limits imposed upon all.

Hope implies that the ills of life can be overcome, that abysmal tragedy is not the final truth of existence, and that the happy life is possible. But on what does such hope rest? There are, it seems, only three possible foundations for hope: the internal resources of the individual, and should those be insufficient, the resources of groups of individuals from families to nations, and perhaps, should these also be insufficient, the aid of the divine. The ancients recognized that divine aid might be needed by mortals, even to secure the happiness that was thought to consists in living according to virtue, as Aristotle once remarked: “Now if anything that men have is a gift of the gods, it is reasonable to suppose that happiness is divinely given—indeed of all man’s possessions it is most likely to be so, inasmuch as it is the best of them all. This subject however may perhaps more properly belong to another branch of study [presumably he means theology]“ (Ethics 1.9.2-
3). But given the fact that the ancients never developed a rationally satisfactory theology that made divine providence plausibly intelligible, they placed their faith in the powers of the individual and of sociopolitical groupings (government and law). Thus, the highest development of their thinking about psyche in the world came down to the politics of the city and, as in Virgil, of empire. But this did not mean that theirs was a humanism that was in principle anti-religious, as was the rationalistic humanism of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The ancients clearly did seek an adequate theology. They simply did not find one. And from the rhetorical perspective taken here in this book, they did not have to find one, for they saw that human resources existed that cannot rightly be ignored and that, if developed, could better the condition of human psyche in the world. On the validity of this possibility (leaving aside now the question of its adequacy), the eyes of Peitho are fixed.

Thus, it is the special task of rhetorical argument to promote the natural inclination to avoid the ills that tragic experience tends to reveal and as much as possible to promote the virtues of moral excellence. But when ancient thinkers like Cicero speak of virtues, what they have in mind needs to be precisely understood to avoid any possible misunderstanding of an appeal to them as the basis of hope that makes argument persuasive. The words “vices” and “virtues” are contentious today. One reason is that to many people they imply personal faith in some particular religious creed and its moral laws. But this implication is false. Why? Because, strictly speaking, the terms in their ancient meaning imply only perfectible human capacities shared by all to secure common human goods recognizable by all in their general desirability. Admittedly, it may take some persuading to move one from the goods of pleasure, money, and social station to the virtues of moral excellence. Nevertheless, even an atheist can understand and recognize human vice and virtue. (In religion, instead of vice and virtue, one should speak of sin and holiness, for these are concepts that necessarily imply some personal relationship to divine
beings.) The polemics of our politicized culture wars between “conservatives” and “liberals” have also obscured the ancient sense of vice and virtue. Conservatives write books about the vices resulting from lost virtues. But they normally mean, when they speak of “teaching traditional virtues or values,” inducing, through familial and formal education, some set of religiously based “traditional” norms. Liberals decry in the name of freedom all traditional norms as arbitrary exercises of power by established groups like “the religious right.” While conservatives mistake the traditional for the universal, liberals deny the universal, imprisoned by the fear of imposing moral and religious “points of view” on others. Neither group listens to the voiceless speaking of desirable goods or pays attention to the excellence possible in the development of human psychic abilities, which is all that human “virtue” is about. The ancient sense of virtue extends moreover to the excellence of the operations of mind, to what they called intellectual goods and virtues, not just to moral ones. Living according to virtue is the happy life. Vice, the opposite of virtue, whether moral or intellectual, is not just imperfection, for no one is born excellent in moral or intellectual abilities. There would otherwise be no need whatsoever for education or training, formal or not. Vice, in this book, means a willful and responsible distortion of the natural human abilities of knowing good things and of self-initiated actions in securing them. The responsibility is recognizable—at least by others. For the saddest fact about the vice-ridden psyche is that habituation reduces one’s power to recognize the distortion. Exculpation of self becomes the norm. In this book, no religiously based notions of sin and holiness affect the meaning of virtue and vice. (See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, especially books 6 and 7, and Cicero, *On Invention* 2.53.159-165.)

But let us now follow Cicero in the *Tusculan Disputations* in his discussion of psychopathology, the forms of emotional disturbance that can, but do not need to, follow immediately from the tragic experience of the ills of life. Tragedy, whether personally experienced in fact or in imagination (through poetry and history), is, we know, the
beginning of the psychagogic pattern of persuasion we must get to know. Because all human choices and actions, whether good or bad, obviously involve the emotions, a rhetorical psychology must, to be truthful, represent well their role in the psychagogic pattern of persuasion. We may then say a few things about the verbal promotion of the psychic movement toward the virtues, the goal of psychagogy.

The key principles of psychopathology should be kept in mind. And Cicero makes clear that he is mainly following the Stoic school of philosophy in what he says. (1) All emotions, whether pathological or not, originate or participate in desire (*appetitum*, in Latin) or its opposite, aversion (*aversio*). Desire means not sexual desire, but any attraction to something good or opined to be good. Aversion means any repulsion from something bad or opined bad. Desire and its opposite, aversion, are the most important of the emotions. They constitute the ancient counterpart to contemporary depth or analytical psychology. Desire is psychic appetite for an opined future good. This is an important point, since it implies that desire is rooted in some sort of recognition of the absence of goods that would bring fulfillment to the individual human being. Thus, (2) all emotion is caused by one’s judgment according to *opinion*, that is, some complex of thought and imagination about what is good and bad. When they are healthy, emotions flow from opinion consistent with the real good of human life, and they have about them, even when intense, a constancy or stability that avoids excessiveness and maintains a sense of happiness. The unhealthy ones are allied to sickness or to vice. In their ordinary forms, they are often the result of cultural or sociopolitical conditioning—Cicero’s “bad education”; but these emotions become truly dangerous when they result from deliberate, habitual moral vice traceable to what Cicero called “depraved opinions.” Unhealthy emotions disturb and disorient human psyche, producing wretchedness and at times physical illness. Such emotions tend to become pathological because they are based in opinions affected by an undisciplined and distorted imagination that have no true basis.
(3) All emotions, healthy or not, may be grouped into two pairs and their varieties, distinguished by attraction or aversion and by whether the opinion considers the good or bad things as possessed in the present or as coming in the future. (Note that emotions based on opinions concerning the past and the future are experienced in the present.)

Thus, there are two pairs of emotional disturbance (Latin: perturbatio). The first pair includes anxiety (metus) and distress (aegritudo), both of which are caused by opined evil, the first of future evil and the second of present evil. The second pair, which is caused by opined good, includes covetousness (libido) and arrogance (laetitia), the first of future good and the second present good. (I should add that the English translations are my own, made for easier comprehension by the reader.) These four emotional disturbances are the fountainheads of many other disturbances allied to them. Allow me simply to list here the names of them Cicero provides without further commentary, using the English words, with a few exceptions, chosen by J. E. King in the Loeb Library edition of the TD (see 4.7.16-9.22). From distress come envy, rivalry, jealousy, misery of heart, dread, mourning, sadness, troubling grief, lamenting, depression, vexation, pining, despondency and anything of the same sort. From fear come sluggishness, fright, trembling and chattering of teeth, timidity, consternation, pusillanimity, confusion, and faintheartedness. From covetousness come vindictiveness, rage, hate, enmity, wrath, greed, lust of many sorts (money, fame, social station, etc.). From arrogance come malice, sensuous raptures, and public ostentation.

In considering all of these emotional disturbances, we should always keep in mind the principle that they are caused by us, by our opinions and judgments. It is not that the mala of tragic experience may not truly be mala but that by our opinions and judgments we cause the emotional disturbances the mala occasion. The hope invested in the psychagogy of persuasion rests on the possibility that the disturbances of mala, not the mala, can be alleviated, indeed eliminated, by our powers, the powers whose perfected states are called
the virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The test cases are always the ones involving the extreme *mala* we all can suffer, death and bodily pain. (Cicero devotes the entire first book of the *TD* to considerations that death is not the evil it appears to be and the entire second book to considerations of that courageous strength that endures even vicious torture.)

Considered in the context of the psychagogy of persuasion, anxiety and distress, the disturbances caused by opined present and future *mala* are clearly the ones that tragic experience can—can, but need not—occasion. Flight from them is the natural response of psyche, and clearly that response will take the form of seeking good things that may remove the ills. But these good things—are they or are they not actually capable of alleviating or eliminating disturbance? We seem now to be clearly moving into the realm of psychotherapy. But we are, according to Cicero, not there just yet. The *TD* indicates that the desire of some things, though they may be truly good things (useful and expedient) and not just apparent or delusory goods sought by the vicious, are not capable of preventing or eliminating emotional disturbance. The truth is that the desire and even possession of these good things will cause the emotional disturbances whose fountainheads are covetousness and arrogance. The result of not finding freedom from disturbance from opined goods is complete intellectual and emotional disorder, a turmoil of psychic opinions and judgments leading to morbidity and sickness (see *TD* 4.10.23-34).

Where, then, is real psychotherapy to be found? The answer of Cicero, as one may now anticipate, is that it is found in the goods that are called the cardinal virtues of moral excellence. Only they are goods productive of an emotional stability and security that produce equable joy, not giddy arrogance, wish, not covetousness, caution, not anxiety, and instead of distress—well, here Cicero gives no opposite. But the opposite of distress appears to be the human happiness of one whose possession of the virtues makes him, as the ancient often say, a wise man. He is a sort of man one can imagine, even if, as Cicero
remarks, he has never been found. (See TD 2. 21.50 and 5. 24.68-25.72.) And why speak of such an imagined being? The clear answer is that the imagined wise man acts as a spur to our powers and does not let us remain shamefully content with our weaknesses, imperfections, and culpabilities. The ancients were realists. They did not expect that everyone would attain the condition of the imagined wise man, but they did expect that in given situations everyone could be moved toward the condition of the wise man in one particular way or another.

In sum, it would be fair to describe the aim of the philosophical psychiatrics of the TD as an imaginative psychic heroism. For it places the burden of moral excellence on us while recognizing the need of verbal psychagogy to stimulate our aspirations toward moral excellence even though we will likely fall short of it. A reader of the TD should not forget that Cicero openly admits that writing the TD is an attempt to console himself is in the midst of personal troubles (see TD 5.1.1 and 5.41.121). The author himself, he lets us conclude, is no wise man. Thus, we are left with a somewhat tentative hope. The reason for the tentativeness is not the validity of asserting that emotional disturbances can, to some extent at least, be cured by our own powers—they can be! There have been people, exemplary figures, who have accomplished extraordinary things. The reason for tentative hope is that the rhetorical enterprise of psychagogy is not force. It may well fail to move others and us toward the moral excellences and psychic security of the happy life. To hope for more would require us to expect things beyond our resources and move us into theological considerations about which Cicero, like all the ancients, feels uncomfortable. Nevertheless, such theological considerations in the psychagogy of persuasion, whatever they may be, cannot simply invalidate and needlessly enervate what hope truly remains in human resources, the human moral virtues. And about them, their meaning and importance in the psychagogy of persuasion, we must say a few things more.

In reality, whenever faced with a specific dispute about human behavior, we
always face great difficulties. What are thought desirable goods may be false ones, the truth of the matter obscured by ignorance, passion, or by an orientation to vice either in the individual or in the sociopolitical order. Where there is conflict among goods, even true goods, the argument, in order to be persuasive, will have to establish a new ranking of greater and lesser goods. Where there is ignorance and passion, the argument will have to be guided by a psychology of treating ignorance and passion. Where there is orientation to vice in the individual or sociopolitical order, the task of persuasion may be virtually impossible without appeal to the experience of tragedy. In any case, the rhetor will have to meditate on what the virtues and goods of psyche are; that is, he must be able to envision the goals of argument and how they can be defined, ordered, and related to the psychology of emotion and to the critique of culture, of the sociopolitical order, and, indeed, of self. In this way the rhetor can encourage movement toward them in the specific context of a persuasive argument. The following definitions should make clear that we all have the capacity for the virtues, but the more important thing is that the basic reason for persuasive encouragement in developing the virtues is they make human psychic life better. How that shall be argued in a specific dispute the rhetorical art cannot formulate. All the art can do is point out the direction or goal of argument.

For a brief overview of the cardinal virtues of moral excellence, we again seek guidance from Cicero. (See his De inventione 2. 53.159-54.165.) To his remarks, I have added the names of opposing vices, which may by contrast clarify the virtues. Prudence is the most rational of the moral virtues because it is the developed ability to recognize what is good, evil, or indifferent. For this reason, it is the virtue that rationally regulates the other moral virtues. The opposite of prudence is not mere imprudence, which, often enough, means only an imperfection, but the vice of recklessness, the willful and habitual disregard of considerations of good and evil. The parts of prudence indicate its highly rational character: memory, or the ability to recollect the past; insight, or the ability to
discern the present; foresight, or the ability to envision what may or may not happen in the future. Clearly each one of us has in a more or less developed state the capacity for prudence, which, as should be evident, does not mean here what it usually means in ordinary speech, mere precaution. Rather, it means the ability to construct a history pertaining to a dispute, to see and formulate the specific issues disputed, and to imagine the possibilities involved. This fundamental exercise of our minds in regulating our behavior takes innumerable forms in different situations and disputes. But it is directed toward assessing what is true and truly good in behavior. And what are these goods? They are many, some pleasurable, useful, and expedient, but at the top of the ranking are the excellent goods of justice, courage, and temperance.

Justice is the developed capacity of giving to everyone his due while preserving the common good of all. What is due is based upon several things: the natural inclinations of all human beings, sometimes called natural law; long-approved unwritten customs of a community regarding agreements between people, fairness of treatment, time-honored or proverbial ways of deciding for the best; and, finally, the specific written statutes of civil law. Only those matters that, the ancients felt, belong to natural justice should be mentioned here, for the other varieties obviously depend upon specific social and political communities, where there may be a great deal of difference about the particularly just and unjust. The virtue of natural justice shows itself in many recognizable goods of human psyche: (1) religion, the natural inclination to give whatever is considered divine its due (its opposite: irreligion, not atheism, which is either a metaphysical position or, more usually, an opinion brought about by the experience of suffering and evil); (2) piety or loyalty, the natural inclination of loving affection for one’s own blood relations (familial piety), for one’s own social, racial, or neighborly group (communal piety), or for one’s own country (patriotism) (opposites are the corresponding forms of disloyalty or impiety); (3) gratitude, the natural inclination to return thanks for favors done by parents, family,
friends, community, or divinity (opposite: corresponding forms of ingratitude); (4) vindication, a natural inclination to seek just redress from injury, violence, or prejudice (opposite: vengeance, which seeks not justice but getting even, if not getting more, by the infliction of injury upon others); (5) reverence or respect, the inclination to honor those in rightful authority (opposite: disrespect); (6) truthfulness or honesty, the inclination to represent in speech or writing the past, present, future without alterations of fact (opposite: lying, deceitfulness, exaggeration).

Courage is the inclination to undertake difficult tasks or endure hardships of all kinds for the sake of some real good. Its varieties are: (1) high-mindedness or idealism, the readiness to undertake unusually large, praiseworthy tasks (opposite: small-mindedness, pettiness, etc.); (2) confidence, the trust in oneself or in the ability of others to act well (opposite: faintheartedness, self-depreciation, pessimism, readiness to blame, etc.); (3) patience, the willingness to endure difficulties for a good purpose (opposite: impatience, bad temper, frustrated meanness, etc.); (4) perseverance or resolution, the long-term application in a planned action (opposite: quick to give up or irresolution, etc.).

Temperance is steady clear-headedness in the presence of strong and innate desires. The varieties of temperance are: (1) continence, the reasonable self-counsel that quiets strong sensual pleasures, especially those of sex and food (opposite: self-indulgence, erotic softness, lust, greed for money and luxury, laziness); (2) mercy or clemency, the gentle restraint of hatred and anger provoked by others (opposite: hatred, violent abusiveness, malicious scheming, gossiping, backbiting, etc.); (3) modesty, the sense of decency or shame to preserve personal honor from likely public abuse (opposites: immodesty, shamelessness, vulgarity in manner and dress, exhibitionism of the qualities of body and mind).

Let us not leave special topics of rhetorical psychology without trying to imagine, as the ancient might have, the man who is not wise. I do not mean the fool but someone
who has come to know, as Socrates did, that he is not wise, without having to undergo tragic experience to make him question himself. What would he wish for? The first thing is the highest intellectual good (the intellectual wisdom of understanding the world around us). Another thing is, as we have already discussed, the greatest of personal moral goods (complete fulfillment or abiding happiness that consists in virtues of moral excellence). Then also, we should add, he would wish for the intimate society of others, which is friendship, called *philia* in ancient Greek, usually beginning with attraction to those closest and most like us, but, in its most mature and rhetorically significant form, extending outward from the self to all, which is called philanthropy. This is not the economic philanthropy of modern society. It means here the foundation of the unrestricted global humanism integral to a responsible rhetoric. Not to be neglected here is the wish for the good of language and the learning available in books, called philology, which, like philanthropy is vital to the rhetorical arts of style. Not to be overlooked also is the wish for beautiful things that give pleasure, called *philocaly* in Greek.

We should not overlook other things this unwise person whom we are imagining here may instinctively wish for in hunger and thirst, the nourishment necessary to physical as well as psychic well-being. What is ordinarily called love is attraction to bodily beauty or sexual satisfaction, and so on for every truly good thing, however less important they may be than those just mentioned above. But some other things wished for are not instinctive but voluntary. Power, social status, fame, wealth, cosmetic improvement, sense pleasures are all good things, all desirable, though they are not the very best among the good things of life because in none of them is there security from emotional disturbance attendant on the lack of moral excellence. Excessive desire for them, usually accompanied by some imagined benefit they cannot in fact provide, is what leads to pathological disturbances. It is one of the great tasks of the rhetorical art to winnow out where needed, from among the goods presented as desirable in a given culture, the real goods of psyche.
CHAPTER 6

Special Topics: Rhetorical Encyclopedism—
A Speculum of the Sciences and Arts of Things

In disputes about things, as in disputes about persons, there is an appropriate set of leading questions that rhetors can use to help find the components of argument. But whatever thesis and points of argument may be developed in answering the prime questions, it remains necessary, for argument to become persuasive, to meditate on the persuasive psychagogy that, occasioned by the ills of dispute (polemics, dogmatism, radical skepticism, despair of the truth) moves remedially toward the intellectual virtues that constitute human wisdom. This can be best done by a survey of the human arts and sciences according to the modes of human knowing best formulated by Aristotle. The rhetorical speculum proposed here was inspired by Cicero and has the same purpose, but it is not the same thing Cicero did in his encyclopedic survey of the philosophical tradition.

Leading Questions

I have organized the list of questions below in outline form for easier comprehension. One or more of the questions will usually be involved in any dispute concerning things.

I. Question of existence. Inquiry about things, whether material or not, ordinarily concerns those things whose very existence is not in dispute.
Nevertheless, in some particular cases, the very existence of something or other is a key issue, say, whether or not virtue exists, or whether or not angels exist. Clearly, the issue of existence must be settled before determining what virtue is or what angels are and whether they have certain qualities or not. Only the evidence of common experience and the rational probabilities and certainties they involve can answer the question of whether something exists, if its existence is disputed publicly or privately.

II. Questions of definition (a question of essence or nature):

A. What genus or general class of like things does the thing in question belong to?

B. What is its specific difference from the other things in the same class of things?

C. Is the name of the thing an indication of what it is or of what some think it to be?

D. If the thing is physical, what are its parts?

E. If the thing is not physical or is immaterial or abstract, what are its mentally distinguishable components, since such a thing cannot, strictly speaking, have parts?

III. What are the causes of the thing? Why is it so? Or why does it act or operate as it does?

A. External causes:

1. Who or what thing or set of circumstances produced it (sometimes called efficient causes)?

2. What is its external purpose? Or to what beyond itself is the thing directed for use (final cause)?
B. Internal causes:

1. Of what materials is the thing composed (material causes)?
2. What is the outward perceptible design of the thing? Or what is the ordinarily imperceptible inner structure of the thing (formal causes)?
3. And what are its interior operations, dynamics, and purposes (final causes)?

IV. Questions of quality:

A. In what circumstances does the thing exist?

1. Of time?
2. Of place?
3. Of persons?

B. How is the thing related to other things?

1. How the same or similar?
2. How different or dissimilar?
3. What effects does it have?

In the rhetorical art, the overall purpose of such questioning is to ready one to perceive the points of argument (the facts and the reasons) that eventually lead to a thesis and argument. Perception depends upon readiness, and readiness is accomplished by the mental postures of the various master prompt-questions.

**Rhetorical Encyclopedism**

In an earlier chapter, a discussion of polymathy led to the question of what rhetors should learn if they cannot learn everything. We can now give a short answer: they should learn all that properly pertains to responsible psychagogy. Of the long answer, we have already claimed that, in disputes about persons, rhetors must have knowledge of the
common and then of the special topic of rhetorical psychology. That answer we can now extend to the special topic of rhetorical encyclopedism in disputes about things. If rhetors cannot learn everything, they must, to flee from the ills and disturbances of intellectual strife, still learn how to get their minds around everything. In other words, they must develop an overview or speculum of the human knowledge of things as they are expressed in the many sciences and arts in order to promote the intellectual virtues. What are these? I propose that there are three master or general virtues: intuition, liberality of mind (the equivalent of eloquence in the Ciceronian organization of the mind), wisdom, and a great many specialized virtues of the different sciences and arts—in fact, as many virtues as there are sciences and arts.

It is an obvious but very significant fact that things, often the very same things, are considered in different ways by the various sciences and arts. An adequate knowledge of things involves one in a multiplicity of ways of knowing that have to be distinguished in order to avoid confusion or, worse, the intellectual imperialism proponents of one art or science may claim over all the ways of knowing the same things. And they can do this by relating all knowledge to the basic ways the mind works to generate and process knowledge, thus bringing about different intellectual virtues. This is what makes an encyclopedic vision of knowledge possible.

These modes of knowing Aristotle first distinguished, and for that we owe him a great debt. The mind works according to three basic purposes: to know purely and simply, to know so as to perform or regulate human actions, or to know so as to make or repair some product. The word science will be used for the first mode of mind, practical art for the second sort, and productive art for the third. We must also add a fourth mode, not found in Aristotle: to know so as to observe and consider changes over time, which we will call history. How these modes of mind enable us to circle the sum of knowledge will be clarified as we go along. I should emphasize that I am not trying to map human
knowledge nor dictate to particular sciences and arts the procedures only they can
determine to be adequate. I am trying to grasp the basic way of knowing that helps to
order knowledge of the world in such a way that their distinctions and interrelations may
keep us from confusion and the ills of dogmatism when one science or art is elevated
unjustly beyond its scope of competence and is allowed to threaten the kosmos of
interdependence among them all. All human knowledge, accordingly, can be divided into
two general types: (1) theoretic-historical science or (2) practical and productive art of
some sort. The sciences are of three kinds: (a) of nature (the existing universe and all that is
in it, which includes all the so-called natural sciences); (b) of general human behavior
(including the so-called social sciences), and (c) of the human productive arts.

The General or Master Intellectual Virtues

Intuition, or understanding, is the basic, not the highest, of the intellectual virtues
of human beings, for it enables us to grasp the basic principles in all areas of knowledge in
the light of reasoning and imagination. Intuitive capacity is in-born, but the developed
virtue of it—intuitiveness—is acquired through education and through the many
particular ways of exercising our powers of reasoning and imagination in the specialized
sciences and arts. Intuitiveness, however, is not specialized knowledge, but the heightened
ability to grasp what is basic to any and all of the kinds of specialized knowledge.
Dullness (not just the simple lack of intuition) is a habitual and degenerative state of mind
brought about by deliberate failure to educate and exercise natural intuitive capacity.

Liberality of mind: The fundamental education and exercise of intuitive
understanding leads to the development of liberality of mind, normally in two stages. The
first, which is the major concern of primary and secondary education, is ordered to the
second, which is, or should be, the common, though not exclusive, aim of higher
education. The first stage is the development of the basic rational, imaginative, and
mnemonic capacities by the basic arts of literacy and enculturation: verbal literacy (grammar of one’s native language in order to make good sense in speech and writing); a basic sense of logical reasoning; basic mathematical skills; historical information that develops a sense of time and mnemonic imagination; acquaintance with imaginative literature. These are usually acquired in formal elementary and secondary education.

The second stage pertains to the subject of this book, the development of the liberal—liberating—arts of words, thought, memory, and imagination included within the rhetorical art in its full ancient sense: namely, the general disciplined capability of a persuasive vision (Peitho’s eyes), based on rhetorical knowledge and the arts that are rationally critical, imaginatively creative, encyclopedically comprehensive, and verbally expressive. Liberality of mind is, in fact, the virtue that best prepares one to achieve excellence in any of the specialized sciences or in any of the arts that require some scientific knowledge and initiates the movement to the highest of all the virtues, wisdom itself.

Wisdom: In the ancient tradition of rhetoric and philosophy, wisdom has three senses, moral, intellectual, and divine. Moral wisdom, the virtues of moral excellence, we have already discussed. Now we are interested in intellectual wisdom, the highest intellectual virtue of the human being, the perfection of the educated capacity of understanding through words, reason, imagination, and memory. Taken in the sense of omniscience, wisdom is, of course, a theological ideal that is ascribable only to divinity and that no human being has in fact attained, though some people are, clearly and recognizably, wiser than others. In its humanly applicable sense, wisdom refers to the capacity to judge well in light of the most comprehensive or encyclopedic awareness possible of the unity of interdependence among all the human sciences and arts. It does not mean possession of the specialized virtues in any one of these sciences and arts. It means only the encyclopedic knowledge of them sufficient to guide judgment or inquiry.
leading to judgment in intellectual disputes about things. Very often and, perhaps, even primarily, human wisdom includes what may be called an extraordinarily keen and rationally developed religious understanding and knowledge (human theological wisdom), often in the light of some authoritative public revelation of the omniscient wisdom thought to be divine in origin (divine revelation). Foolishness is not just the lack of wisdom, but the blamable habitual condition that is its opposite. It may also be called stupidity or buffoonery. It is often malicious and stems from a willful denial or rejection of all that leads to self-improvement in any way pertaining to the liberal arts and the specialized human sciences and arts.

The intellectual virtues of the specialized theoretic-historical sciences and arts are necessary, as well. (See the scheme of sciences and arts provided below.) People may have acquired some developed capacity for one or more of the arts and sciences. These virtues, as the developed capacities are called, affect thought and action as much as one’s circumstances and bodily qualities do.

All sciences aim at knowledge chiefly, for theoretic here implies, not some tentative notion, but what theory meant to the Greeks, sustained attention so as to know and understand something, anything at all. (The English word “theory” derives from a Greek word that means “to behold or see.”) They are also called historical because all sciences have at least a history of development, and some of them actually include historical material. The importance of history as an element of science is in origin a Hebraic contribution to the Greek sense of theory.

Knowledge, however, that is turned to a purpose other than knowledge itself, is called art. As I have mentioned, an art, in the ancient Aristotelian sense of the word, is a knowing either for acting and regulating action in some way (including mental processes like those in the art of rhetoric) or for producing, or making, something. One should note that these practical and productive arts might also be the objects of theoretic-historical
All the particular sciences differ from one another by the objects studied and the rational, imaginative, and technological means employed to know them. Here, for our rhetorical and mnemonic purposes, they will be distinguished solely by object of study; no consideration will be given of their specifically developed rational methods and special procedures. Moreover, only the chief sciences and arts will be mentioned, their often numerous and esoteric sub-types being omitted out of necessity. (For a more detailed, non-rhetorical scheme of the encyclopedia of human knowledge, one may consult the entries in the Encyclopedia Britannica [the Macropaedia and, especially the Propaedia, which is volume 30 of the 15th edition, 1993].) I have followed it in many respects but have, in addition, tried to integrate the modern conceptions of the sciences and arts within an ancient, mainly Aristotelian scheme of the modes of mind.)

The Theoretic-Historical Sciences

The theory and history of metaphysics: Metaphysics or rational theology or ontology deals with the principles and causes of the being of all things as such—that is, insofar as they are all real beings, including the possibility of a divine cause for the very existence and regulation of things, which is why metaphysics is also called rational theology. Otherwise, metaphysics is called ontology. Metaphysics, taken as rational theology, does indeed try to determine something about god, the gods, or other beings (say angels or daemons) that are perhaps no part of the physical universe. In any case, metaphysics does not depend upon any special body of information believed to be divinely inspired revelation and requiring religious observance. If, however, some texts or traditions are taken into account as truly inspired and revealed by a god or gods, then such theology would obviously have a claim to be the highest kind of knowledge, since the authority for it would be divine and, therefore, superior to human rationality. Such
revealed theology, as it can be called, may or may not qualify as a human science. That would have to be argued, as it was indeed argued by religious theologians—Christian, Islamic, and Jewish—in the Middle Ages. Modern thought since the eighteenth century has generally regarded metaphysics as invalid and has concentrated instead upon man as the product of culture, not as involved in the general order of being to which the external world also belongs. The external world is there, indeed, but only understandable through the natural sciences. As indicated in Part I, this modern view has had an effect upon the notion of rhetoric.

Next is the theory and history of nature or the existing universe, which includes both a general theory (or a philosophy) of nature and the chief natural sciences and their numerous subdivisions and combinations.

The modern sense is that the natural sciences belong to two major types: (1) the physical sciences that treat the inanimate world of matter and energy and (2) the life sciences that study animate things—things that live, most of which, presumably, belong also to the world of matter and energy—except, perhaps, an immaterial god or gods whose being may, because immaterial, be no part of the physical universe. (Note that the Latin word *anima*, root of the English words “animate” and “inanimate,” means life or, perhaps, soul, in the sense of whatever is the internal source or principle of life in things from the very simplest life forms to the most complex. From the viewpoint of the natural sciences, there is no need to talk about soul, since even human life is only a highly complicated phenomenon of the matter common to all things.)

The chief physical sciences in the usual modern reckoning are physics, chemistry, astronomy, and the earth sciences, each having several subdivisions. For our rhetorical purposes, only the chief ones are necessary to know.

Physics, the general study of matter, motion, and energy, includes these particular studies: mechanics (which studies the motion and rest of bodies and, especially, quantum
mechanics), gravitational physics (basically, general relativity), the physics of heat and thermodynamics, electricity and magnetism, optics, atomic and chemical physics, nuclear physics, condensed matter physics, particle physics, relativistic mechanics (or special relativity), physics of conservation and symmetry, and the physics of forces and fields.

Chemistry, which studies the atomic composition, structure, and interactive properties of material substances, includes these: analytical chemistry (any substance with little or no carbon), organic chemistry (substances with carbon), biochemistry (the molecular basis of life and physiological processes), polymer chemistry (certain molecules joined linearly), and physical chemistry (the quantitative aspects of all chemical processes).

Astronomy studies all extraterrestrial objects, including the solar system, the stars, the Milky Way galaxy, other galaxies, and cosmology.

The earth sciences are of three general kinds: geological, hydrological, and atmospheric. The geological sciences include the sciences of the earth’s composition (mineralogy, petrology, economic geology, geochemistry); the sciences of the earth’s structure (geodesy, geophysics, structural geology, volcanology); the sciences of the earth’s surface features (geomorphology and glacial geology); the sciences of the earth’s history (historical geology and stratigraphy); the sciences of the waters of earth (precipitation, limnology [lakes], oceans and seas, and ice and glaciers); and the sciences of earth’s atmosphere (its vertical structure, horizontal structure, clouds, climates and their changes).

The life sciences can be grouped in several ways. One simple, if not simplistic way, is based upon the living things studied: botany (plants), zoology (animals), ornithology (birds), ichthyology (fishes), mycology (fungi), microbiology (micro-organisms), protozology (one-celled animals), herpetology (amphibians and reptiles), entomology (insects), and physical anthropology (the human organism).

However, another and very important way to group the life (or biological) sciences
is by focusing upon one or more special features common to all animate things, otherwise called organic things. Thus, for example, we may speak of morphology (which studies the gross size, shape, structure, and parts of animate things), physiology (the functions of the parts and their interaction), taxonomy (the classification and ranking of animate things, say, animals and plants, according to kind and complexity), biophysics (the interrelation of life sciences to concepts of physics), biochemistry (the chemical substances and their interactions found in animate things), genetics (heredity in animate things), ecology (relation of organisms to their organic and inorganic environment), and eugenics (the ways of bettering heredity, especially in man).

The theory and history of mathematics: Mathematical sciences study the nature, properties, and interrelations of real, logical, and imaginative entities that are all quantitatively and symbolically expressible. The chief mathematical sciences, each having several special kinds, are these: set theory; algebra (including arithmetic); geometry (including trigonometry); analysis (including calculus); combinatorics and number theory; and typology.

The following sciences are sometimes called “the humanities.”

The theory and history of man: Such sciences treat both human nature in itself (a general theory of human being) and the history of humanity, which, of course, can be subdivided into a great many types depending upon the specific historical object of study. Then there are theoretical ethics, politics, and economics. And to these sciences must be added, since they too clearly deal with human being, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

The theory and history of the many productive and practical arts (see below for a general list of these arts). Note that the theory and history of art in general or of any art in particular, productive or practical, is not itself an art. It is a form of science. For example, the theory, history, and, we should add, the interpretative criticism of imaginative
literature are not the art of making literature, just as the theory, history, and criticism of painting or music or dance are not the art of making paintings, music, or dances. There is no good contemporary name for the sciences of the productive or the practical arts. The ancients would likely have conceived the science that treats of the productive arts as “poetics” because they all involve some sort of making or, in Greek, poiesis. In contemporary usage, the word “poetics” is restricted to imaginative literature and does not refer to all the other productive arts. As to the science of practical arts, what we today tend to call the social sciences, the ancients would likely have called politics, since politics, in their thinking, was the most comprehensive consideration of all that in one way or another contributes to the general flourishing of human life. The simple reason behind such thinking is that individual human beings cannot flourish by themselves, apart from some regulated form of human association that responds well to their needs and desires. Aristotle’s famous dictum is that man is by nature a political animal (Politics 1.2). Only gods live well by themselves, it seemed to him.

The Productive Arts

Productive art refers to the special kind of knowledge we often informally but very precisely call the know-how required for making some product. And such art seems to be of three basic kinds, depending upon whether the primary purpose of the product, though not always the sole purpose—some may do double or triple duty—is pleasure, usefulness, or understanding. Thus, we may speak of the arts of entertainment, which chiefly aim at products that give recreative pleasure, the technological (engineering) and the trade arts, which aim chiefly at useful ones, and the fine arts, which aim not just at products that are not only pleasing or useful but also means of greater understanding. Many of the technological and fine arts require considerable knowledge of one or more of the sciences.

The products of the arts of entertainment aim primarily at recreative pleasure, not
understanding also, as do the fine arts. In fact, some of the fine arts, when less serious—that is, less ambitious in the communication of knowledge—fall back into the category of entertainment arts. There is, thus, some interchange among these two kinds of productive art. Indeed, technological and trade arts may be involved in them as well.

The chief fine arts include all written or literary products, fictional and non-fictional: theater, music, dance, film-making, architecture (including landscaping and urban design), sculpture, drawing, painting, printmaking, photography.

The chief technological arts are these: the arts of agriculture and food production, mechanical industry, construction, transportation, information processing and communication systems, military technology, urban services, and earth and space exploration. Again, all these arts require a good measure of scientific knowledge.

Many productive arts, however, require little or no knowledge of the sciences, although each of these arts involves a certain kind of skilled knowledge particular to it. In other words, scientific knowledge is not a prerequisite for these arts. They are the numerous trade skills and crafts—for example, carpentry, masonry, plumbing, sewing, cooking, office skills, etc. Whatever process leads to the making of a product—no matter what the product—is a productive art. The large-scale production of any artifact of trade or craft, clothes, pins, beer, automobiles, whatever, becomes quickly a matter of mechanical industry (see above).

The Practical Arts

The practical arts are devoted to the regulation and improvement of human life and activities and to the upkeep and repair of the service environment of mechanical and electrical artifacts of all sorts. The practical arts may be differentiated by the sort of activity—of man or of artifacts—they chiefly involve and regulate. Intellectual activity is the object of the educational arts, which involve the arts of literacy, enculturation, the liberal arts, and professional education of all kinds. Those that treat behavior may be
called social service arts. Those that treat human bodily life and motion are medicinal and gymnastic arts. We must keep in mind that many of these arts require a great deal of scientific knowledge, though not all do.

The liberal arts: One of tenets of this book is that the arts of thought, memory, imagination, and expression involved in written rhetoric are primary liberal arts, and only insofar as other skills, arts, and sciences contribute to these rhetorical arts are they called liberal (in the sense of liberating). Liberality of mind is one of the chief intellectual virtues (see above). Nevertheless, understood in another way, the arts of rhetoric are practical arts because they direct the mental operations of the mind to the production of discourse, written or oral.

The practical arts of human behavior that require some or much science are the social service arts of government services, legal representation and the administration of justice, education systems, the conduct of warfare, police services, business management, and those devoted to the education and therapeutics of human psyche (all the religious and social services that involve instruction and counseling: for example, pastoral ministry, psychotherapy, nursing care services, counseling service, teaching at all levels, journalism.)

The practical arts of bodily welfare are the numerous kinds of medicine involving diet (nutrition), drugs, and surgery. The arts devoted to bodily exercise and play are, of course, general gymnastics and the many kinds of athletic games.

The practical arts of maintenance and repair of the innumerable artifacts, mechanical and electrical, require practical arts of all sorts.

This encyclopedic survey of the intellectual virtues of the sciences and arts is intended to highlight difference and delimitation in the ways things are known and managed. The principle is that a responsible psychagogy requires some such knowledge in order to resolve intellectual strife. The survey does not attempt to lay
down the principles and procedures by which the virtue of a particular science or art is developed. That must be left to those who learn one or another of the sciences and arts, and it is their obligation in the first instance to make these principles and procedures understandable to others. This is special rhetorical responsibility that belongs to masters of the sciences and arts. But it is the rhetor’s responsibility, or so it is maintained here, to monitor the strife that threatens the interdependence of the kosmos of knowledge in particular disputes.
SECTION B

DISPOSITION, STYLE, AND DELIVERY: A KOSMOS OF RHETORICAL WORDS AND IMAGINATION
CHAPTER 1

Disposition: Receptivity and the Parts of the Discourse

We must now shift attention from the rhetorical inquiry of writers in invention to their management of language in composition. When, during invention, writers have reached a point where some clarity has been achieved about the issues and points of argument, they are ready for the next step. Disposition, the second of the traditional five parts of classical rhetoric, is the process by which a writer organizes a discourse. The English word “disposition” derives from the Latin noun *dispositio*, which means the act of putting things into different places. It indicates to writers not only how to organize their words and ideas, but also how others are best disposed to receive a discourse in a way that frees them to judge it well. So the viewpoint here is architectural, inclusive of both purposive function and aesthetic form. Since disposition involves how one writes for a reader, it pertains to figure of Athene, who, along with *Peitho*, is the allegorical personification of responsible psychagogy.

By experience I have learned that for students a sense of a required structure for any persuasive discourse best enables them to integrate, by frequent reference back to its parts and functions, all else involved in the rhetorical care of words and things and others. For this reason, the ancient sophists used to teach the structure of discourse first. They found it pedagogically useful, as would any teacher today, though few of them do. And the young chafe at such restraint. They have been taught to value freedom, which is fine, and interested in self-expression and “creativity,” also fine things. But rhetorical thinking and expression are involved with much more than these things of the self.
Our concern, however, is not with pedagogy. It is with the fundamental dynamics of responsible psychagogy involved in the practical matters of rhetorical disposition. These dynamics must be understood, for they are applicable in one way or another to all forms of verbal psychagogy to resolve disputed matters in life generally, public or private. Even in the randomness of oral dispute, it will be possible at some point for the rhetorically trained thinker to perceive how to gather the scattered materials. Paradoxically, considerations of rhetorical disposition will affect the prior process of invention. Writers who already have a sense of structure will anticipate what they must do in its parts and guide their inventive thinking accordingly.

**Structure and Psychagogy**

Does a responsibly suasive discourse really have a basic structure? There is, clearly, no one structure for all the forms or genres of suasive discourse. But in the recommended form of the public oration, what they call “the parts of the oration,” the ancients have suggested to the western world a great deal about what verbal psychagogy involves in regard to writers and their addressees. (And with a little imagination, their suggestions may be adapted to other forms of discourse other than a public oration.) If writers are to be free of the disease of *adoleskia*, which leads to formless discourse, they must come to know all that helps to clarify their own minds and that contributes to suasion—in the philosophic sense already explained, not in the sense of effectiveness in getting others to agree with what is written, no matter what that may be. The general need for a formal plan is, thus, plain; and Plato, for one, expressed the need for it very well, urging us through his Socrates to envision writing and speaking as the work of a good craftsman, aiming at the best in all he does:

[T]he good man, who is intent on the best when he speaks, will surely not speak at random in whatever he says, [for that would amount to babbling]
but with a view to some object [persuasion]. He is just like any other craftsman, who having his own particular work in view selects the things he applies to that work of his, not at random, but with the purpose of giving a certain form to whatever he is working upon. You have only to look, for example, at the painters, the builders, the shipwrights, or any other craftsman, whichever you like, to see how each of them arranges everything according to a certain order, and forces one part to suit and fit with another, until he has combined the whole into a regular and well-ordered production. (Gorgias 503D-504A)

So, then, if a good craftsman works with his mental eye trained upon a certain order in what he makes, what is the structure a writerly craftsman must envision? From the standpoint of logic, there are, as Aristotle observed, only two basic parts: the statement of a proposition (or thesis) and the proof of it by argument. From the standpoint of persuasion of the readers or listeners, there are other necessary parts. All ancient rhetoricians agreed that, in addition to thesis and proof by argument, a discourse should have a beginning and an end; but some rhetoricians, the ones who best discerned the psychology of reception, argued for a few more. In short, the classical structure of a public oration reflected a psychology of verbal reception as well as a mode of persuasive expression.

Below is a list of all the parts of a written public oration. In each part, one will note, the writer performs certain functions, which are also briefly described. This model will serve, as I have mentioned, when used with a little ingenuity, for any genre of written discourse involving psychagogy: letters, news articles, business reports or legal briefs, student papers, professional articles, books, including the chapters of books, diaries, love letters, etc. But let’s consider now the parts of the oration.

An introduction (exordium in Latin: remarks that describe the subject matter
and pose the leading issue or problem about it that will be addressed);

A statement of the thesis (propositio: basically the answer to the leading issue or problem);

Partitions (partitio: remarks that outline the discourse for the reader or that indicate transitions from one point of discussion to another throughout the discourse, especially useful in long discourses);

A narration (narratio: an account of any information or series of events that may be needed to help another understand the question in dispute or the argument of the proof better;

The proof (probatio: the validation or warranting of the thesis) containing the argument which best confirms the thesis and overcomes, as much as possible, opposing opinions and difficulties);

Digressions (digressio: remarks on the broad significance of one or more of the particular points of argument optional); and

A conclusion (peroratio: synopsis of the whole argument, its general significance, or its limitations).

What does this list have to tell us? It tells us that there is a psychology of verbal reception that underlies this scheme. It is simple in outline, complex in its details. The logical needs of readers are that they know what will be said in the written discourse and why they should accept it. But the reality of persuasive communication goes well beyond these logical needs. Persuasion always involves a paradox: though people are interested by the new and different, they are usually resistant to it. And the reason is that whatever is received by readers is in fact received by them according to their already established customs of thought and feelings. Consequently, very little that is truly different or new is well received, even if it is true, more probable, or better. Given
this fact of readerly psychology, one may intuit the writer’s great task once again: to crack the crusty and customary manner of reception in order to enable readers to imagine, think, and act in another and arguably better way. The parts of the discourse embody the general structure for doing that. It is important to observe, before going any further, that the general structure represents the finished discourse. What the structure conceals is the entire mental process of invention leading to the finished discourse.

But before discussing the parts of the general structure of the oration further, let us reflect for a moment on the transition from invention to disposition. The transition may not be easy. For example, the introduction is the place where the disputed issues about some subject are specified. But it may well happen that the inventive process that leads to the specification of the issues is long, complicated, and chaotic, full of mistakes. One may find, for example, that to resolve one issue, several others may have to be raised and resolved. Of course, this is not always the case, since many disputes are not brand new. Consequently, over time the specific issues involved tend to become clear. Still the specification of the issues is always necessary. Again, the proof is the part of the finished oration where the thesis, once found, is warranted. But the invention of the points of the argument may well be a slow and frustrating process. Much of the evidence and reasoning adduced for the possible points of argument may have to be discarded as insufficient. But at some point in the inventive thinking of writers and often before they are sure of exactly what to write, they will have to consider what they must do in each of the parts, for the parts embody the psychagogic needs of the readers. Writers may do different things at this point to prepare for disposition. They make notes for themselves of what to say in the several parts. They may make an outline to follow, or simply begin making a rough and sketchy draft of a text of the discourse part by part. But as soon as writers start putting words into written sentences within the planned parts, they are moving also into matters of style and delivery, the subject of the
next chapter. The important point to grasp is that whenever writers begin writing, however sketchily, they are also starting to clarify and refine their own thinking for themselves and for the imagined readers. This process almost always involves rethinking—reinventing. So back and forth goes the entire process, back to invention, forth to disposition and style, then back again and forth again until the text is completed. *Hoc opus, hic labor est*: this is the burden, this the hard work of writing. The whole trial and error process of writing indicates that the actual dynamics of psychagogy, the entire inventive mental interaction between writer and imagined readers or between the actual spokesman of parties in oral disputation, are complex. For each of the parts of the finished discourse, the same is true, as our discussion of them will show. A process of invention is involved in the composition of the discourse that the composed discourse does not completely represent.

Before examining each of the parts in more detail, we should perhaps now consider the overall movement of both reader and writer through the traditional normative array of the oratorical parts. For the writer, the movement is a matter of organization. For readers, it is a matter of their psychagogic needs. So our focus of attention is now inside the general structure. There are two basic internal forms for responsible psychagogy within the basic structure or the oration. In a written discourse it is *the placement of the thesis* among the parts of the discourse that determines its basic internal movement.

If the thesis is stated early in the discourse, in the introduction or at the beginning of the proof, the form becomes direct or *expository* (or, in a broadly discursive but not strictly logical sense, deductive—leading from the thesis). The development of the discourse would accordingly move in this pattern: from a subject to the issue or issues about it (introduction), then immediately to the proposed answer (thesis), then perhaps to the pertinent background (narration), then to the warrant or proof of the answer (points of
argument and digressions), and finally to a conclusion. If, however, the thesis is stated late in the discourse, at the end of the proof or in the conclusion, the organizing internal form is exploratory (or inductive—leading to the thesis). In this case, the developmental pattern moves from the subject and issues, to pertinent background, to the proposed points of argument and needed digressions, and finally to the thesis at the end of the proof or in the conclusion. The exploratory form obviously can simulate the process of inventive inquiry more closely than does the expository. It is the more engaging and dramatic form. For many readers it may well be the more deeply psychagogic experience, since the writer is mentally postured toward them like a fellow participant in an inquiry. The advantages of the expository mode are economy and clarity and vigor, which tend to be lost in the exploratory. In a written discourse, the place where the thesis is expressed a crucial matter about which the writer will have to decide.

It is also possible to vary the two basic forms. In one variation, they may be combined, where the thesis is stated early and unmistakably, thus giving the whole discourse an expository orientation, but the proof also moves at times in an exploratory and interrogative way. Other variations depend upon a movement in the degree of certitude that writers may feel best suits the readers. Writers may, for example, vary the expository form by proposing the thesis early as a tentative resolution of the issues. Then, while they adopt either the expository or exploratory presentation of the proof, they proceed finally to a firm (or firmer or even different) statement of the thesis at the end of the proof or in the conclusion. It is even possible for writers adopting the exploratory method to leave the thesis unexpressed because some point of real indetermination has been reached. The discourse is in this way left open to the judgment of the readers, though of course the complexities and difficulties of the argument, while left unresolved, presumably have been clarified as much as possible by the discussion. The truth of psychagogy here is that the truth is often not easy to determine at any given occasion for
discourse. And, for readers, there may be risk in acting according to a thesis and argument in exigent but shifting circumstances.

**Introduction, Partition, and Narration**

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes what an introduction to a discourse is and does. His remarks are applicable to a written discourse too:

The introduction is the beginning of a speech, corresponding to the prologue in poetry and the prelude in flute-music; they are all beginnings paving the way, as it were, for what is to follow . . . . This, then, is the most essential and distinctive property of the introduction, to show what the aim of the speech is. (*Rhetoric* 3, 14: 1414b 20-25, 1415a 20-25)

The aim of a discourse is, in the proof, to present persuasively the argument that confirms the thesis about a given subject matter. Therefore, the introduction prepares the reader for the proof by doing several things:

1. It indicates briefly what the *subject matter* of the discourse is. Note that the subject matter is not the thesis. The thesis is a judgment that responds to an issue or problem about the subject matter. The title of a discourse should also be a brief indication of the subject matter. See, for example, the title of this book.

2. It arouses the interest of the readers by posing, for the whole discourse, *the leading issues or problems about the subject*. They are the primary way of clarifying the writer’s own mind and of evoking and leading the interest of readers. And what the lead issue or problem leads to, whether one or more, is, obviously, its resolution—the thesis. An interested reader is, obviously, an attentive reader. The subject matter itself may or may not interest a given reader. Nevertheless, what always to some degree gains the interest of readers in a subject is an issue or problem about it, even when the question threatens the tenability of an individual reader’s own prior opinions. Should an issue or
problem seem to be important or innovative to readers, their interest will be increased. (An “important” question, I may add, is one whose answer involves the values readers presumably already have. A question or problem is “innovative” if the answer is itself new or promises a new way of understanding the old.)

3. It exhibits a benevolent impartiality in the writer, which is essential to philosophic inquiry.

4. It sets up one or the other of the two strategies of development, either by stating the thesis early in the discourse or by deferring it until near the end.

The introduction, like all the other parts of the public oration, exhibits the verbal pattern that can move from *eris* toward *harmonia*. When strife has not yet become war with its attendant tragedies and has not yet broken down the intuited, legal, or customary cultural restraints upon human interaction, the human capacity for *logos* may be engaged in an attempt to transpose strife into words. A certain determination of the mind is first and fundamental. What in fact are the basic issues that seem to defy resolution? Without a sense of the issues or questions, there is no place to begin a resolution. Sometimes, as has already been noted, just getting at the real issues takes time and perseverance. In written rhetorical discourse, the introduction is the place where this is done. It may or may not take a lot of work to isolate the essential problem, but it is absolutely necessary. It provides orientation for the whole discourse and itself creates interest by eliciting “wonder” to some degree, even in the midst of intense and conflicting emotion. It may do so if the writer or speaker can reduce the sense of fear in the disputants when their conflicting opinions are suspended and transformed verbally into a question for inquiry. More than anything else, it is a certain impression of themselves writers give to readers that makes this transformation possible. (More will be said about this matter in the chapter on style).
Partition

A partition is usually a set of statements, sometimes extending even over several pages, that orients the reader within the discourse itself, either by providing an overall sketch of the discourse, usually indicated in its titled parts—chapters, section headings, or whatever—or by indicating points of transition within the discourse in the light of the overall plan previously sketched. (A table of contents is, in fact, a partition. See the one made for this book, for example.) Even words, phrases, or statements of transition between paragraphs, which help the reader to follow the course of discussion, may be included among the techniques of partition. In long written discourses, partitions are especially needed to keep the reader on track. Of course, the need to provide orientation for the reader helps to keep the writer’s own thoughts on track as well.

The resolution of strife or elimination of deception may well require a kind of discrimination that does not lose its way within the labyrinth of ways and byways traced out by the thoughts and feelings involved in a dispute. Strife tends to chaos, and chaos to tragedy. But this is hardly easy in actual oral dispute without reflection on what has or has not been said or meant, on what is or is not really related to the issues or to those involved in the issues. In written discourse, of course, one mentally has to get above the entire labyrinth to see what path avoids the dead ends and leads to the center, the resolution of the dispute. This sort of vision becomes possible only by keeping things together that belong together and things separate that are separate. These arts of mind recall Plato’s Socrates’ advice in the Phaedrus (265-266). There “collection” (synagoge), which enables definition, and “division” (diairesis), which enables classification and distinction within the defined, are called the primary requirement of the truly artistic rhetor in whose footsteps, like a god’s, Socrates would follow, if he could find one.

Narration
This part of the classical model of the oration may not always be needed. Its function is to provide whatever pertinent background information or narrative of events that may help to make the disputed issues or the proof of the thesis more understandable to the reader. If such information is already common knowledge, the narration may be omitted. If not, the narration is necessary because it sets up a context for the proof of the thesis.

Context is a very important matter in the psychology of reception and, thus, has psychagogic importance. The understanding of another, whether a reader or not, often depends upon supplying a clarifying context for what is being said. Misunderstandings are thereby often avoided. As the great biblical parable suggests, the seed of the word requires good receptive ground, and if it is not there to begin with, a writer—indeed anyone who would communicate with another even minimally—will have to cultivate the ground by supplying the needed context. Even in personal conversation, the lack of an adequate context for what is being said by one to another is often the reason for misunderstanding. It normally takes a great deal of talk to fill in the missing background—a personal history or a significant set of unknown facts—to enable another to understand well.

Only the writer can determine exactly what contextual information will be needed in a given discourse. In some discourses, the context may have to be a more extensive discussion of the lead issue or problem raised about the subject so that it may be fully understood. In other discourses, it may be a matter of needed historical information or pertinent facts. In certain academic discourses, like undergraduate essays or graduate theses and dissertations, the narration may present a brief survey of scholarly dispute about subject matter and thereby prepare for the writer’s own thesis and proof. Another possibility is that it may contain a discussion of ideas or terms important for a right understanding of the proof. Even in kinds of writing where the issues are not very
disputatious, narratives may be needed. For example, in a book review, where the only issue is whether a book is worth reading, the reviewer may utilize a narration to consider other works by the same author or to similar kinds of books by other authors.

The dynamics of psychagogy must always be kept in mind. To spark *eros* in the writer as well as in the addressees, it will be necessary to do more than determine the precise issues. What generally quiets strife is perspective, some removal of mind and heart from the friction of conflict. The psychagogic purpose of the narration is to provide some sort of perspective. The primary function of narration is its most common one—recounting the facts or events involved in a dispute in some intelligible temporal order. Any dispute will have a history, and it may well involve the rhetor in the complications and difficulties of historical narrative generally. But narrative’s historical function, as indicated, is not the only one. Any information that creates a contextual background to the disputed issues set in the foreground may enable readers to perceive the issues in a new or better way and in this way prepare them for the proof.

**Proof, Digression, and Conclusion**

Proof and digressions belong together as parts of the discourse, for responsible psychagogy normally requires both. The proof is the most important and longest part of a discourse formed according to classical principles of rhetorical art. The word proof may be a little misleading. The Latin word *probatio* means examination or testing for worth or reliability. Proof in a written discourse is a series of paragraphs, sections, or chapters that presents an argument and its complementary imaginative context. Described in another way, proof is a pattern of reasoning and imagining that brings together the specific points of argument—the evidence (facts), reasons, and imaginative context. Thus, components of the proof are three: (1) points of argument—facts and reasons—that serve to confirm the thesis and to refute objections—developed in paragraphs grouped into large sections and
chapters; (2) digressions concerning the points of argument; and (3) the complementary imaginative context established by figurative language and paradigms. (See chapters on invention and style.) The pattern is dialectical, for it both supports the thesis and, when necessary, refutes those objections which might be made against the thesis or any one specific point of argument by readers.

It is well to remind ourselves that some honest representation of opposing opinions is necessary in responsible psychagogy. But such honest representation requires a certain humility or openness in the writer in both the process of invention, where these opposing views are considered, and in disposition where they are presented. In oral discourse, listening is the prerequisite for understanding what others may be saying, and when passions are aroused in the speaker, listening may be difficult. The same is true of the writer. Obviously, aroused passions in the addressees, like those of the Furies in the *Eumenides*, make it very difficult for the writer or speaker.

Digressions are like little narrations for specific points of argument. Despite the connotation of the word, digressions are not wayward or superfluous. Digressions have the same general functions as the narration, but the focus of the digression is a particular point of argument and the context it may need to be understood. That context may include certain facts adduced, reasons advanced, or imaginative suggestiveness developed, thus providing for the reader perspective on the point. That’s the key reason for any digression. Like the narration, it helps expand the reader’s awareness of context or importance.

Let us be clear, however, about the roles of reason and imagination in the argument of the proof. The pattern of reasoning embracing the evidence (facts) in the argument is only one component of the proof, the rational. Imaginative context is another. It is established in several ways. Narration and digression are two of them. Another is the aggregate imaginative effect of tropes (see chapter on style) that appear in the discourse and that often suggest an overarching narrative (myth). Still another way is by the
imaginative effect upon the reader of literary or historical analogies, called paradigms in rhetoric, which are explicitly discussed or implicitly alluded to (see chapter on invention). Tropes and paradigms are matters usually thought to be secondary in importance because style is usually thought to be only imaginative cosmetics for rational argument, just as paradigms are thought to be only illustrations for reasoning. But that view of imagination, both in rhetoric and in education, is inadequate. Reason and imagination are always interacting, as Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* shows. (That interaction will be explained more fully in the section on style.) Argument in fact cannot be separated from style, for imaginative context, in part established by style, is an integral part of persuasive proof. The formal patterns of reasoning are the subject matter of logic or dialectic, another art of language and thought that, like grammar, is employed by rhetoric. Formal logic will not be discussed here.

A few remarks should be made about paragraphing and the order of points made in the proof. All the components of the proof, the specific points of argument (facts and reasons), the digressions, and the imaginative context, which involves style too, require development through explanation. The basic device of written rhetoric for developing any one component is the paragraph. These are graphic devices whose beginnings are indicated in writing and printing by indentations from the set margins of a text. Obviously, in an oral discourse, there are no paragraphs, no visible graphic ways by which units of development are noticeable. It should be self-evident too that, in the psychology of verbal reception that leads to persuasion, attention should be paid to the order of the points of arguments in a proof as a matter of importance. The logic of order requires that the first matter of argument should always be to make clear what precisely is being discussed, and that is a matter pertaining to the law of definition. The other components may be arranged according to the way they are related logically or dramatically to one another.
The last part of the classical model of discourse is the conclusion. Its function is synopsis. Synopsis—which means, not summary, but general overview of the whole discourse—brings closure to it, making of it a verbal kosmos. Closure is achieved by bringing the reader’s attention back to the leading issues or problems about the subject that began the discourse and that now have, in the course of the proof, been given some resolution. What precisely the conclusion contains will also depend upon the method of general development, direct or indirect.

1. If the expository strategy of development was used, then, the synoptic function of the conclusion will be:

   a. to remind the reader or the leading issues or problems of the discourse and the thesis that responds to them in the light of the key points of the whole argument, especially if it has been a very long and complicated one;

   b. or, to indicate the broad significance of the thesis and argument as a whole. Synoptic digression in the conclusion should be distinguished from digressions in the proof, which are usually limited to discussing the significance of one or more of the individual points of argument, not the argument as a whole, though, of course, they may be related to the synoptic digression.

2. If the interrogative strategy was used in the discourse, then the conclusion should contain the thesis which the argument leads to and which answers the question or problem stated in the introduction.

3. In another kind of synoptic conclusion, which may be written no matter which strategy of development is used, the limitations of the argument may be discussed. Its certitude may well be conditioned by lack of evidence, by reasoning which cannot be absolutely conclusive about one or more points of the argument, or perhaps by the personal limitations of the writer or of human reason and imagination. This kind of conclusion is confessional: there are a good many matters about which any thesis and
argument can only be tentative.

The mind that works with a sense of the classical form is one that aims to be conceptually precise about the words used and the things being written about. It tries to distinguish the subject, the issues about the subject being discussed, the thesis in response to the issues, and the needed context for understanding whatever proof, both rational and imaginative, may be developed to confirm the thesis. It seeks to be attentive to the receptiveness of others. Such a mind is already on the way to being beautiful in its operations and expression. What a classically formed discourse looks like is the very image of a writer’s mind. One should meditate upon this image—the form of a discourse—and commit it and the functions of its parts to memory. For all the other parts of rhetoric pertain to it.
CHAPTER 2

Style

As in the previous chapter, we turn again to considerations concerning the mind of the rhetor in the responsible management of language in written discourse. Style and delivery are the remaining two of the traditional five parts of the rhetorical art. Latin rhetoricians called style *elocutio*, a word that means, according to its etymology, the act of utterance. In its technical meaning, *elocutio* refers to the ways of verbalizing the thesis and argument supposed to be already thought out during invention, at least to some extent, and already planned for disposition into the several parts of a discourse. By delivery, which the ancient rhetoricians called *pronunciatio* or *actio*, they meant the techniques of oral presentation: voice, facial expression, bodily posture, and gestures. The English word “style” derives from Latin *stilus*, meaning a pointed stake or pen. In this etymological sense, style is, in fact, a metonym for writing.

In written discourse published in some way, style and delivery pertain to the actual process of writing out (“stylizing”) a text. Writing begins when a writer, like a mother, feels ready to put on paper or, as is now the usual case, on an electronic screen what has been conceived within her. The newborn text will, of course, need parental nurturing to reach a maturation point required for leading an independent public life among others. In practice, style and delivery have three general phases: (1) the first draft, (2) its needed revisions, however many they may be, leading to (3) the final text, the one that is judged capable of being published, no matter whether by some commercial publisher or by the author. This book will not treat the means of writing: pen and paper, typewriter, computer
program, dictation. Nor will it treat means of publishing or getting a text published. These allied matters, technological and commercial, are not part of the rhetorical art. Only the process of writing is.

The reader should again be alerted to the features of the special treatment of style in this book. Its primary purpose is not so much to teach techniques of style but to illustrate the pertinent rhetorical way of thinking and being among others by means of psychagogic writing. The key question is what arts of mind are involved in style. The answer is that there are many of them, and I will call them collectively a sort of philology, but before describing any of them and their interaction, some additional preliminary notions of orientation are necessary.

The Graeco-Latin rhetorical tradition gave prominence to oral communication, but the five-part scheme of rhetoric the ancients devised, which is useful though not programmatic, clearly needs some revision when applied to writing. Actio, for example, has no meaning in writing. Memoria, the fourth part, is a matter in writing much deeper than techniques of memorization, granted that ancient culture was much less affected by writing than modern culture has been after the invention of printing. In oral discourse, a live audience cannot easily separate a speaker from his words: they are perceptually indistinguishable. An audience sees and hears speakers, what they look like, their fashions of dress, qualities of voice, postures, and gestures—indeed the reputations that they bring with them—and all of these factors strongly affect the receptivity of an audience according to cultural and personal custom. In written discourse, however, writers cannot be seen or heard.

There are, however, in the physical absence of a speaker in written discourse both an advantage over the speaker and a special task for the writer. The advantage is that writing, especially when clarified by print, enables one to reach any and all that can read a given language, at anytime, anywhere, though, of course, all readers may not easily
understand what is written. The special task is that, in order to serve the good of any and all potential readers, writers must give extraordinary care to the good of the words—the linguistic medium—by which their readers, whether all or some of them, may be reached.

Still, from the standpoint of rhetorical thought, such writerly care must be understood chiefly according to the interplay of the mental operations involved in the process of writing that the five-part scheme merely outlines. I have mentioned before that invention usually provides writers with only a working thesis. It remains, so to speak, in childhood, its mature identity not yet clearly recognizable to the rhetor-writer. The reason is easily verifiable. Writing out a text word by word, sentence by sentence as one organizes it part by part in one draft after another forces all writers to attend, with new consciousness, not only to words as needed to express what has been conceived within their minds, but also to those same words as educated and matured to reach the minds and imaginations of readers, at least insofar as writers can imagine their readers’ reactions if they do not in fact know them. This readerly orientation in the work of writers will always involve rethinking and, more often than not, new thinking, new invention and new disposition. Thus, drafting and revising a text always means reinventing to some degree what has been conceived within and then, very likely, reorganizing it. In fact, all the arts of mind exercised within the so-called parts of rhetoric interact with one another in the actual process of writing out a text. And they interact probatively, not simply to communicate a meaning suasively but to show both the truthfulness and desirability of what is meant. Truthfulness and desirability are something more important than meaning or meaningfulness. I reiterate that all of them, when taken together, are, in the metaphor already used, simply further steps taken to help nurture and educate a writer’s words to suasive, publishable maturity.

In this chapter the nurturing and educative process in writing will be called philology, by which I mean, in the root senses of the word, a writer’s love of logos or
discourse. (And here I am merely tracing the metaphor of parental nurturing back to the love that is its source.) Such philology is shown in the means the ancients used to give a discourse certain psychagogically powerful qualities. They were first discussed by Aristotle in his formalistic fashion in *Rhetoric* 3 and, afterwards by Cicero, amplified and, as we have seen, provided with a new rationale in *De oratore*: clarity, purity, *ornatus* (attractive pattern or imaginativeness), and appropriateness. These four became the standard qualities of style in oratory and in literature used by handbook rhetoricians.

But I must add one other, a singularly powerful psychagogic quality of language, not only in oratorical writings but also in poetic and historical writings. It is described as wondrous, elevating, and irresistible when dealing with matters called lofty, great, or sublime by the ancient Greek rhetorician known as Longinus or Dionysius, the greatest of the Greek preceptive rhetoricians. And in discussing loftiness or sublimity, Longinus indicates, in my opinion, the two most important stylistic or philological arts of mind, the two biggest and brightest things in the firmament of rhetorical style *in writing*. They are persona and imagination.

Persona refers to the writer’s imaginable impression and role as they may be inferred by a reader from the words of the written text. There obviously comes a time when a writer’s own *eros* for the true and the truly beneficial—the disinterested philosophic spirit of rhetorical thinking in general—must turn to the benefit of the receivers (the readers) of a discourse. (See the third discourse of Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus.*) To seek their benefit inevitably means, as the myth of *Eumenides* suggests, that writers will have to negotiate with all the Furies of readers. Only a writer who exhibits a kind of *philia* or friendship for readers combined with a genuine philosophic *eros*, prevents the effort to persuade in this negotiation from turning into sophistry, as Aristotle noted in his *Rhetoric* (1.2; 1355b30). Imagination (*phantasia*) refers to the ways writers
communicate with another at the level of *extraordinary* perception and conception. The ancient rhetoricians were aware of the role of imagination in discourse, especially in figures of speech like metaphor and simile, but they did not go far in discussing it. The lack of concentrated discussion of these two matters in the ancient tradition of rhetorical thinking is one of its major weaknesses.

Longinus, however, is something of an exception in several ways. He comes close to a real treatment of persona by trying to integrate style in writing with philosophy as the much greater theorists, Plato and Cicero, did before him. And it is to Plato that he seemingly comes closest, perhaps by direct imitation and inspiration, as he develops his thinking about the words expressing “sublime things” and the sort of writer needed for thinking such things. He is also one of only two ancient rhetoricians I know, the other is Quintilian, to give direct attention to imagination. Then again, he is the only ancient rhetorician to have mentioned the Hebrew Bible (specifically the opening sentences of Torah, Genesis for Christians) to illustrate sublime things. It is to Longinus that I owe the precedent for the extensive use I make later in this book of examples from the Christian Bible in discussing “sublimity” or “greatness” in imaginative figuration.

Persona and imagination are the chief mental arts, though not the only arts, that make a written style good—good because a text so styled becomes responsibly and powerfully psychagogic, not because it exhibits the individuality of the writer. The psychagogic power of the person of the rhetor-writer in the style of a written discourse is a matter more significant and profounder than a writer’s individuality. That, the ancients assumed, would always make itself perceptible in written discourse. But individuality is not persona in writing. The difference is a crucial matter in rhetorical thinking about written style.

Aristotle, we know, spoke of *ethos*, the public reputation and visible person of a
speaker, as a means of gaining credence or trust in public oratory. In writing, persona is different from public reputation, though it may include it, because, as mentioned, the author himself is not visible. Because only the written words make a writer imaginable, adopting a persona turns out to be inextricable from “philological” qualities of a discourse—“philological” meaning here, as I have indicated, a certain kind of loving or attentive care given to words and things (and persons!). In fact, without the right kind of persona and the many philological ways of acquiring the needed qualities, which I will soon discuss, the individuality of writers, in being given written expression, can easily become an impediment to persuasion. But the right sort of persona is not a matter of seeming but of being—truly being a certain kind of writer. And, as Longinus indicates, such a rhetor will also have a certain kind of imagination. Let us first listen to Longinus on persona and imagination before developing some needed additions to his thought.

Longinus addresses his treatise to a friend with whom he studied a little work on sublimity composed by one Cecilius, usually thought to be a Jewish rhetorician who lived in Rome in the first century. Longinus intends to supply what Cecilius did not, the means by which “to lead our natures” (1.1) to the sublime things or, in other phrasings, lofty things, great things, or the “supernatural.” Longinus thinks sublimity applies to things as well as words, but when he refers to sublime words, he is thinking of short passages or even sentences, not whole works. That restriction, I think, stands up to the experience of any readers. Most discourses, long or short, no matter how impressive, do not rise to what this ancient rhetorician called sublimity except in parts. Longinus does not formally define it, but his several descriptions make it recognizable in its effect. That effect, which is the reason for the fame of the greatest poets and historians, is ecstasy or wonder. Longinus insists upon “the persuasion (peitho) of hearers . . . . Invariably what inspires wonder casts a spell upon us and is always superior to what is merely convincing and pleasing. For our
convictions are usually under our own control, while such passages exercise an irresistible power of mastery and get the upper hand with every member of the audience” (1.4).

We must go farther than Longinus in the matter of persona and imagination and try to bring into the account of them a deeper sense of their relation to the other mental arts of expression exercised within the traditional five “parts of rhetoric.” Just as writing out a text for readers always requires writers to reinvent and to reorganize their previously conceived thesis and argument, so too writing always brings the imagination of both writers and their anticipated readers into play. Even before drafting a text, when the initial mental work of invention is being done, a writer’s imagination is active, no matter how “abstract” (drawn away from something imaginable) some thinking may be. Thinking involves, first, forming thoughts (concepts), then relating concepts in a statement (assertion), and then relating statements to one another (reasoning, narrating, explaining) in ways that avoid error (thus the laws of logic) to insure as far as possible the truth or truths about some disputed matter. And all this thinking seems to go along as if imagination were not at all involved, except, perhaps, to provide illustrations. However, the relation of imagining to thinking is not simply the well-known auxiliary one of providing illustrations for already conceived ideas and assertions.

The relation of imagination to rational thinking is really deeper and subtler than it appears to be. Imagination in fact often precedes conception and reasoning, and exercises a frequently unrecognized influence on them. For example, any conflict of opinions is actually attended by a conflict of imaginative contexts in which rational judgments are rooted and from which much of their vigor and suasive force come. In fact, for the ideas in every opinion, imagination vaguely supplies a context and, in some cases, may go so far as to situate opinions in a story in which a writer’s personal identity and self-respect are involved. For example, disputes today about government welfare policies are always attended by conflicting stories—say, a story about the need for personal responsibility and
the determination to work, on the one hand, and a story about social victimization and institutional heartlessness, on the other. In either story, as it may be extended backward to an imaginable past or forward to an imaginable future, the emotions of writer or reader may in some respect easily reach a flash point.

Imagination, moreover, is always affected by inherited personal or cultural factors that may either liberate judgment, making it more responsive to the real, or enchain it to what people call, without too much critical thought intervening, the “realistic,” meaning whatever they have been influenced to think is real. In the liberal and liberating art of style, imagination must often be used to overcome imagination, and this conclusion applies as much to writers as to their readers. Writers may be forced, in many instances, to suggest to themselves as well as to their readers what Shakespeare’s Hamlet once remarked to his disbelieving friend Horatio: “There are more things in heaven and earth than... are dreamt of / in your philosophy.” The imagination of rhetors must be active in envisioning, first for them and then for their readers, what things more there really were, are, or can be, thus going beyond some limited and misleading imaginative sense of the realistic or beyond whatever imagined stories may be impeding new and better insight and feeling. But how are writers to do this? How are writers, if we think of them according to Aeschylus’ Athena, to overcome the Furies, that is, the emotionally charged imaginative stories that in some form or another, often inchoate, cling to given opinions, including a writer’s own?

Again, the only answer for writers is to take seriously the necessity to be philosophic and to present themselves through a philosophic persona, whatever else they may reveal by their words about their individual identities to their readers. Imagination may sometimes be misleading, no doubt. It may also be an obsequious follower of ideologies. It may nevertheless be a true locus of revelation or innovation, as will be shortly explained when discussing the psychagogic dynamics of figuration. Only by
always keeping in mind these things about the imaginations of writers and readers may we understand well the psychagogic power of style, generated in great part by a philosophic persona. And what that means, Longinus pointed out, is being philosophic in fact. But there are different ways in written discourse for a rhetor to be philosophic in persona: by addressing readers through an assumed identity in the text, by allowing only inferences about authorial identity among those of others, or by way of one’s own as author.

And there are some famous examples of benevolent philosophic personae in ancient literature by way of assumed identity. Let us reconsider Aeschylus’ Athena: she is an imaginative embodiment of rhetorical persona. This persona is feminine. However, she is no ordinary female. In her speech, as Aeschylus represents it, she combines a “masculine” rational combativeness, like that of her brother, Apollo, in leading another disinterestedly to the true and good with a “feminine” compassion that seeks another’s personal transformation, in spite of all that resists persuasion in the Furies. What her unusual double-­gendered qualities of character suggest, I think, is, first, that there is in persuasive discourse nothing of an aberrant feminine tendency of “motherly” self-­love that pampers or nags children (or others) by attempting to master all the details of their lives as she sees fit. Nor, second, in persuasive discourse is there anything of a masculine tendency to arrogant “fatherly” love, that factious aggression against children (or others) that, posing as adherence to abstract principles of rationality, tries to compel submission but leads only to disheartened self-­abasement or furious resentment. However, such “feminine” qualities as gentleness, patience, pity, softness, compliance and such “masculine” ones as aggressiveness, boldness, anger, exasperation, and resistance are not to be ruled out, only tempered according to the occasion and time. Moreover, there is a clear indication that Athena speaks for and by the authority and power of Zeus, her father.
Plato’s Socrates is, perhaps, the most famous example of rhetorical philia. If we recall the homoerotic ambience of Plato’s dialogues about rhetoric, the philia Socrates showed to those with whom he conversed evinced a desire to move their love of beautiful bodies toward several different kinds of love, beginning with a love of speech (philology, in Greek) and leading to a love of wisdom (philosophy). He sought to arouse philology in order to lead them by other loves toward philosophy. The process of such erotic and benevolent psychagogy is particularly clear in the dialogues called Phaedrus and Symposium, indispensable masterpieces of the Greek rhetorical tradition in this matter. Another, though much less famous, example of persona is Cicero’s Crassus, the chief figure in his dialogue De oratore, who is presented as a sort of alternative to Socrates. Crassus gives the clear impression that he strives to lead younger men, all of them interested merely in political success, into the love of something greater and even more important than himself, even greater than Cicero, the author who speaks through Crassus: the conceivable and imaginable ideal or model of the philosophic speaker. But these are assumed personae, where the author clearly hides himself in an imagined character, though the ones mentioned are based upon historical figures. A dramatist like Aeschylus transmits a philosophic persona only inferentially, since he does not appear at all in his dramatic scripts. Plato spoke of inspired rhetor-philosophers. One of the very greatest rhetoricians of antiquity, Saul of Tarsus, later Paul the Christian apostle, was learned not only in the Torah, but also in Greek rhetoric. In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians in the Christian Bible, he provided the greatest and most far-reaching discussion I know of rhetorical persona as his own personal identity, but with a notable difference. He is a vessel for another who speaks through him. An examination of that discussion is not possible here. Instead, what Paul wrote in a famous passage about the divine charity expressed through human beings in First Corinthians is a powerful expression of rhetorical philia expressed through the writer’s persona: “If I should speak with the tongue
of men and of angels, but do not have charity, I have become as sounding brass or a
tinkling cymbal. And if I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if
I have all faith so as to remove mountains, yet do not have charity, I am nothing” (1 Cor.
13.1-2). For St. Paul, charity is a kind of divine love that, as Christian theologians speak of
it, circulates, in a way beyond telling, through human discourse and action. Persuasion,
we need to remind ourselves, remains, despite all our effort, irreducible to matters of
knowledge and techniques.

Inspiration aside, most rhetorical writers speak for themselves in their texts. Philia,
natural or divine, is, however, the true spirit of rhetors. It ought to be the spirit of anyone
in authority, from parents to presidents. It ought to be because its contrary is the self-
interested exhibitionism and liability to much crass exploitation that characterizes the
spirit of those whom Plato and Aristotle called sophists. In short, writers can only
communicate themselves as philosophers by being philologists, lovers who, for the sake of
others, care for words, the things words refer to, and those whom they address. This care
is the stylistic task rhetors take on.

What, then, are the mental operations involved in making a written discourse clear,
pure, imaginative, and appropriate? To make it clear, writers must develop two things:
the habit of grammatical analysis to insure correctness and the habit of expressive
economy. To make a discourse “pure,” they must develop the habit of verbal
discrimination to achieve as they can precision in usage. To make it imaginative, they
must develop the habit of figurative expression and thinking. And to make it appropriate,
they must develop the habit of discerning the particular stylistic duties befitting their
particular subject matter and their readers. These mental arts help writers to communicate
the necessary persona, to clarify and make precise the real thesis and argument, and, at the
same time, to exhibit their persuasive beauty—their attractive and transforming power—
in ways adapted not only to the logic of argument about the matter being considered but
to the readers’ thoughts and imagination.

The great task of rhetorical expression is this twofold adaptation. We have tried to express it in terms of writing. But of course, rhetoric is a way of verbally interacting in disputed matters, which in life generally, quite apart from writing, develops over time among those interacting. After writers intuit for themselves the imaginative context implied by the thesis and argument, they must then reveal it to another. But that may and usually will require dealing as one can with the Furies, the impediments to persuasion within the culturally influenced personal imaginations of readers. Given the many cultural and personal factors that in readers may inhibit their receptivity to an author’s words, to cause another to imagine and judge anew may be, in the ordinary course of things, beyond human capacity—unless human capacity becomes enhanced by some power that comes from a source other than the discourse of the writer. This means inspiration, but there are means within ordinary human capacity. To the ordinary philological means of caring for the medium so as to communicate a philosophic persona with an imagination capable of sublimity, we may now turn.

**Clarity and Purity**

Clarity is the quality of style that makes a written discourse capable of being understood without *needless* effort by the reader. Of course, it remains true that not everything can be made easy to understand, however clearly expressed. Some matters are really complicated and so cannot be made easily understandable. Clear writing obviously requires clear thinking and well-formed arguments that are also well disposed (see invention and disposition). However, the stylistic basis of clarity is grammatical correctness and economy.

In fact, all the qualities of style require at least grammatical correctness. That insures the basic intelligibility of a text to a reader. But to be as clear as possible, writers
need the ability to discern and to judge all the *predications* of a sentence and all the ways in which they may be *modified*. If writers have already reached a high level of literacy, at least in their own mother tongue, it will not be too hard for them to develop in a brief time this powerful analytical ability, which belongs to the rhetorical art as much as to grammar. In fact, it is one of the intellectual and verbal virtues that come into play when reading and analyzing texts in the inventive process. (How otherwise than by the close analytical reading of sentences can what is written be both accurately understood and assessed?) But here, in the work of style, the art of grammatical analysis comes into play both in the formation of sentences that compose a text and, as is usually necessary, in their revisions.

Economy means regulating the number of words used in sentences to the number *necessary* (not the fewest possible). Following this practical maxim will help clarify both writer’s and the reader’s understanding, for wordiness, which has many causes, dims the intellectual radiance of words. The “things” signified by the words remain in the dark. Indeed, to change the metaphor, wordiness is noise, making one deaf to the silent language by which things communicate themselves both to writers and, through them, to readers.

To develop the ability to analyze sentences grammatically, we must recall certain basic grammatical notions. (1) *Predication*: predication is the verbal act of asserting something about something else. Every sentence except, perhaps, for the pure exclamation, involves predication, and every predication has two basic elements, a subject and a predicate. (2) The *subject* is a word or group of words that signify whatever it is the assertion is about. A noun or noun equivalent, plus all its modifiers, compose the full subject. (3) The *predicate* is a word or group of words that signify what is asserted about the subject. A verb, all its modifiers, plus its complement or objects and their modifiers compose the full predicate. Thus:
SUBJECT + PREDICATE

Noun or equivalent    Verb(s), complement, objects, modifiers
and modifiers

(4) Modification: The subject noun and the verb with its complement or objects make up the substance of a sentence. All the other words in the sentence modify them. Modifiers can be single words, phrases, or clauses. (5) A word: let it be defined as the smallest significant syntactic unit of discourse. (6) A phrase is a group of words that makes no predication, no assertion, and that, therefore, has no subject and predicate. (7) A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate. It is an independent clause when the sense of the assertion is complete. It is dependent when its sense as an assertion depends for its completion on an independent clause, one or more.

The basic rules for composing or analyzing sentences are simple: (1) that the predication in every sentence and in every modifying clause must make sense, logically or figuratively; and (2) that all other modifiers of a predication must be chosen and placed so that they do not obscure or destroy its sense. Here are some illustrations of the five basic ways these two grammatical rules are violated:

1. Talking to Alexander, Helen’s heart began to beat hard. [The participial phrase “talking to Alexander,” is misplaced, for it seems to modify “heart.” But the heart is not doing the talking; Helen is. Revision: “Talking to Alexander, Helen felt her heart begin to beat hard.”]

2. Although the setting of the novel occurred in Troy, the chief characters were Greek. [The predication of the subordinate modifying clause makes no sense. The “setting” of a novel cannot “occur.” The setting is or is not a place and time. Revision: “Although the setting of the novel was ancient Troy....”]

3. At the age of four, my father taught me grammar. [The modifying prepositional phrase “at the age of four” is misplaced, for it seems to modify
“father,” thereby making nonsense of the entire statement. Revision: “My father taught me grammar when I was four.”

4. Our expectation had little hope of being met. [An expectation cannot have hope. People have hope. Revision: “We had little hope that our expectation would be met.”]

5. Smiling often placates an adversary. [The adverb “often” is misplaced, thereby obscuring the sense of the sentence. Revision: “Smiling will often placate an adversary.”]

These are illustrations only. It is true that practice makes perfect, and a writer may practice either by the old-fashioned means of diagramming sentences or, in conjunction with some grammar-check program, by taking sentences apart mentally in order to see and to clarify in revision what the relations among words, phrases, and clauses are. Doing either, of course, implies that the writer can identify the parts of speech—noun, pronoun, verb and verbal, adverb, adjective, article, preposition, and conjunction—and all the matters of form and function that attend them. This book is not the place to teach grammar. It is about rhetoric. Nevertheless, clarity of style, usually achieved by the emendation of sentences, depends upon the mental virtue of grammatical analysis.

The English word “economy” has two Greek roots that together mean household management. Economical writers, like household managers, must consider the right balance between available resources and desired expenditure. If they spend more than they have or can get, they self-indulgently waste the household goods required to maintain life, including their own. Here are some examples of wordiness, the tendency to self-indulgent expenditure from one’s word-hoard in writing.

1. The big questions concerning how morally to run the course of one’s life cannot be with complete adequacy understood apart from sustained and careful consideration being given to what it is that people like to admire, these things being the things people
really and truly want.

[This sentence is grammatically correct, but verbally wasteful. It not only suggests the writer’s recklessness but also his unfriendliness to the reader. Suggested revision: “How to live morally is a vital question that demands a scrutiny of what people admire and desire.” In this revision, 46 words have been reduced to 18, an example of good husbandry of resources used in the basic predication and modification of the sentence.]

2. It is a truth that what people end up desiring and all the things they end up admiring are precisely and undoubtedly the very things that form the focal point of the matrix of personal quotidian-decision making on their part.

[This sentence, like the one above, is grammatically correct but shamelessly extravagant. Suggested revision: “Admiration and desire truly govern how people think and act daily.” In this revision 11 words do the work of 41.]

To paraphrase Shakespeare, the expense of a spirit in a waste of words is wordiness in action (Sonnet 129). To eliminate wordiness, a writer must always focus and then refocus on what he means and then write it and rewrite it in, remember, not just the fewest possible words, but the fewest words the writer thinks the reader needs.

Purity

When the Romans spoke of purity of style, they had in mind not crusty resistance to the natural vitality of speech and writing, but aversion from indiscriminate meaning. The term “usage” refers to the ways people speak and write, which are at times very creative but which, much of the time, block persuasive communication. To manifest thought to another requires writers to have good knowledge of the meaning of words and their uses, alone or in phrases and clauses. That will give writers what they need to discriminate between what is persuasive and, to use of the words of the ancient grammarians, usage that is barbarous or solecistic. A barbarism is either the verbal
destruction or blunting of semantic precision, thus supplanting subtlety with vulgarity or cliché; or it is a violation of the conventions of correctness in spelling or pronunciation. A solecism is a violation of syntax, the conventional and often idiomatic ways words are put together to make meaning.

Discrimination is another philological virtue of the rhetorical art. Perhaps an analogy may make it more understandable. Words grow and develop according to their natures and their places. Left to themselves, some of them may get along, but others may die out or become a wild tangle of greenery, strangling out many or most of the delicate varieties, but producing at times many new and exotic ones. The art of the gardener may here interpose itself in the processes of nature by learning the nature of plants and how they grow and flourish so as to bring to nature a reasoned purpose that it could not achieve by itself but that remains in accord with nature. Nature can make an exotic jungle or a field full of wildflowers, but only a human being, by the interposition of art, can make a garden. But the interposition of art must be discriminating, ecologically sound. On the one hand, it must knowingly respect the natural order of operations and, on the other, without destroying or corrupting that order, bring it to a perfection it would not otherwise have. Thus, verbal discrimination, the judgment guiding usage in a discourse, will depend upon grammatical knowledge of words and phrases.

More important still is the fact that the virtue of verbal discrimination is philosophic in spirit, as the whole rhetorical art should be. Words are signs of the varied experiences of things in the thoughts and imaginations of writers and readers, and this internal experience may or may not represent well the specific actuality of things. To discriminate well among words is to discriminate well among real things, whether mental, material, or immaterial things. Confusion in words is confusion of thought and actuality. For example, to show others that they are wrong is not to indicate that they are inadequate. Being wrong and being inadequate are things too often experienced
confusedly, but they are really different and should be kept apart.

There are many kinds of barbarisms and solecisms, and they can be described in many ways. In general, a “pure” or “good” choice of words enhances, even in very small ways, the persuasiveness of a discourse. (Of course, persuasiveness cannot be separated from the use of words to manifest, according to the philosophic spirit, the rhetorical art, what is true and good within any disputed matter.) In particular, discrimination requires awareness of the following:

1. Contemporary usage in the light of the etymology and semantic history of words;
2. the semantic force of prefixes and suffixes on the meaning of roots and stems;
3. the evaluative connotations of what words denote;
4. the sometimes subtle differences among words roughly synonymous;
5. the greater importance of noun and verbs to adjectives and adverbs, for nouns and verbs the key grammatical part of speech in a sentence;
6. the semantic, especially logical, force of prepositions, conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, prepositional phrases, and the idiomatic ways they are used to conjoin other words in a sentence;
7. and, finally, the euphonic attractiveness and rhythm of words when combined in a sentence.

Such matters may seem to have little overt logical importance. Nevertheless, with regard to what enhances receptivity covertly, even in the silence of reading, they have great importance in the verbal psychology of reasoning; for reasoning, when formally perceived as a verbal text, is indeed a kind of rhythmic sequence within and among sentences.

For purity in senses 1-3, there is no better school of discrimination than studying the composition of words, the meanings of their prefixes, roots, and suffixes, especially of words that derive from Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon. There are many such guides
available, but none go far enough. The reason is that none provide, along with etymologies, discriminative glosses upon the cultural and intellectual importance of root-meanings. By showing only what was once conceived by those of other cultures in the root meanings of English words, such glosses would provide those who do not know the classical languages a very short but highly instructive course in Western thought and culture. To omit, furthermore, some mention of the Bible in connection with purity would be negligence. (I am thinking of the Christian Bible, which, of course, includes the Jewish Tanakh, written in Hebrew, and other works written in ancient Greek.) A writer should become acquainted with a modern dictionary of the Bible because many English words we use to express religious concepts have startlingly different meanings in the original biblical languages. For example, what the ancient Hebrews meant by “word” (dahvar) is very different from what we mean by “word” (from Anglo-Saxon word). It means both word and thing and event at the same time. It is thus different from what the ancient Greeks meant by logos, namely word and reason and measure, and what the Romans meant by verbum, which denotes the word as a perceptible sound. Learning the many different concepts English “word” can signify, thereby deepening and extending one’s verbal discrimination, is indispensable for a contemporary writer who would do more in dealing with words than “look it up.”

Good dictionaries will, of course, supply etymologies as well as a list of meanings (semantic range), though they do not give a semantic history of word usage from Anglo-Saxon times (the Old English period) to the present. Invaluable, then, is the greatest historical dictionary of any modern language, the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language (the OED for short). For most practical purposes, however, The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language is very good. It provides good etymologies, including inferred Indo-European roots, and thoughtful remarks on usage.

In this and other fine dictionaries, notations about “synonyms” (see #4 above) are a
noteworthy verbal resource. Synonymous words share a common meaning. Yet, when considered individually, each has a distinctive meaning that should be preserved—should, that is, because a distinctive meaning indicates a distinctive feature of something real. For example, under the word “admonish,” one will find this note on synonyms in the AHDEL: “admonish, reprove, rebuke, reprimand, reproach. These verbs refer to adverse criticism intended as a corrective. Admonish stresses the act of advising or warning so that a fault may be rectified or a danger avoided. Reprove usually implies gentle criticism and constructive intent. Rebuke refers to sharp, usually angry, criticism, as does reprimand, which often also implies an official or otherwise formal act. Reproach usually refers to sharp criticism made regretfully or unhappily out of a sense of disappointment” (First College Edition). Carefully reading all the notes on synonyms in this dictionary— not all that hard to do, in fact— will quickly sharpen a writer’s ability to discriminate among words.

Particularly useful for purity in senses 3, 5, 6, and 7 (see above) is an old stand-by, Fowler’s Modern English Usage. But even better, because it is a sort of training manual to increase verbal discrimination, is Jacques Barzun’s Simple and Direct: Rhetoric for Writers. Its subtitle is misleading; it is hardly a full account of rhetoric in the ancient sense. Yet it contains many exercises that develop not only “purity” in the senses mentioned, but also that economy of expression needed to make a discourse clear (see above). Another is John Simon’s witty Paradigms Lost.

However, a good vocabulary will not supply the discriminating judgment needed to determine what best befits a particular discourse, with its particular subject, thesis, arguments, and so on. Only the whole set of inventive, organizational, and stylistic arts will be able to provide writers with particular guidance. Not to be overlooked either is the contribution of practice. Any virtue, moral or intellectual (as is the art of rhetoric), requires practice.
Ornatus: Master Figures and Tropes of Imagination

Latin rhetoricians used the noun and adjective *ornatus* to denote what makes a discourse attractively imaginative. The Latin word translates the Greek word *kosmos*, which, as has been pointed out several times in Part I, combines the meanings of ornament and of order, where ornament implies attractive imaginability and where order implies arrangement. To the ancients, the earth, all in and on it, including humanity, and the star-filled heavens above, appeared to be interconnected parts of a beautiful whole, and so they called it a *kosmos*. English “cosmos” merely transliterates the Greek. The opposite of *kosmos* is chaos, ugly disorder. Under the heading *ornatus*, the Latins listed the so-called figures and tropes of discourse. Among them were certain figures of sound (sometimes called schemes), figures of thought or syntax, and tropes of meaning, such as simile and metaphor. A full exposition of the ancient figures and tropes would lengthen this book inordinately and, more to the point, needlessly. Nor need we here repeat the Cicero’s wide-ranging defense of style in oratory.

There is an alternative, seldom followed: to examine only the most fundamental and important among them *in order to understand the workings of imaginative mind*. But to do that, we must first recall a few things already said and explain some others not yet mentioned. Understood as beauteous order or arrangement, *ornatus* connotes an important rhetorical principle: readers better understand the things said to them if the language used comes to them in patterns they can perceive, imagine, or rationally and narratively follow. Suasive power, for good or ill, inheres in these patterns. Rhetorical discourse should, then, as it can, communicate by such patterns. This principle, however, is only the obvious complement to another and more profound one, which in fact ought to govern the first: things in actuality communicate in such patterns. Style, then, is a sense of actuality. Reality, conversely, communicates in many styles as patterns of perception,
apperception, conception, imagination, and sequences of time and cause.

The ancients, it has been emphasized, understood deceit—including verbal fraud. They understood that style could be a mere dress of thought, making the worse appear better, the harmful appear desirable, a insinuating and deceptive cosmetic preparation, like the arts of a seductress or gigolo. Still they had confidence in the speakability of the world surrounding them. The world was speakable because first it was communicating. The world, not just human beings, had indeed a verbal capacity, a logos. The world was in great part, if not wholly, “logical,” in the plenary sense of the Greek word, not just in the restricted ratiocinative sense of the word. To experience the world was, then, a personally communicative encounter, and it involved not just rational conceptions but also much subliminal, tacit, memorative, and imaginable communing and self-identification with particularities that escape formal inference and involve passion and will. Such communicative encounter is decidedly not a head-buttng of human subjectivity with a non-communicative or, as we say, an objective order of matter governed only by mathematical laws of quantity. In short, things were words of a sort. They could, although voicelessly, actually speak about themselves or about other things and be “heard” by the human psyche or soul. Their discourse, variously rational as well as imaginative, could be re-spoken and voiced by human beings. The communication of things could be re-spoken, but only on the condition that human psyches were properly disposed to hear and understand the words of things, the language being spoken by them. And things often spoke in a language of figures and tropes. Figures and tropes are, then, not merely what we do when we play with words, quite apart from their referentiality to things. The human psyche’s primary experiential communing with the being of things, a communing sensorial and intellective at once, registers then in both the imaginative and the rational receptiveness of psyche according to particularities of person and culture. And that is the reason why
we must study figures and tropes. To re-speak the communication of the world means to use the human mind fully, responding to all being communicated, and that includes imagining, with the cooperation and service of our rational and intellectually intuitive powers, the stories (myths) that things are communicating.

Again we must revert to the importance of the imagination among the arts of mind in psychagogic expression, a matter usually derogated in the ancient world of rhetorical thinking. (And for the good reason that imagination, should it tend to break away from its primary interplay with intellectuality in the human psyche, is often a major source of strife and delusion.) In addition, affected by the anti-rhetorical biases of contemporary culture, we are not used to the idea of thinking, too often mistakenly restricted by us to the mathematical logic of experimental physical sciences, as involving imagining, with reason and insight not guiding but serving imagination. However, this kind of mental imaginativeness, when fully expressed in words, is, in fact, poetry at its best—poetry that discovers the real by voicing or writing it. Poetry, we have come to believe, is self-expression, not our expression of the world. That, we think, does not really express anything at all, since it is an impersonal world of objective things. Thus, we have forgotten the way human imagination in poetry proves itself as true, not simply as reason does, when exercised in various ways according to the laws of reasoning, but as imagination does, when exercised with, but not in, the service of mind, according to an imaginative and intuitive sense of actuality.

The phrase “imaginative proof” almost sounds nonsensical. In psychagogic discourse, proof is usually taken to be a matter of argument by ratiocination. Imagination may complement ratiocination, but it cannot be probative. So goes the usual opinion. But complementing ratiocination is only one of the roles of imagination in responsible psychagogy. The probative ways of imagination have their own logic, so to speak, involving the deepest communications of things with human psyche.
according to prior experience, memory, and general learning. In the probative processes of imagination, the patterns of experience called tragedy and comedy are of prime importance. (Here tragedy and comedy do not refer to genres of literature but patterns of experience involving sensorial and intuitive understanding.) They touch on the prime truths of human existence, potentially available to anyone, sooner or later in life, in the light of which all else comes to be judged and organized. In this book I have called them the common topics of rhetorical invention.

Failure to realize the roles and the tragicomic “logic” of imagination in verbal psychagogy is one of our greatest faults in rhetorical thinking. For, as Cicero, remarked, the orator is the near kinsman of the poet. Plato the rhetor was, almost everyone senses, something of a poet. Like poets, rhetorical writers employ rational imaginativeness. Call it poetic creativity, if you will; however, unlike poets, they can and do ally it to abstract modes of argumentative reasoning, not to poiesis, the making of poems, in some genre or another.

Better to call it the rhetorical thinking that should inform rhetorical expression. If I may repeat here a tenet that forms the core of this book, the therapy of the psyche or soul, the great aim of ancient philosophers, implied what is usually not understood by a great deal of modern historical scholarship: such an aim meant that rhetorical discourse, the verbal discourse (oral and written), aiming at psychagogy (which, again, means guidance of the psyche), is integral to philosophy itself. The critique of rhetoric by ancient philosophers was meant to turn one away from the irresponsible forms that did not care for the truth of psyche and cosmos or that simply pandered to the empty conventions that governed the psyches of most people and lead psyche disturbance of many kinds. Truth is where psyche should be led.

The figures and tropes should be understood, therefore, as pertaining to both words and things in communication at the levels of intuition, rationality, and imagination.
They are indeed patterns of words, of verbal expression. Writers can and do play with these patterns as they write and revise; they often find the patterned words productive of new ways of imagining and thinking. Sometimes the patterns will lead nowhere, but the important point is that they often lead somewhere, somewhere we do not ordinarily situate our receptivity, so enabling us to experience a new hearing of things said or, in a different metaphor, a new insight into things. Thus, the patterns become revelatory, heuristic. And it is not difficult to understand why. Psychologically considered, the figures and tropes are different “postures” of perception, conception, imagination, and memory, including much personal experience that remains present but subliminal and tacit. But as postures of mind, they have no content; they are like empty pots whose shape the water or sand poured into them necessarily takes. But the new shapes of the contents, once seen, may well be revelatory of new aspects of things, simply overlooked before. The readiness—of the figures and tropes—is all.

In fact, readiness suggests that the figures and tropes are psychic channels of receptivity. Once tuned to the communications from things, they may enable us to receive and to discover the figurative and mythic narrative logos of the world. They may enable us to experience it anew, thus altering the ways we ordinarily think, since personal habits as well as familial, social, and cultural customs tend to confine our minds to routine and familiar ways of response. A famous saying has it that verbal art de-familiarizes. It makes the commonplace strange and so gets the readers’ attention. It makes all things new.

Some of the figures (those primarily dealing with the sound of words in combination) pattern sense perception, as meter and rhyme do in poetry, thus giving to our minds a rhythm-based aural expectation that can surprise us by what things are thereby associated as well as both create and maintain coherence and thereby our comprehension. Others, the figures of thought, give ideas or concepts a syntactic pattern within sentences as well as among them, with many possible rational and imaginative
effects. However, others, the tropes (from a Greek word meaning a turn) are not figures (from a Latin word meaning form or shape). They are twists or turns of meaning; and some of them challenge or violate familiar thinking and imagining in ways that are needed to intuit the imaginative stories and rational discourse that the things of the world in human experience are uttering voicelessly. Figures and tropes help writers attune the mind to the full suggestiveness of the (perhaps inspired) thesis and argument both for themselves and for their readers.

Many of the ancient figures and tropes have been listed and described in schoolbooks. But never are they presented in their proper context. All of them will not be discussed here, nor is there any need to discuss them all. The ones discussed below are, I believe, the indispensable and fundamental ones; for, as mentioned, they expose the basic workings of imaginative mind in its responses to things. They are as important to the human mind as the laws of reasoning are. They disclose the primary sensitive and intellective (intuitional) responses of psyche to the informing communicative being of things.

Fundamental Figures of Sound and Thought

The fundamental figures of sound and thought (or syntax): patterns of the sounds of words or of the concepts signified by the words as syntactically expressed in the phrases and clauses of a sentence. Such figures may extend beyond a single sentence, patterning thereby groups of sentences, even paragraphs or larger units of discourse. Meter and rhyme in poetry do the same sort of patterning, only more thoroughly:

1. *Alliteration*: the repetition of consonant sounds, usually initial ones, but medial and final ones also.


Note that words are composed of vowels and consonants. Thus, alliteration and assonance
are the two basic ways of patterning the sounds of words. Meter, in English, is a pattern of accented and un accented syllables in a unit called a verse or line. Rhyme is a pattern of sounds at the ends of verses. Both are modes of poetical, not rhetorical discourse. Nevertheless, even in written rhetorical discourse, there may be an attempt to write sentences that have certain patterns of accentuation that produce a rhythm perceptible to a reader.

3. *Onomatopoeia*: sound that suggests the sense of words.

4. *Inversion or anastrophe*: some change of normal order of syntax—subject, verb, object, or complement.

5. *Parallelism*: similar syntactic forms used to coordinate ideas.

6. *Climax*: pattern of several ideas by time or importance.

7. *Anaphora*: repetition of initial words or phrases in different clauses.

8. *Antithesis*: a pattern of contrasting ideas or statements syntactically linked by adversative conjunctions.

9. *Chiasmus*: pattern of ideas reversed in successive clauses or phrases: X Y, Y X.

The examples below contain one or more of the figures of sound and thought (syntax):

A. Downward rumbled the rock. [See above: 1, 3, 4]

B. The hiss of serpents is scary. [1, 3]

C. I came, I saw, I conquered. [2, 5, 6, 7]

D. Very deliberate whenever proposing policies in peacetime, he was, surprisingly, whenever planning some strategy in war, very rash. [4, 5, 8, 9]

E. Just a pattern of perception—that’s all a figure really is. [1, 4]

F. “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of
righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16. 7-11, King James Version: Christ is speaking to his disciples) [5, 6, 7].

**Tropes**

*Tropes* are patterns of mind and the being of things that twist or contort our “normal” (logical or customary) way of expression and sense of realism. But, of course, what’s “normal” and “realistic” to us may well contain a great deal that is misleading, partial, idiosyncratic, or ideological. Tropes challenge or violate the customary, the seemingly logical, the seemingly realistic, or the usually acceptable in order to express some new and often truer way of thinking. For all of us have had the experience of realizing that we were mistaken, of seeing things anew from different points of view, of changing our attitudes to something or someone. Tropes, like such experiences, lead to revelations, surprises, epiphanies, showing us things never before realized and, perhaps, leading to changes in our thinking and behaving. Responsible persuasion involves such changes. Tropes, by themselves or in connection with other tropes, may suggest a new way of accounting for things and imply a new sense of self and world or of pertinent past, present, and possible future. In short, tropes change our thinking by making us perceive, imagine, conceive, and narrate differently the way things actually are. The tropes in this way bring rhetoric close to the poetically imaginable *kosmos* whose broad outline the fundamental tropes generate. The poetic *kosmos* of imagination is the proper context for understanding how rhetorical imagination works with both words and things in tropes.

**Hyperbole and Personification**

Hyperbole and personification are the two most important—and the two most
easily dismissible—of the tropes. They seem easily dismissible because they are closest to the primal communing of psyche with the being of things and thus are farthest from the strictly abstractive rational communing that variously occurs in the arts and sciences. But they generate the outer limits of the poetic cosmos, its “upper heaven,” the place of the gods and heroes, and its “earthly paradise,” where man and nature communicate and commune easily and, at the lower and opposite limit, the “hell” of evildoers and the “waste land” of corruption, where man and nature do not commune but repel. All the other fundamental tropes generate the imaginable realm or realms between them. We may call this intermediate poetical region middangeard or middle-earth, as the Anglo-Saxons did. It is the human world of mixed experience, partaking of heaven and hell, sometimes alternately, sometimes simultaneously.

Hyperbole (from the Greek, meaning a “throwing over”) is a trope of imaginative magnification beyond the logically accurate or ordinary scope of experience. It is usually described as an exaggeration that, since it is induced by strong emotion, is rationally worthless. But the very life of imagination is exaggeration induced by strong desire (eros) evoked by experience. Thus, what is essential in hyperbole is dynamic magnification of the being of people and world we experience beyond whatever normally restricts them. Hyperbole perfects or degrades someone or something to the fullest imaginable extent. It can create beings without ordinary flaws, gods or godlike beings, or worlds of complete joy and fulfillment that are not restricted by our sense of realism (an otherworldly heaven beyond space and time or a terrestrial world of endless pleasures and beauties). Or it can create the opposite, the most evil of beings and worlds of utter wretchedness and corruption (hell or wasteland). In other words, hyperbole imaginatively moves from the experienced world into the realms of the better and best or the worse and worst. Hyperbole is the basis of apocalyptic imaginings and intuitions from whatever seems tending toward but is not yet fully apocalyptic. In fact, hyperbole is the mode of
imaginative mind that sketches out the far reaches of the imaginable *kosmos*. All that may be imagined lies within or between its “heaven” and “hell.” It is the mode of imaginative mind that lies behind science fiction as well as behind apocalyptic literature. In the heaven of the hyperbolic *kosmos*, nature will display no impersonality, no violence of bloody tooth and claw in a food chain, and no inevitable corruption or entropy of all. In it, human beings will abide in a permanently exciting and fresh communion with superior beings like the gods or angels or God and with all the other so-called inferior creatures. Of course, in the hyperbolic “hell,” the opposite conditions will exist.

Example: “This book is worth more than all the diamonds in the world.”

Example: “We don’t need bait to fish in this lake; the fish, glad to be of service and full of play, will jump right into the boat and make us forget about fishing and regret the baiting.”

In the first example, a very simple one, we can easily perceive the magnification that occurs in hyperbole. What we call exaggeration in ordinary speech is hyperbole that expresses intensity of feeling about something or someone. But when that intensity is given wider and more intellective scope by the intimations of the “best” and the “worst” in our experience, then hyperbole begins to sketch out the imaginative beings and worlds encountered in the various genres of literature.

*Prosopopoeia* (from a Greek word meaning, the “making of a mask”) is also called personification. In this trope a writer imaginatively attributes to a logical or abstract conception or to a non-human thing the qualities or actions of human beings.

Example: “When we parted, the sun hid itself in clouds, and the rain fell compassionately, washing away my tears.”

This is a trope not very much in favor today, since it imagines the so-called world of objective, non-human things as capable of feeling or intelligent response to individual experience. To us, personification may well be the most alien of the tropes because it
endows the external world of so-called objects with personality. Very much like metaphor, which will be discussed below, personification disposes the imagination and intuitional powers of psyche in writer or reader to perceive a personal quality in the world’s "logical" or communicative capacity. The great Jewish thinker Martin Buber once wrote a book in German called Ich und Du (I and You). It is a meditation on the attitude that approaches everything, not just everyone, as a You with whom I am in a relationship and not merely as an It to which I have no personal relation. We often say that we should not treat other people as things because we find in this attitude something that leads to exploitation of others, which we think is wrong. This is a common opinion that carries with it something of the actuality of life. Still, we do not say that we should treat things as people. Yet this is just the attitude, according to Buber, that makes us blind to what they can reveal to us or deaf to what they can say to us. Again, the important point here is that prosopopoeia is not just a trick of talk but a mode of perception attuned to the communication of actuality. The distinctive feature of that communication is that human psyche intuits by it that in an almost inexplicable way the world is at some mysterious depth personal, not indifferently impersonal, despite all the evidence to the contrary. Of course, poets have always talked as if things were talking to us in one way or another, even after the mythological mask of some god or goddess, who has been united metaphorically with the things, has been stripped away or demythologized.

By these two tropes the ordinary things and beings of ordinary experience, magnified by desire or aversion, suggest other beings and other worlds. The suggestions of heavens and hells, gods and monsters, are perceived as spoken to the imaginative mind within the things and people of ordinary experience. Many examples of the tropes we will discuss will be taken from the Christian Bible, but not for any sectarian reason. The fact is that, quite apart from religious adherence and dogma, it is the greatest treasury of imaginative thinking I know and enables me to sketch out the poetic cosmos in its fullness.
and seriousness much more easily than does Greco-Roman mythology.

**Oxymoron, Paradox, and Irony**

The next three tropes, oxymoron, paradox, and irony, generate the poetic realm of middle-earth. Perhaps one could also say that as kind of purgatory lies here in middle-earth, one that is the vestibule, say, for what Dante imagined in his *Purgatorio*. (I should add here that Dante’s *Commedia*, which divides the realm of psyche after death into three realms, Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso, is a major influence in the way the tropes work.) These three tropes of middle-earth are similar to one another; all violate directly and overtly, though in different ways, customary thinking and imagining that obscure or distort the communication of experienced actuality as radically mixed or ambiguous but nevertheless as highly enlightening of the delusive capacities of people and things and words.

*Oxymoron* (from the Greek, meaning a “sharp foolishness,” a phrase that is itself an oxymoron) unites in a phrase two percepts or concepts that are contraries, like fiery ice (percepts) or vengeful mercy (concepts). This trope is related, as we will see, to metaphor in that it challenges the complete sufficiency of logical distinction in verbally translating the actuality of the “middle” world of experienced being in everything and everyone. Oxymoron suggests that what is distinct in thought (in definition) may not be distinct in actuality. Actual life is oxymoronic, full of base nobility, or noble baseness, of selfish altruism, or altruistic selfishness, of harmful innocence, or innocent harmfulness, of powerful weakness, or weak powerfulness, of living death, or dying life, of drunken sobriety, or sober drunkenness, of treacherous fidelity or faithful treachery—the list of oxymora is virtually endless. The oxymoronic nature of so many things, people, and talk in human experience makes us feel that life is basically ambiguous, and we often cannot make up our minds about the truth of any single experience, let alone the whole truth of
human mortal life. Yet we are sobered by oxymora, disabused, undeluded, to a degree enlightened. John Keats, the nineteenth-century English poet, called the urn of his famous “Ode on a Grecian Urn” a “Cold pastoral” though on it was depicted a scene of a lover chasing a girl chase though the country in summer. Keats claimed that the poetic mind was characterized by what he called “negative capability,” the ability to remain among contraries without irritably trying to resolve them one way or the other.

The mental posture of receptivity called oxymoron is unquestionably at the core of all literature as well as of the imaginative activity in the rhetorical art of style because so much of life is oxymoronic.

Example: “Love is a heavenly hell.”

Note that the statement expresses a turn of imaginative mind that unites oxymoron with hyperbolic metaphors. Heaven and hell are “places” that ordinarily are thought not to exist in this world. They are hyperbolic imaginative opposites, for one is a place of all joy and the other a place of all misery. The changes brought on by time, for good or ill, are not found in them. They are eternal places (see hyperbole above.) In thought and imagination we can create no universe beyond one delimited by heaven and hell and what’s in between. Although our actual life occurs in the earthly temporal place between these imaginative eternal places, we can nevertheless envision them. We can imagine as unmixed the things we experience in life only as mixed. There is, in other words, evidence of heaven and hell in experience, but in actuality it very difficult at times for us to judge whether we are experiencing one or the other in this world. Both the story of actual love and our poetic love stories represent us as wandering between heaven and hell while experiencing something of both, often simultaneously.

Example: “I came to a place where the sun is silent.”

This oxymoron, which is a quotation from Dante’s *Inferno* (1.60), unites two ordinarily distinguished percepts, one of sight, the other of sound. However, the
oxymoronic combination inclines us wonder about a “place” where the sun is not silent. What could such a place be, if it is a place at all? And how would the sun speak? (See prosopopoeia or personification above.) We ordinarily experience a world in which the sun is silent—or seems to be. But perhaps it is we who are deaf and blind to the “speaking light” of the sun, as the whole of the Divine Comedy seems to suggest. And what we are deaf and blind to—what the speaking light of the sun reveals to us in the poem—is the ordinarily unperceived relation of this life to the unmixed imaginative realms of hell, purgatory, and paradise. Of course, the psychagogic plausibility of this unperceived relation depends upon how well the total, suasive rhetoric of the poem warrants itself by the indications of the unmixed (hyperbolic) possibilities of hell, purgatory, and heaven that are already given in the mixed (oxymoronic) actualities of our lives. Paradox (from the Greek, meaning “beyond opinion” or customary judgment) is, in fact, an extension of oxymoron from contrary concepts and percepts to the realm of common opinions that compose the social, political, and cultural matrix of life. Paradox is a challenging imaginative violation of commonly held opinions, its imaginative force leading us to consider new and different possibilities and actualities. Thus, this trope always implies a myth of liberation or of therapy in which we come to see these opinions (called doxai in ancient Greek) as forming around us a cave of illusory shadows, mere projections of willfulness or of self-interested groups which would deny the paradoxes of actual life. Psychotherapy (which means care of the soul) or philosophy (which means love of wisdom) are both paradoxical enterprises since both try to go beyond the illusions and delusions of common opinion that tend to define our identities and affect our thinking. This is not to say that common opinion is always misleading or unhealthy.

The implicitly imaginable story of paradox means that we may as well be living an illusion if we do not have a mind that can go beyond common opinions, for unless we do,
we cannot tell illusion and delusion from actuality even if the opinions translate the actualities of life.

Example: “Only the wise man has the wealth to be self-sufficient and happy.”

The thought expressed in this statement challenges the common opinion that being rich means having the money to protect oneself against any and all adverse circumstances and to satisfy any and all personal desires, which is what happiness is usually taken to mean. The notion that being wise, whatever that may mean, provides the security and satisfactions associated with happiness surely conflicts with what ordinary experience teaches and throws its apparent teaching into question. But ordinary experience may well contain much that is delusive, the unrecognized ill effects of some particular cultural and political cave. Whatever the alternative teachings implied in the high-sounding word, wisdom begins, as the ancients say, in wondering—wondering in this case whether what makes us truly happy, surely a question that interests everyone, is some unthinking assimilation of whatever opinions surround us. But we would never wonderingly question those opinions unless our experience challenged them. The experiential challenge is tragedy, and it is the hard way to learn. The easier, if less gripping way, is by paradoxical words.

The imaginative and intellectual possibilities opened by paradox may lead to a comprehensive rational or imaginative critique of all that people ordinarily think makes them happy. The report of the experienced actual world may well be calling for such a critique.

Example: “Good fortune is bad for you, but bad fortune is good.”

This paradox violates the commonly accepted opinion that experiencing misfortune is bad. The imaginative force of the paradox suggests an actuality in which “misfortune” is good. How is that possible? Is real life so? Paradoxes are invitations to think otherwise than we ordinarily do. Tragedy in literature is a mode of paradox because the tragic story
carries us through the experiences of one who is living according to customary opinion in some respect. However, actuality leads the protagonist to a catastrophe. The story is designed to make us recognize what the protagonist did not, because of some error, which may or may not be a moral fault, about the way things really are. Sometimes the protagonist gets a glimpse of what lies beyond common opinion, even though it is too late to do anything about reversing the ill effects of the catastrophe. (The opposite process is called comedy.) Accidents causing injury or suffering or even death are all occasions for paradox, and we often loosely speak of them as tragedies because they, like paradoxes, induce a thoughtfulness that may well lead beyond conventional opinion to true wisdom.

_Irony_ (from the Greek, meaning a dissembling in speech that hides what is really thought) does not belong to the hyperbolic regions of imagination but to the middle-earth between them, the vast region that oxymoron and paradox generate, but especially paradox where dull conventional opinion holds sway over the mind’s full and free communication with things in all their actuality. Irony is often defined as a trope stating one thing but meaning another, which is fine so far as the definition goes. But it does not go far enough. Experience shows that things often are hastily judged to be one thing but in time turn out to be another, either for good or ill, a reversal that induces a certain skeptical, wait-and-see attitude. Irony is the imaginative adoption of so-called conventional wisdom in order to expose in it the hints of irregularities, discrepancies, or opposites that are ordinarily precluded: for instance, the arrogance in the seemingly modest (or vice versa), the abnormal in the conventionally normal, the lustful in seemingly chaste, the exclusive in the seemingly inclusive, and so on. Plato’s persona, Socrates, is a good example of a philosophic ironist, as is the contemporary thinker Jacques Derrida. Irony is in many ways heuristic and purgative, but it carries with it a danger that it too can become a conventional wisdom by losing its responsiveness to the actuality of things within its own sense of the artificiality and conventionality of everything. Irony then turns into a sort of
nihilism of artifice. Study the following examples.

Example: “Quarreling, when one acquires skill at it, purges and quiets intense emotions, quickens perception, and aids understanding between people.” The conventional wisdom here adopted for ironic exploration is that quarreling is bad, that it is better that people get along. But in a sense, peacefully getting along obscures the real benefits of intense disagreement, which, if handled artfully (say, with all the arts of rhetoric) can and does indeed contribute to understanding between people.

Example: “In a rationally ordered state, the nurturing of children would be done by those most fit to do it, which, of course, excludes, almost by definition, most parents. Their motives for reproducing, usually an unintended consequence of strictly irrational appetites, have little to do with the long and tedious process of educating and caring for children, unless they are under some illusion that mere reproduction is beneficial.” The conventional wisdom ironically explored here is that it would be better if people acted rationally in matters of reproduction. The ironic suggestion is that such a rationally ordered state would be worse than any present one, however woefully inadequate.

Metaphor and Simile

Metaphor is one of the more important tropes of middle-earth. It is helpful to differentiate metaphor from simile, though the difference is metaphysical and so not easy to explain. It comes down to differentiating the way things exist (their actuality), which is the realm of metaphor, from the variable features and properties of the invariable structures or essences of things, which is the realm of simile. A metaphor indicates an identity in a way essentially different things actually exist. A simile indicates a likeness between the variable features of essentially different things.

These two tropes are, in fact, basic ways the human imagination receptively works in the middle-earth of psychic experience to allow the actuality and the voicelessly
communicative energy of the real to be translated in words.

Example: “In vengeful fury, the shining Achilles, who excelled other men in words and in war, was in battle a fierce fire in dry woods.” Achilles is a man, a warrior, a prince, but he is not and cannot be a fire—or so it seems. In awareness bounded only by logic, which always stresses the specific differences among things, or by a customary sense of realism, which always has its limitations, the metaphor is nonsensical. Rational logic, remember, is a way of distinguishing the essential or formal differences among things to avoid confusion in knowing what things are. A metaphor does not suppress rational logic. It does not obfuscate the real and formal differences among things. It is aimed, rather, to reveal what identity there is between the actualities of things in some manner of their very existence, which is also their communicative energy. Nevertheless, the initial logical discord in a metaphor does arrest our attention; and, furthermore, if the metaphor is not at once rejected because it is illogical but allowed to remain within our attention, it may prompt us to discover some actual union in what appears only formal difference. For the being of things is actively communicative and can be “carried across” (which is what metaphor means etymologically) from one being to another that is capable of receiving it.

If this is true, then ordinary experience should, at least sometimes, give us indication that things do become united with one another and with us. These experiences are sometimes called aesthetic or epiphanic moments—times when we feel in union with our surroundings and with others, as if all were in communication with us and with one another. The differences between self and others and external nature—the whole non-human animate and inanimate world—dissolve. People often do not need to talk to sense the communion between them as communicative. And when this happens, we get an inkling there is a strange actuality about ourselves and the world not seen before but really there and telling us something we “normally” do not listen to. Thus, the truthfulness of a metaphor, to bring this matter up again, will depend upon several
factors: the validation our aesthetic or epiphanic moments may, even if occasionally, give it, the story the metaphor implies, and the discourse to which the metaphor belongs.

But let us return to the example to consider these matters further. Is there not an actual (existential) becoming one of the man Achilles and fire—a way of existing that destroys almost all that is touched? Does not Achilles, when the union is so imagined, suddenly become understandable in a new way? But more important still, does not the metaphor subtly show both what is true about Achilles and, at the same time, evaluate him, by showing Achilles to be an inhuman and unfeeling fire that destroys all it touches? But there is more to the suggestiveness of the metaphor. It is the germ of a potential story, a mytheme, where the word myth means a revealing, not false, story or tale. In fact, it is plausible to think that it suggests the key thematic issues of Homer’s Iliad: Just what kind of being is this Achilles who so singularly shines out among other men as a warrior? Does he so excel others that he is, as it were, one of a kind, perhaps even a god, or some combination of god and man? Or, in his ruthless killing of men with whom he is angry, is he something less than a man, a destructive elemental force, a fire fearsome, awesome, pitiless, and undiscriminating? Or is he identifiable with other men, despite his shining excellence and fierce fury? If so, has his vengeful rage gone too far? Has it gone beyond the bounds of humane compassion and justice? Within the narrative possibilities opened by the trope lies, potentially, a myth or story containing dramatic issues, which, in turn, are, potentially, productive of new reasoning and new insight about the way human beings are. The trope then becomes part of a larger context of possible narrative words in which Achilles is evaluated.

Study the following metaphors, attentive to the stories imaginable within the scope of their implications. There may be several possible stories implied. The more we do this, the more we creatively exercise the imagination in the way poets do. Note too that the metaphor can be grammatically expressed in a sentence or only implied in a phrase or a
word (noun, verb, adjective, or adverb):

Example: “The heart of the Trojan warrior Hector is a shield of bronze.” The metaphor is expressed in a sentence. The story suggested? Why so? How so? Good to be so? Bad? Dangerous?

Example: “Penned within the city walls and surrounded by their enemies, the terrified Trojans roared defiance.” The metaphor is implied in the words “penned” and “roared.” The story?

Simile (from the Latin simile meaning “a like thing”; much the same as analogy or comparison) does not roughly violate logic and a customary sense of realism, as metaphor does, because, in the form used to express a simile, certain words appear—“like,” “as,” “just as . . . so also.” These words signal that only a likeness among non-essential features, not an identity in mode of existence, is meant. Its specific dynamic as a posture of rational imaginativeness is not to violate reasonableness and realism. Rather, it serves to indicate a precise point of sameness among things otherwise essentially different. And it serves to twist ordinary or conventional ways things are compared. For it suggests that the full actuality of the subject of the simile, the primary thing in the comparison, whether for better or for worse, eludes adequate expression or representation; otherwise, there would be no need for the simile.

In short, simile attests to an insufficiency in the normal or ordinary awareness of something as conventionally expressed.

Example: “Just as a lily among thorns, so also is my beloved among women” (Canticles 2.2). In this example, the simile indicates a certain likeness, which rational logic finds tolerable, among things otherwise and normally considered unlike, a woman and a lily flower. But the simile does more than indicate a likeness. Like metaphor, simile twists and turns ordinary or normal meaning toward something new, distinctive, and conventionally unperceived. It suggests that the full distinctive reality of “the beloved”
goes beyond the normal awareness of people. The beloved is not just another woman. Her connection with womankind is slight. The lily flower and thorns are features of plants, yes; but they could not be more different as features. That difference is the likeness indicated. What is the evaluation implicit in it? Beauty, we sometimes say, is in the eye of the beholder, a superficial truth. But the speaker indicated in the word “my” is implying that other lovers are blind to and ignorant of the real beauty of his beloved. What possible narratives are suggested in the trope? Could not the story be an attempt to show that the speaker’s beloved is in fact far superior to any other woman, but how would a writer do that? Does not the force of feeling not make lovers prone to exalt those they love above all others? One may read the Song of Songs to see what the writer does to persuade a reader. Or one may contemplate how a poet like Dante praises his beloved Beatrice to establish her superiority to all other women. In such ways can literature reveal the workings and persuasions of imaginative mind.

Example: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed” (Matthew 13.31). In this example, the subject of comparison, the thing to be explained, is the kingdom of heaven, but it is itself an implied metaphor: heaven is a kingdom. And though the immense sky above where the great lights are and from which the rain falls may be normally understood by readers of the Bible to be the place where Yahweh the king abides and which he rules, the simile challenges that normal image. For it indicates something perhaps unperceived or forgotten but not normally imagined about the heavenly kingdom. The usually imaginable features of a kingdom, great in size, glorious and colorful in its trappings, and powerful in its army, suggest that it has little or nothing in common with a mustard seed, which is tiny, planted in the earth and so hidden, something living and slow-growing and needing nourishment. The unusual comparison suggests that the kingdom of heaven is difficult to express because it is an unusual thing, so unusual perhaps that its full reality is rather mysterious. Thus, the simile helps to reveal
the unusual reality of the heavenly kingdom in a way that is provocative and twists expectation but that still refers to something recognizable. The simile is far-fetched because the supposed reality of the kingdom is far removed from ordinary comprehension and normal expectation. Obviously, the less far-fetched the simile, the less the trope really works as a trope to challenge or twist ordinary thinking, but that defeats the whole purpose of tropes.

The next two tropes, in fact, both fall within the field of imaginable, conceptualizable forces opened up by metaphor and simile and, as it were, specialize in one or more of them. And these forces, it should not be overlooked, may well resound from the full “logical” capacities of the actuality of things in the world, not just from our own wild imaginations. The world may be the really wild thing, as our moments of epiphany indicate.

**Parable and Allegory**

The two next tropes, parable and allegory, illustrate well how metaphor and simile may be mythemes, little stories in germ, which—once allowed to expand narratively into an imagined past, present, and future—may well occasion new understanding of what experienced reality is actually communicating but usually not understood.

*Parable* (from a Greek word meaning “to throw one thing alongside another”) is a simile whose narrative suggestions are explicated into a little story. Parables throw one thing, its subject (that is, the thing primarily to be explained), alongside something else, some more familiar and better known process or action, that has some feature in common with the subject. The subject of parables is ordinarily some moral or religious process, but such a subject is not essential to the mental posture of parable as a trope nor to the actual or possible reality corresponding with it; for parables can, as we will see, turn easily into allegories.
Example: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seed; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matthew 13. 31-32). In this example, “the short story” or mytheme developed from the simile indicates that the kingdom, which is evidently at the present hardly noticeable since it is so tiny and hidden in the earth, is nevertheless real and growing imperceptibly, little by little. Its actual growth from the earth will eventually result in a huge tree where the creatures of the air will find shade and rest and lodging. Condensed here into a few sentences are a pertinent past, a present, and a future—a story of growth—that can easily be amplified by the imagination of the reader, which is why parables have such lasting appeal and broad significance.

The example here, like some of the earlier ones already discussed, is quite intentionally taken from the Bible to illustrate how imagination works to reveal the truths of things, not how reasoning does, against the background of some normal or usual readerly common sense. The Greco-Latin tradition of rhetoric puts great emphasis upon suasion by rational argument, more than the Bible does, which stresses imagination, narrative, legislation, and memory of events more than rational argument. And, for this reason, the question whether biblical rhetoric excludes reason or implicitly repositions it in a new and enhancing context has been a perennial one in the history of both Judaism and Christianity. Quite apart from the religious credence we may give the Bible, we should realize that the Bible is a rhetorical discourse that seeks to persuade readers of its truth primarily (not exclusively) by imaginative tropes. They refer to special past events, processes of the created world, and to human interaction governed mysteriously by God. For this reason, the Bible is a great treasury of imaginative language that suggests that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in anyone’s philosophy, period. But the truth of any trope depends upon the way it engages the minds and
experience of readers, and in the Gospel parable of the kingdom, the trope engages human experience with small or insignificant things that slowly become astonishingly great and impressive and only then become noticed. Moreover, the simile is part of a much larger verbal context, the whole Christian Bible, whose overall truth, as I mentioned, depends upon the ways, primarily imaginative, it rhetorically works to persuade its readers to have a new sense of the actuality of things. Here we are merely illustrating the nature and rhetorical dynamics of a single trope within the Bible.

*Allegory* (from a Greek word meaning “to speak otherwise in public”) is, like parable, a narrative trope related to simile. However, in allegory the subject of the simile is treated in ways different from the subject of a parable. In allegory, the subject of comparison is to some extent hidden, not expressed. It is either a set of related concepts or events or persons, and allegory of this sort is very much like a riddle (enigma) or imaginative code. Sometimes, the subject is altogether concealed, which then prompts the reader to determine by a kind of guesswork what the subject may be. In fact, the total concealment of the subject allows the narrative to have a wide range of possible subjects, making the allegory polysemous, capable of many meanings that plausibly fit the narrative. The reasons for writing allegorically are many, ranging from the simple pleasure of solving riddles to a writer’s desire to avoid hostile reaction. However, as in some similes, the subject of allegory may well be otherwise inexpressible or unimaginable. All allegorical discourse invites the reader to think more deeply.

Example: “It has no voice, but the hand is needed to disclose what it says to the eyes, and what it says is always the same. It cannot speak differently, though it may be understood differently, that is, more or less adequately. Its power is great, often reaching into the very hearts and minds of people, and it changes them dramatically and in this way may even affect the course of history. So it must be governed by arts, called rhetorical, which direct its power wisely and beneficially.” The allegory in this instance is
a covert, riddling one. The subject or riddle referred to is a book. If to this riddling allegory, another trope, called personification, is added, it could become an even more complex narrative. Personification will be discussed shortly. However, there is another example of personification allegory close at hand. It is the allegory of the fictional figures found in the Oresteia of Aeschylus, each god being identified with one of the components of persuasive discourse. This kind of allegory is legitimate to the extent that the details of the story do justifiably fit the interpretation made by the reader, who, in other words, supplies the subject of the narratively extended simile. Used in this way, allegory is also a mode of poetical expression.

But there is another sort of allegory that is not simply a riddling of abstract concepts or persons or events.

Example: “We were at last freed from slavery in an alien land, thanks to our extraordinary but mysterious leader; but we did not realize that our journey home would take so long or be so arduous. For years we wandered in what seemed a desert or a great sea. We had no recourse but to follow the directions given by our mysterious leader, who was the only one that seemed to know the way. We relied on him, but our trust in him waned as time went on, for he kept to himself as if he were thinking of things we could not comprehend. Despite some incredible events that saved us from our destruction and from starvation, we began to feel that slavery was better than this life of uncertainty, where hope was placed not in anything we could do for ourselves but in the leader, whom many of us grew to resent. Little did we realize how deeply this wandering would change us. We would gradually learn the leader’s new laws, which ran counter to our customs and habits, but many of us could not endure them. They died, all by their own recklessness. The rest of who endured this purgation became a new company, indeed a new people, and by doing so finally came to the end of our journey home. How we lived at home is another story.” In this example, like the first one, the subject of the allegory is
hidden, but it is not an enigma, which is always solvable by an identification of the encoded thing, event, person, place, whatever it may be. Instead, the narrative seems to have no particular subject and thus allows several things to be read into it by the reader. Indeed several other stories, like the Exodus in the Tanakh or Homer’s Odyssey can be read into it also. In this respect this allegory is also an allusion, another trope which will be discussed shortly. The germ of the allegory is the simile that human life or cultural change or some other transforming experience is like a mysteriously directed journey homeward from exile.

The whole rhetorical art as presented in this book is, in fact, founded on a parable and an allegory that were presented in Part I, the parable Cicero told and the (personification) allegory of Aeschylus’ Eumenides. The simile at the core of Cicero’s parable is that human beings without persuasive speech are like savage beasts. Aeschylus envisions persuasion to be like a trial in which a problem of justice is resolved when speech wondrously changes hostile and vengeful hearts thorough a new projection of imaginative mind.

**Synecdoche, Metonymy, and Periphrasis**

The next three tropes—synecdoche, metonymy, and periphrasis—are very important for understanding both the ways of the imaginative mind and the communication of things in the poetic kosmos. All persons and things exhibit internal features (both particular and typical) and external associations with something else. Ordinary awareness often does not attend to these features and associations of persons and things, so these tropes contort routine awareness by turning it toward them. Some unperceived feature or association is thereby placed in the foreground of attention. Common awareness is dulled by habit, familiarity, expectation, and by prejudice. Such awareness is, for all tropes, the monster that obstructs the passage out of the cave of
dullness, conventionality, and somnolence. This soporific monster of our minds must be slain. But how? The answer is to awaken the mind by forcing it to attend to the details, types, and appendages of persons and things. These previously unnoticed features of things are often signs of other persons and things, or imply stories that can be guessed at in the disciplined ways of the art of invention.

*Synecdoche* (from a Greek word meaning “to grasp or receive together”) awakens perception by directing awareness to internal features of persons and things, either to some particular detail or part of a whole person or thing, or to the type or class to which the person or thing belongs. It makes conspicuous those features that are either particular and concrete or general and typical. One may say that, when a synecdoche is expressed in words, it substitutes the part for the whole or the whole for the part. But synecdoche is not really substitutive; it is synthetic. It brings things together, as its etymology suggests.

Example: “Give us this day our daily bread.” The concrete thing “bread” is here a synecdoche for “nourishment,” the class of things to which bread belongs. The full “logical” or communicative capacity of things is both concrete and abstract at once, although we habitually tend to separate the one from the other or lazily ignore both. Every synecdoche suggests that the concrete instance may be itself significant in their contexts, but we don’t usually see it, so literal and literal minded are we ordinarily. The example above is so familiar that there appears nothing remarkable about the synecdoche. But let us ask why bread rather than, say, meat. What’s the point, if any, of concentrating upon bread rather than another particular instance of food? The reason is that a given detail may have a significance of its own. The sentence expressing the synecdoche is, we know, a quotation from the New Testament. It is part of a model prayer that Jesus of Nazareth formulates for his listeners. Bread would be for them a highly resonant and evocative word, reminding them of several stories associated with “our Father.” For example, only after the Flood did Yahweh allow his often bestial human creatures to eat meat and then
only if cooked (Gen. 9.3). Yahweh also provided them bread-like manna in the Sinai desert (Ps. 78.24), and he speaks a powerful word that produces bread (Is. 55.10-11). Indeed, the speaker is suggesting to his hearers that, although human creatures make bread, they are yet to pray to their Father for the daily bread he gives.

In the next example, it is the type, not the concrete particular instance of a human being that is being singled out for attention.

Example: “She was the only humanity I could ever love.” Synecdoche always concentrates upon the internal features of persons and things, sometimes emphasizing their essential or typical features, sometimes their individual concrete and material features. The example suggests that the fullness of humanity itself showed itself loveable to the speaker in only a single woman. The story it suggests is that other human beings, male or female, simply did not speak or act in ways the speaker thought to be truly human.

Metonymy (from the Greek, meaning “transference of name”) draws attention to the many different relations a single person or thing may have to other persons and things. There are as many metonymies as there are relations, and there is no need to classify them here. However many they may be, the important point is that in metonymy the mind transfers attention to the relation rather than to the person or thing in its internal formal or material make-up, which is the province of synecdoche.

The transfer is indicative that things often communicate themselves by their relations to other things.

Example: “As the jury was sitting down, the suits and briefcases [lawyers] filed into the courtroom.”

Example: “The signature is coming to the staff meeting.”

Example: “This legislation must first go to the Hill [Congress] for approval and then to the White House [the president].”
Metonymy allows exploration of the network of relations that obtain among people and things. The “signature” is the man who signs the paycheck, approves documents, and signs official and important letters: the boss, in short. The metonymy suggests, perhaps, a story of isolated power exercised impersonally from afar and perceived by the staff of people merely as a signature. That the presidency is referred to as the White House is significant in several possible ways. For the metonymy displays not the man himself or the office itself but his official place of residence. And it is a place, moreover, whose impressive size suggests the established power of an institution and whose architectural structure and particular color may call to mind a Southern plantation house, which itself was the center of a slave-owning aristocracy. To present lawyers by the suits they wear and the briefcases they carry is to highlight certain relationships that themselves carry potential significance, for example, that lawyers belong to a slick, moneyed class of people who have made it in a society that thinks and judges according to appearances. The general principle should be clear: whatever the relation the metonymy attends to can itself be suggestive. Once perceived, the suggestions can be explicated and evaluated. In effect, metonymy and synecdoche are the tropes that constitute the symbolic realm of the poetic kosmos.

*Periphrasis* (from the Greek word meaning “talking around”; also called circumlocution) is very much related to synecdoche and metonymy. In fact, it is a descriptive and narrative mode of amplifying them, as the example below should make clear. Example: “She who placed a ring on my finger, who cooled the brows of my feverish children in the night and who smiled me into joy has passed from this life [for the more direct ‘my wife has died’].” Why this roundabout way of writing? Getting to the point often misses the point. For the point is the whole set of features that composed an important relationship. Its actual importance could not otherwise be made clear. But periphrasis is not only a way of descriptive amplification of internal and external features.
It can also establish narrative context or background to understand something or someone better. Getting to know people often means learning their stories. Without the stories, they are merely figures without any background. Periphrasis can be, in a sense, a trope of history that sets present persons and things in relation to some particular past or future situations.

Periphrasis, metonymy, and synecdoche are fundamental modes of imagination, directing its focus alternately to the interplay of concrete (sensory) and general (conceptual) features of something or someone as well as to their stories. All have the capability of breaking down conventional ways of thinking about them and may well better attune the imaginative mind to their full suggestiveness.

**Imitation and Allusion**

Imitation (from the Latin to copy or emulate) was not really one of the classical tropes but a general procedure for improving style and thought by learning and emulating (not simply copying) the artful techniques and provocative ideas of past writers who were considered good. Thus, imitation required the formation (at least informal and personal) of a canonical (worthy) literary tradition. No writer long writes without a sense of former writers. (See prudential memory and the historical sense discussed above.) Allusion (from the Latin word meaning to play with something) is common word today for denoting the way writers play with literary or historical tradition they take seriously. The word now means a deliberate reference to or quotation of some other written text (cited or not) or to some mythological, historical, or contemporary person, place, or thing.

Allusive imitation, as I shall call it here, is a very important trope of mind and things since our awareness of things, for good or ill, is often developed through what has been already read or experienced by others. We learn by reading. And sometimes, alas, we learn only to repeat what we have read, instead of trying to understand the full actuality.
of things written about. (We should recall Plato’s warnings about writing.) And indeed it is often necessary for writers to direct their readers to other writings in order to communicate persuasively. The whole purpose of allusive imitation is to play with the similarities and differences among texts and things. Thus, it is a form of simile and is related to paradigms of argument. Like them, allusive imitation supplements judgment by referring to models that provide occasion for insights that would not occur in the absence of such referential models.

Allusive imitation, then, can take two basic forms as a trope of mind and things. It can repeat the text or thing alluded to (the same with minor difference), or it can extend and transform the object of allusion (one thing alters into another). One way of allusion gives us archetypes in the past that recur in endless cycles, which is a Greco-Roman trope based on the primary natural patterns like the seasons, in which minor and random variation does indeed occur but cannot really alter the pattern. Like Odysseus, this trope always comes back home. The other way is typological and dynamic, not repetitive. It envisions fulfillment of the being and meaning of one thing (the type) in something else that occurs later (the anti-type). But the process of fulfillment is not predictable. It comes about by either sudden interruption (of divine power) or by slow but unnoticed development (guided by divine power), which is a biblical or Judeo-Christian trope. Like Abraham, this trope leaves home, never to return. In spite of their differences, the classical and the biblical tropes are complementary, though the metaphysics by which that complementarity can be shown is difficult and cannot be treated here. Perhaps, it will be helpful to say that one stresses the essential and the other the existential features of things in their communication with the receptive minds of human beings. Consider these examples of allusive imitation:

Example: “To be or not to be is the question that distresses the suicidal and depressed.”
Example: “I go to bars without any money, so I can enjoy the song of the Sirens without risk.”

Example: “Medea lives within mothers who would kill their children to spite their false-hearted lovers and husbands.”

Example: “Rome, the world-order of justice that Virgil dreamt of, did not really fall; it is here in the making through the electronic instruments that have put the world on the World-Wide Web. And as nations draw closer together and become more interdependent economically and culturally in the electronic ‘global village,’ conflict becomes more intense, not less because proximity and familiarity tend to create more friction, not less. Such friction makes all the more evident the necessity for the extension of a just law for all to unite peaceably.”

In the first three examples, imitative allusion is archetypal—repetition with minor differences. But the fourth is typological since it exhibits a transformation of Rome as empire into the human global community, the allusions being to the Roman poet Virgil, author of the epic poem, the *Aeneid*, and to the famous phrase of the twentieth-century media critic, Marshall McLuhan.

**Appropriateness and the Offices of Style**

This fourth and last virtue of the rhetorical art of style in a way summarizes the entire rhetorical art of expression. Thus, the explanation of it will be a fitting way to end Part II. In the classical art of rhetoric, which, of course, was in large part concerned with the art of public speaking and writing, the quality termed appropriateness (often, decorum) referred to the fitting relation perceived by the speaker or writer among four things: (1) himself and his words, (2) the thesis and argument, (3) his listeners or readers, and (4) the circumstances of time and place or the occasion for words. The special virtue upon which appropriateness depends is verbal tact. According to Cicero, appropriateness
is as important in the conduct of life as it is in the conduct of words: “The universal rule in oratory as in life is to consider propriety [in Latin, *decorum*]. This depends on the subject under discussion, and on the character of both the speaker and the audience. The philosophers are accustomed to consider this extensive subject under the head of [moral] duties *[officia]*” (*The Orator* [Orator] 21. 71-72).

What, then, are these duties? The first and most important is to discern whatever arouses in oneself and in others, with regard to the specific subject, the desire (eros) for the true and the truly beneficial. In short, the prime duty is to excite the philosophic spirit, thus avoiding the disease of *adolesokia* (see Part I). But how is this done? By the combined exercise of all the liberal arts of mind within rhetoric in order to fulfill what the ancients called the *three* duties of anyone who would uses words persuasively (see Part I):

1. to enlighten or to teach: that is, to dispel ignorance regarding any matter of dispute; to break through the dullness of ordinary awareness and clarify.

2. to overcome resistance or to please: to break through, by argument, the many kinds of prejudices or ideology that strongly encrust ordinary awareness and to persevere in this effort with courtesy and good will, even in the face of hostile resistance, until the pleasure of new discovery, new thinking, begins to take hold—just as Athena does when speaking to the Furies.

3. to transform or to move inwardly: to make available a new and hopeful imaginative context for thinking and acting.

The whole rhetorical art of care discussed in this book is inseparable from these writerly duties. Thus, only the basic principle needs to be mentioned here. The ancients attempted a synopsis of the whole rhetorical art by aligning the three writerly duties to three major kinds of stylized discourse that correspond to them: the plain style, to enlighten; the temperate, to overcome resistance by pleasure; and the high style, to transform imaginatively and excite to action. Any occasion for persuasion will require, to
one degree or another, each of the three styles. The basic principle of the three kinds of stylization is simple: how something is said affects how it is judged and imagined by others. In all sorts of ways, by the very words one chooses, by the organization of the discourse, by the reasoning among sentences, by the figures and tropes employed in the sentences, one has the duty to open the perception and judgment of others—their inward ears, as it were—to the voiceless speech of the realities involved in any matter involving persuasion.
Epilogue

What this book has tried to explain is a form of thinking no longer taught and so no longer much used in the contemporary world. It includes a knowledge, arising chiefly from mediation on tragedy fundamental to persuasion, a rhetorical psychology, a speculum of the arts and science, and a poetic, almost prophetic visionary capacity of imagination, all open to both ontology and theology that are simply ruled out by much in the intellectual conventions of the present time. Indeed, rhetorical thinking includes rational and imaginative arts that, brought together within the art of rhetoric as anciently conceived and as in part reconceived here, provide a new kind of vision, called here the eyes of Peitho. What Peitho sees is the human capacity to change for the truly better. In the classical rhetorical tradition, as I understand it, that human possibility is a phoenix-like source of hope that arises from the contemplation, often bitter, of the ashes of human tragedy, small and large, resulting from the baneful work of the goddesses Eris and Apate. To a large degree, the whole of Greco-Roman civilization, not just the rhetorical tradition within it, attempted to manage Eris and Apate. And in the final effort of ancient civilization, the Roman empire, it tragically failed. The many reasons for its failure historians must contemplate, but one of the reasons, I suspect, was failure to submit the powers of government, always tempted by order achievable by the sword, to the scrutiny of responsible persuasion. It is also a danger we face.

For reasons already mentioned, the hopeful vision of Peitho, the rhetorical knowledge, the arts of mind that are her eyes are not specifically and consciously taught in any college or university today, not even in those places that advertise themselves as
liberal arts schools. Yet the liberal and liberated culture of mind is the very thing that higher education should strive to develop in every student, even those who ultimately seek some professional training and governmental office. The reason is simple: the rhetorical arts foster those virtues—those developed mental and imaginative capacities—that professional training presumes. They promote the well-being of both the individual and the society to which he belongs; for the rhetorical arts, quite apart from being practical techniques for writing, are the arts of the whole mind’s liberation and the path toward wiser vision, not of the many things that divide us, but of the common humanity which unites us.
A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS RECOMMENDED AND CITED

Works Recommended

For a broader sense of the history of the rhetorical tradition in antiquity and beyond, there are several useful guides. The best introduction to the way rhetoric was incorporated into ancient education is still Henri Marrou’s *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. from the original French, 3rd ed., by George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956); paperback ed. by New American Library, 1964). George Kennedy has sketched the whole rhetorical tradition in his *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). In the twentieth century, as in antiquity, rhetoric became again a major concern of thoughtful philosophers of language, literary critics and theorists, and, especially, of academics belonging to departments of speech and communications. The distinctive character of much of this immense body of scholarship and theorizing has come from two things: metaphysical doubts that retard the transcultural dynamic of philosophic persuasion toward a global humanism and the epistemological rejection of the world as source of a real communication whose understanding is not necessarily precluded by the workings of the mind of man. As immense as modern rhetorical scholarship is, there is nevertheless a fine resource available to the reader interested in it and needing bibliographical guidance: *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, general ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Also very helpful as a guide to the ancient Greek and Latin sources is the scholarly study of Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, trans. Matthew T. Bliss (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1998; originally published in German, 1960). For dates of the ancient writers, I have followed in

The following list includes the works explicitly cited or referred to within this book as well as some of those, not cited or referred to, that have helped me greatly and, I believe, that will help interested readers. I especially would like to mention the work of Entralgo (on the psychiatric power of the word), Buxton (best treatment of Peitho), Rahn (on notions of kosmos and adolesekia), Frye (on the Christian Bible and figuration generally), Buber (on the Tanakh), Weaver (on eros in Plato’s Phaedrus), and DiLorenzo (on Cicero).

For the ancient sources mentioned in this book, I usually have cited editions found in the greatly useful Loeb Classical Library, in which the original Greek or Latin texts accompany translations into English. The Loeb Library is published jointly by Harvard and Cambridge University Presses.

Works Cited


Homer. *The Iliad of Homer*. Trans. Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of


Rahn, Helmut. “Die rhetorische Kultur der Antike.” *Der altsprachliche Unterricht* 10.2 (1967), 23-49. [This article is not translated into English. See DiLorenzo, above, for an account of its contents.]


