

Extending the (Aristotelian) Argument: Perelman, Rorty and the Value of Rhetoric and Dialectic

by Gustav Verhulsdonck

Whereas the task of the philosopher, inasmuch as he is addressing a particular audience, will be to silence his audience's particular passions in order to facilitate the "objective" consideration of the problems under discussion, the speaker aiming at a particular action, to be carried out at an opportune time, will, on the contrary, have to excite his audience so as to produce a sufficiently strong adherence, capable of overcoming both the unavoidable apathy and the forces acting in a direction divergent from that which is desired.

– L. Olbrechts-Tyteca & C. Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*

Introduction

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle's view of rhetoric allows the speaker "in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" and thus gives a means of distinguishing different kinds of proof (Bk 1.2, p. 36). In contrast to Plato, who tried to emplace rhetoric as a lesser branch on the tree of the truth-making discipline of philosophy, Aristotle's idea of rhetoric is strictly founded in its *pragmatic* use: in order to see all the options, the rhetor as well as the audience need to be informed by a practical knowledge of rhetoric to come to a form of agreement. Aristotle's notion of rhetoric relies on the idea that it should not be held accountable for finding immovable Platonic ideals of the true, but instead should prove itself as a practical discipline that is much like "dialectic and that it is useful" (*On Rhetoric*, p. 35) when it is applied to human decisions and debates in which it is difficult to speak of a solitary truth.

Though Aristotle's influence on rhetoric has been large, Plato's notion that philosophy is the supreme truth-seeking discipline, which is superior to rhetoric, has done much to harm Aristotle's idea that rhetoric is a pragmatic discipline that can help us make well-informed decisions. Plato's dismissal of rhetoric, and the ensuing belief that rhetoric is a form of knowledge which is "unable to explain or to give a reason of the nature of its own applications" (*Gorgias*, p. 137) and is thus *too* pragmatic in accounting for its own application, has led philosophers, scientists, and logicians to dismiss the pragmatic qualities of rhetoric altogether in favor of Plato's deontological approach to epistemology and knowledge.

The difference between Aristotle and Plato is in the function that they ascribe to rhetoric: whereas for Aristotle rhetoric (and dialectic) is capable of allowing the citizens

of the polis to make good decisions and thus serves a pragmatic function, for Plato the idea that rhetoric could be misused is enough to banish it altogether. Plato dismisses rhetoric because of its pragmatic use in argument, and because rhetoric eludes the solid foundations of knowledge that Plato seeks in his idealized Forms. The argument between Aristotle and Plato therefore seems to be based on the idea of the pragmatic value of rhetoric (Aristotle) which seeks immediate and practical solutions, and the desire for an eternal foundation upon which we can build our knowledge (Plato), which is an argument that has also been played out in various cross-Atlantic philosophic discussions of epistemology over a long time.

Credited with reviving the long-dormant tradition of rhetoric in Europe in the late twentieth century, Chaim Perelman has given an explanation of the value of rhetoric that runs counter to traditional Platonic banishment of rhetoric and extends the Aristotelian focus on the pragmatic value of rhetoric. For Perelman, rhetoric provides a means of arguing about human values and motivations that philosophy's Cartesian obsession with irrefutable foundations cannot provide. The central question that Perelman addresses in books like *The Realm of Rhetoric* and *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (with Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca), is the difficulty of traditional logic and philosophy in accounting for reasoning that deals with human values. According to Perelman, rhetoric is most adept at handling the reasoning behind human values and motivations, and rhetoric should once again join philosophy and logic in importance in human affairs and knowledge.

Like Perelman, Rorty has also done much to counter the way philosophy has traditionally treated epistemology and its Cartesian demand for self-evident and eternal foundations as its primary focus. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) Rorty argues that we need to make the move from epistemology, which attempts to seek undisputed grounds from which to argue from first, to the discursive and pragmatic sphere of hermeneutics, which favors carrying on a conversation "where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts" (p.318). Both Perelman and Rorty thus reject the Platonic idea of knowledge as foundational, instead claiming the need for rhetoric and dialectic in constructing knowledge and human decision-making, where human intervention is not anathema, but necessary.

In this essay, I want to investigate how Perelman and Rorty both adapt Aristotle's notions in *On Rhetoric* about the pragmatic value of rhetoric, and counter the tradition started by Plato (and continued through Descartes and much of modern philosophy) that demands irrefutable foundations for our knowledge. In both Perelman's and Rorty's work, Plato's desire for philosophy as an ahistorical, universal truth-making discipline is replaced by the historicized *praxis* of rhetoric and dialectic, which carry on the useful conversations necessitated by the human realm, where agreement is seldom achieved but always necessary. Though Perelman's training as a lawyer and philosopher shapes his argument, and Rorty operates from the American tradition of pragmatism favored by Dewey and others, they both use Aristotle's notion of rhetoric as a dialectical endeavor that is "useful" in the realm of human decision-making. In doing so, Perelman and Rorty extend Aristotle's argument by arguing in favor of the utility of rhetoric and dialectic in practical human matters, and they historically reinvest rhetoric and dialectic with renewed importance while denouncing the tradition of philosophy.

Specifically, I want to trace the idea that Aristotle's definition of audience influences the separate functions that he gives to rhetoric and dialectic, whereas Perelman and Rorty seek to emplace dialectic within rhetoric in their idea of "new rhetoric" (Perelman) and "hermeneutics" (Rorty) and also give a new role to the audience. In contrast to Aristotle who delimits his category of the audience in terms of universal situations and posits the audience as either spectator *or* judge, Perelman and Rorty seek to demonstrate that rhetoric and dialectic both combine spectator and judge in helping audiences reach consent and agreement in various social, political, cultural and historical contexts. In other words, Perelman and Rorty revive and extend Aristotle's pragmatic idea of rhetoric in order to include a less universal, more contingent idea of audience and expressly give dialectic a place in rhetoric and contemporary social, political and cultural matters. If Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* functions as a how-to book on rhetoric, then Perelman and Rorty take Aristotle's pragmatic approach to rhetoric and dialectic further by giving both a renewed social, political and cultural relevance in human matters.

Aristotle's *Polis*: on the Function of Rhetoric and Dialectic

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle emphasizes the pragmatic qualities of rhetoric and dialectic in helping to persuade people in making decisions. At the same time, Aristotle makes a distinction between dialectic and rhetoric that has far-reaching consequences for the later discussions of Perelman and Rorty. In Book 1 of *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle separates the sphere of science, where knowing is possible, from the sphere of the probable, in which practical decisions are facilitated by the use of rhetoric and dialectic. Aristotle thus defines rhetoric and dialectic as “antistrophos”- counterparts that work to effect consensus among the audience by utilizing different means of reasoning:

Since the persuasive is *persuasive to someone* . . . and since no art examines the particular . . . neither does rhetoric theorize about each opinion – what may seem so to Socrates or Hippias – but about what seems true to people of a certain sort, as is also true with dialectic. For the latter does not form syllogisms from things at random (some things seem true even to madmen) but from that [which seems true] to people in need of argument, and rhetoric [forms] enthymemes] from things [that seem true] to people already accustomed to deliberate among themselves. (*On Rhetoric*, p.41; my emphasis)

In Aristotle's system, rhetoric forms enthymemes to seek approval based on the held opinions and values of the audience; whereas dialectic is explicitly syllogistic in reasoning about situations where self-evident truths need to be found on which to base the propositions of the syllogism. Aristotle thus also gives different functions to dialectic and rhetoric: though akin to rhetoric, dialectic can only give guidance in private arguments between two or more persons, whereas rhetoric serves a more public function. This, as will be argued below, also has implications for how Aristotle defines audience and the value of rhetoric (and dialectic) in making decisions.

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguishes the audience of rhetoric to be either a “spectator” or a “judge”, depending on which context the rhetor is speaking in. For this reason, Aristotle provides the well-known contexts in which rhetoric functions: rhetoric is used in epideictic (ceremonial; dealing with the present), forensic (judicial; dealing with the past), and deliberative (political; dealing with the future) contexts in order so that a judgment can be made (Bk 1.3, pp. 47-49). According to Aristotle, each context implicates a different role for the audience. In deliberative and forensic functions of

rhetoric “a member of a democratic assembly is an example of one judging about future happenings, a jury-man an example of one judging the past” and thus has the ability to make decisions, whereas in epideictic rhetoric the audience is “a spectator [who] is concerned with the ability [of the speaker]” and can only remark upon the speaker’s persuasive qualities (*On Rhetoric* Bk 1.3, pp. 47-48). For Aristotle, an epideictic speech usually is addressed at spectators, whereas a forensic and deliberative speech is addressed at judges who are spectators as well. Even though these categorizations are useful, the idea that spectator and judge can somehow be separated shows the limited sphere that Aristotle gives to epideictic rhetoric and rhetoric in general.

Aristotle’s idea for rhetoric is that it is mainly used in the public assemblies in order to advance the political, cultural and social goals of the Greek *polis*, where one can only be a spectator or a judge. Aristotle remarks that rhetoric can be defined “as an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” 9(Bk 1.2, p.36) In contrast, in dialectic, judge and spectator are combined because decisions will have to be made in context of an on-going argument in order for the argument to continue. In dividing the function of rhetoric and dialectic, Aristotle therefore limits rhetoric to the confines of the Greek political assemblies and lawcourts where a final judgment had to be made, whereas dialectic’s purpose is given in terms of its qualities in carrying on a conversation in order to advance philosophical truths where no practical outcome is needed. In doing so, Aristotle underestimates the value of dialectic and epideictic rhetoric in facilitating human decisions.

Aristotle’s point that rhetoric can help settle situations where the probable needs to be converted to a decision (such as whether someone is guilty or not, or whether a particular course of political action needs to be taken) signals the idea that rhetoric can only work in cases where an underlying truth is capable of being uncovered. In this sense, Aristotle seems to want to remain closer to the teachings of Plato, who believed in the existence of an underlying truth, whereas sophists such as Isocrates stressed the contingent nature of truth, where truth was a matter of opinion. As Aristotle remarks in *On Rhetoric*: “one should be able to argue persuasively on either side of a question [. . .] in order that it may not escape our notice what the *real state of the case is* and that we ourselves may be able to refute if another person uses speech unjustly” (*On Rhetoric*, p.

34; my emphasis). For Aristotle, dialectic is therefore used for arriving at logical decisions in philosophical discussions, whereas rhetoric is based on enthymemes (non-rational decisions based on values and opinions held by the audience). Aristotle divides his audience based on the idea that some underlying truth can be uncovered and judged in forensic and deliberative rhetoric, but neglects the idea that epideictic rhetoric can combine rhetoric and dialectic, as well as can combine the audience and speaker as spectator and judge in allowing them to decide on matters that need deciding but can never be found irrevocably true. As a result, Aristotle sees the benefits of rhetoric in facilitating decisions, but underestimates the value of dialectic and epideictic rhetoric in creating practical decisions outside of the official functions that he gives rhetoric in the polis.

Perelman's Realm of Rhetoric: New Rhetoric, Dialectic and "Quasi-Logic"

The central question that Chaim Perelman addresses in his works *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (together with L. Olbrechts-Tyteca; 1958, trans.1969) and *The Realm of Rhetoric* (1977; trans.1982) is the difficulty of traditional philosophy (and systems of logic associated with it) in accounting for reasoning that deals with human values and where no "true" answer(s) can be discerned. In contrast to Aristotle, Perelman notes how the emphasis on forensic rhetoric (which is invested in notions of finding out truths *a priori* and *a posteriori*) should be shifted to epideictic rhetoric, which deals with the values of the audience in seeking adherence and consensus. Rather than seeing it as simply a speaker seeking approval of his speech by an audience, epideictic rhetoric for Perelman should not be underestimated in the social and political value of its function: that of motivating an audience to make practical and well-informed decisions in situations where no evident answer can be found or truths uncovered.

In *The New Rhetoric*, Perelman thus remarks that epideictic rhetoric, as evinced in Pericles' Funeral oration, and Gorgias' Encomium of Helen, is closer to literature in that it appeals to the commonly held values of an audience and that it differs radically from other forms of rhetoric:

According to Aristotle, the speaker sets himself different goals depending on the kind of speech he is making: in deliberative oratory, to counsel what is expedient, that is, the best; in legal oratory to establish what is just; and in epideictic oratory, which is concerned with praise or blame, his sole concern is with what is beautiful or ugly. It is a question, then, of recognizing values. But in the absence of the concept of value-judgment, and of that of intensity of adherence, the theoreticians of speech, from Aristotle on, readily confused the concept of the beautiful, as the object of the speech (which was, besides, equivalent to the concept of “good”) with the aesthetic value of the speech itself. (1969, p. 48)

According to Perelman, epideictic rhetoric is most adept at handling the reasoning behind human values and motivations because it seeks to harmonize human values by seeking adherence of the audience instead of eternal truths. Epideictic rhetoric thus plays a large role in letting the audience make decisions and function as spectator and judge in giving shape to their common values.

In *The Realm of Rhetoric*, Perelman notes that philosophy’s desire to fashion itself after Plato’s idea of eternal, immovable Truths (which was furthered by the Cartesian ideal of knowledge as based on the same self-evident principles as mathematics and the Kantian belief in *a priori* analytical knowledge), has long neglected to incorporate these human values in a way that works. Though Perelman does not deny the importance of empirical science, his solution to philosophy’s inability to deal with values is to divide up reason into two separate spheres: that of formal logic, to which science belongs, and informal logic, where human values reside. Thus, for Perelman, the formalized sphere of logic of a discipline such as mathematics can be universally applied and demonstrated as being self-evident (an idea which he credits Descartes and Ramus for popularizing) in science, but should not be applied to informal, political spheres of reasoning where values cannot be universalized but are highly contextual and contingent upon the participation and particular values of an audience (Bizzel & Herzberg, 2001, p.1373). Perelman thus gives explicit attention to the importance of the complicity of the rhetor and the audience in constructing knowledge and arguments in giving way to practical decisions.

Perelman follows Aristotle’s idea in *Analytics* of dividing analytical reasoning – dealing with “truth” as evinced in the first premise of a syllogism, which for Aristotle needs to be based on an unquestionable universal truth that will demonstrate the rest of

the propositions - and dialectical reasoning – dealing with “justifiable opinion”, as evinced in the enthymeme which seeks the audience to fill in one of the premises they generally *believe* to be true but cannot always prove (1982, p. 2-3). Perelman notes how Peter Ramus undoes this distinction with a swift stroke and reduces rhetoric to ornamental language and dialectic to pure analytical reasoning. The problem in this arrangement for Perelman is that the burden of proof in any argument cannot always be reduced to formal analytical reasoning, because some matters – for example, forensic rhetoric, politics, ethics – cannot be decided solely by logical reasoning, but need to be decided through the values of the audience and thus, the use of rhetoric as well. Central to Perelman’s valuing of rhetoric and dialectic is the idea that an “argument . . . can intervene only where self-evidence is contested” (1982, p. 6). Perelman therefore highlights how rhetoric and dialectic do play a role in human decision-making by revalorizing Aristotle’s definition in *On Rhetoric* of rhetoric’s role in forming enthymemes that seek adherence of the audience and emplacing dialectic within the realm of rhetoric.

Since the audience is assumed to be universal in the appeals of logic and philosophy, Perelman changes the definition of Aristotle’s universal approach to “audience” to include specific kinds of audiences. To him, there is no “universal audience”, and hence, there are no “universal values” to argue from either: since argumentation is not necessarily always intellectual and truth-finding, but also involves motivating the audience to take specific actions, rhetoricians can argue from specific values instead of universals. Though philosophy writes for this universal audience, Perelman says rhetoric’s emphasis on rhetorical exigency and audience makes it suitable for decisions in practical matters. To underline his renewed valorization of rhetoric and dialectic, Perelman claims that “the new rhetoric is concerned with discourse addressed to *any sort of audience* – a crowd in a public square or a gathering of specialists, a single being or all humanity. It even examines arguments addressed to oneself in private deliberation” (1982, p.5). Moreover, the aim for new rhetoric is thus to “elicit or increase the adherence of the members of an audience to theses that are presented for their consent”, and not, like philosophy, to demonstrate universal truths (1982, p. 9).

Connected to this new idea of audience is Perelman's concept of the speaker's ability to highlight important ideas and give them presence in the listener's mind through associative "liaisons" – constructions of ideas placed in a particular order and connection – which for Perelman demonstrates the practical reasoning of the rhetor in seeking the adherence of the audience. In essence, Perelman revises Aristotle's Book 3 in *On Rhetoric* to include particular forms of argumentation that deal with values. The "quasi-logical arguments" that Perelman presents in his book show that even though we assume logic to be infallible, we hide behind an idea of its infallibility and thus assume we reason from solid logical foundations. Perelman simply questions the idea of absolute facts and truths in human matters, and says they are not guaranteed "unless we accept the existence of an infallible authority, a deity whose revelations are incontestable and who could guarantee these facts and truths" who could then make these propositions true (1982, p. 24). However, when this is not the case, argumentation, and thus rhetoric and its ability to form enthymemes that seek adherence of the audience, do come into play in making decisions. Perelman says we merely efface our construction of (quasi-) logical arguments, and should recognize that we cannot reason from logic solely but should include rhetoric and dialectic, which deal with probable knowledge filled in by human values, opinions and beliefs which reconnect Aristotle's divisions of audience by making the audience *both* spectator and judge.

In the final chapter of *The Realm of Rhetoric*, Perelman therefore remarks that without the ancient Cartesian formalized system of logic that believes in the assurance of a God that "justified the elimination of all personal elements from scientific thought", all logic becomes susceptible to rhetoric and dialectic, which deal with human values and motivations, and "all thought becomes human and fallible, and no longer sheltered from controversy" (1982, p. 159). For Perelman, dialectic and rhetoric are both a part of the this sphere of informal logic that mediate and help facilitate humans in taking a particular decision or course of action: "As soon as a communication tries to influence one or more persons, to orient their thinking, to excite or calm their emotions, to guide their actions, it belongs in the realm of rhetoric. Dialectic, the technique of controversy, is included as one part of this larger realm" (1982, p.162). In seeing the pragmatic use value of rhetoric and dialectic in aiding us in seeking adherence of an audience and giving values, rather

than logic, a place in human decision-making, Perelman tries to undo the ethical, political and moral quiescence caused by two centuries' worth of scientific belief in foundationalism. In so doing, Perelman mends the gap created by Aristotle between dialectic and rhetoric, spectator and judge, audience and rhetor, and refutes the Platonic tradition of philosophy, which has searched for answers beyond the realm of human values and actions.

Richard Rorty: Hermeneutics as (Dialectical) Rhetoric

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Richard Rorty attacks the Enlightenment traditions of philosophy in preoccupying itself predominantly with Cartesian and Kantian notions that posit the idea that our minds and bodies are especially equipped to make knowledge claims about an underlying fundamental reality that is presumed to be independent of human sensory perception. Specifically, Rorty attacks Kant's idea of philosophy as a "tribunal of pure reason" that allows philosophers to make privileged claims about reality which necessitates that we have a theory of knowledge – epistemology – in order to "ground" our knowledge claims (1979, p. 4). Working in the philosophical tradition of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey, as well as the work of Kuhn, Frege, and Quine, Rorty questions the idea of epistemology as a discipline:

The notion that there could be such a thing as "foundations of knowledge" (*all* knowledge – in every field, past, present, and future) or a "theory of representation" (*all* representation, in familiar vocabularies and those not yet dreamed of) depends on the assumption that there is some such a priori constraint. If we have a Deweyan conception of knowledge, as what we are *justified* in believing, then we will not imagine that there are enduring constraints on what can count as knowledge, since we will see "justification" as a social phenomenon rather than a transaction between "the knowing subject" and "reality." (1979, p.9; my emphasis).

For Rorty, the legacy of Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey is that they highlighted the pretensions of analytic philosophy in pursuing "investigations of the foundations of knowledge or morality or language or society" which in reality were mere "apologetics, attempts to eternalize a certain contemporary language-game, social, practice, or self-image" (1979, pp. 9-10). In doing so, Rorty echoes the point made by Perelman: that we should be aware of "quasi-logical arguments" which attempt to obscure the reasoning

from values behind the idea that all our knowledge is based on eternal, immovable foundations which we should attempt to uncover. Similarly, Rorty questions the idea that analytical reasoning – being the basis for much traditional philosophy – needs a separate study of knowledge (epistemology) that is superior to dialectical reasoning, which deals with what we can justify as a result of our negotiations. As a result, for Rorty, it is a mistake to adopt the idea that knowledge should be represented in a “theory of knowledge” that attempts to reach beyond our immediate representations of reality, because this pre-empts the idea that we are active participants in creating arguments about that reality and that we use rhetoric and dialectic to do so.

Building on Kuhn’s idea of “incommensurable” (1962, p. 103) or untranslatable sets of theories that demonstrate science’s inability to adopt logical argument, Rorty, like Perelman, remarks that the whole tradition of philosophy of science (and philosophy in general) has erroneously separated Aristotle’s division of analytical reasoning from dialectical reasoning:

Logical-empiricist philosophy of science, and the whole epistemological tradition since Descartes, has wanted to say that the procedure for attaining accurate representations [of reality] . . . differs in certain deep ways from the procedure for attaining agreement about “practical” or “aesthetic” matters. (1979, p. 333)

Rorty remarks that this distinction has led philosophy to a path of Cartesian self-questioning about finding foundations upon which it could build itself, all the while ignoring the fact that the model of science itself does not operate upon analytical and logical reasoning but adopts more or less successful rhetorical and dialectical argumentative strategies to introduce new ideas. Moreover, as Rorty continues, “we should not regret our inability to perform a feat which no one has any idea of how to perform” because doing so means not accepting the “Platonic *focus imaginarius* – truth as disjoined from agreement – and allowing the gap between oneself and that unconditional ideal to make one feel that one does not yet understand the conditions of one’s existence” (1979, p.340). Rorty here posits that the ideal of Platonic forms pre-empts any rational, pragmatic discussion on “practical” or “aesthetic” matters that demand a form of agreement instead of a clear definition of an underlying truth to proceed.

Similar to Perelman, Rorty therefore also questions the idea of the “universal audience” that philosophy addresses in wanting to uncover the foundations of a bedrock truth. Writing in the pragmatic traditions of William James, C.S. Pierce, and John Dewey, who question the usefulness of having a “correspondency theory of truth” (as Plato and Descartes would have it) which attempts to “ground” reality by trying to describe it as closely as possible, Rorty questions the ability of traditional analytical reasoning in giving humans the ability to make moral decisions that work. Like his pragmatic forefathers, Rorty is more concerned with the outcomes of decisions as a measure of their value rather than their specific claim to truth. The idea that such decisions need to be “justified” as opposed to “grounded” is an important one, because it gives way to hermeneutics, in which “inquiry is routine conversation” (Rorty, 1979, p. 318) and dialectic and rhetoric, which seek to justify certain decisions according to the values of a specific audience, are givens. Rorty thus gives credence to hermeneutics over epistemology, because, like rhetoric and dialectic, hermeneutics engages in argument by critically examining vocabularies and finding new ways of explaining the world, rather than trying to explain it once and for all by “grounding” it. This also means the adoption of the idea that no such eternal foundations need to exist for an audience before human values and courses of action can be decided upon:

Epistemology views the participants as united in what Oakeshott calls an *universitas* – a group united by mutual interests in achieving a common end. Hermeneutics views them as united in what he calls a *societas* – persons whose paths through life have fallen together, united by civility rather than by a common goal, much less by a common ground. (1979, p. 318)

For Rorty, hermeneutics is about countering the idea of epistemology that “all contributions to a given discourse are commensurable” and that a common “set of rules” can then give shape to a procedure of rational agreement (1979, p.316). Instead, hermeneutics emphasizes the *praxis* of decisions made by a diverse group of people that are in need of reaching an agreement without needing to achieve a common ground from which to argue first. Thus, hermeneutics “sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never

lost so long as the conversation lasts” (Rorty, 1979, p.318). Necessarily, such conversations, not being based upon the Kantian ideal of a pure “tribunal of reason”, cannot have separations of spectator and judge, rhetor and audience, dialectic and rhetoric, but involve all these elements simultaneously in order to advance the contingent decisions that are justified by participants of such conversations. Whereas epistemology posits the hope that analytical logic might lead to foundations that ensure rational results and decisions independently, hermeneutics sees argumentation (which incorporates rhetoric and dialectic) as facilitating the possibility of carrying on a conversation that will allow humans to make decisions based on specific social, political and personal values as opposed to a neutral, scientific “common ground”. This ties Rorty to the tradition of pragmatism of Dewey, James, and Pierce, which looks at “the pattern of all inquiry – science as well as moral” as “deliberation concerning the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives” and thus encourages dialectical reasoning that is concerned with values as opposed to irrefutable foundations (1982, p.164).

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), Rorty is therefore critical of the idea that truth exists independent of our linguistic constructions of the world. Like Perelman, Rorty is aware of the God-head truths that equate truth with a divine intention. Instead, Rorty is critical of such notions, remarking we remake the world according to the language and vocabularies we use and adopt to describe it:

Truth cannot be out there, cannot exist independently of the human mind, because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by the describing activities of human beings – cannot. . . . But if one clings to the notion of self-subsistent facts, it is easy to start capitalizing the word *truth* and treating it as something identical either with God or with the world as God’s project (1989, p.67)

In calling hermeneutics “another way of coping” (1979, p. 356) with incommensurable vocabularies which necessitate that we discuss them, Rorty thus emphasizes the ability of rhetoric and dialectic to facilitate pragmatic choices on the basis of consensus and agreement of the participants. Rorty remarks that “substituting dialectic for demonstration as the method of philosophy . . . is not a discovery about the nature of a preexistent entity called “philosophy” or “truth”” (1989, p. 20) which two thousand

years' worth of philosophical tradition has led us to believe. Instead, it is about accepting that the vocabularies we use are not grounded in a truth that needs to be "captured", but are instead other ways of speaking about the world we live in and the motivations that we make for describing that world in newer ways: "It is changing the way we talk, and thereby changing what we want to do and what we think we are" (1989, p.20). Rorty's anti-foundationalist approach to philosophy, as well as his pragmatic desire to stop asking the same epistemological questions in favor of outcomes of actions and values, allows him to propose the conversations enacted by hermeneutics, which incorporate rhetoric, dialectic, judge, spectator all in one in an attempt to redescribe the world in ways that work for the participants of these discussions.

Conclusion

Though Aristotle does not deny the pragmatic value of rhetoric in dealing with the values of an audience, he separates its functions according to the different contexts in which a speaker could use it in the polis. This led to his adoption of the idea that the audience can only be a spectator or a judge, and that epideictic rhetoric was merely about judging the speaker's ability to produce a convincing speech. Aristotle thus divided rhetoric and dialectic as antistrophic means of facilitating argument, giving dialectic the capability to facilitate agreement in a private argument between two or more persons by way of syllogism, whereas rhetoric was given a more public function in giving the rhetor a way of creating consent through enthymemes. In his system, Aristotle thus neglected to include dialectic and rhetoric as possibly useful for *both* public and private discussions and decisions. Though Aristotle justly made a distinction between analytical and dialectical knowledge as reasoning based on logic or values, Plato's desire, together with the philosophical tradition of Descartes, Kant and science in general, to posit a correspondency theory of truth as a prime example of philosophy, has led to the demise of rhetoric and its ability to aid in reasoning of values, with the prime example of dialectic being given a separate place from rhetoric under analytical reasoning.

As Belgian philosopher Chaim Perelman demonstrated, Aristotle's division of analytical and dialectical reasoning was reduced by Peter Ramus, who put rhetoric in the vestiges of ornamental language use and reformulated dialectic as analytical reasoning

that is concerned solely with logical demonstration. In turn, Descartes also sought irrefutable foundations for his knowledge by doubting the existence of everything that his senses presented him, and demanded a pure epistemology of mathematical universal applicability and self-evidence. Perelman's vigorous defense of "new rhetoric" makes a case for Aristotle's pragmatic use of rhetoric and dialectic in facilitating the arguing of audiences' values where no universal, underlying truth can be found but a decision needs to be made. However, whereas Aristotle divided his audience in spectator or judge and gave rhetoric specific public functions separate from dialectic, Perelman argues in favor of specifically epideictic rhetoric in allowing specific audiences to make social, political decisions as both spectator and judge and making dialectic a part of the realm of rhetoric.

Across the Atlantic, Richard Rorty has also sought to refute the traditions of philosophy that favored foundationalist approaches to truth, knowledge, and dialectic. In advocating that we adopt hermeneutics over epistemology, Rorty asks us to continue the conversations that have taken place in the history of the world in lieu of finding a common way or vocabulary to speak about the world. For Rorty, it is important that we let go of the idea that we need descriptions of truth that irrefutably "ground" reality once and for all. Instead, we need to look at such descriptions as "language games" that point at alternate ways of describing the world that strike us particularly true at a particular time. However, for Rorty the point is to see that these descriptions are motivated by rhetorical and dialectical strategies in which the outcome of their adoption is more important than the measure they correspond to our idea of "objective" truth. In accepting that all "Truth" is merely "justified opinion" in the ongoing conversations of hermeneutics as opposed to a "pure tribunal of reason", Rorty also mends the divisions between rhetoric and dialectic, speaker and judge, and analytical and dialectical reasoning.

To recap, both Perelman and Rorty reinvest rhetoric and dialectic with renewed value by denouncing the tradition of philosophy that has sought to enslave rhetoric as ornament, and see dialectic as closed-ended analytic reasoning. Plato's desire for philosophy as an ahistorical, universal truth-making discipline is thus replaced by the historicized *praxis* of rhetoric and dialectic, which for Perelman and Rorty continue the useful conversations necessitated by the human realm, where achieving agreement is rare

but always necessary. In doing so, Perelman and Rorty extend Aristotle's argument by arguing in favor of the utility of rhetoric and dialectic in practical human matters, and they historically reinvest rhetoric and dialectic with renewed importance while denouncing the tradition of philosophy that has sought to deny reasoning from human values in favor of logic and reason.

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