What Is Rhetoric?

I specify now that rhetoric is the functional organization of discourse, within its social and cultural context, in all its aspects, exception made for its realization as a strictly formal metalanguage—in formal logic, mathematics, and in the sciences whose metalanguages share the same features. In other words: rhetoric is all of language, in its realization as discourse.

—PAOLO VALESE
Novantiqua (1980)

The function of rhetoric is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case.

—ARISTOTLE
Rhetoric (c. 350 BCE)

Here then we have in popular use two separate ideas of Rhetoric: one of which is occupied with the general end of the fine arts—that is to say, intellectual pleasure; the other applies itself more specifically to a definite purpose of utility, viz. fraud.

—THOMAS DE QUINCEY
“Rhetoric” (1828)

A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in competitive competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to the views transcending the limitations of each.

—KENNETH BURKE
“Rhetoric—Old and New” (1950)

Rhetoric in the most general sense may perhaps be identified with the energy inherent in communication; the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message.

—GEORGE KENNEDY
“A Hoot in the Dark” (1992)
Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallocentric tradition. It is indeed that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallocentrism.

—Helene Cixous

“The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975)

“WHAT IS RHETORIC?” This is a difficult question for which there is no short answer. The difficulty begins with the fact that rhetoric is not a content area that contains a definite body of knowledge, like physics; instead, rhetoric might be understood as the study and practice of shaping content. This is a common definition that has informed the vilification of rhetoric since antiquity. When rhetoric is regarded as the manipulation of the linguistic features of a text, it becomes associated with some with fraud, by others with the maintenance of institutional hierarchies. In this connection, studying rhetoric means studying how people get fooled; and rhetoric is understood as the opposite of truth. The rhetoric of a text is seen as its use of ornamental, pretentious, carefully calculated, sometimes bombastic language, through which the writer or speaker seeks power over listeners or readers.

If we consider rhetoric as the study and practice of featuring rather than shaping content, we foreground its function as a tool for “special-interest groups.” The special-interest-group rhetor selects and configures language so that certain terms are privileged and endorsed, and others are ignored. In literary studies, for example, the rhetoric of the New Criticism appreciates unity, continuity, and coherence in literary works, and directs our attention to these elements; by contrast, the rhetoric of deconstruction finds literary value in the breakdown of these same elements. These two groups adopt different critical lexicons that strike us as mutually exclusive:

It will be sufficient if [the reader] will understand the unit meanings with which the poet begins—that is, that he understands the meanings of the words which the poet uses—and if he will so far suppress his convictions or prejudices as to see how the unit meanings or partial meanings are built into a total context. (Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, 252)

In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach... as based as it is on the infinity of language. (Roland Barthes, S/Z, 5–6)

Brooks employs the lexicon of units and unity, Barthes of multiplicity and infinity. Analyzing the connection of lexical and syntactic choices to the special-interest group that an author represents has become a common academic and journalistic enterprise, so that there are numerous studies of, for instance, the rhetoric of advertising and marketing, the rhetoric of political movements, and the rhetoric of religious institutions, as well as the rhetoric of academic language itself, such as literary criticism and philosophy. However, to the extent that the meaning of rhetoric is restricted in such studies to the linguistic features of the text, they evade a fuller—and, in fact, classical—portrayal of rhetoric.

The power of eloquence, as defined in 55 B.C. by the Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero, indicates the scope of rhetoric. The real power of eloquence is such that it embraces the origins, the influence, the changes of all things in the world, all virtues, duties, and all nature, so far as it affects the manners, minds, and lives of mankind. (De Oratore 3:20). Eloquence, which is for Cicero another word for rhetoric, is activated by and affects changing manners, minds, and lives as it constructs our knowledge of the world. Taking as our cue this representative classical view, we would like to present the practice of rhetoric here as much more than verbal ornamentation, and the study of rhetoric as much more than a catalog of ideological buzz words.

Rhetoric is a primarily verbal, situational, contingent, epistemic art that is both philosophical and practical and gives rise to potentially active texts. As we explicate this definition, we will attempt to interrogate it as well, recognizing that any conception of rhetoric—no matter how broad—entails ambiguities and limitations. As twentieth-century rhetorician and philosopher Kenneth Burke said, “A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing” (“Permanence and Change,” 49).

The word text in our definition of rhetoric can be understood in both its conventional, quite limited sense, and its ambiguous, more rhetorical sense. In the former sense, we mean by that any instance of spoken or written language that could be considered in isolation as a self-sufficient entity. Thus, a book, an essay, an editorial, a song’s lyrics, a joke, and a speech are texts, but so are a chapter, a section of an article, a refrain in a song or poem, and a contribution to a conversation. This definition of text may remind you of the definition of sentence that you learned in elementary school: “a statement that can stand alone.” You probably realize now that this is an inadequate definition of a sentence, because no statement can “stand alone”; every utterance depends for its meaning on extrinsic factors. This fact is epitomized by a famous passage from Kenneth Burke’s Philosophy of Literary Form:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another...
comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embar­

rassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of

your ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour
grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vig­

goriously in progress. (110-111)

If we imagine a text as the momentary entry into an unfolding conversation

connected to what Burke calls (after anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski) shif­
ting “context of situation,” we see that defining it as an independent and self­

contained entity is something of a convenience.

We will use the term rhetor here to indicate an individual involved in the pro­
duction of a text, usually a speaker or writer; we will call readers and listeners

who attend to and interpret a text auditors, or, as a group, the audience. A text is

potentially active when the rhetor intends it to do something, to affect or change

the auditors’ minds or actions or environments. Rhetorical analysis is the study of

whether and how texts actually do affect, influence, or change auditors. The term potentially active bears some scrutiny here, as one of our students, Ulrike

Jaeckel, indicated in her review of this Introduction:

Does a rhetor ever NOT intend a text to do something? Since you include “a

contribution to conversation” under “texts,” pretty much any utterance can

become a text, so even specific instances of “hello” or “thank you.” Aren’t these “potentially active”—capable of producing an effect on a hearer—just by

being uttered?

We agree that all utterances are texts, and all texts have the potential to change audi­
tors. As Ulrike Jaeckel’s response indicates, our term potentially active had effects

that we did not anticipate; that is, we did not assess its potential fully enough to

predict that it might activate her questions. With this admission, we might draw a

distinction between the intended potential activity of a text and its unintended poten­
tial activity. Rhetorical analysis is interested in both kinds of potential.

As a primarily verbal art, rhetoric has as its medium the written and spoken

word, although many scholars study how visual images and nonverbal sounds

can complement the effect of a text’s words. Some use the term rhetoric

metaphorically and speak of the rhetoric of, for instance, gestures, paintings, or

films. The eloquentian movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

attempted an exhaustive analysis of the communicative effects of bodily move­

ments in order to advise orators about what kinds of body language suited what

kinds of speeches. But the eloquentians made clear that gestures do not them­

selves constitute rhetoric; rather, the visual image of the rhetor produced lin­
guistic understanding in the auditors. For instance, a certain contortion of the

facial features would have them think and feel “pity.” Following this under­

standing, we may say that rhetoric infers in the words that a visual image activ­

ates, so that the rhetoric of a painting, for instance, may be understood as the

verbal understanding that accompanies its viewing.

As a situationally contingent art, rhetoric guides prospective writers and

speakers to consider the timeliness and suitability for the particular situation of

any text they might produce. Ancient Greek philosophers and rhetoricians had a

useful term for this abstract concept forms. Inherent in forms is a sensitivity to the

belief that in any situation where the potential for active communication exists,

rhetors must consider whether, from the point of view of potential auditors, the

time, the circumstances, and the intellectual and ideological climate are right.

These are factors that are very difficult to control, let alone predict. In recent years,

scholarship in the humanities and the social sciences has begun to recognize the
difficulty of maintaining “stable” texts with determinate meaning; this recogni­
tion accounts for the difference in the statements by Brooks and Barthes above,

written in 1947 and 1970, respectively. Barthes’s statement suggests that—given

infinite possibilities for meaning—a text is an unachievable ideal. Adding to this

view our recognition that the public realm any text enters is today more politi­

cally, ethnically, and intellectually diversified than ever, the contingent nature of

rhetoric becomes a very prominent and formidable consideration.

As an epistemic art, rhetoric leads prospective auditors to see “truth” neither

as something that exists in their own minds before communication nor as some­

thing that exists in the world of empirical observation that they must simply

report “objectively.” Instead, rhetorical truth is something achieved transac­tion­
ally among the rhetor and the auditors whenever they come to some shared

understanding, knowledge, or belief. As coparticipants in a verbal exchange, all

the parties involved are knowledge-makers.

Philosophical rhetoric is primarily concerned with the exploratory construc­tion

of knowledge. The philosophical rhetor is less concerned with the composition of

a particular text than with exploring ways of knowing and defining a subject. Plato

attempts to illustrate philosophical rhetoric in Phaedrus, in which Socrates engages

in a question-and-answer exchange with Phaedrus about the nature of love, of

rhetoric, and of writing, working through different possible meanings of each.

Ann E. Berthoff has recently tried to engage writing students in a kind of

philosophical rhetoric through the use of a “double-entry notebook,” in which

they write about a subject in one column and then return to that writing at a later

column. In this way, writers engage in a dialectical exchange with themselves as

they try to “think, and think again,” as Berthoff puts it. Another form of philo­

sophical rhetoric might be called topical rather than dialectical, originating in

Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric as “seeing the available means of persuasion”

(Rhetoric 1355b) through the subjection of an issue to topo or “topics,” which are

strategies (such as comparison or analogy) that contribute to full investigation.

As a philosophical art, rhetoric guides rhetors to think and observe deeply—intu­

itively, systematically, and empirically. Philosophic or exploratory rhetoric can also

be seen as the foundation for practical rhetoric. That is, systematic exploration

leads prospective rhetors to find what they could say or write in specific situations

when they plan a potentially active text, even if they do not actually produce it.
Rhetoric is not logic, but they are related fields of inquiry. Logic studies the way a chain of reasoning leads from premises to incontrovertible conclusions. Rhetoric also studies how rhetors and auditors reason from premises to conclusions, but it is located in the realm of uncertainty and probable truth, in which conclusions are arguable rather than incontrovertible.

Rhetoric is not dialectic, although Aristotle calls rhetoric the antistrophos (counterpart) to dialectic, and the examples from Plato and Berthoff above suggest that rhetorical exploration can take on a dialectical—question-answer or comment-response—form. In its classical sense, dialectic is a system of reasoning about subjects for which there are few or no "hard," scientific data or proven premises. Rhetoric also addresses such subjects, but because the practice and study of rhetoric take into account how rhetors actually shape their reasoning processes into texts that appeal to a potential auditor's understanding and emotions, it is a more expansive, inclusive, and socioculturally alert art than dialectic.

Rhetoric is not poetics, but they are related fields as well. Poetics studies literary texts—poetry, fiction, drama, and so forth—as linguistic artifacts, examining such features as imagery, diction, textual organization, and rhythm. In his Poetics, Aristotle discusses the ways in which tragic drama affects its audience, and this perspective suggests that both rhetoric and poetics are audience-oriented. The decisive distinction between rhetoric and poetics rests on rhetoric’s concern with the invention of an effective text; whereas poetics regards the elements of an effective composition, rhetoric is additionally a body of resources for composing.

To anyone who would hold that rhetoric is merely an empty display of verbal ornamentation or a facile use of one-sided terms and concepts, we would offer a broader view of rhetoric’s scope: Certainly, the rhetoric of a text is the selection and organization of language it uses to move potential readers and listeners to consider its ideas and conclusions. But the rhetoric of a text is also the intellectual, cognitive, affective, and social considerations that guide the writer or speaker to use the language as he or she does; and the rhetoric of a text is the effect it actually has on people who listen to it or read it.

THE FIELD(S) OF RHETORIC

When we speak about the art of rhetoric, then, we mean the faculty that humans have—a teachable, improvable faculty—for inventing constructions of "reality" that others may regard as such. In short, rhetoric is the art of knowledge-making. Some scholars have devoted themselves to learning how this art was conceived and taught in periods since antiquity; they specialize in the history of rhetoric and have produced an impressive array of studies that indicate the ways in which the definition and purposes of rhetoric have changed through the ages, and have tied these changes to epistemological and political shifts. Other scholars study the effectiveness of actual texts, past and present, thus specializing in rhetorical criticism. Perhaps one of the most famous pieces of rhetorical criticism in this century is Kenneth Burke’s essay, "The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle,’” in The Philosophy of Literary Form, in which Burke tries to account for the social, political, and psychological conditions that made Hitler’s discourse persuasive.

The teaching of written and oral communication has also recently become a scholarly specialty, with the history and theory of rhetoric as its antecedent. Communication pedagogy that is grounded in a full definition of rhetoric offers students a broad view of the functions a text can perform. The rhetorical theorist-as-teacher would tend to give the following sort of characterization of rhetoric to these students:

To engage in the art of rhetoric does not solely mean producing texts that aim to persuade people to take a specific action—vote for Candidate X, invest your money in Bank Y, march in protest against Policy Z. The range of rhetoric is wide: You can create a text that will lead your auditors to wonder about a subject, to ruminate, to think in ways they have never thought before. You can inform your auditors about facts, data, and information of which they were previously unaware. You can lead your auditors to accept an idea, a proposition, a thesis. And, of course, you can move your auditors to take a specific action: vote for Candidate X, invest your money in Bank Y, march in protest against Policy Z. Teachers in antiquity proposed that the art of rhetoric appeals to an auditor’s beliefs and opinions, emotions, and aesthetic sensibilities. They named the purposes of rhetorical communication as 1) to teach, 2) to persuade, and 3) to move. Through the elaboration and practice of the appeals and purposes of rhetoric, you can develop a broad repertory of communication skills and strategies. Think of the complexity of the art of rhetoric. To succeed at it calls for a thoroughly inquisitive, logical, flexible and philosophical frame of mind; an almost anthropological view of the situation in which you will be communicating, in order to assess how issues of time and place and the predispositions of potential auditors might affect your text; a knowledge of the structure, limits, and nuances of language; and a psychological ability to assay your auditors and know how to move them from believing only in their own ideas and feelings to considering and accepting yours.

Although a number of scholars and teachers specialize in the history, theory, and teaching of rhetoric per se, we can locate an implicit theory of rhetoric in any discussion that addresses the elements of verbal knowledge-making. The philosopher discussing the ethical limits of the human imagination, the ethnographer surveying the types of discourse in action in a village, the teacher typing up the requirements for her students’ term paper, the political scientist arguing reasons for an election victory, the feminist illustrating the kinds of writing that correspond with women’s ways of knowing, the computer programmer creating
word-processing software, the cultural historian studying the different ways in which literacy has been defined through the centuries, the psychologist presenting the cognitive effects of television advertising, and the newspaper subscriber writing a letter to the editor complaining about an inaccurate article, are all both rhetors and theorists of rhetoric. They are rhetors in that they are making verbal knowledge, with the hope that others will accept it as valid; they are theorists of rhetoric in that they are explicating and criticizing particular instances of verbal knowledge-making. We offer this indication of the diverse activities that might constitute both the theory and practice of rhetoric in order to further our point that rhetoric concerns nothing less than what Terry Eagleton has called “the field of discursive practices in society as a whole” (Literary Theory 205).

We survey the breadth of this field more fully in Part IV of this book, which focuses on the relationships between rhetoric and cultural studies, non-Western culture, feminism, gender studies, philosophy, the arts, literary criticism, science, education, literacy, composition, technology, and oratory.

Our primary concern in this book is the development and diversification of theories of rhetoric. For the balance of this Introduction, we will essay this concern in a general fashion, with the promise that the terms and concepts we deal with here will show up again in subsequent sections, in discussions that we hope will both further explicate and complicate the nature of rhetorical theory.

THE ELEMENTS OF RHETORIC

Over the centuries, scholars have produced works that explain principles, techniques, and guidelines for practicing the art of rhetoric. Because they have generally been used to teach prospective rhetors, these works have often been called rhetoric didactics, the Latin term for “teaching” rhetoric book. In addition, scholars over the centuries have studied what they regarded as excellent and effective texts—often speeches—produced by renowned rhetors, trying to infer effective principles that other rhetors could follow. Collectively, the exemplary texts have been called rhetoric ideals, Latin for “rhetoric in use.” The traditional body of concepts that we know as rhetorical theory is derived from both the works of rhetoric didactics and rhetoric ideals.

The major elements of rhetorical theory are the rhetorical situation, the audience, the plete or “proofs” (and their subdivisions), and the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.

Although the concept of the rhetorical situation is inherent in the history of rhetoric from antiquity to the present, it is most clearly explicated in an essay written in 1968 by Lloyd Bitzer titled “The Rhetorical Situation” (reprinted in Part III). According to Bitzer, a situation is rhetorical when three elements are present: an exigence, an audience, and rhetorical constraints. An exigence is a need, a gap, something wanting, that can be met, filled in, or supplied only by a spoken or written text. We can say that the exigence of a situation calls forth a text. Thus, exigence is related to limits as a kind of “generative timeliness.” The death of a famous person creates an exigence that calls forth a eulogy. Receiving lousy service from a public utility company creates an exigence that calls forth a letter of complaint. The discovery of a new concept by researchers—for example, the discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA by James Watson and Francis Crick—creates an exigence that calls forth an article reporting the discovery and arguing for its importance.

The audience, according to Bitzer, is not simply the aggregation of people who listen to or read the text called forth by the exigence. More specifically, the audience comprises the people who have a reason to be concerned about the exigence and who are capable of acting on it or being acted upon by it. The audience for a eulogy is the people who were connected, however remotely, to the deceased person and who are in the position to have their feelings of grief assuaged by the text. The audience for the letter of complaint is the people connected with the utility company who are in some position to see that the lousy service improves in the future. The audience for the report of the new discovery is the people who are concerned about the state of knowledge in the field and who believe that future research projects should be built on the foundations of newly validated concepts, whether they actually conduct those research projects themselves or simply keep informed of others who do.

Rhetorical constraints, according to Bitzer, are the features of the audience—and perhaps the speaker’s or writer’s—frames of mind, belief systems, and ways of life that lead the audience to accept the speaker’s or writer’s ideas and to act upon the exigence. Rhetorical constraints include the audience’s presuppositions and beliefs about the subject of the text as well as the patterns of demonstration or proof that the audience will accept. In other words, the constraints are ideas and attitudes that exist between the rhetor—motivated to create discourse by the exigence—and the audience, who ideally will act upon this exigence. Constraints upon a eulogy include the facts about the deceased person’s life and works that the audience can be expected to know, as well as the audience’s beliefs about the thoughts and sentiments that are comforting in a time of grief. Constraints upon the letter of complaint include the writer’s conception of what would constitute good service, the facts of the situation that amount to lousy service, and the types of appeals the writer believes she can make—appeals to her status as a good customer who regularly pays her bill, say, or appeals to the company’s image as a trustworthy provider of service—that will induce the company to improve. Constraints upon the research report include the beliefs, shared by the writers and the audience, about the nature of an experiment or research project in the field, presumptions about the “objective” roles of the researchers themselves, the facts of the experiment or project that the researchers are reporting, and the patterns of reasoning they use (and fully expect their audience to “buy”) in order to argue for their discovery as something significant in the intellectual community.

Although Bitzer’s article brought together concepts that had already been
developed in rhetorical theory, some scholars found his characterization of exigence, audience, and constraints a bit too passive. Thus, his work was very productively revised in an article written eight years later by Richard Vatz, titled "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation" (reprinted in Part IV). The problem with Bitzer's depiction of the rhetorical situation, Vatz maintains, lies in Bitzer's tacit suggestion that exigences, audiences, and constraints exist as a priori categories, before a rhetor chooses to produce a text. It's not that exigences, audiences, and constraints are simply there, Vatz argues, and a rhetor simply trips over them and uses them. On the contrary, says Vatz, exigences, audiences, and constraints are created by rhetors who choose to activate them by inscribing them into their texts. In other words, a situation becomes rhetorical only when a speaker or writer evokes an audience within a text, embodies an exigence within the text that the evoked audience is led to respond to, and handles the constraints in such a way that the audience is convinced that they are true or valid. Bitzer's and Vatz's articles represent two major contributions to an important debate within rhetorical theory about whether texts simply recognize and make use of certain conditions or whether texts actually create those conditions.

AUDIENCE

At first glance, the concept of audience in rhetorical theory seems simple to illustrate, but that simplicity is deceptive. The term audience embodies a metaphor from the theater, and indeed when a speech is given before an assembly, we can say that that collection of people is an audience for the speech. In other words, the term audience can refer exclusively to those who hear a speech or performance, as suggested by a strict translation of words. In point of fact, the concept of audience becomes considerably tangled when we consider three complications: First, spoken texts are often recorded for later listening or transmitted electronically beyond the setting where they are performed. Second, spoken texts are often performed versions of previously written texts or are transcribed into written form after they are spoken, and are thus available for audiences completely removed in both time and space from the person who delivered the speech. Third, most of the texts we encounter are never spoken or intended to be spoken, but are instead written and, like transcribed spoken texts, may be read by anyone who happens to pick them up.

Scholars have tried to accommodate these complications by reconsidering the definition of audience. They have, for instance, distinguished the primary audience for a text from various subsidiary audiences. This distinction has also been drawn using the terms immediate audience and mediated audiences. Consider an example: The governing council of an economically developing city commissions an ecologist to write a report on the environmental implications of opening up a certain region of the city for commercial real estate development. The primary, immediate audience for the ecologist’s report would be the city council members. The report, however, would probably have at least several subsidiary or mediated audiences: the aides to the council members, who read important documents for their bosses and help them digest the material; potential real estate developers, who want to see whether their entrepreneurial plans are favored or foiled by the document; writers for the local media, who are responsible for reporting such issues in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television; and members of environmental protection groups, who want to maintain the ecological viability of the region in the face of what they consider threats posed by commercial development plans. The ecologist’s text, to be most effective, would have to address the concerns of all these audiences in some way.

Drawing on canonical works from antiquity through the eighteenth century, traditional rhetorical theory has conceived a text’s audience as some individual or collective “other” whom the rhetor must identify, analyze in psychological and emotional terms, and then, by means of the text, “change” in some way so that they will adhere to the rhetor’s central idea or thesis. This traditional view has three drawbacks. First, it largely limits attention to the primary, immediate audiences in a rhetorical situation, and generally ignores any subsidiary, mediated audiences. Second, the traditional view tends to assume an antagonistic relation between the rhetor and the audience; it tacitly posits that there is some ideological, emotional, or psychological condition that must be changed within the auditors before they can accept the rhetor’s ideas. Third, the traditional view ignores the shared, dialectical nature of communication by characterizing the rhetorical interaction as moving in one direction, from the rhetor to the auditor. The rhetor is the sender and the auditor is the receiver.

Clearly, real communication does not operate on such an immediate, one-way, agonistic stream. Some theorists have conflated the concept of audience, as traditionally treated in rhetorical theory, with the concept of speech community developed in sociolinguistics. The result has been the forging of a new concept, discourse community, an entity defined by Martin Nystrand in 1982. A discourse community, according to Nystrand, comprises people who “may very well never speak or write to each other,” but who “could effectively so interact if required since they know the ways of speaking of the group” (15; emphasis in original). In a 1991 work, John Swales provides a more comprehensive definition of discourse community: It comprises people who strive to achieve a “broadly agreed set” of epistemological or social goals by means of their spoken or written texts, who employ “mechanisms of intercommunication among members,” who use “participatory mechanisms” to provide information and feedback concerning one another’s texts, who use one or more genres “in the communicative furtherance of the communal aims,” and who conventionally use “some specific lexicon” (24–27). Consider, for example, the kind of discourse community that has developed in many manufacturing or quality control operations in many contemporary industrial settings. These operations have been shifted from a single department to the production workforce as a whole. Instead of having a company inspector examining the products as they
are being made, the workers themselves assess the products and they document, in writing, what is working well, what is not working, and what needs to be done differently in future shifts. They meet regularly, usually in “quality control teams,” to go over the quality control documents they are writing and to plan modifications to both production and the documentation system; they produce a common genre, the “quality management report,” which embodies their common knowledge of appropriate content, diction, and format. These workers form a discourse community.

The concept of a discourse community allows rhetorical theorists to analyze interactions among rhetors and both primary and subsidiary audiences, and to illustrate how audiences and speakers and writers influence each other’s texts. A clear example of such an analysis is provided by the work of Greg Myers, a linguist at Lancaster University in Great Britain. In the early 1980s, Myers studied how two academic biologists—one a well-known researcher in his field and the other attempting to publish his first article in what for him was a new area—shaped their personalities as they wrote grant proposals and articles for professional journals. Myers was able to analyze how the two biologists reacted differently to the responses by the grant proposal reviewers, as well as how the biologists tried to shape their articles to accommodate the range of auditors in their discourse community, which included the reviewers, the journal editors, and the readership of the journal.

The concept of audience is further complicated by the question whether the audience in mind is “addressed” or “invoked.” As noted previously, rhetorical theory has traditionally conceived the audience as an isolated, usually antagonistic other whom rhetors have to “address” and “accommodate” in their texts. Clearly, there are some rhetorical situations in which the transaction between the rhetor and the auditors happens in exactly that way. But as early as 1975, with the publication of Walter Ong’s essay, “The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction,” rhetorical theorists began to characterize the writer-reader interaction in some texts as constructive rather than adaptive. In other words, in some rhetorical situations, writers cannot know with any certainty who their readers are; accordingly, writers work to construct an audience, playing on the assumptions and operating within the rhetorical constraints to which they presume the constructed audience would adhere. For example, when writing a letter to a friend or colleague, discussing common ideas or experiences, a writer addresses an auditor personally and immediately as a known entity. On the other hand, when writing an article for mass publication, a writer must imagine and make the interests, knowledge, and needs of a presumed audience. In either case, the rhetor determines the role of the audience as part of the process of composing. A full explanation of this conception of audience is offered by Lisa Ede’s and Andrea Lunsford’s 1984 article, “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy.”

**MEANS OF PERSUASION**

An ancient term for the kinds of appeals that may affect an audience is *pistis*. The concept of the *pistis* is Aristotelian, and the singular term *pistis*, usually understood as “proof,” “appeal,” or “means of persuasion,” is one of those classical Greek terms for which we have no precise English equivalent. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses three sorts of textual appeals: to the authority of the rhetor (*ethos*), to the emotions or “stages of life” of the audience (*pathos*), and to systems of reasoning (*logos*) that the rhetor and the audience share. Although Aristotle categorizes the appeals separately, examining their operation clearly shows that they intersect and interact.

*Ethos* is generally defined as the good character and the consequent credibility of the rhetor. Theorists in ancient Greece and Rome did not agree among themselves whether *ethos* exists solely in the text a rhetor creates, or whether the rhetor must evince *ethos* in his or her life as well as in his or her texts. Aristotle maintained the former position: He taught that a text must demonstrate that the rhetor is a person of good sense (*phronesis*), virtue (*arête*), and good will (*euthyolia*). A rhetor could not depend, according to Aristotle, on the audience’s knowing more about the rhetor’s *ethos* than the text itself established. The text must do the job. The theorists who translated and adapted Greek rhetoric for Roman life, notably Cicero and later Quintilian, tended to take the externalist position. Quintilian, who referred to *ethos* with the Latin term *auctoritas*, maintained that the character of a speaker or writer was as vital as the representations of it within the text. Thus, Quintilian taught that the expert at rhetoric was the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*: the good man skilled at speaking.

Although there are clearly instances where the *ethos* of a rhetor is demonstrated by actions and examples in life, because texts are today so frequently disseminated and consumed at a remove from the author, it is sensible to examine the ways the texts themselves inscribe a rhetor’s *ethos*. Consider, for example, the convention in published academic papers of using footnotes and bibliographies to cite previously published studies. Why does a writer do this? Surely, some readers could use these citations to check the accuracy and validity of the writer’s intellectual antecedents, and some readers might use them to guide their own reading or research on the same subject. Actually, however, such citations operate to invest the writer—and thus the text—with *phronesis*: good sense or “practical” wisdom. The writer becomes more credible because she has done the required homework in the field and shown it through the citations. Consider, to continue using the published academic paper as an example, the tradition of listing the author’s academic affiliation in a byline, an address line, or a biographical paragraph; here is an example recently published to accompany an article by William Covino:
William A. Covino is professor of English at the University of Illinois, Chicago, where he teaches in the graduate program in language, literacy, and rhetoric. His articles on rhetorical theory and history have appeared in several journals, and his books include *The Art of Wondering: A Revisitional Return to the History of Rhetoric*, *Forms of Wondering: A Dialogue on Writing for Writers, and Magic, Rhetoric, and Literacy: An Eccentric History of the Composing Imagination*.

Although certainly some readers might want to correspond with the author or read something else he has written, for most such a listing amounts to a display of art, a demonstration of affiliations and activities that amount to “virtue” in an academic context. Consider, to take a final example from this genre, the degree of deference an author shows to previous studies, even if his or her work will diverge radically from them, and the amount of polite hedging the author of an academic paper demonstrates when setting out the significance of his or her own thesis.

The pioneering histories of rhetoric produced early in the current revival (Kennedy, Corbett, and Kinneavy) have served virtually to bring into existence for a late-twentieth-century audience authors and texts ignored under the philosophic tradition. The task at hand now is to examine more closely the method of reading we bring to those texts and, more broadly, to the whole discursive field within which they take their places. The result will be different readings of canonical texts, as well as the identification of new significant sites of “rhetoric” in its more comprehensive sophistic definition. (Susan Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists*, xix).

Jarratt might conceivably have been more dismissive of previous scholarship and more brash in asserting the importance of her own. Maintaining *eunomia*—good will toward the discourse community she hopes to engage with her work—requires the more respectful tone struck here, a tone we recognize as a strategic appeal at the same time that we presume it to be sincere.

We have already alluded to the second traditional *pistis* in our discussion of audience. This is the appeal to *pathos*, sometimes called the pathetic or the emotional appeal. The central idea underlying *pathos* is that an effective text will somehow activate or draw upon the sympathies and emotions of the audience, causing them to attend to and accept its ideas, propositions, or calls for action. As with *ethos*, the source of most later rhetorical theory concerning *pathos* is Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. In Book I, Aristotle describes in detail the emotions he believes a text, depending on the rhetorical situation, could activate in order to persuade one’s audience: anger, calmness, friendship, emnity, fear, confidence, shame, shamelessness, kindness, unkindness, pity, indignation, envy, and emulation. In addition, he categorizes potential audiences into social groupings according to character types—the young, the elderly, people in their prime, aristocrats, the wealthy, and the powerful—and analyzes the dominant emotions inherent in each of these character types that a text might try to animate.

**Two points** about Aristotle’s view of *pathos* are noteworthy for understanding the role of this appeal in rhetorical theory. First, his catalog of emotions and character is thoroughly ethnocentric, tied to his purpose of providing instruction in rhetoric to young men who strove to gain political influence in fourth-century BCE Athens. There is little to suggest that rhetors in all, or even most, current rhetorical situations would find it wise to appeal to the emotions as Aristotle defines them. Nor would it probably be wise for rhetors to stereotype their audience into Aristotle’s categories. Nonetheless, the basic move that Aristotle’s treatises illustrates—fitting one’s text to the character types and states of mind that make up one’s audience—remains legitimate in current rhetorical activity. Second, Aristotle assumes a neutral stance toward ethical issues related to *pathetic* appeals. Certainly current rhetorical theorists, as well as rhetors, need to distinguish between texts that indiscriminately utilize and panders to an audience’s emotions and texts in which *pathos* is tied to a virtuous *ethos*, in which a rhetor of goodwill seeks to evoke the same in the audience.

The third *pistis* is *logos*, the appeal to patterns, conventions, and modes of reasoning that the audience finds convincing and persuasive. Although it is common to translate *logos* into its cognate, the “logical” appeal, such a translation is imprecise and potentially misleading. *Logos* in ancient Greek means more than simply logic or reasoning; it means something like “thought plus action.” Thus, just as *ethos* moves an audience by activating their faith in the credibility of the rhetor and *pathos* stimulates their feelings and seeks a change in their attitudes and actions, *logos*, accompanied by the other two appeals, mobilizes the powers of reasoning.

Although *logos* has been explained using different terminology by rhetorical theorists over the centuries, the “logical” transaction they describe can always be characterized in the same general way. A rhetor enters a rhetorical situation either knowing, or prepared to discover, what she and her audience hold as common assumptions about the subject that she will discuss. Knowing that she will have to invoke these common assumptions either implicitly or explicitly in her text, she proceeds to offer a premise or observation about the situation at hand, about the subject of the text. With the common assumptions invoked and the premise or observation put into play, the speaker can then posit a conclusion that follows from the assumption and the premise; this conclusion is, in general terms, the central idea or thesis that the speaker or writer hopes the audience will believe or act upon.

The key feature of this basic “logical” transaction of rhetoric is that none of its constituent elements is always, or even frequently, certain and beyond argument. That is, the speaker or writer might find herself in a wrangle with the audience about (1) what they do believe, think, or feel in common; (2) whether the premise or observation is just and appropriate; or (3) whether the conclusion—the central idea or thesis—actually does follow from the assumptions and premise, and even if it does, whether there are other circumstances that would prevent the audience from accepting the conclusion. Conversely, the speaker or writer might find the audience in perfect agreement with some or all of the constituents, in which case the “logical” rhetorical transaction succeeds grandly.

Three cases might provide instances of this basic logical transaction at work.
Case A is a simplified version of a rhetorical situation in the social sciences: A graduate student in psychology wants to investigate whether high school seniors learn more effectively if they listen to classical music while they study. Thus, the researcher identifies two groups of high school students, equal in number and gender, who on a pretest showed similar levels of ability and knowledge with respect to a particular subject. One group is the control group and the other the experimental group. The control group studies new material on the pretested subject under naturalistic conditions in a library; the experimental group studies the same material in the same location, but with classical music playing. The researcher finds that 95 percent of the students in the experimental group score higher on a post test than their counterparts in the control group. In the report of this experiment, the researcher attributes the success of the experimental group to the presence of classical music in the students’ study environment.

Case B comes from American history: The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence reads, in part, as follows:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

The Declaration then proceeds to list and elaborate the “long train of abuses and usurpations” of these “inalienable rights.” 19 such violations in all, perpetrated by George III, king of England. Thus, the representatives to the General Congress assembled in 1776 could “solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states; that they are absolved from allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be totally dissolved.”

Case C is another hypothetical case, this time from literary criticism: A student in an American literature class is reading William Faulkner’s novel As I Lay Dying and encounters the character Dewey Dell. The name sounds vaguely familiar to the student, and he seems to remember a phrase in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem, “To a Skylark,” where some action takes place “in a dell of dew.” The student eventually reads further into Faulkner’s work, finds many echoes of phrases from English romantic poetry, and writes a term paper detailing the influences of the romantics on the American novelist.

How does logos, the invocation of and appeal to a potential reader’s system of reasoning, operate in each case? Only in rare instances does a discourse function “logically” by announcing incontrovertible premises as assumptions, by positing empirically verifiable and irrefutable observations about the subject matter at hand, and by offering a claim that is based on a “logical” chain of reasoning from assumptions through observation to a conclusion. In other words, logos generally does not function logically; it functions rhetorically, and each element of the appeal—the assumptions, the observation, and the claim—may be debatable and admit of more than one possibility.

Case A represents a classic, if oversimplified, version of what social scientists would call a causal-comparative study. The researcher is working from three of the ruling assumptions of the experimental research community: first, that we live in an essentially behaviorist world where people’s actions come in response to various stimuli that affect them; second, that it is possible to establish a research setting in which all the conditions under which the research subjects are operating are controlled and in which a single, isolatable variable can be manipulated; and, third, that when conditions have been controlled, any differences in behavior between two groups of research subjects can be attributed to the causal influence of the single, manipulated variable. Although none of these assumptions is indisputable, the researcher does not explicitly argue for their validity. Such assumptions are, he presumes, part of the conventional logos already operating in his scholarly field, and they effectively constitute some of the premises for his conclusion, that 95 percent of the students who listened to classical music while they studied scored higher on a post test than their non-music-listening counterparts. Because the researcher has established a conventional and controlled investigative structure, this observation itself is largely indubitable. The researcher’s commitment is to test the validity of the post test, asking whether it really measures anything significant about the students’ performance, but no one can question the reliability of the assessment. Armed with these data, the researcher is prepared to make his claim, to argue that the higher scores of the music listeners were caused by their more relaxed states or their more intense concentration, both attributable, in the researcher’s argument, to the presence of the classical music.

The operation of logos in Case B involves one of the most famous examples of explicitly stated assumptions in history. The authors of the Declaration of Independence boldly state the credo, the “self-evident truths” upon which their argument is built: All people are created equal and are entitled to the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness; when any government impedes this pursuit, the people may abolish it and institute a new government. As with the experimentalist/behaviorist assumptions in Case A, the question of whether these assumptions are universally “true” or “valid” is a moot point. They are certainly “true” and “valid” within the theology and cosmology of the authors of the Declaration, who see them as “self-evident”; similarly, the authors assume, any one reading or hearing their text will agree.

Coming in the wake of the power and euphony of the “self-evident” assumptions, the actual observation that the authors make about the situation seems rather prosaic: In 19 ways, the king of England has violated the colonists’ rights
to the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. Unlike the “hard-data” observations in Case A, the assertions in Case B cannot be so easily verified empirically. The assertions themselves—for example, that George III has kept a standing army in the colonies—are contentious and open to dispute. But notice that the authors of the Declaration do not invite the audience to dispute the truth of these assertions. They simply lay each assertion out, offer a bit of evidence to illustrate it, and then move to the claim: The colonies are independent of Great Britain. If you buy into the “self-evident” assumptions and you agree that the actions of George III cited in the document represent breaches of these “truths,” then you must concur that the colonists have a right to declare their independence and that this document makes it so.

Case C builds its claim on a common assumption in the rhetoric of Western literary criticism, namely that authors are influenced by the work of their predecessors, particularly those revered as “great authors” in the canon of British and American literature. Although this assumption has been freighted with psychological implications by Harold Bloom and other scholars, traditionally literary critics have not seen it as troubling in the logos of a critical argument. Thousands of critical essays in articles, papers, monographs, and books have been put forward based on the assumption that the influence of a previous “great author” on a latter one is discernible, perhaps conscious on the part of the latter, and generally a good thing for literary criticism to make note of. Again, this assumption is not provable; it is simply a notion that students of literature tacitly adhere to. The student in Case C discovers a “manifest intertextuality,” a patch of language in Faulkner that so closely resembles a passage in Shelley that the similarity is intentional; indeed, other passages in Faulkner show distinct Shelleyesque echoes as well. Accepting the assumption about influence and citing the intertextual passages, the student in American literature can argue, probably convincingly, that Faulkner was influenced by the literature of British romanticism.

This basic transaction of logos—assumptions, assertion or observation, and claim—is called an enthymeme. According to Aristotle, speakers or writers arguing a case either construct enthymemes or cite examples; those are the only two persuasive devices available. Unfortunately, Aristotle’s own definition of the enthymeme is quite sketchy. He explains that the enthymeme is to rhetoric what the syllogism is to logic. A syllogism offers an incontrovertible proposition as its major premise, an empirically verifiable observation as its minor premise, and a necessary, logical conclusion; an enthymeme, however, might be contentious at all three points. It is a “rhetorical syllogism” that depends for acceptance upon the context in which it occurs. In the centuries since Aristotle, rhetorical theorists have tried to flesh out his suggestive definition. Some have seen the enthymeme as a materially deficient syllogism because neither its premises or conclusions are provable; some have seen it as formally deficient because the major premise—what the rhetor believes that the audience presumes to be true—often goes unstated, and the minor premise—the assertion or observation—is occasionally implicit as well. Contemporary rhetoricians have largely stopped trying to distinguish the enthymeme from the syllogism, simply accepting that the two logical devices have some formal and material similarities but are essentially different.

The other logical device Aristotle describes, the example, might initially seem the converse of the enthymeme, but actually the two devices are related. Anyone who has ever argued a case knows the value of citing a precedent. If you are campaigning for a Republican presidential candidate and arguing that he or she will act decisively to protect American economic interests in the oil-rich Middle East, you might cite the precedent of George Bush’s actions in the Gulf War and claim that your candidate will be equally decisive. To Aristotle, however, an example is more than a single instance that acts as a precedent. The Greek word Aristotle uses for example is paradigma, from which English draws the cognate paradigm. To be rhetorically effective, an example must offer a repeated pattern of precedents. For example, if a rhetor is arguing that, despite its advocates’ claims to the contrary, the “Star Wars” defense system will probably be used aggressively and offensively, she might cite the example of previous weapons systems: “They said the incendiary bomb would be used only for defense and it was used offensively; they said the hydrogen bomb would be used only for defense and it was used offensively; they said the atomic bomb would be used only for defense and it was used offensively. Shouldn’t we expect, then, that the ‘Star Wars’ system will be used offensively?”

Although the enthymeme looks like what a logician would call a deduction and the example looks logically like an induction, they are similar in their effect rhetorically. As James Raymond has perceptively noted, the example is itself a kind of enthymeme. Its major premise, the unstated assumption, is that history tends to repeat itself. Its observation, its assertion about the situation at hand, consists of the pattern of precedent-setting instances. Its claim is the conjecture about the future that follows from this premise and the cited instances.

Although the enthymeme and example are usually discussed in rhetorical theory under the rubric of logos, these two tools of argument are not devoted exclusively to appealing to the logic and reasoning of the audience. Indeed, in order to move an audience to believe what the rhetor holds as a communal assumption, to accept her observation about the subject at hand as valid and legitimate, and to adhere to the conclusion that she claims follows from the assumption and the observation, she may need to deploy pathos and ethos as well. That is, arguing enthymematically may require her to appeal to the audience’s reasoning, emotions, interests, and to her own credibility and character.
Invention is the art of generating effective material for a particular rhetorical situation. Some rhetorical theorists have argued that invention is not a completely appropriate term for this canon because the rhetor often does not generate new material, but simply calls it forth from memory. Invention requires the rhetor to assess the audience in order to determine what they feel, think, and know about the subject he intends to speak or write about; to determine, at least provisionally, what purpose he hopes his text will accomplish; and thus to decide what kinds of material—if, propositions, ideas, and so on—he will inscribe in the text. For many rhetors, these determinations are made subconsciously, simultaneously, and perhaps even randomly. Nonetheless, such decisions allow the rhetor to probe his thoughts, knowledge base, and experiences and the data in the world around him, and to generate material he believes will be effective for the particular audience and purposes he will invoke. Some rhetors effect this search for material using techniques specific to their particular discipline. For example, a writer constructing an argument in literary criticism may search a novel, poem, or play for some important material for a particular part of his text; he might deliberately create a discourse that violates the conventions of traditional period, or he might deliberately create a discourse that subverts the conventions of traditional period.

Arrangement, sometimes called “disposition,” is the art of ordering the material in a text so that it is most appropriate for the needs of the audience and the purpose the text is designed to accomplish. Every effective rhetor understands, at least intuitively, that in most conventional situations a text must have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but methods of producing this order differ widely. Some speakers and writers considering arrangement may use principles drawn from ancient rhetoric; in general terms, these principles suggest that an effective argument is specifically ordered first to capture the audience’s attention, second to provide necessary background information, third to state and prove the text’s thesis or central idea, fourth to anticipate and address possible counterarguments, and finally to conclude by appealing to the audience’s emotions. Rather than relying on any general law, however, most rhetors derive principles of arrangement from the genres their discourse community values and expects from speakers and writers within it. For example, a writer of scientific research reports knows that for her text to command the attention of people in the discipline, she must write an introduction that frames a research question, a section outlining the methods and materials involved in her research, a section detailing the results of the specific project, and a section arguing that these results actually mean something significant.

Some rhetorical theorists have included under the rubric of arrangement not only principles for ordering entire texts, but also guidelines for arranging information within smaller units, such as paragraphs. The work of the Scottish rhetorician Alexander Bain, for example, led many scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to describe the arrangement of material in both whole texts and paragraphs according to the mode of discourse they were supposed to display: narration, description, exposition (often subdivided into such “methods of exposition” as cause-and-effect, definition, comparison-contrast, and so on), and argumentation. Finally, some rhetorical theorists have treated issues of the relative importance of information under arrangement. One mode of arrangement-by-importance is Nestorian order, named after the clear-voiced orator of the Greeks in the Trojan War. Nestor, according to legend, would begin a speech with the next-to-most important information, then provide the least important, and close with the most important.

The canon of arrangement has been called into question with the advent of postmodernism, in particular through the insistence that no text ever really “begins” or “ends”; rather, as Burke’s “conversation in the parlor” above suggests, all texts enter into a larger text. The artificiality of beginnings and endings has been explored by postmodern writers such as Roland Barthes, as the excerpt above from 5/1 indicates. For an audience of postmodern literary theorists, then, the rhetor might deliberately create a discourse that violates the conventions of arrangement, one that accepts and welcomes the disorderliness of open intellectual play.

Often called elocution, is the art of producing sentences and words that will make an appropriately favorable impression on readers or listeners. Traditionally, the canon of style has included discussions of levels of language—the grand, the middle, and the low—for example—as well as explanations of tropes, or figures of thought, and schemes, or figures of actual expression. To cite just three examples: Under the rubric of tropes, rhetorical theorists have explained the nature and uses of metaphor (implied comparison), personification (the attribution of human qualities to nonhuman entities), and synecdoche (the substitution of the part for the whole). Under schemes, rhetorical theorists have catalogued such devices as parallelism (creating a similarity of structure in a set of related words, phrases, or clauses), ellipsis (a deliberate omission of words that are readily supplied by the context), and anaphora (the repetition of the same words at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses). A great debate in the history of rhetoric has surrounded the question of whether style is simply an ornamentation of thought and speech, or whether style is “organic” to the specific text and represents, as Thomas De Quincey proposed, the “incarnation of thought.”

Most modern rhetorical theorists have adopted some version of the latter position and see style as the process of “giving presence” to ideas that rhetors
want their audiences to attend to. Chaim Perelman, among others, has discussed presence in terms of the emphasis that the rhetor gives to “events which, without his intervention, would be neglected but now occupy our attention.” The rhetor can do this by presenting images that will affect an audience—“Caesar’s bloody tunics as brandished by Antony, the children of the victim of the accused”—or by applying techniques of amplification (e.g., “repetition, accumulation, accentuation of particular passages”) that highlight the “reality” that the rhetor would like to present (Perelman, The Rest of Rhetoric, 35–37).

**Memory** The fourth traditional canon of rhetoric, seems to bear the most residue of the oral culture in which rhetorical theory has its ancient roots; however, memory is undergoing something of a revival in contemporary theory. In classical periods, rhetors were expected to commit their speeches to memory. In later periods, the art of memory was taught to young rhetors as a means of mental discipline, even though they most often read texts that had been written out. The most commonly taught mnemonic method was for rhetors to associate the later periods, the art of memory was taught to young rhetors as a means of mental discipline, even though they most often read texts that had been written out. The most commonly taught mnemonic method was for rhetors to associate the parts of the speech with visual images in some specific physical setting. For example, a rhetor could mentally connect the introduction of his speech to the porch of a house, the background narration to the foyer, the thesis and proof to the arch and the grand ballroom, and the conclusion to the ante-chamber. As rhetoric over the centuries became more and more an art of crafting and delivering written texts, the canon of memory diminished in importance. In current rhetorical theory, however, computers are being used to store monumental databases and rhetors are devising increasingly inventive ways to manipulate these data, so memory is becoming a vital canon once again.

**Delivery** The final traditional canon of rhetorical theory, once constituted the art of using one’s voice and body effectively when speaking. Elaborate theory and pedagogy, in both classical periods and later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was developed to teach rhetors how to promote words, project their voices, and move their faces, arms, hands, and even legs and feet. In departments offering courses in public speaking today, contemporary principles of delivery are still being developed; where rhetorical theory and pedagogy are more concerned with written texts, the canon of delivery has come to embrace the study of graphemics, the display of material on the printed page or screen.

When one teaches rhetoric, either its theory or its effective practice, one can teach principles of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery as general tenets, applicable in varying degrees to discourse in all fields. However, as suggested earlier, rhetoric has developed during the second half of this century as the study and practice of the featuring of specific content that is vital to the epistemological and social functions of special-interest groups. The title of a 1983 book by Christopher Norris, The Deconstructive Turn: Essays in the Rhetoric of Philosophy, suggests what might have been regarded as a heretical idea in centuries past—that philosophy is rhetorical. The “rhetorizing” of academic subjects that were once regarded as objective, and whose scholars regarded themselves as disinterested, comes along with the postmodern recognition that all discourse serves to advance certain interests, certain versions of truth and facts that serve individual and institutional biases and motives. One of the projects of rhetoric has become the investigation of how such biases and motives are inscribed into academic and scholarly discourses, and so we see increasing attention by humanists, scientists, and social scientists to the *pisteis* of the writing that defines their fields. The presence of rhetoric in other fields is addressed extensively in Part IV of this book in order to suggest what a global art rhetoric has become in our time.

**WORKS CITED**


PART I AN INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC


Glossary of Major Concepts, Historical Periods, and Rhetors
with Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, Cicero’s treatises collected what was known of *Isocrates, Plato*, and *Aristotle*.

Cicero was born in Italy and was given a patrician education, studying Greek with Greek teachers. It is generally accepted that *De Inventione* (84 BCE) is a compilation of Cicero’s student notebooks, detailing in handbook fashion a method for generating speeches. *De Inventione* retains Aristotle’s distinctions of the kinds of oratory (epideictic, deliberative, and judicial) and the canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery). However, most of the treatise is devoted to invention only, concentrating on the parts and composition of forensic speeches. Cicero pays only minor attention to speaker and audience. Although he later disowned this treatise as unsatisfactory, it is recognized as the major authority for later knowledge of rhetorical invention, and with its contemporary text *Rhetorica ad Herennium* serves as a model of Roman technical rhetoric.

*De Oratore* (54 BCE) is considered Cicero’s mature statement on rhetoric, and was written to correct what he saw as the inadequacies of *De Inventione*. Evocative of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, *De Oratore* is a dialogue primarily between two speakers, the historical figures Antonius and Crassus. Antonius, in general, argues that eloquence can be learned through training in formulaic technical rhetoric, while Crassus, in general, takes the position that eloquence springs from innate talent, practice, and in-depth knowledge of sophistic rhetoric and philosophy. However, Antonius and Crassus contradict their own positions and each other so that a simple definition of rhetoric cannot be articulated from *De Oratore*. Its method of contradiction and amplification shows Cicero’s refusal to treat rhetoric as mechanistic handbooks did, suggesting instead a rhetoric that is speculative, literary, and expansive and that draws equally from sophistic, philosophical, and technical rhetorics.

Cicero was active in Roman politics and is often referred to as the greatest Roman orator. Through his eloquence, he was elected to a series of public offices, culminating in a position as consul. In 43 BCE, he was killed trying to prevent Marc Antony from taking power. Cicero’s surviving fifty-eight speeches and letters do not significantly add to our understanding of Cicero’s rhetorical usage.


**Classical Rhetoric** In standard histories of rhetoric, the classical period extends from early in the fifth century BCE to around the beginning of the fifth century CE; it comprises the principles and theories of rhetoric developed by philosophers and teachers primarily in Athens, Rome, and the Roman Empire. Most scholars acknowledge that the work of the classical rhetoricians forged the concepts of rhetorical theory that have continued to be developed or adapted in the two millennia since.

According to these standard histories, although effective speakers and writers certainly practiced their crafts in the Greek city-states before the fifth century, it was the sudden introduction of democracy in the Greek colony of Syracuse on Sicily in 467 BCE—and the democracy’s implicit requirement that citizens be able to speak for themselves—that gave rise to explicit theorizing and teaching about speaking effectively in public gatherings. From the need to train budding orators there emerged two traditions of rhetorical teaching. The first, the handbook, or *rhetorica*, prescribed how to structure an oration. The second, or *sophistic*, tradition offered set speeches that students of oratory could memorize, analyze, and imitate.

Plato called both of these types of rhetorical teaching into question in *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. In both, Plato has Socrates, a central character in the dialogues, criticize the handbooks as being too mechanistic and reductive and dismisses both the handbooks and the sophists as being unconcerned with the role of truth, which Socrates sees as transcending the material world of reality, particularly discourse. Perhaps in response to Plato’s call for an ideal philosophical rhetoric that leads orators to design each speech to match the “souls” of the rhetor and audience, Aristotle in the fourth century BCE taught courses in rhetoric, the contents of which were later collected into his *Rhetoric*. Aristotle’s work has been called the first psychological rhetoric, emphasizing how an orator demonstrates a thesis by creating enthymemes and examples and how a discourse appeals to both the *ethos*, or character, of the orator and the *pathos*, or emotional states, of the audience.

As they attempted to adapt principles developed by the Greeks to a new sociopolitical context, Cicero and his fellow Roman rhetoricians featured aspects of rhetorical theory initially introduced by the sophists, particularly *Isocrates*: the interdependence of wisdom and eloquence and the humanistic power of persuasive discourse to create an orderly civil state. The Romans also emphasized technical features of rhetoric from the handbook tradition, particularly the parts of an oration and the definitions and functions of *tropes* and *schemes*. Both Cicero and later Quintilian are credited with synthesizing the rhetorics, and their supporting philosophical and pedagogical theories, of the Greek and Roman cultures. *Quintilian’s Institutio Oratoria* in particular is valuable as a compendium of classical rhetorical thought.

The end of the classical period is generally seen as the early fifth century CE with the rhetorical theory of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, or *On Christian Doctrine*: Augustine demonstrated that principles developed by classical rhetoricians, particularly Cicero, could be adapted to address the need to train Christian preachers, even though the antique orators were seen as pagans by the early Christian apologists.

Commonplaces Commonplaces represent a recurring feature of rhetorical theory from antiquity through the present. The term commonplaces emerged largely from a problem in translation. In ancient Greek rhetoric, an orator could be expected to consult the topoi, or places, of an argument. There were two types of topoi: Special topoi furnished conventionally accepted propositions—that is, material knowledge—for particular kinds of speeches, and the common topoi furnished various options for handling that knowledge—that is, patterns of development and inference. The Greek term for the latter was koinoi topoi. Translated into Latin, the phrase becomes loci communi; translated into English it becomes “common places.” The removal of the space between words yielded the term.

Largely because rhetorical education in western Europe was based on Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, the definition of the term commonplaces lost the double meaning inherent in the concept of topoi. As Cicero and later Quintilian taught, the commonplaces were sources of content, either propositions or constructed arguments, that could be easily inserted into a discourse. Medieval and Renaissance scholars taught students to keep lists of commonplaces—stock arguments, snippets of past speeches, praises or censures of famous people, brief treatises on virtues and vices, proverbs, quotations, and so on. The stock arguments were usually from cause and effect, from the orderly design of the universe, from the degrees of natural perfection, and from the contingent nature of things in the universe.

Not all rhetorical theorists of the Renaissance and later the Enlightenment embraced the use of commonplaces in composing texts. In the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Lamy saw commonplaces as sources of deception. In the eighteenth century, George Campbell and Hugh Blair rejected them as inimical to observation and induction. Indeed, as Richard Lanham points out, from the Renaissance forward rhetorical theory has tended to make much less use of the commonplaces than did earlier periods in that the function of rhetoric has been increasingly to communicate a distinct, novel worldview and not to transmit conventional, accepted wisdom.


Edward P. J. Corbett (b. 1919) For many years a professor of English at Ohio State University, Edward P. J. Corbett is one of the half dozen or so scholars responsible for reviving the study of rhetoric in American universities in the 1960s and 1970s and for infusing the principles of classical rhetoric in the teaching of college composition. Corbett’s major work is his seminal textbook Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student. He is also responsible for helping introduce the rhetorical theories of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rhetorical theorists, notably Hugh Blair, to a new generation of scholars.

Corbett chronicles his introduction to the study of rhetoric in an interview with his student Robert J. Connors, published in Connors’ edited volume Selected Essays of Edward P. J. Corbett. In his first year of college teaching, Corbett was assigned to teach four sections of composition and one survey of literature course. He recounts that planning the composition courses didn’t worry him—it was the literature course that was troubling. Having been taught the New Criticism, Corbett was adept at analyzing poetry but at a loss for how to analyze the prose pieces that are frequently included in literature anthologies. In the library, Corbett happened to pick up Hugh Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres and was taken with Blair’s analyses of Joseph Addison’s Spectator papers. Curious about his discovery, Corbett decided that if he were to work with Blair, he had better investigate the rhetoricians Blair cited, specifically Cicero and Quintilian. Corbett went on to write his doctoral dissertation on the rhetorical theory of Hugh Blair and to spend his entire professional life in rhetoric, a field into which he accidentally stumbled.

Like Quintilian’s Institutio Oratoria, Corbett’s Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student is a stunning compendium and synthesis of previous rhetorical theory. As Quintilian synthesized six centuries of Greek and Roman rhetorical theory, Corbett drew together the theories and applications proffered by rhetoricians in antiquity, the Renaissance, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Offering sample essays for analysis from a range of historical periods in each chapter, Corbett introduces major terms from rhetoric, then teaches principles of invention (which he terms “discovery of arguments”), arrangement, and style. He closes the text with a historical survey of rhetoric. Faithful to its sources throughout, Classical Rhetoric is particularly notable in its thorough treatment of figures of rhetoric, tropes and schemes.


teenth century by Christine de Pizan and continued today by feminist writers such as Mary Daly.


Dramatism Dramatism is the name given to a philosophy of language and human relations that Kenneth Burke developed in the course of writing his 1945 Grammar of Motives. To some extent, dramatism was developed as a response to theories of human motivation based on psychological, sociological, and scientific theories that Burke felt did not encompass the full complexity of the human situation. Dramatism begins with the belief that a rounded statement of motives must address each of the following categories, which collectively comprise the dramatistic pentad: act (“what took place, in thought or deed”); scene (“the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred”); agent (“what person or kind of person performed the act”); agency (“what means or instruments he used”); and purpose. Sometimes Burke adds a sixth term, attitude (the manner of the act), making the pentad a hexad.

Although dramatism would highlight the five-fold complexity of human motivation, it places special emphasis on the role of “act.” In the dramatistic perspective, all language and thought are primarily modes of action. Because of this emphasis, dramatism considers human motivation a problem of philosophy, not science. In Burke’s view, the study of motives necessarily lies beyond the realm of empirical science because of a basic “arbitrariness” or “magic” inherent in the very idea of an act. An act cannot be scientifically explained as the sum total of its causes. An act is a paradoxical combination—both a result of causes outside itself (namely, the other four categories of the pentad) and a creation of “something out of nothing.”

Dramatism was “developed from the analysis of drama,” but Burke insists that it is a literal, not figurative nomenclature. People really do act, a fact that Burke emphasizes through a dichotomy separating the action of symbol-users from the mere motion of things (that have no choice, that can make no mistakes). Fundamentally, “dramatism is a theory of terminology,” a theory that is, of the “resources, limitations, and paradoxes” of symbolic action. Burke succinctly summarized the theory’s implications for human relations in his essay “Dramatism”: “If action, then drama; if drama, then conflict; if conflict, then victimage.” With the examples of Greek tragedy and Christian theology before it, dramatism believes “that rituals of victimage are the ‘natural’ means for affirming the principle of social cohesion above the principle of social division” (“On Human Behavior”). Given such a principle, inherent in the very structure of language, Burke gave dramatism the motto ad bellum purificandum (towards purification of war), in the “moralistic” hope that an attitude of “linguistic skeptic­icism” would provide us our best method for understanding and averting lin­

Enlightenment Rhetoric In the era of European intellectual history known as the Enlightenment, roughly from the early seventeenth century through the middle of the eighteenth century, rhetorical theory underwent a major epistemological shift. Reacting to the emphasis in science on experimentation, empiricism, and inductive logic, rhetoricians promoted new ways of investigating reality and constructing discourses to appeal to what they saw as the mind’s “faculties.” Notable among the Enlightenment rhetoricians’ concerns was a diminution (and sometimes dismissal) of the role of syllogistic logic and a broadening of the scope of rhetorical discourse to include explanatory, expository texts as well as persuasive ones.

Many thinkers provided an intellectual foundation for the new rhetorics of the Enlightenment, but among the most influential were French philosopher René Descartes and British philosophers John Locke and David Hume. Descartes, whose ideas were promulgated in the Port-Royal Logic (1662), taught that the way to truth was through individual intellectual analysis, not through the collective interaction that characterizes rhetoric. To Des­cartes, one investigates reality by carefully dividing it into parts, conducting experiments, and drawing out causal connections. To Descartes, truth is absolute and empirically validated, not probable and established through deductive argumentation.

In his Essay on Human Understanding (1689), John Locke proposed that because the mind has the ability to perceive and profer, it therefore comprises two principal faculties, the understanding and the will. Within the will, ideas are formed from sensory observation and then bound together by a law of association. To extend Locke’s theories, David Hume prop­osed in his Treatise on Human Nature (1739) that the association of ideas occurs in one of three ways: resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cause and effect.

In the eighteenth century, it fell primarily to the Scots to translate this new epistemology of empiricism and faculty psychology into rhetorical theory. In The Philosophy of Rhetoric, for example, George Campbell notes that there are four possible ends of any discourse—“to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will”—and proposes a “regular progression” of the intellectual faculties to achieve these ends: “Knowledge, the object of the intellect, furnishes materials for the fancy; the fancy calls, compounds, and by her mimic art, disposes these materials so as to affect the passions; the passions are the natural spurs to volition or action, and so need only to be rightly directed.”

Other rhetoricians offered theories that expanded the scope of the faculties. Hugh Blair, for example, taught that the path from understanding to will lay...
through the cultivation of the faculties of morality and taste. To Blair, rhetoric was the art of "belles lettres and criticism," which encompass all "that relates to beauty, harmony, grandeur, and elegance; all that can soothe the mind, gratify the fancy, or move the affections." To Blair and others, rhetoric became a technique for upward mobility, an art that would distinguish a person as a disciple of the best culture of the times.


**Enthymeme**: In his Rhetoric, Aristotle proposes that the enthymeme is central to rhetorical persuasion. It functions, he argues, much in the same way as a syllogism in dialectic. A syllogism is a complete formal argument that consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. The following is a well-known example:

- All humans are mortal [major premise]
- Socrates is human [minor premise]
- Socrates is mortal [conclusion]

For Aristotle, the enthymeme is a partial syllogism; for instance, "Socrates is human, therefore mortal." The rhetor delivering this enthymeme presupposes that the audience will supply the missing part; the result should be cooperative understanding in which the audience is persuaded of the enthymeme's truth by virtue of having participated in making it fully meaningful. Through such a process, the enthymeme constitutes a rhetorical proof.

Aristotle's proposal that the enthymeme is a truncated syllogism is much modified and elaborated throughout the history of rhetoric; rhetorical handbooks from antiquity forward are full of discussions of how many parts a rhetorical proof might have and still be considered an enthymeme. Current scholarship has called into question the practice of defining an enthymeme in terms of the number of its parts. Lloyd Bitzer, for one, contends that counting the parts of the enthymeme is less important than recognizing that it is rooted in probability. He emphasizes that the premises of the enthymeme are drawn not from certainties (as with the syllogism), but from the beliefs and presuppositions of the audience.

Some important examples of enthymemes may illustrate Bitzer's position. In "Keeping the Thing Going While Things Are Stirring" (1867), Sojourner Truth says "If I have to answer for the deeds done in my body just as much as a man, I have a right to have just as much as a man." The unstated premise here is "All those who are equally responsible by law for their actions should receive equal rights under the law." The effectiveness of the enthymeme depends upon the audience's silent acceptance of this premise, which is itself a contestable inter-

Epistemology in Rhetoric Epistemology in rhetoric is the body of rhetorical theory maintaining that the truth conveyed by a text neither exists a priori outside the rhetorical situation that generates the discourse nor dwells immanently within the speaker or writer. Instead, epistemic rhetoric holds that truth is forged via negotiation, is generated by the transaction among the speaker/writer, the listener/reader, and the constraints of the particular rhetorical situation.

Epistemic rhetoric has historical antecedents that extend back to the Greek sophists Protagoras and Gorgias. Arguing that decisions about truth in rhetorical situations cannot be guided by a transcendent logos or reason, the sophists concluded that they must consult the dissoi logos, or competing, often contradictory, truth claims and determine which best fits the situation at hand.

Although the pre-Socratic sophists discussed the situational contingency of truth in rhetoric, epistemic rhetoric as a theoretical construct was not so named until 1967, when Robert Scott published his seminal article, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic." Maintaining that "truth is not prior and immutable but is contingent," Scott argues that, "Insofar as we can say there is truth in human affairs, it is in time; it can be the result of a process of interaction at a given moment. Thus rhetoric may be viewed not as a matter of giving effectiveness to truth but of creating truth"; rhetoric, thus, "is a way of knowing; it is epistemic."

Scott's essay generated abundant controversy among scholars (see the Cherwitz essay in Part IV), and in 1978 Michael Leff published a synthesis of the claims the-
Ethos

In rhetorical theory, the appeal of speakers or writers to their own credibility and character is called ethos. This Greek term, from which the noun ethics originates, is sometimes called the ethical appeal in modern handbooks of rhetoric.

The earliest systematic treatment of ethos is in Aristotle’s Rhetoric. Most modern discussions of the concept derive from Aristotle, who taught that ethos is one of three pletas, or means of securing persuasion, available to a speaker; the other two are logos and pathos. According to Aristotle, to establish ethos a speaker must demonstrate three characteristics: phronesis, good sense or practical wisdom; arete, good moral character; and eunolia, good will toward the audience. Roman rhetoricians adapted the Greek concept. Cicero, for example, in the Orator describes an oratorial style designed to secure the good will of the audience with the adjective ethikon. Quintilian in the Institutio Oratoria concedes that there is no exact Latin equivalent for the term ethos and offers mores, or a person’s overall moral constitution, as the closest corresponding term.

A tension has existed in the history of rhetorical theory over the ultimate source of ethos. One tradition, established by Aristotle, maintains that ethos must be established by the speech itself and may not depend on the actual, historical personal characteristics of the speaker herself. Another tradition, established by Isocrates and further developed by Cicero and Quintilian, holds that the rhetor’s actual history may be emphasized in order to establish character and credibility. Thus, Quintilian can argue that an effective rhetor must be a vir bonus discendi peritus, “a good man skilled at speaking.” Drawing on Richard Lanham’s distinction between homo rhetorius and homo seriousus, James Baumlín calls the former, intrinsic-to-the-speech tradition the “rhetorical” view of ethos; he calls the latter, extrinsic-to-the-speech tradition the “philosophical” view.

A term related to ethos in literary theory is persona. In classical drama, a persona was literally a mask that an actor wore, both to amplify his voice and to provide clues about his character. Literary theorists use the term metaphorically, referring to the character a narrator’s voice establishes in both literary and nonliterary discourse. In a useful essay, Roger Cherry casts ethos and persona as end points on a continuum, with ethos being the speaker’s or writer’s invocation of his or her own “real” self and persona being the establishment of a “fictional” character appropriate for the discursive situation at hand. Cherry acknowledges that although the concepts are separable, many situations require a speaker or writer to establish both ethos and persona.

Contemporary rhetorical and literary theory has complicated the concept of ethos considerably. Poststructuralist discourse theorists reject the image of a stable, unified author whose “self” can be invoked as either ethos or persona. Michel Foucault, for example, maintains that texts have “author functions,” fragmentary voices that are dispersed throughout, rather than authors. Given this claim, theorists from several fields are attempting to redefine ethos for the postmodern critical world.

Further Reading: James S. Baumlín and Tita French Baumlín, eds., Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1994);


Faculty Psychology

Various philosophical theories of the faculties or powers of the human mind are central to conceptions of audience appeal in eighteenth-century rhetorics, primarily those of Blair and Campbell. Faculty psychology is sometimes contrasted with eighteenth-century associationism and with Scottish common-sense philosophy, but both of these doctrines made use of the concept of mental faculties; moreover, modern histories of psychology also apply the term faculty psychology to the way the regions of the mind—soul were described by Plato and Aristotle and their medieval and Renaissance successors.

Although David Hartley spoke of “Psychology, or the Theory of the Human Mind” in his Observations on Man (1748), the term psychology was not commonly used until the nineteenth century. German philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1754) has been identified as an originator of faculty psychology, and it is true that his Psychologia Empirica (1729) and Psychologia Rationalis (1734) carry the modern term in their titles. However, in England, use of the term faculty to denote a mental capacity dates back to before 1600; and in The Advancement of Learning (1660), Bacon divides the “faculties of the mind of man” into understanding and will. This division is adopted by such eighteenth-century thinkers as Locke and Reid under these two main heads; the number of faculties varied. Reid’s student Dugald Stewart distinguished forty-eight, which included attention, memory, and conception under the subcategory “intellectual,” and sex, ambition, and pity under the subcategory “active powers.”

In Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric, the four “ends of speaking”—to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will”—match the four faculties to be addressed. Campbell also discusses memory as a faculty that assists the other four when hearers listen to and react to a speech. Both Blair and Campbell emphasize the faculty of taste.

Faculties played an important role in empiricist epistemology. In contrast to ideas, which were thought to be acquired through experience, the faculties were assumed to be innate. They were the equipment that enabled the mind to form ideas through reflection on sense perceptions. However, Condillac (1715-1780) was one philosopher who made even faculties—at least those related to the understanding—into products of sensation.

Faculty psychology maintained its sway into the nineteenth century and became especially important as a subject in American universities. It took a physiological and scientific turn in Gall and Spurzheim’s phrenology—an attempt to locate the seat of various human capacities in the brain by examining the protuberances of the skull—which later came to be discredited as a form of
training by a teacher in the general principles of rhetoric. Although Isocrates idealizes the discourse that is the outward image of a good soul, he insists that speaking well can be ennobling for the speaker as well as the audience. Thus his ethical rhetoric both creates and is created by the moral orator.

Isocrates insists that oratory is an act of creation and cannot be learned or taught from a handbook. Concepts such as kairos (fitness of oratory to each particular situation) and pronoia (intuition of adequacy and propriety) are central to the production of ethical discourse. Such concepts are not successfully systematized by rhetorical rules and must be flexibly, even instinctively, understood and manipulated by the orator. Isocrates defends the use of this noncodifiable rhetoric to educate young men, and attempts in his educational system to institutionalize principles he admits cannot methodically control subject matter.


Kairos In rhetorical theory, kairos is the term used to describe the right or opportune time to speak or write. It also connotes the right measure, the appropriate move in a rhetorical situation. In contrast to the Greek noun chronos, which is measurable time, kairos is less translatable into English. It is akin to “timing,” implying choice of a specific moment upon which success or failure depends.

Both pragmatic and moral implications inher in the concept of kairos. Carolyn Miller illustrates its pragmatic nature, arguing that James Watson and Francis Crick’s 1953 paper on the structure of DNA was widely accepted because its timing was right, even though Oswald Avery and his associates had published a similar paper nine years earlier. James Kinneavy demonstrates the moral aspect of kairos, establishing a link between it and justice. For the Pythagoreans, justice was what was due to a person for his or her hard work or accomplishments. The “proper measure” afforded to a person is just; therefore, to be moral and just means to observe “the proper measure” in action and words. Kinneavy also traces the history of the concept. Other sources besides the Pythagoreans include Hesiod, whose seventh-century BCE proverb instructs people to “observe due measure and proportion . . . in all things,” and Pindar, whose fifth-century BCE poetry stresses due or proper measure. The concept is central to the rhetorical theory of the sophists, especially Gorgias, who, according to Kinneavy, placed it as “the cornerstone of his entire epistemology, ethics, aesthetic, and rhetoric.” Plato develops a theory of kairos in the conclusion to Phaedrus, and Aristotle develops the concept briefly in Rhetoric.

Kairos has emerged as an important concept in modern scholarship in rhetoric and religion. Theologian Paul Tillich, for example, describes a New Testament kairos as “the fullness of time,” the fateful demand of every moment that requires decision.


James L. Kinneavy (b. 1920) James L. Kinneavy, the Jane and Roland Blumberg Centennial Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, emerged in the 1970s as a major figure in the revival of the study of rhetoric in college and university English departments. In three books that merge theory and practice—A Theory of Discourse (1971; reprinted 1981), Aims and Audiences in Writing (1976), and Writing—Basic Modes of Organization (1976)—Kinneavy develops theories of the basic “aims,” or emphases, of discourse and its basic “modes,” or patterns of organization. In later works, Kinneavy provides rich historical scholarship on the ancient rhetorical concepts of pisteis and kairos. Throughout his career, he has argued for a more central role for traditional rhetorical theory in the teaching of writing.

Kinneavy’s theory of discourse, which he defines as a complete utterance of speech or writing that has a beginning, middle, closure, and a purpose, depends on his graphic depiction of the communications triangle, a representation with historical roots ranging from Aristotle to Roman Jakobson. Kinneavy’s triangle depicts the discourse participants, the terms for which he varies depending on the kind of discourse being described. At the three points are the encoder (i.e., the speaker or writer or a production artifact of communication), the decoder (listener or reader), and the reality (the subject matter treated in the discourse). In the center of the triangle is the signal (the text, the artifact of communication). Using the communications triangle as a structuring device, Kinneavy attempts to describe the intellectual scope of English studies by explicating points of tension and cooperation among the four elements.

More importantly, Kinneavy employs the triangle to generate his theory of the major aims of discourse. Conceding a “crucial caution” that some aims will overlap, Kinneavy maintains that discourse that primarily emphasizes the encoder—journals, diaries, protest manifestos, and so on—is expressive in aim; discourse that primarily emphasizes the decoder—advertising, sermons, editorials, and so on—is persuasive in aim; discourse that primarily emphasizes the signal, or the artifact of communication—lyric poetry, a joke, an art film, and so on—is literary in aim; discourse that primarily emphasizes the reality—definitions, diagnoses, research reports, news articles, and so on—is referential in aim. Using this taxonomy, Kinneavy explains the underlying philosophy and basic organizational patterns of each aim.

Kinneavy’s theory of the modes of discourse offers four modes—description, narration, classification, and evaluation—in lieu of the traditional modes pro-
mulated by nineteenth-century Scottish rhetorician Alexander Bain—narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Kinneavy maintains in *A Theory of Discourse* that the modes constitute “classifications of the kinds of realities referred to by full texts” and “are grounded in certain philosophic concepts of the nature of reality considered as being or becoming.”

As a historian of rhetoric, Kinneavy has exhaustively explicated two important concepts from classical rhetorical theory. His 1987 book *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* demonstrates how the New Testament concept of faith, or *pistis*, grew out of the use of that term by Isocrates and Aristotle. A 1986 essay provides a similarly rich historical explanation of the notion of *kairos*, or situational timeliness, in discourse.


Logos. In the ordinary Greek sense, *logos* means word or reason. In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, *logos* is thought made manifest in speech (the Greek verb *legein* means to speak) and is one of the *pisteis* or means of proof. For Aristotle, proof through *logos* or what may be called logical proof, involves the construction of persuasive examples and enthymemes. *Aristotle* does not develop in *Rhetoric* the more spiritual and magical senses of *logos* that also informed its meanings in antiquity. The power of *logos* is described in magical terms by the sophist Gorgias in his *Encomium of Helen* (415 bce), where he expresses the conventional view that dialectical forces can reside in words; speech, he says, can “bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.” For Heraklitos, the sixth-century BCE Greek philosopher, *logos* is the ordering principle of the universe, the term that stands for divine reason. *Logos* is also understood as the power of discourse to call forth realities by the New Testament writer of the Gospel of John, who, alluding to the Hebrew Bible’s creation story, writes, “In the beginning was the Word.” We are reminded that the earth is formed from out of the chaos by divine utterance: “Let there be light,” calls God in Genesis 1. “And then there was light.” As Donald Preziosi points out, the divine “Word made flesh,” manifests “a perfect exchange between Spirit and matter, between the world of the infinite and the world of mortal finitude.” The Christian *logos* is the divine text walking among us.

It should not be surprising, given its association with reason and with the male God, that *logos* has been seen as a term of exclusion by feminists. A number of recent studies remind us that the ancients (Aristotle among them) considered women to be lower on the scale of being and perfection than men, and utterly incapable of reason. Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva are particularly concerned with what they see as the silencing of women’s voices by patriarchal culture, and both attempt to create conditions in which women can speak and write and be heard. Mary Daly, because she sees women as being essentially locked out of the mythological system that celebrates the perfection of the male God, wrote *Beyond God the Father* as an introduction to her later books outlining the patriarchal lexicon that determines our *logos*.

Another modern conception of *logos* has been offered by Jacques Derrida, who uses the term in order to critique a Western philosophical tradition that reinforces what he calls “the metaphysics of presence.” In a sophisticated, Derrida confronts those ancients who believe that reason can discover truth and that language is a mimetic link between mind and nature. This belief, for Derrida the principle assumption of all Western thought, participates in a “logocentrism” that insists that mind and nature give rise to language; Derrida would insist instead that language makes possible consciousness and reality. For Derrida, there could be no god before there was the word.


**Medieval Rhetoric** The medieval period in the history of rhetoric is often said to have begun in 427 ce, with the completion of Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, and ended in 1416 with the rediscovery of Quintilian’s long-lost complete *Institutio Oratoriae*. Augustine’s work marks the adaptation of classical rhetoric to the Christian institutions that dominated the Western Middle Ages, and the rediscovery of Quintilian heralds the neoclassical Renaissance tradition. Dominant characteristics of medieval rhetoric are its preceptive, heavily rule-governed nature and its pragmatic adaptation of classical material.

Historians of rhetoric have traditionally identified the Middle Ages as a period that reduced classical rhetoric to formulary treatments of style and arrangement. Works on rhetoric by Boethius, Cassiodorus, Isidore, and Martianus Capella tend to reinforce this view. Characteristically, Martianus’ famous fifth-century poem, *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, features rhetoric as a lindy fearsomely armed and ornamented with figures and tropes. Recently, however, revisionist historians such as Mary Carruthers and Ria Copeland have emphasized the dominance of both invention and memory. Carruthers labels the entire medieval tradition as a “memorial culture,” documenting the pedagogical emphasis on memory while she points out that memory was itself coincident with the invention of arguments.

Pan Chao (c. 45CE-115CE) Pan Chao, a first-century CE Chinese woman, served as historian to the Imperial Court of China during the reign of the Eastern Han emperor Ho; taught mathematics, writing, history, astronomy, poetry, and eloquence at the court; wrote commentaries, poetry, arguments, and what was one of the first treatises in history arguing for the education of girls; and was editor for the imperial library. She was also a successful orator and political advisor to the empress Teng.

Although her extant works are relatively few (four poems, two memorials, and a treatise have survived out of sixteen volumes of her written work), Pan Chao is important to understanding the history of women in rhetoric, and can also contribute to our understanding of Eastern rhetoric. In her Lessons for Women, Pan Chao offers advice that had not been articulated before on the proper use of language. "Womanly words" were one qualification of a virtuous woman; these words "need be neither clever in debate nor keen in conversation," but women should be careful to choose "words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and not to weary others [with much conversation]." Pan Chao shared the traditional belief that an ability to distinguish right from wrong was the basis of knowledge, and thus stated that "words may be either right or wrong."

In the midst of this treatise on appropriate female behavior, Pan Chao inserted a radical call to educate girls. This was not an indication that she viewed males and females as equals, but, consistent with her philosophical position that human nature has within it a seed of goodness that can be fostered by education, she believed that females should have the same opportunity to develop that goodness as males. Pan Chao was the first person in China to argue for such an innovation. Although Pan Chao's argument for the education of girls and women was not successful in her time, she was successful in framing and presenting arguments to the emperor and empress, gaining through two "memorials" the release of her aging and ailing brother to public service and the right of the empress's relatives to resign of their own volition. The pieces present lucid, well-crafted arguments for action in the ruler's best interest. With regard to her ailing brother, Pan Chao argues:

If it is a long time before he is relieved, (your handmaiden) fears that there will be a springing up of conspiracies to incite a spirit of rebellion and disorder.... Should trouble arise among the barbarian soldiers, Chao's physical strength would not be able to follow the wishes of his heart. And it may happen that from the point of view of the dynasty the work of several generations would be injured.


Pathos

The emotions [pathos] are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites.

For Aristotle, pathos names the rhetor's appeal to the audience's emotions, which he characterizes here in Book 2 of the Rhetoric as states of mind that affect judgments. It is primarily Aristotle's discussion of pathos that has distinguished his Rhetoric as a study of human psychology. However, it is also true that Aristotle's teacher Plato made the psychology of the rhetor's audience—expressed as the state of the mind—soul—a central concern in Phaedrus, where Plato's Socrates says that the ideal rhetor must discover the kind of speech that matches each type of nature. When that is accomplished, he must arrange and adorn each speech in such a way as to present complicated and unstable souls with complex speeches, speeches exactly attuned to every changing mood of the complicated soul—while the simple soul must be presented with simple speeches.

Although defining pathos as state of mind leads us to associated considerations of human psychology in rhetorical theory, emphasis on a common connotation of pathos—that is, "what one has suffered"—makes pathos an element of tragic literature, usually associated with characters who evoke the audience's pity. Proceeding from this sense of pathos, John Ruskin coined the term pathetic fallacy in 1856 to describe the attribution of human emotions to nonhuman entities, such as the foam in these lines: "They rowed her in across the rolling foam—/ The cruel, crawling foam."

Returning to the sense of pathos that Aristotle initiated, we may conclude that the meaning of a discourse is contingent upon the beliefs and presuppositions that inform the audience's state of mind. Thus, Chaim Perelman says in The Realm of Rhetoric that "[i]t is the audience's role to choose as premises of argumentation those the audience already holds." With this statement, Perelman follows Aristotle's blurring of the distinctions between ethical, logical, and pathetic appeals, saying, in effect, that the logos of one's speech must fit the pathos of the audience, and noting elsewhere (as does Aristotle) that the character of the speaker—insofar as it arouses the good will of the audience—also has persuasive force.

Although the role of the audience in determining meaning has been acknowledged in rhetorical theory since antiquity, only quite recently have theories of reading that feature the reader's role gained notice. Under the general rubric of Reader
Response Theory, theorists such as David Bleich, Norman Holland, Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jau, and Stanley Fish have emphasized audience psychology.


Chaim Perelman (1912–1984) Chaim Perelman is a contemporary scholar whose works have done much to revise the traditional intellectual status of rhetoric. A professor of law and philosophy at the University of Brussels, Perelman co-authored with Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca *The New Rhetoric* (1958), an ambitious study of argumentation with Aristotelian underpinnings. He distilled this analysis later in *The Realm of Rhetoric* (1977). In their works, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca unite philosophy and rhetoric by analyzing *enthymeme*, the Greek ideal of practical reason. Like Aristotle before him, Perelman finds that arguments do not necessarily rely on formal logic, that arguments are capable of being persuasive without being purely logical.

For example, Perelman emphasizes the importance in argumentation of establishing *presence*, by which he means the evoking of physical realities. In *The Realm of Rhetoric*, he notes the persuasive effects of the sight of “Caesar’s bloody tunic as brandished by Antony” and says in *The New Rhetoric* that an effective speaker must similarly “make present by verbal magic, what is actually absent.”

Metaphor and analogy, long understood as an orator’s flourishes rather than argumentative strategies, are also important in Perelman’s scheme. An analogy is a comparison of a set of relationships (a/b = c/d), and a metaphor is a “condensed analogy” (a ≈ c) that an audience must expand in the act of apprehending it. An analogy or metaphor has two parts, the *phora* (or figure) that we employ to understand the *theme* (or subject); there are similarities here to I. A. Richards’s conception of vehicle and tenor. Although sometimes a speaker will abandon the *phora* once the *theme* is clear “as does the contractor who takes down the scaffolding after the building is finished,” there is usually not such an easy separation of the two parts because “the separation between the form and content of discourse cannot be realized in as simple a way as classical thought imagined it.” Metaphor and analogy, then, are not dispensable aids to an argument, but the very fiber of it.

Perhaps Perelman’s most controversial concept is the *universal audience*. Throughout his work, Perelman stresses the importance of the audience to which arguments must be adapted. In order not to alienate the diverse members of an audience, a speaker must posit a universal audience whose members all assent to certain fundamental propositions. To critics who fear that the idea of a universal audience presupposes the existence of self-evident truths, Perelman answers that a great variety of conflicting ideas have seemed self-evident throughout history. He points out that the universal audience does not exist in fact, but must exist in the rhetor’s imagination. It is, in words borrowed from Sartre, an “abstract universality.”


**Pisteis** In Aristotle’s Rhetoric, *pisteis* are proofs, or resources for rhetorical persuasion. Artistic proofs, those that must be invented by a speaker, are based on ethos, pathos, and logos. *Ethos* is the character of the speaker, as projected in the speech. This projected character should embody practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill. It should also meet the needs of specific rhetorical occasions: The ethos one projects to one audience may not be effective with another, as any modern political candidate knows well. *Pathos* refers to the emotions, or states of mind, of the audience. The rhetor must understand the elements of emotions such as pity and fear in order to appeal to them or arouse them when necessary. *Logos* refers to the chosen words of the speech, and its signature is the *enthymeme*. In practice, the *pisteis* are interdependent. Even for purposes of explanation, they are not easily isolated. Aristotle overtly connects ethos and pathos in his discussion of how a speaker might adapt his own character to the character of the audience, based on its age and social and economic status; and he treats ethical and pathetic considerations in his discussion of constructing the enthymemic logos.

Although *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* have remained central to rhetorical theory, their interrelationship has been neglected since Aristotle’s time. Many theorists have emphasized a single *pistis*: *De Oratore*, Cicero dwells on the qualifications of the orator and extends his sense of ethos to include a discussion of the rhetor’s general intellectual habits, apart from a particular rhetorical situation. Quintilian continues the emphasis on ethos with his definition of the ideal *rhetor* as the “good man speaking well.” The advent of Christianity brought renewed attention to the moral and spiritual qualities of the rhetor; in his fifth-century treatise *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine says that an effective preacher needs only to be filled up with the grace of God.

From the late Middle Ages, as rhetoric developed further written and spoken forms, new logos-centered, with handbooks attending mainly to matters of arrangement and style. An effective text was one that followed conventional organizational formulas. *Enlightenment rhetoric*, with its appreciation of plain style and its suspicion of subjectivity, gave most weight to perspicacity and factuality. Influential teachers such as Hugh Blair argued that the simplest and most direct argument will be most effective because our minds are naturally predisposed to it; in this way, Blair acknowledges a role for audience psychology, but makes pathos ancillary to a rather constrained logos. George Campbell’s 1776 *Philosophy of Rhetoric* gives more complex attention to pathos than does Blair, drawing on contemporary faculty psychology. Renewed interest in Aristotle in this century has led to the foregrounding of the *pisteis*’ interdependency in the work of theorists such as Chaim Perelman.

**Plato** (c. 429–347 BCE) A follower of Socrates (469–399 BCE), Plato presented his philosophy primarily through dialogues whose main character is Socrates. The dialogue form contributes to the literary quality of Plato's works, that is, the ambiguity that results from an interplay of viewpoints and the absence of an expository author (i.e., Plato) with a determined perspective. Although many of Plato's dialogues deal with the nature and practice of rhetoric, those that devote fullest attention to the subject are Gorgias and Phaedrus.

The dialogue form in these works and others lends itself to the practice of dialectic, that is, a method of inquiry that proceeds through series of questions and answers in order to arrive at the precise definitions and distinctions that must, for Plato's Socrates, inform philosophical truth. Ostensibly, participants in dialectic do not have a final solution or thesis in view as they proceed, but the character of Socrates often seems to be directing the discussion toward certain ends to which he is already predisposed. In this way, Platonic dialogues can be seen as instances of Socrates trying to move his auditors toward certain conclusions, not unlike the kind of orator he often disparages.

**Gorgias** is a relatively early dialogue (c. 367 BCE) whose characters are Socrates, Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles. Gorgias— a prominent orator and teacher of rhetoric remembered for his *Encomium of Helen*— was still alive when Gorgias was published, and is reported to have read it. In this dialogue, Plato's Socrates advances the idea that because the practice of rhetoric does not require any particular body of knowledge and does not aim at the good, it is a false art or "knack" rather than a true art. Just as cookery is a false art that offers the body pleasant taste rather than good health, rhetoric is a false art that offers a crowd what they enjoy hearing rather than what is good for them.

The castigation of rhetoric continues in *Phaedrus*, which is probably a later dialogue than Gorgias, and is widely regarded as one of Plato's greatest works. This dialogue begins with a meeting between Socrates and Phaedrus, in which the latter describes his excitement over just having heard the sophist Lysias give a speech. In a discussion of the speech, Socrates leads Phaedrus through considerations of both the nature of love (the subject of Lysias's speech) and the nature of rhetoric, culminating in a famous Platonic summary of ideal rhetoric.

A man must first know the truth about every single subject on which he speaks or writes. He must be able to define such in terms of a universal class that stands by itself. When he has successively defined his subjects according to their specific classes, he must know how to continue the division until he reaches the point of indivisibility. He must make the same sort of distinction with reference to the nature of the soul.... Not until a man acquires this capacity will it be possible to produce speech in a scientific way.... either for the purposes of instruction or of persuasion.


**Poetics** Though used in various ways, the term poetics commonly refers to theories of the nature and function of poetry, which in this connection is meant to encompass all conventional forms of literature. The term poetics has origins in Aristotle's *Peri Poetikes*, which has been translated as *On Poetic Art*, and is commonly known as the *Poetics*. In the fragment of this work that survives, Aristotle discusses the elements of poetic tragedy, giving particular attention to the construction of the plot. Aristotle's *Poetics* is notable for the recognition that the effects of poetic art are connected to the psychology of the audience, and in this regard the *Poetics* can be compared to his *Rhetoric*.

One of the important points of overlap between Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* is his discussion of metaphor. In his comments on style in Book 5 of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle features metaphor as one of three most effective elements of style— metaphor, anaphora, and actuality; and in the *Poetics*, metaphor is called the "token of genius." Both books advise writers to create engaging metaphors that are neither too obscure nor too obvious.

Finding common terms for rhetoric and poetics in discussions of style, Aristotle anticipates the forum in which these two subjects will meet in the following centuries. *On the Sublime*, written in the first century CE of an undetermined author, discusses sublimity as a feature of great poetry while at the same time locating its effects in stylistic categories associated with rhetoric. The tendency to locate literary excellence in terms of rhetorical style continues in influential and representative treatises such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's thirteenth-century *Poetria Nova* and George Puttenham's sixteenth-century *Arte of English Poesie*. Hugh Blair's eighteenth-century *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* announces with its title the conjunction of rhetoric and poetics, and argues that the same formal and stylistic features that constitute tasteful and effective rhetoric—unity, clarity, and perspicuity—are evident in the best literature as well.

It has been argued by Donald Stewart that the splitting off of poetics and literary study from rhetoric was an effect of the "Harvardization of English departments" in the late nineteenth century, when rhetoric in the academy became identified more exclusively with basic expository writing, and distinguished from the more advanced study of literature. Reconsiderations of the relationship between rhetoric and poetics have emerged recently in the wake of postmodernism, with literary theorists such as Paul De Man proposing that the tropes...
Speech act theory has become an established paradigm in the field of linguistic anthropology. Del Hymes has proposed that a true understanding of how language works to enact social realities must take into account the illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of utterances from the perspective of the members of the language community under study. The speech act is viewed as the essential component of more complex discursive activities, such as speech events and speech situations, in which it participates.


Stasis Theory. The word stasis has both Greek and Latin roots and means to stand or to sit. In rhetorical theory, a stasis designates the point of disagreement in an issue. Stases present a way of determining the central question in a controversy; thus, stases determine where a case stands, and the case develops or proceeds from this point of disagreement.

Although stasis theory has roots in Aristotle’s Topics, Hermogoras of Temnos (second century BCE) was the first to write a treatise on it. As developed by Hermogoras, stasis theory comprises four questions, the stases, that a rhetor can ask about an issue. The first stasis is a question of fact: Did an act take place? The second stasis is a question of definition: What are the act’s essential qualities? The third stasis is a question of quality: What are the act’s nonessential qualities or its extenuating circumstances? Hermogoras divided the third stasis into categories of justification, countercharge, plea for leniency, and shifting of blame. The fourth stasis is a question of jurisdiction or objection: Is there anything about this act that mandates its dismissal or considered in a different setting? For example, the claim, “It is a fact that you stole my watch,” embodies the stasis of fact. The rejoinder, “I did not steal your watch but merely borrowed it,” represents the stasis of definition. The further explanation, “I took your watch because I knew that the spies had bugged it and would be listening to your every word,” falls under the stasis of quality. The claim, “I insist that we take this case of the stolen watch to the Supreme Court,” represents the stasis of jurisdiction.

Later rhetoricians adapted Hermogoras’ version of stasis theory to their own contexts. In De inventione, for example, Cicero teaches the four stases, but in De Oratore he dismisses the fourth stasis. In Cicero’s time, questions of jurisdiction and procedure were settled before the case came to court, thus making the fourth stasis superfluous. Cicero complicated stasis theory, however, by dividing the third stasis into legal topics and topics of equity. In the second century CE, Hermogenes altered stasis theory in three major ways. First, he restored the fourth stasis. Second, he taught that stasis theory applies to political, deliberative discourse as well as to judicial, forensic rhetoric. Third, and most important, he insisted on the hierarchical order of the stases. Thus, the stasis of fact must be answered before definition, definition before quality, and quality before jurisdiction.

Stasis theory still lives in today’s courtrooms, inherent in legal procedures, but modern applications of stasis theory range beyond the courtroom. Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor, for example, have applied stasis theory not only to forensics but also to what they see as the epistemic discourse of literary criticism. Fahnestock and Secor modify the last two stases, calling the third value and the fourth procedure. They also add a fifth stasis, the stasis of cause.


Style. Style is the third of the five traditional canons of rhetoric, appearing in lists of the canons after invention and arrangement and before memory and delivery. Style—called lexis in Greek and elocutio in Roman rhetorics—concerns the selection and deployment of the words and sentences that comprise a discourse. Under the general rubric of style can come treatments of diction, or word choice; the length, variety, and patterns of emphasis in sentences; and the use of figurative language, including tropes and schemes.

In ancient Greece, Aristotle stated that the “propriety” of an orator’s level of language should conform to the expectations and aspirations of the audience, thus fostering a community prepared to be persuaded. Uncommon language could make the audience feel learned and elevated; yet to persuade, the speech had to appear natural to a given audience, always concealing its art. Roman rhetoric emphasized textbook learning for efficient bureaucratic ends, so the choice of style depended more on subject matter than audience. The Rhetorica ad Herennium, for example, schematizes style as a prescriptive doctrine of tropes and schemes that match three types of subject matter and purpose: the plain style for teaching, the middle style for pleasing, and the grand style for moving audiences. Augustine and later Christian rhetoricians retained the Roman structure, but they based their choices of style on the intended purpose of the sermon (the subject matter was uniformly Christian doctrine).

Renaissance humanists embraced imaginative uses of tropes as a way of cultivating intellect. Erasmus’ On Copia of Words and Ideas, for example, shows how a writer can turn any statement through infinite varieties of figurative language and commonplaces. The highly figurative style of some Renaissance authors presses the vital question: Is rhetoric the “dress” or the “incarnation” of thought? If such tropes as metaphor generate different views of reality rather than simply ornamenting ideas, thought becomes more dynamic than foundational.

Such complexities of the style—thought relationship are difficult to teach to