

Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* – Notes on the Organization of the Text

The structure and organization of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* presents difficulties for the reader. No doubt owing to the text's genesis as lecture notes and to the likelihood that sections were revised at different times corresponding to periods when Aristotle was preparing to teach the subject, the ordering of main sections of the work does not seem intuitive and sometimes seems positively haphazard. The following outline proposes an alternative grouping and ordering of chapters. The objective is to help you see relations between sections that are obscure or easily missed in the received text. This outline corresponds roughly to the order in which readings are assigned for class.

BOOKS 1 & 2

- 1.1 The nature of the art of rhetoric (*technê rhêtorikê*); rhetoric and dialectic
 Criticism of previous handbooks on rhetoric
 Centrality of the enthymeme; enthymeme and syllogism
 Remarks on well-governed *poleis* and well-framed laws
 Why rhetoric is useful; the function (*ergon*) of rhetoric
- 1.2 Definition of rhetoric
 Relation of rhetoric to other arts/*technai* (dialectic, ethics, politics, medicine)
 The function (*ergon*) of rhetoric; where it is needed (the "realm of rhetoric") (1.2.12)
 Artistic and inartistic proofs (*pisteis*)
 The three types of artistic proofs (from *êthos*, *pathos*, *logos*)
 Enthymeme and *paradeigma* (example), relation to dialectical syllogism and induction
 Topics of enthymemes: General (e.g., "more/less"); specific (premises derived from specific disciplines)
- 1.3 The three "species" (*eidê*) or genres of rhetoric
 Propositions (*protaseis*) common to all species ("possible/impossible"; "past fact/future fact"; "degree of magnitude [greater/less]": see 1.7, 1.14, 2.19)

Special Topics (idia) or Subjects for Argument in the Three Genres of Rhetoric

1.4-14 Sources for ethical/political propositions

Commonly held opinions (*endoxa*) on political and ethical matters that could be used as premises in the formation of arguments (Kennedy 51-52).

1.4-8 Deliberative topics: Political, ethical, degree of magnitude (in what is advantageous or concerning the good), topics about constitutions

1.9 Epideictic topics: Virtue and vice, the honorable as source of praise, amplification (a persuasive technique "common" to all genres) is most at home in epideictic (paradigm in deliberative, enthymeme in judicial) (see also 2.26, 3.17.3-5)

1.10-14 Forensic topics: About wrongdoing, pleasure, wrongdoers/those wronged, justice/injustice, degree of magnitude (pertaining to wrongdoing)

Inartistic Proofs (Pisteis atechnoi)

- 1.15 Inartistic proofs from laws, witnesses, contracts, testimony of slaves under torture, oaths
Called “specifics” (*idia*) of judicial rhetoric

Proof through “Logos”

2.18-26 Sources for logical propositions; forms of inference

- 2.18-19 “Common” subjects (*koina*) of logical argument: (“possible/impossible”; “past fact/future fact” (probability/*eikos*) (see also 1.2.14-15, 2.25.8-11); “degree of magnitude [greater/lesser]”: see 1.3.7-9, 1.7, 1.14)
- 2.20 Paradigms [See also 1.2.8-10; 3.17.5]
- 2.21 Maxims [See also 3.17.9, 3.17.17]
- 2.22-26 Enthymemes: Sources and strategies [See also 1.1-3; 3.17, etc.]
- 2.22 Restatement of definition of enthymeme; special topics of enthymemes; demonstrative vs. refutative enthymemes [See also 3.17.13-15].
Introduction to topical reasoning
- 2.23 “Common topics” (*koina topoi*) of enthymemes. 28 lines of argument useful in all species of rhetoric (e.g., “from opposites”, “from correlates”, “from cause and effect”)
- 2.24 Sources/topics of apparent enthymemes
- 2.25-26 Refutation of opponent’s enthymemes; amplification, objection [See also 3.17.13-15]

Proof through “Ethos”

- 2.1 *Ethos* as artistic mode of proof [2.1.2-7. See also 1.2.3-4, 1.8.6; 1.9.1; 3.16.5-10, 3.17.7-17, 3.19.1]
Three elements making a credible character: practical intelligence (*phronêsis*), virtue (*aretê*), and goodwill (*eunoia*)
- 2.12-17 “Character sketches”. Description of the “characters” (*êthê*) of people of different ages and fortunes in life (useful for adaption to the audience?)
“[S]ince all people receive favorably speeches spoken by in their own character and by persons like themselves, it is not unclear [from this account] how both speakers and speeches may seem to be of this sort through the use of words” (2.13.16, see Kennedy 152 n. 74). [See also 1.8.6]

Proof through “Pathos”

- 2.1 *Pathos* as artistic mode of proof [2.1.2-8. See also 1.2.5, 3.16.10? 3.17.8? 3.19.3; cf. 1.1.4-5, 1.1.9]
- 2.2-11 Description of emotions (*pathê*) (useful for constructing emotional proofs/appeals to emotions?)
“...[A]n account of how the emotions are created and counteracted, from which are derived *pisteis* related to them” (2.11.7, see Kennedy 147 n. 68)

BOOK 3

Delivery (Hypokrisis)

- 3.1 The subject has not been much studied; remarks on voice in expressing emotion [3.1.3-7;
See also 2.8.14 (voice/gestures); 3.7.8-10 (voice/face); cf. 2.24.4? 3.7.5? 3.12 passim]

Style (Lexis)

3.1-12

- 3.1 Introductory remarks on delivery and style
- 3.2 The “virtue/excellence (*aretê*) of style” = clarity + appropriate degree of elevation or “strangeness”
Remarks on propriety of diction and importance of metaphor
- 3.3 Faulty diction (“frigidities): 4 sorts, including “inappropriate” metaphors
- 3.4 Simile: defined as a metaphor; use is limited in prose [See also 3.11.11-13]
- 3.5 Idiomatic Greek (*to hellênizein*) (= “purity” of style?): Called “the first principle (*archê*) of style; syntactical and grammatical matters
- 3.6 Tips for expansiveness and conciseness of style
- 3.7 Propriety of style (*to prepon*). 3 sources/aspects of propriety:
Expresses emotion (*pathêtikê*), expresses character (*êthikê*), and is proportionate to subject matter (*analogon tôn pragmatôn*)
Inappropriate usages; appropriate expressions for one “speaking emotionally”.
- 3.8 Prose rhythm: Rhythm as the “limit” for language; recommendation of the paeon
- 3.9 Periodic composition; simple or divided periods; antithesis and other figures
- 3.10-11 “Urbanities” (*ta asteia*) and “Bringing-before-the-eyes”.
“First principle” (*archê*) = words that create knowledge are pleasurable.
More on metaphor and antithesis; brief remarks on enthymemes which bring “quick learning” or fail to do so.
Recommendation of metaphors coming “from analogy”
“Bringing-before-the-eyes” = to signify things engaged in activity (*energeia*), e.g., metaphors that give life to inanimate objects.
Urbanities in epigrams, good riddles, paradoxes, puns, homonyms
Greatest pleasure from style spoken concisely and expressing a contrast (creates “quick learning”)
- 3.12 Agonistic and written styles
Agonistic style suits deliberate and judicial speeches and is conducive to animated delivery; features repetition and asyndeton [cf. 3.19.6]
Written style suits epideictic and is most suited to reading [aloud]; features high degree of “precision” (*akribēia*)

Arrangement (Taxis)

3.13-19

- 3.13 The necessary parts of a speech
Only two parts are necessary: statement of subject and proof (*pistis*)
Criticism of previous teachers of rhetoric for their numerous, “laughable” divisions

3.14 Proemium (in epideictic, judicial, deliberative)

Necessary function of judicial proemium is to give clear sense of purpose; subsidiary functions include making audience well disposed (*eunous*), attentive, and receptive.

Less need for proemium in deliberative

3.15 Ways (“Topics”) for meeting prejudicial attacks

3.16 Narration (in epideictic, judicial, deliberative)

Criticism of rhetoricians who say narration in judicial rhetoric should be rapid; but “speaking well is not a matter of rapidity or conciseness but of moderation” (3.16.4)

Seize opportunities to mention “what bears on your own virtue . . . or your opponent’s wickedness. . . or what is pleasing to the judges” (3.16.5)

Narration ought to be indicative of character (*êthikê*): Things that indicate character.

Narrative is least common in deliberative

3.17 Proof (*pisteis*)

In epideictic, amplification of what is good and advantageous; less need of evidence

In deliberative, paradigms (proof from examples) most appropriate

In judicial, enthymemes most appropriate.

Cautions on the overuse of enthymemes, for *pathos* and for *êthos*

Greater difficulty of deliberative speaking than judicial

Audience approval of refutative enthymemes

Brief remarks on *êthos*

3.18 Interrogation

Advice on lines of questioning; on resolution of apparent contradictions

Comments on humor in debate: Quoting Gorgias, “One should spoil the opponents’

Seriousness with laughter and their laughter with seriousness” (3.18.7)

3.19 Epilogue

Four components:

Disposing the hearer favorably toward speaker, unfavorably toward his opponent

Amplifying and minimizing the importance of what has been shown in the proof

Moving the hearer to emotional reactions (*pathê*)

Recapitulating main points of the argument