

ON THE ART OF ARISTOTELIAN RHETORIC. FORMAL/NEUTRAL ART AND FORMAL/NEUTRAL ELEMENTS

A. Introduction

One of the main problems in Aristotelian scholarship is determining Aristotle's exact attitude towards rhetoric. This problem touches upon various aspects within rhetoric and rhetorical theory, such as Aristotle's position on rhetoric as an art; his attitude towards τὰ ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος («things extraneous to the issue»)¹ – those elements which he attacks in the first book of *Rhetoric*, but elaborates in detail in the following books, especially in the third; the relation of rhetoric to other arts, specifically to dialectic and politics – and, of course, his controversy against the τέχνη writers – changing the emphasis from the μέρη λόγου («parts of a speech») to the πίστις («conviction, evidence»).

In this article, I shall concentrate on one question concerning Aristotle's rhetorical art: is rhetoric a formal or even a neutral art? Many scholars have touched upon these terms in Aristotle's rhetoric. There are works intended to find the exact ὑλη («subject matter») of rhetoric for Aristotle, or even deny the existence of ὑλη altogether. Some scholars have argued for the amorality of Aristotle's rhetoric², while others insisted on his non technical concept of τέχνη³. No doubt in the *Rhetoric* there are traces of formality alongside other traces which point to rhetoric's materia. Likewise one can detect neutral statements in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* alongside explicit statements which see rhetoric as a beneficial art *qua* art. This inconsistency is part of a larger problem which characterizes Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in general. Indeed, the problems which the *Rhetoric* raises, problems of inconsistencies, ambivalence, and – some would even say – contradictions, are well

1. ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, 1354 a 15-16. All translations in this paper, from both Greek and Latin, are mine.

2. F. I. HILL, The Amorality of Aristotle's Rhetoric, *GRBS*, 22, 1981, pp. 133-147.

3. J. E. GARRETT, Aristotle's Non-technical Conception of Techne, *The Modern Schoolman*, 64, 1987, pp. 283-294.



documented in the secondary literature⁴. One famous solution is that of Solmsen⁵ who argued for *Rhetoric* as a collection of different texts composed in different stages of the author's activity, thus manifesting different views held by Aristotle. However, much work has been done since 1929. Today there are scholars who try to find the solution by other means, such as the intention of *Rhetoric*⁶ or the exact audience to whom *Rhetoric* is aimed at⁷.

Concentrating on the issue of rhetoric as a formal and neutral art, I shall suggest an alternative answer. I shall argue for a vacillation in Aristotle's conception of rhetoric, which both reflects the specific historical position of rhetoric in his days, and at the same time locates him and his discussions of rhetoric in an intermediate stage between the traditional ancient Greek concept of art and our modern concept. While the traditional ancient Greek attitude could not even imagine combinations such as «formal art» and «neutral art», and the modern present-day attitude sees in such combinations a rather natural expression, or at least an option, I shall be claiming that Aristotle identifies in rhetoric formal and neutral elements, but that he still does not attribute these characteristics to the very essence of the art. In fact Aristotle paves the way for one of the most important metamorphoses the notion of art has gone through from ancient times to the present day.

Let me clarify what I mean by «formal» and «neutral» in connection with rhetoric. Formal rhetoric does not limit itself as to its fields of knowledge. The orator «knows how to speak», and he needs no specific field of knowledge. The question «about what does he know how to speak?» is not relevant to the art itself, since what the «speaking artist» knows is simply how to speak. Neutral art removes every ethical responsibility from the teacher's art (the rhetor). Therefore, within his art⁸, the teacher has no interest in the way his students use what they learn from him. The same is true of the stu-

4. The best survey of the various ways adopted in secondary literature to deal with these problems is in A. G. GROSS & A. E. WALZER (eds.), *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.

5. F. SOLMSEN, Die Entwicklung der aristotelischen Logik und Rhetorik, *Neue philologische Untersuchungen* 4, Berlin, Weidmann, 1929.

6. C. LORD, The Intention of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *Hermes*, 109, 1981, pp. 326-339.

7. E. W. CLAYTON, The Audience for Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *Rhetorica*, 22, 2004, pp. 183-203.

8. The emphasis on the words «within his art» is very important. Removing the responsibility from the teacher does not entail a neutral conception of art. The teacher can argue that his pupils took a good art (which is not neutral) and misused it. My claim here is that the teacher can use the neutral art argument to exempt himself from responsibility for the use made of what he teaches. Nowadays the teacher has the option – if he wishes – to declare himself to be teaching a «pure technique». In antiquity, however, there was no τέχνη which was not beneficial. A concise discussion of the value-neutrality of τέχνη held by contemporary scholars (IRVIN and WALLACE) dealing with Aristotle is to be found in GARRETT (n. 3 above), pp. 286-289.

dent (the orator); if he misuses his knowledge, *e.g.* he succeeds in defending a rapist in court, the blame is to be placed upon his personality and character, not upon his art. This situation, I argue, is far from being self-evident, not to mention natural. It is the result of a real revolution, not only in the concept of rhetoric since its inception in the 5th-4th centuries B.C.E., but first and foremost in the very concept of art.

To understand Aristotle's position on this issue and to evaluate it properly, we should deal briefly with two other topics. The first is Aristotle's position in his rhetorical discussions compared with that of his predecessors and contemporaries. The second is the status of rhetoric as a formal and neutral art up to Aristotle's arrival on the scene. As we shall see immediately, these topics are interrelated, and provide us with the milieu for our investigation.

B. 1. Aristotle and the Question of Rhetoric as an Art

In Aristotle's consciousness, rhetoric is an art. This is evident from several places in the *Rhetoric* where he refers to it as τέχνη⁹, as well as from the very title of the treatise – if Aristotle himself was responsible for it – which is nothing but a shortening of ἡ ῥητορική τέχνη. Furthermore, it seems that this was his conclusion in the *Gryllus* – one of those Aristotelian writings that have not survived – a dialogue concerning exactly this issue, namely, «is rhetoric an art?»¹⁰. Yet, the attribution of the title of art to rhetoric by Aristotle implies much more than can be seen at first glance. It is not a simple statement, but the consequence of a very serious dilemma. Aristotle did not live in a vacuum. One should not forget his master, Plato, who at least in one of his dialogues – *Gorgias* – totally denied rhetoric the title of an art¹¹. But we should also bear in mind Aristotle's dispute with the τέχνηαι writers. Aristotle has to take count of two opposing attitudes, neither of which he can endorse.

The very fact that Aristotle chooses to deal with rhetoric is proof of his rejection of Plato's solution (as it is seen in the widespread conception of the *Gorgias* among scholars) – the wholesale dismissal of rhetoric. *Rhetoric* is necessary for society, particularly a society with a democratic constitution

9. «τῶν μὲν οὖν ἄλλων τεχνῶν οὐδεμία τάναντία συλλογίζεται, ἡ δὲ διαλεκτικὴ καὶ ἡ ῥητορική μόναι τοῦτο ποιοῦσιν» (1355 a 33 - 35). Here Aristotle speaks *ambulando* (based on practice), which strengthens my claim. Cf. also 1355 b 27; 1359 b 6.

10. See M. LOSSAU, Der aristotelische Gryllos antilogisch, *Philologus*, 118, 1974, pp. 12-21. Cf. also J. BERNAYS, *Die Dialoge des Aristoteles in ihrem Verhältniss zu seinen übrigen Werken*, Berlin, 1863, pp. 62-63.

11. PLAT., *Gorg.*, 465 a 2 - 6.

based mainly on oral activity. Something redundant can, and sometimes should, be dismissed. Something indispensable cannot be given up; it should only be improved. On the other hand, when we read the *Rhetoric* carefully, we find an overall attack on the representatives of rhetoric in those days – the τέχναι writers. Aristotle is actually attacking all his predecessors in the τέχναι tradition. In response, he does not compose another τέχνη which changes one detail or another concerning the division of λόγος, new subtleties and new τόποι¹². Aristotle totally changes the rules of the game. The main axis of rhetoric is the πίστις, and to be more exact – the ἐνθύμημα¹³.

Aristotle's task is not an easy one. He cannot accept the opinion of those who deny rhetoric the status of an art nor of those who support it. He cannot simply accept Plato's position at the *Gorgias*, since for a realist like Aristotle, an integral part of the political fabric like rhetoric cannot be simply done away with. Disqualifying rhetoric would lead to the paralysis of society. On the other hand, one need not be an expert in order to see the problems connected with rhetoric and its practitioners. Aristotle is not naive. He sees what his master saw, and this is why he cannot accept rhetoric as it is. His only option is to try and establish a new kind of rhetoric – an art which would accomplish its necessary functions in the society in which it exists, but would not be subject to its deficiencies. Such a task could be entitled «vacillation within intrinsic tension». It should be emphasized that rhetoric has to function in society with all the implications which follow. On the other hand, the attempt to «clean up» rhetoric should not be overdone. In such conditions, complete success is not possible. This background is important for anyone who wants to evaluate Aristotle's views on this issue.

B. 2. The existence or non-existence of formal and neutral art before Aristotle

Many scholars who dealt with the criteria for art throughout history have detected the materia (knowledge of a materia) and the beneficence of an art as the first criteria¹⁴. However these criteria are not simply first on a chronological axis. They are indispensable criteria¹⁵, and there is no need to prove

12. On this tendency among τέχναι writers, compare QUINT., *Inst.*, III, 1, 7.

13. For a comprehensive discussion of this topic see among others, F. SOLMSEN, The Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric, *AJP*, 62, 1941, pp. 35-50, 169-190.

14. Cf. F. HEINIMANN, Eine vorplatonische Theorie der 'τέχνη', *MH*, 18, 1961, pp. 105-130; D. ROOCHNIK, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne*, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996. See especially ROOCHNIK's lists in the first part of his book (pp. 17-88).

15. As ROOCHNIK, *ibid.*, p. 19 notes, art is built on a materia and does not get one (the very term τέχνη derives from the «one who is expert in woodwork». Cf. also J. KUBE, *Tέχνη und Αρετή*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1968, pp. 9-10; A. BALANSARD, *Technè dans les dialogues de Platon*, Sankt Augustin, Academia, 2001, pp. 17-20.

it positively. My concern here is to prove the opposite: that it was impossible to think of a formal and neutral art before Aristotle.

In what follows I shall take Plato's *Gorgias* as a test case. The reason is simple. Whereas we have not a few treatises which deal with rhetoric or with art in general (the Hippocratic treatise *Περὶ τέχνης*, to mention but one example), it is only with Plato's *Gorgias* that we have an attack, or at least a critical examination of rhetoric, which touches upon the possibility of a formal and neutral concept of art. Moreover the *Gorgias* is the only surviving text which presents us with a rhetor who tries to defend himself against external criticism, by one who is not a rhetor¹⁶. It is only with someone attacking an art as lacking a materia, and a defendant who cannot understand the attack since he has no concept of the possibility of formal and neutral art, that we can support our claim. This, I think, is the case with Plato's *Gorgias*. Hence I shall make use of Socrates and Gorgias' conversation in the *Gorgias* as reflecting Greek enlightened society of the second half of the 5th century, or the early 4th century B.C.E.¹⁷.

Whoever examines carefully Socrates' words in his conversation with Gorgias, will immediately notice that these two attributes «formal» and «neutral» (using our own anachronistic terminology, of course) constitute the axis upon which Socrates denies rhetoric the title of an art. In the first part of their conversation (449 c 9 – 454 b 7), Socrates' questions – concerning the field in which rhetoric acts – hint, of course, to the «formal» aspect. In the second part of their conversation (454 b 8 – 461 b 2), we find Socrates insisting upon the artist's responsibility for the use his pupils make of their studies. Under Socrates' pressure, we find Gorgias agreeing that every student has to know what justice is and therefore he should be just. The apparent consequence is the total absence of an unjust and harmful student. The Socratic emphasis on the need for a field of expertise and Gorgias' choice of justice hint to the «neutral» aspect. We have used the word «hint» precisely because all Socrates can do is hint. Socrates, so it appears from analyzing the dialogue, does not say explicitly to Gorgias that his art is neutral

16. This is important, since we have few discussions concerning the nature of rhetoric, and all of them are limited to debates among various teachers of rhetoric on the question as to what is the best way of acquiring and imparting rhetoric. One of the few examples of such a debate which has survived is the controversy between Isocrates and Alcidamas. On this debate cf. my article: Y. Z. LIEBERSOHN, Alcidamas' *On the Sophists*: a Reappraisal, *Eranos*, 97, 1999, pp. 108-124.

17. In our case we are exempt from the risk concerning the gap between the dramatic date of the dialogue and the date of composition: cf. E. R. DODDS (ed. and comm.), *Plato Gorgias*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959, pp. 17-18, since the conception of a formal and neutral art is naturally later than an attitude which still has no room for a formal and neutral art.

and formal and therefore should not be considered an art, even if he himself might think so. The reason for this reveals to us the substrate of rhetoric at this age *de iure* and *de facto*, especially the grey area between these two aspects. In the rhetor's consciousness, his art is dealing with definite things and its value is good. Practically, however, he deals with (and actually establishes) a formal and neutral art. In a word, Gorgias' art is at an intermediate stage – a twilight situation between *de iure* and *de facto*. In Gorgias' conscious awareness, rhetoric is merely one aspect of political life, the aspect which deals with «speaking well»¹⁸. Thus the special field of rhetoric is clear. Gorgias' rhetoric is wholly concerned with politics and with venues related to it, *i.e.* public assemblies, law courts, and other public gatherings¹⁹. Indeed, Socrates' many attempts to find out from Gorgias his art's materia – attempts which extend through seven Stephanus pages (449 c 9 - 454 b 7) – do not imply that Gorgias is at a disadvantage; the opposite is true. Gorgias simply cannot understand the question. Only we, who are already used to the conception of rhetoric as a formal art, are able to look for the materia in it. Gorgias, to whom a conception of formal art is totally alien, since it has not yet come into being, cannot understand the question. Indeed, only after seven Stephanus' pages and much encouragement on the part of Socrates, do we find Gorgias' answer – (454 b 5-7) δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικα («things just and unjust») – which evidently refer to what we can call «affairs of the polis» especially as treated in the Assembly and the courts. However, if we examine the text carefully, we find flaws. Suddenly we find that Gorgias can speak not only about «affairs of the polis». He can speak about medicine as well. Indeed, at this stage he just helps his brother, who is a physician, to persuade the patient to take his medication – but who can guarantee that he will stop there? Furthermore, when we read on, Gorgias is being led, again with Socrates' encouragement, to declare explicitly that in the Assembly the rhetor will be able to be elected to whatever craftsman's position he wishes, and this at the expense of the craftsman himself (456 b 6 - c 6). Gorgias even declares, again with Socrates' encouragement, that the rhetor does not have to know and understand the field he is speaking of (458 e 3 - 459 c 5). In-

18. Cf. ISOCRATES, *Antid.* 256: «καὶ ῥητορικοὺς μὲν καλοῦμεν τοὺς ἐν τῷ πλήθει λέγειν δυναμένους» (while we call eloquent {literally: those who have had a proper rhetorical training} those who are able to speak before a crowd).

19. Cf. 452 e 1-4. For the political and public context in which rhetoric is located, see especially the words καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ συλλόγῳ παντί, ὅστις ἂν πολιτικὸς σύλλογος γίγνηται («and in every other gathering whatsoever, when there is a public gathering of the polis»), *ibid.* On rhetoric at this stage as an aspect of politics, cf. DODDS' (n. 17 above) comments on these words (p. 202), and his comment on the word ῥήτορα (p. 194). These comments contain further references to ancient texts and secondary literature.



deed, Gorgias is careful to restrict his statement to the Assembly, but we are entitled to suspect this is not where things stop.

As to the neutral aspect we find the same pattern. *Rhetoric* benefits from the worthiness of politics, and therefore the art is considered beneficial. Even if there is a student who misuses what he has learned, the teacher, by his very definition as an artist, has nevertheless taught him to use what he has learned ἐπὶ τῷ δικαίως χρῆσθαι («for its proper/just use»)²⁰. This is very important, and Gorgias takes the trouble to emphasize that for him rhetoric is a beneficial art. Furthermore, Gorgias is explicitly proud of his assistance to his brother, which also exemplifies this attitude. *Rhetoric* helps and this is how the artist evaluates it. However, Gorgias is *de facto* engaged in a neutral art, which is composed of nothing but modes of speaking. Someone else – and this is the intention of Gorgias' friend Callicles – can use rhetoric to acquire unlimited power in order to enslave others. He can persuade the assembly or any other gathering to accept his opinion using only his powers of speaking, and without knowledge of the subject he is talking about. He might lead them to take decisions which ought to benefit them, but actually only serve his personal interest and cupidity – all this at the expense of those who voted for him.

To sum up: in the period which is presented in the *Gorgias*, rhetoric is conceived as a beneficial art whose special field is political affairs. There is no one who can even think of a «formal» or a «neutral» art – not even those who practise it²¹. We shall now turn to our main subject: the discussion concerning this issue in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*²².

C. Aristotle – Rhetoric as formal art

Formal art is an art which lacks a special and definite field with which it deals, a field it claims to know and in which it claims to possess expertise and skill. I am hinting, of course, at the ὕλη (materia). Those who attack rhetoric in later periods claim that rhetoric lacks a ὕλη as is required for every occupation which strives to be called an art. The ὕλη, in fact, which

20. 456 e 3; cf. also 457 b 7 - c 1.

21. The one exception is the philosopher. Yet, the philosopher is in a sense separated from the present, since he can foresee what will become of this occupation in the future.

22. Before turning to point out Aristotle's vacillation concerning the problem of rhetoric as a formal and neutral art, one should be very careful: as far as Aristotle's rhetorical writings which have come down to us are concerned, we do not find any special discussion of this issue. This procedure, however, is by no means a disadvantage. The more oblique the method we use to expose Aristotle's view, the more credibility we gain. Finding Aristotle's views on a specific issue through his discussions of other issues, which do not deal intentionally and officially with it, is sometimes the preferable way.

rhetoric's supporters claim for it, does not suit real criteria for a *ὑλη*²³. When we turn to the *Rhetoric*, especially to its opening sentences, we might get the impression that Aristotle already considered rhetoric a formal art. I shall try to argue for the fallacy of such an impression²⁴.

First, we should try to understand what could cause such an impression. The existence of *ὑλη* in art was taken for granted since early times. Even if we do not always use this term²⁵, the very conception that every art is unique by claiming specialization and expertise in a definite field in which the artist has superiority over others is natural and logical. In fact, it derives its validity directly from the very conception of art.

As long as art is being naturally conceived in a society which acknowledges its value, no one asks about the *ὑλη* of carpentry. Not because it is of no interest, but because it is so obvious. The urge to define the *ὑλη* of art, so it seems, originates only in later stages, with attacks on certain arts, when some people wish these arts to be driven out of the city. Only then do we find all the natural and obvious elements, including *ὑλη*, being fixed and abstractly articulated. Now we find a double demand which for rhetoric can be phrased thus: on the one hand rhetoric should not participate in another *ὑλη* except its own; on the other, rhetoric's *ὑλη* should not be part of any other art except its own – rhetoric's²⁶. This infrastructure which sees in the existence and presentation of *ὑλη* an indispensable condition for the existence of art becomes so firm, that even when someone does introduce a *de facto* formal art, he takes pains to phrase it in a way which will present a *ὑλη*, at least formally²⁷.

It seems to me that this (later) insistence on the existence of *ὑλη*, and especially on stating what it is, may have led modern readers to find in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* a formal art, since in no place does Aristotle officially give rhetoric a *ὑλη*. Indeed, there are two places where Aristotle can be seen as

23. Cf. SEXT. EMP., *Math.*, II, 48 - 59; QUINT., *Inst.*, II, 21.

24. Indeed, one cannot deny that Aristotle does identify formal elements in rhetoric. However, these elements by no means imply that rhetoric as a whole is a formal art. If this difference may seem to us to be mere pedantry, this itself is the best proof of the progress we have made since that ancient attitude, which could not even conceive of a formal occupation as an art.

25. It seems that the earlier use was *ὑποκείμενον* and even the verb *ὑπόκειμαι* (sometimes it was the combination *ὑποκειμένη ὑλη*; cf. ARIST., *Eth. Nic.*, 1094 b 12; 1098 a 28; *passim*. In other cases it could simply appear in periphrastic expressions such as *περί* + gen./acc. (cf. PLAT., *Gorg.*, 449 d 1 - 2; d 9; 450 b 6 - 7; *passim*).

26. Cf. QUINT., *Inst.*, II, 2, 21, 7 ff; SEXT. EMP., *Math.*, II, 48 - 59.

27. Cf. Quintilian's definition of *materia rhetorices*: *Ego ... materiam esse rhetorices iudico omnes res, quaecumque ei ad dicendum subiectae erunt* (QUINT., *Inst.*, II, 21, 4) («I ... consider the materia of rhetoric to be all things whatsoever which may be subject to it for the sake of speaking»).

endorsing such a formal conception. I hint, of course, to the opening sentences of the *Rhetoric*, especially the first chapter in general, and to the definition of rhetoric which appears at the beginning of the second chapter. In these places we do not find any ὕλη, hence the «formal» impression. Furthermore, the near-equation between rhetoric and dialectic, which characterizes the opening of the book (on which later), only strengthens this feeling. However, it should be clear that nowhere does Aristotle say explicitly that rhetoric is a formal art. It is we who do not find the ὕλη we are so familiar with, hence our conclusion. But perhaps the ὕλη exists for him, even if its existence is not stated in its «natural» place, and perhaps this also has its own reason. Perhaps it is not the ὕλη with its strict criteria of later periods. Perhaps in Aristotle's case there is no need at all to mention rhetoric's ὕλη. In short: those who see Aristotle's rhetoric as a formal art apply to it the strict criteria which have been invented and articulated in later periods. Let us turn to the opening sentences of the *Rhetoric* and try to see if we can substantiate our claim.

The opening of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* reads:

ἀμφοτέραι {sc. ῥητορικὴ καὶ διαλεκτικὴ} γὰρ περὶ τοιούτων τινῶν εἰσιν ἃ κοινὰ τρόπον τινὰ ἀπάντων ἐστὶ γνωρίζειν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἀφωρισμένης (1354 a 1 - 3).

(«For both {sc. rhetoric and dialectic} are about such things which, being somehow common, can be known by all, and belong to no definite field of knowledge»).

Let us state clearly: this sentence does not mention ὕλη, but ἐπιστήμη. Furthermore, the end of the sentence uses the same word again and explicitly states that rhetoric belongs to no ἐπιστήμη ἀφωρισμένη. How are we to interpret these words? Every artist must understand his field. This understanding with its practical implications makes the man an artist. This is a self-evident attitude in Aristotle's time, and Aristotle makes no exception to this common attitude. He does not say that rhetoric does not belong to any knowledge, but only that it does not belong to a specific or definite knowledge. Indeed, under the strict criteria of later periods, this kind of ὕλη would perhaps not be accepted, but here we are dealing with Aristotle. True, our natural conception requires the artist to exhibit a knowledge superior to that of ordinary people, and if the ἐπιστήμη to which rhetoric belongs is to be shared by all, how are we to identify the artist? Hence, we should conclude that here Aristotle is deliberating and in a sense even vacillating. I am, of course, referring to the words τρόπον τινὰ («to a certain amount»)²⁸. Ari-

28. Compare the corresponding Latin expression *aliquo modo* (QUINT., *Inst.*, II, 17, 10).

stotle conceives of rhetoric's ἐπιστήμη as belonging to all, but «in a sense». Hence, the artist has his own place. Moreover, if rhetoric has ἐπιστήμη we can assume it has a ὕλη as well²⁹. Indeed our text uses explicitly the construction of περί + gen which is one of the constructions commonly used to indicate ὕλη³⁰.

Let us sum up our conclusions so far: the opening of the *Rhetoric* does not claim that rhetoric has no ὕλη at all. Quite the opposite: rhetoric and dialectic do have ὕλη, but this ὕλη is not strictly peculiar to them. The knowledge of things with which these two arts deal belongs in a sense to all people. No doubt this is a problematic position, and one can argue that such a position is no more than saying «politely» that the art has no ὕλη at all. Anyhow, we should remember: the one and only meaning of formal art is an art with no ὕλη. The Aristotelian sentence which opens the *Rhetoric* contains *no* such argument.

If rhetoric is not formal, we are entitled to ask for its ὕλη. However, before we deal with this issue, let us examine the second place in Aristotle which seems at first glance to present rhetoric as a formal art – the definition of rhetoric at the beginning of chapter 2. This definition makes the Aristotelian conception somewhat more complicated.

Ἐστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν (1355 b 25-26).

(«Let rhetoric be a capacity for theorizing about each case what could be accepted as convincing»).

At first reading, one gets the impression that rhetoric is nothing more than acquiring «pure» persuasive means, *i.e.* a formal art. However, is it necessary to read the definition in this way? Should we determine arbitrarily that the words τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν («what could be accepted as convincing») have nothing to do with ὕλη? Not necessarily, especially if other places in Aristotle imply the opposite. A great deal of the *Rhetoric* supplies us with τόποι on various subjects, and the orator is to understand the subjects about which he talks. Indeed, every τόπος is connected to a special subject, and requires the orator's familiarity with it³¹. Aristotle does not separate form from content.

29. As far as art is concerned ἐπιστήμη and ὕλη refer to the same phenomenon, namely a delimited field in which the artist claims superiority by means of knowledge and expertise.

30. Cf. n. 25 above.

31. Compare the five subjects belonging to συμβουλευέσθαι. Aristotle starts dealing with them in 1359 b 19, and the discussion continues to the end of the chapter. It should be noted that the subjects contained in συμβουλευέσθαι are political, and even if the orator does not have to know them in the strict sense of the term, still he has to be familiar with them. In Quintilian's version, *sed mihi satis est eius esse oratorem rei, de qua dicet, non inscium* («I however regard it as sufficient that an orator should not be actually ignorant of the subject on which he has to speak») (*Inst.*, II, 21, 14).

However, we should not overlook the simple fact that this sentence, as it stands, and out of context, actually describes the rhetorical activity as entirely formal. If Aristotle did not really conceive of rhetoric as formal, he should have added at least one or two words to locate the activity of τὸ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν («theorizing what could be accepted as convincing») in a special and definite field³². Aristotle does not do this, and the reason for this needs to be investigated.

The beginning of the answer should be found, so it seems, in the word δύναμις which characterizes the definition, as well as the verb ἔστω which opens it. We shall begin with ἔστω. Kennedy³³ has already suggested that what we have here is not really a definition, but a proposal for a definition, and this is due to the verb ἔστω which denotes similar openings in other places in Aristotle. That is to say, one should not single out this sentence and view it as the be-all and the end-all of Aristotle's conception of rhetoric. All Aristotle does here is suggest a working assumption³⁴. Taking into consideration the fact that the first chapters (obviously the first chapter) deal with one aspect of rhetoric, namely its similarity to dialectic, it seems that Aristotle is not supplying here a final definition of rhetoric, but is rather proposing a «working definition»³⁵ based on one of the aspects peculiar to rhetoric, with which he wants the discussion to be continued. Let us turn now to the word δύναμις.

One of the issues Cope deals with is the application of the terms τέχνη and δύναμις in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. His solution is simple: «Looked at theoretically, absolutely in itself, and generally, ἀπλῶς, καθ' αὐτό, it is an art, laying down rules for practice and accompanied with illustrations in the shape of τόποι; so far as it manifests itself in its practical and relative aspect, and individually as exercised by its professors, πρὸς τι, καθ' ἕκαστον, it assumes the form of a δύναμις or individual faculty, which is exercised 'in the con-

32. Cf. the «emendation» of Aphthonius, one of Aristotle's scholiasts. He adds to the περὶ ἕκαστον which appears in Aristotle's definition the word πολιτικόν; on this scholion cf. E. M. COPE, *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric*, London and Cambridge, MacMillan and Co., 1867 (repr. Hildesheim/New York, Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), p. 149 n. 1. For more on this «emendation» of Aphthonius, cf. n. 49 below.

33. G. A. KENNEDY, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 36 n. 34.

34. A good example of the use of ἔστω in the context of ὅρος is Euclid. The author opens with ὅροι which are definitions. In every stage ἔστω, which means literally 'let X be Y', is no more than a starting hypothesis.

35. If we examine the whole context properly, it seems, indeed, that 1356 b 25-34 is actually a summary of what had been said hitherto. The discussion between πίστεις starts at 1356 b 35. Indeed, whoever divided the text into chapters chose line 25 to start the chapter, perhaps because he erroneously thought we were dealing with an Aristotelian definition of rhetoric, and thus it ought to open the chapter. My opinion is of course different: see also immediately below.

sideration of the means of persuasion possible in any subject whatever' ... And so arts in their practical aspect are called δυνάμεις ...»³⁶.

I do not challenge this insight, which has grounds in other Aristotelian texts as well³⁷. However, I think that because these two terms refer to the same phenomenon, we can also suggest the following explanation: the term δύναμις, as it refers to the artistic activity *de facto*, reflects the formal activity, since the artist in his very activity is involved in finding the κοινοὶ τόποι to be applied in the specific case he is dealing with at that moment. The fact that at that moment he deals with justice or military affairs is irrelevant from the artistic point of view. The term τέχνη, on the other hand, refers to the artistic conception beyond the activity *de facto*. The τέχνη reflects a general and moral conception of art.

Now we can return to the Aristotelian «definition» and try to understand it again. It is only δύναμις which the definition deals with. Aristotle does not say anything about the rhetorical art *qua* τέχνη. The reference is only to the artist's activity, and this very activity, if we are to be precise, is indeed formal. In other words, Aristotle identifies formal elements in rhetorical art. He is even aware of their central function in rhetorical art. But there is a great difference between identifying rhetorical elements in an art, and conceiving of the art itself as formal.

The section which deals with the «definition» ends with a sentence which, at first glance, can be seen as repeating the «definition», but its end rather strengthens our assumption concerning the implication of the word δύναμις

ἡ δὲ ῥητορικὴ περὶ τοῦ δοθέντος ὡς εἰπεῖν δοκεῖ δύνασθαι θεωρεῖν τὸ πιθανόν, διὸ καὶ φάμεν αὐτὴν οὐ περὶ τι γένος ἴδιον ἀφωρισμένον ἔχειν τὸ τεχνικόν (1355 b 31 - 34).

(«Rhetoric seems to be able to see what could be persuasive in what is given to her, so to speak, and therefore we say that rhetoric has its technical aspect which is not defined according to any specific kind»).

The first sentence is utterly formal. The same is true of the second sentence which begins with the particle διό. The sentence makes it clear that rhetoric does not deal with any specific field of its own. However, all this is only τὸ τεχνικόν, that is to say, only in its «technical» aspect. Only in this aspect can rhetoric be seen as formal. Hence, one should conclude that looking at rhetoric in other aspects, such as the fields of knowledge the orator should be familiar with, or the status of rhetoric within the family of arts, it is impossible to conceive of rhetoric as a formal art.

36. COPE (n. 32 above), p. 15.

37. For these texts, cf. the references provided by COPE (n. 32 above).

Another example: in 1354 b 22 - 29 Aristotle argues that the symbuleutic part (πραγματεία δημηγορική) is superior to the forensic part (πραγματεία περὶ τὰ συναλλάγματα), precisely because the materia of the symbuleutic part is superior³⁸. Now, if rhetoric were a formal art, the *materia* in which the art is being employed should be of no relevance. But if the *materia* is relevant, as is this case, one should conclude that Aristotle does not conceive rhetoric to be a formal art, at least not clearly and completely.

So far we have seen one aspect of Aristotle's inner tensions, *i.e.* formal characterizations existing in rhetoric without making rhetoric a fully formal art. However, if we argue that in general Aristotle does not conceive of rhetoric as a formal art, we ought to look for its ὕλη, and it seems that we already have a starting point. We know that it is not strictly exclusive, *i.e.* it is not unique to its practitioners alone. The opposite is true: it is common to all (in a sense; τρόπον τινά). But we are entitled to ask: beyond the fact that these things are common to all, what are they? This question becomes acute, not because there is no answer, but because the answer does not appear in the first chapter, a fact which should attract our attention.

On the strength of later works such as Cicero's *De Inventione* based on Greek sources, and the remains of at least one contemporary work – *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*³⁹ – one may assume that it was customary for the τέχνη books in Aristotle's time to open with a «meta-rhetoric» introduction (in our modern words) which included, among other things, references to rhetoric's ὕλη⁴⁰. Aristotle's treatise, with all its unique features, can still be seen as a τέχνη. Yet, if we look to its opening for rhetoric's ὕλη, we find none. We find instead that dialectic is ἀντίστροφος to rhetoric. Dialectic might be judged as a formal art⁴¹, but should we conclude that rhetoric is formal too, merely on the basis of the similarity between these two arts⁴²?

38. «διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο τῆς αὐτῆς οὐσης μεθόδου περὶ τὰ δημηγορικὰ καὶ δικανικά, καὶ καλλίονος καὶ πολιτικωτέρας τῆς δημηγορικῆς πραγματείας οὐσης ἢ τῆς περὶ τὰ συναλλάγματα» (1354 b 22 - 25). Πραγματεία is, of course, the preoccupation with political or forensic issues; but the expression καλλίονος καὶ πολιτικωτέρας (καὶ explicativum) makes it clear that what makes symbuleutic rhetoric better is its political materia. Matters of the *polis* are more important than business relations between individuals.

39. Today most scholars ascribe this treatise to Anaximenes of Lampsacus. On this treatise, cf. KENNEDY (n. 33 above), pp. 59-51; COPE (n. 32 above), pp. 401-457.

40. Cf. H. RABE (ed.), *Prolegomenon Sylloge*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1931, p. 15, 6 ff; IDEM 17, 14-15; CIC., *Inv.*, I, 6 *passim*.

41. On my opinion about this issue, cf. pp. 19-20 below.

42. Generally one should be very careful concerning the comparison between rhetoric and dialectic. Aristotle does compare these two in the beginning of his treatise, but it seems that the comparison applies merely to one phenomenon, that which is discussed immediately after this sentence. To compare between these two in all aspects would be wrong. Indeed, in other

The answer to this question is not simple. Even assuming that dialectic is indeed a formal art, all we can say here is that rhetoric has a formal aspect, but this aspect is not the whole story, simply because the *Rhetoric* does not consist only of what is said in the first chapter of the first book. The treatise continues, and we do find other partners to rhetoric, first and foremost politics.

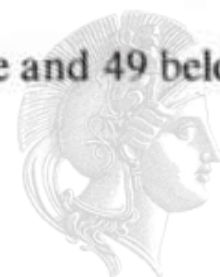
In 1356 a 25 - 26, Aristotle conceives of rhetoric as παραφυές τι ... περὶ τὰ ἥθη πραγματείας, ἣν δίκαιόν ἐστι προσαγορεύειν πολιτικήν («a certain offshoot ... of the field concerning behavior which it is right to call politics»). True, this comment appears in a discussion which does not deal with placing rhetoric in the family of arts, but in a detailed discussion about πίστις. However, sometimes it is exactly such things which are uttered incidentally which may have more validity. For Aristotle, the relations between rhetoric and politics are so natural and obvious that he does not take the trouble to say it exactly at the place where we might expect him to do so⁴³. We, who are already used to the concept of formal art, would expect a reference to this issue precisely in the first chapter. However, is this very fact not just an indication of Aristotle's different attitude? Granted, the Aristotelian «definition» does not indicate, not even with one word, politics. One could then ask: why should we infer rhetoric's ὕλη through context and scholarly arguments? The answer, so it seems to me, is to be found within the question itself. Politics as rhetoric's ὕλη is so natural and self-evident in Aristotle's consciousness that he does not bother to say it explicitly. When he characterizes rhetoric, he is careful to state his innovations, and not what is obvious. The replacing of τὸ πείθειν with τὸ θεωρῆσαι is to be emphasized, and not politics as rhetoric's ὕλη which no one challenges. Moreover, had Aristotle inserted politics into his definition, the definition would have been deficient. This addition would have shown Aristotle's conception as differentiating, at least in principle, art from its ὕλη. This, of course, is not the case. Politics does appear, but not in a declarative way. It appears within another issue and is mentioned incidentally.

How far Aristotle's conception is natural can be deduced from the following fact: the scholion of Aphthonius⁴⁴ criticizes Aristotle explicitly on

places Aristotle refers again to the relation between these two by using other expressions such as παραφυές τι (1356 a 25); μόριόν τι; ὁμοίωμα (1356 a 30-31); ἀντίστροφος (1354 a 1). The use of different terms shows Aristotle deliberating about the exact relation between these two arts. At least it testifies to the difficulty inherent in comparing them ἀπλῶς.

43. The relations between these two arts hardly needs to be mentioned. Suffice it to recall that rhetoric is conceived in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1109 a 8 - b 3) as an offshoot of politics which gives it its rules and conditions. In the *Rhetoric* as well we find many references to politics. It is worth noting the long discussion in the beginning of the treatise about the right regime and generally the relation between the νομοθέτης and the δικαστής.

44. On this scholion and the exact references to it, cf. nn. 32 above and 49 below.



the ground that his definition is too wide. In order to «improve» Aristotle's definition, his suggestion is to add the word πολιτικόν to the words περὶ ἕκαστον mentioned in the definition. Aphthonius' emendation can be understood if we bear in mind the age in which this scholiast lived. We are talking about an age when the classical *polis* was a thing of the past (4th century B. C. E.). However, it is easy to see that in a Greek *polis*, where everything is «political», or at least not disconnected from politics, this kind of emphasis is not necessary. It is even redundant.

Indeed, the phrase οὐδεμιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἀφωρισμένης («belong to no definite field of knowledge») hints at rhetoric being associated with politics. The very fact that politics is common to all people in that they are φύσει ζῶα πολιτικά («animals which by nature live in a polis») is the reason why this art which deals with public speaking has nothing unique in it. In other words, the declaration that rhetoric has no ἐπιστήμη ἀφωρισμένη does not prove that it does not have a ὕλη. Rather it has a ὕλη but it is general and common to all, namely politics.

If my proposal is correct, there is a further question to be considered. The first sentence of the *Rhetoric* mentioned in one breath rhetoric and dialectic. In our previous discussion, any mention of dialectic has been avoided, and intentionally so. Now we should ask: is politics the ὕλη of dialectic too, or, rather, is dialectic formal?

In principle, nothing prevents us from separating dialectic from rhetoric, at least concerning the possibility of regarding them as formal arts. The mere fact that Aristotle binds them together in the beginning of his work does not force us to regard them as equal in all aspects. Indeed the first sentence of the *Rhetoric* which entails the intricate comparison between rhetoric and dialectic using the word ἀντίστροφος, is one of the most difficult phrases in the treatise. Many scholars have tried to find the exact meaning of that comparison. Some have argued for a response to Plato who used the same word for degrading rhetoric as ἀντίστροφος ὁψοποιίας (*Gorgias*, 465 e 1). Green⁴⁵ dedicated a whole study to the word ἀντίστροφος, checking its use in Greek poetry and going through Aristotle's commentators, from Alexander of Aphrodisias to the late Renaissance thinkers. As Green notes, the word took, through history, contrary meanings, rendering the prefix ἀντί between *pro* and *contra*. The English word «counterpart» which became the common rendering of ἀντίστροφος, as Green puts it: «suggests that the consensus is an evasion, not a solution»⁴⁶; and a page later: «The

45. L. D. GREEN, *Aristotelian Rhetoric, Dialectic, and the Tradition of ἀντίστροφος*, *Rhetorica*, 8, 1990, pp. 5-27.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 21 n. 51.

great advantage of the word counterpart is that it can mean whatever each of us needs it to mean»⁴⁷.

I wish to suggest here another way of looking at the equation between rhetoric and dialectic, a way which takes the historical context of these two fields into account. It may be suggested that dialectic too is a part of politics. When, in the context of democratic Athens, one mentions dialectic especially when it is mentioned together with rhetoric – the ordinary person's associations would connect it with the teaching of the sophists. The sophists taught dialectic not as a formal discipline, but as a means towards social and political success.

Indeed, whichever way we look at it, every argument has something to do with social affairs. In the beginning of the *Topics* Aristotle identifies the purpose of dialectic as the ability to make syllogisms on every given problem based on accepted premises, which are called in Greek ἐνδοξα. Does this infrastructure not bind dialectic to society and politics⁴⁸? Furthermore, the traditional division between dialectic and rhetoric sees the difference between the two solely in form, *i.e.* a long and continuous speech versus verbal exchange in the form of questions and answers⁴⁹. If Aristotle makes innovations in this field, he still does not break away from this conception.

The next question can be put as follows: in what sense and to what degree does Aristotle succeed in releasing himself from a dependence on politics?

It seems that Aristotle is vacillating on this issue too. As we have already seen, Aristotle refers to rhetoric sometimes as part of the architectural edi-

47. *Ibid.*, p. 22. Cf. also R. SALLY, Aristotle's Rhetoric and Ethics and the Ethos of Society, *GRBS*, 13, 1974, pp. 291-308, who goes further and claims that Aristotle himself was confused in the comparison between these two arts.

48. The term ἐνδοξα can take two different meanings. The first, opinions accepted by the public, and therefore their credibility is reasonable (*Top.*, 100 b 21 - 23). The second, opinions accepted on the basis of their logic (*e.g. Eth. Nic.*, 1095 a 12 ff). In this second meaning there are occasions where the philosopher's ἐνδοξα do not fit those of the public. Indeed sometimes they are even opposed. However, the text at the beginning of the *Topics*, so it seems, uses rather the second meaning. On the difference between these two meanings, cf. G. W. MOST, The uses of ENDOXA: Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Rhetoric, in D. J. FURLEY & A. NEHAMAS (eds.), *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 167-190, p. 176.

49. The scholion of Aphthonius (n. 32 above), criticizes Aristotle's 'definition' on two points. The first we have already discussed (*ibid.*). His second criticism touches exactly upon emphasizing the different ways of speaking in these two arts. Aphthonius' suggestion is to add διεξοδικός to the words πιθανός λόγος (*ibid.*). It is worth noticing that this difference between rhetoric and dialectic - a continuous speech versus questions and answers (which is already explicit in *PLAT., Soph.*, 267 e 7 - 268 b 10, even though without using the words «rhetoric» and «dialectic») - is not the only one. The other difference is of course the story ascribed to Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, which «shows» the difference between the two through the open hand (rhetoric) and the fist (dialectic). On this well-known story and its many versions, cf. *SVF* I, 75.

fice of politics and at other times as a 'parallel' of dialectic. We do not know, and, indeed, at the moment we cannot know whether the difference is due to a change of position over time or because rhetoric for Aristotle could not be given a fixed status. I think the second option is more correct. In his attempt – a very pioneering attempt indeed – to see rhetoric in a positive light, this vacillating is indispensable. However, we should differentiate this vacillating from that of a rhetor, such as depicted by Plato in the *Gorgias*. The rhetor's vacillating comes from his indifference and lack of interest in confronting this issue. The origin of Aristotle's vacillating is totally different. It comes from a brave and honest attempt to deal with a phenomenon (rhetoric) which, despite all its disadvantages, no one can live without. Such an attempt will eventually lead to positive results⁵⁰.

The issue of Aristotelian rhetoric as a formal art can be summed up as follows: there is no doubt that Aristotle was able to abstract. This is clearly shown through his various writings, especially the *Topics*, but the *Rhetoric* too. However, it is one thing to be able to make an abstraction in a specific field, and another to refer to that field as an art only on the basis of its formal aspect. As far as rhetoric is concerned, Aristotle identifies the formal aspect (perhaps due to its affinity with dialectic⁵¹ and his formal achievements in that field), but he does not make the further step required to consider the very formal aspect in rhetoric an «art» (apparently due to its umbilical connection with politics).

One can argue that all these formal elements are essential to art, thus turning rhetoric into a formal art. In my opinion, such a solution is too easy and does not fit either the complexity of the text or Aristotle's complicated manner of thinking. Furthermore, the difference between a regular art which contains formal elements and a formal art is not only a verbal difference. This difference reflects, in my opinion, the conception which Aristotle is

50. Here I touch upon a very central issue, and things should be clarified briefly. Since the publication of JAEGER's book (W. W. JAEGER, *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923) assuming a development in Aristotle's thinking, there has been a widely accepted tendency to solve almost every problem concerning inconsistencies within Aristotle by claiming that there are different stages in the development of Aristotle's thinking on the issue discussed (in the case of rhetoric cf. also SOLMSEN (n. 5 above)). No doubt, what we have as Aristotelian writings are probably no more than notes for lectures, and there is always the possibility that Aristotle inserted 'emendations' to these notes without always rewriting the whole section. Anyhow, and without discussing this issue in detail, it seems to me that concerning rhetoric there is no need for the 'development theory'. Indeed, it would be misleading. The sections dealing with the essence of rhetoric give no impression of 'emendations' of the kind presented in the development theory. It seems to me that the intermediate status of rhetoric, which is elaborated in this article, explains reasonably Aristotles' 'vacillating' on this issue. Cf. also my «conclusion» below (pp. 166-167).

51. Cf. my discussion on the word ἀντίστροφος above (pp. 161-162).



aware of in struggling with a problematic phenomenon, a conflict which Aristotle faces with courage and honesty, a conflict which has its indispensable price. The other option, which regards Aristotle as endorsing a conception of rhetoric as a formal art, is no more than a simplification of Aristotelian thought. Simplification and total consistency are not always an indication of excellence.

D. Aristotle – Rhetoric as a neutral art

In the preface to his translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Kennedy⁵² writes: «Aristotle was the first person to recognize clearly that rhetoric as an art of communication was morally neutral, that it could be used either for good or ill».

Elsewhere we encounter Sprute with a very similar attitude: «Aristotle seems to have differentiated between a morally neutral theory of rhetoric and the application of the theory; and only the application is to be judged from a moral perspective»⁵³.

Kennedy does not prove his statement, perhaps because it appears only in a preface. The same is true of Sprute. Anyway, they seem to rely especially on the first sentences of the *Rhetoric* and the «definition»⁵⁴ which appears at the beginning of the second chapter. Indeed, as we have already seen, these sentences can be interpreted as dealing with the possibility of a formal art, but it seems that these two scholars infer that if rhetoric is a formal art, it should have no ethical obligation as an art (in contrast to the artist's obligation as a human being). And we should admit that there is a very reasonable relation between formal and neutral art⁵⁵, even though this relation is not always necessary. If indeed the possibility of a formal art is at the basis of these scholars' opinion, we have already argued that this possibility does not exist. However, we can prove from other passages in the *Rhetoric* that Aristotle's rhetoric is not a neutral art.

The sentence which proves it beyond any doubt is at 1355 a 31: οὐ γὰρ δεῖ

52. G. A. KENNEDY, *Aristotle: On Rhetoric*, New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. ix.

53. J. SPRUTE, Aristotle and the legitimacy of Rhetoric, in FURLEY & NEHAMAS (n. 48 above), 1990, pp. 117-128, p. 118.

54. On this «definition», cf. above (pp. 12-16).

55. It can be formulated thus: a formal art is an art in which the artist is not obliged to have knowledge of a certain and well-defined field. In such a case, how could he commit himself to its beneficence? Hence, formal art entails neutral art. However, this is not the place to expand on this issue. I have dealt with it elsewhere: Y. Z. LIEBERSOHN, Art and Pseudo-Art in Plato's *Gorgias*, *Arethusa*, 38, 2005, pp. 303-329. That article also deals with related issues, such as the connection, in ancient conceptions, between «technical» (in our sense) and moral failure. These are essential for understanding the exact relation between formal and neutral art.

τὰ φαῦλα πείθειν («for one should not persuade to do what is debased»). However, one should pay attention to the context in which these words appear. The words which open this discussion are in 1355 a 21: χρήσιμος δέ ἐστιν ἡ ῥητορική («rhetoric is useful»)⁵⁶. Why would anyone who conceives of his art as neutral speak of its utility? One might object: why not praise one's occupations' advantages if possible? However this answer seems wrong. The very discovery of neutral art should be an object to be proud of. Had Aristotle really conceived of rhetoric as a neutral art, we would have expected a note mentioning it. In this case, mentioning rhetoric's utility with no mention of its neutrality proves the opposite. Furthermore, Aristotle is definitely aware of those who misuse rhetoric, but in his opinion this use should not be counted as artistic use. It is a use which has to be reprehended, and it cannot be ascribed to the art. In this sense, Aristotle has the same conception as Gorgias in his speech (PLATO, *Gorgias*, 456 c 6 -457 c 3). Whoever thinks his art is neutral does not apologize on behalf of those who misuse it.

In order to substantiate our claim, as well as to show what is really a neutral conception of rhetoric, let us take a look at two explicit expressions of it. These expressions are taken from very late sources, but this should not affect our discussion:

1. τῶν ἐν μέσῳ γὰρ τὸ ὄνομα {sc. δύναμις}, καὶ βλάβη καὶ ἐπ' ὠφελεία χρωμένων ἡμῶν αὐτῷ⁵⁷.

(«for the word {sc. power} belongs to things in the middle, since we use it for both harm and benefit»).

2. ὅτι ἡ ῥητορική πρᾶγμα ἐστὶν ἕμμεσον καὶ ᾧ ἔξεστι καὶ καλῶς καὶ κακῶς χρήσασθαι ... ἡ δὲ ῥητορική δύναμις ἐστὶν, ἐπειδὴ κέχρηται καὶ τῷ ψεύδει καὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ... (IDEM, 109, 9 - 16)⁵⁸.

(«because rhetoric is an intermediate affair which can be used well and badly ... but rhetoric is a power since it employs both falsity and truth»).

These two quotations are taken from a text composed in late antiquity, and intended for students. Their intent is the explanation to the word δύναμις. One should note that the neutral description is so clear here precisely because it does not describe the word τέχνη, but δύναμις. Indeed, the δύναμις itself is only part of the definition of rhetoric which conceives the whole field as τέχνη (*ibid.*, 108, 2 - 4). However, using these two words in this way testifies to the confusion of the author, who remembers something

56. Aristotle repeats it at the end of the discussion (1355 b 9-10).

57. Cf. n. 40 above, p. 107, 19-20.

58. The first citation refers to a definition of some ἑτέροι who conceive of rhetoric explicitly as δύναμις (*ibid.*, 107, 15-18).

of Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as δύναμις but wishes it to be termed τέχνη too⁵⁹. Anyhow, for our purpose, no doubt we have here a clear awareness of the possibility of a neutral art (τέχνη). If we recall the implications of granting an occupation the title τέχνη, we could phrase our conclusion thus: we have here a clear awareness of the possibility of a neutral occupation which is also beneficial⁶⁰.

This determination concerning rhetoric's beneficence overlooks or ignores the first chapter of *Rhetoric*. This chapter, which has already been denominated as «the austere view»⁶¹, causes problems to every generalization one makes about Aristotle if we compare it to its other parts. The same applies to our issue – the possibility of neutral rhetoric. The very close relation Aristotle presents between rhetoric and dialectic gives rise to the suspicion of rhetoric as a neutral art.

I want to argue that the same phenomenon we have seen in the «formal» topic recurs here as well with regard to the «neutral» one. Aristotle identifies neutral elements in rhetoric, but still, as an art, he conceives of it as beneficial. Looking at rhetoric's neutral elements, rhetoric can, in a certain way, be seen as a neutral art; a sort of an ὄργανον which transfers the moral responsibility to the character of the artist who uses it. Furthermore, these elements are directly linked to the formal elements that exist in rhetoric, those we have already dealt with, since an art which lacks ὕλη comes very close to an ὄργανον, thus becoming neutral from a moral angle. Art which has ὕλη by definition vouches for the responsibility for its outcome.

E. Conclusion

Aristotle vacillates between rhetoric as a formal and neutral art and re-

59. This topic – the relation between δύναμις and τέχνη – is somewhat more complicated. No doubt, Aristotle's commentators, from middle Platonism onward, and those who were influenced by him in some way, directly or indirectly, were conscious of the Aristotelian use of these two terms. Alexander, already in his commentary on the *Topics* (CAG, 2, 2, p. 4, 28 W.), claims that rhetoric and dialectic are named δυνάμεις because both (to be precise: the rhetor and the dialectician) ὁμοίως τὴν τῶν ἀντικειμένων δεῖξιν σκοπόν ἔχουσι.

60. Here one could ask: how can a neutral occupation be beneficial? The answer consists in noting that «beneficial» has changed its meaning from the social and moral to the private context. In other words, while formerly an occupation was considered «beneficial» if it benefited society, after the change «beneficial» meant no more than beneficial to the private person by fulfilling his desires and passions. All this does not include functional meaning, which are to be found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where words like χρήσιμον (e.g., 1408a5-6) should be translated as «useful» (to achieve a limited and functional aim within the art itself, but not for the art as a whole) rather than «beneficial».

61. The phrase «the austere view» for the first chapter of the *Rhetoric* is ascribed to M. F. BURNYEAT in E. SCHÜTRUMPF, Some observations on the introduction to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, (in FURLEY & NEHAMAS (n. 48 above), 1990, pp. 99-116, n. 1.



garding it as an aspect of politics (and thus as a good and beneficial art). However, he does not cross the lines. On the one hand, rhetoric's intimate relation with dialectic brings it very close to the formal aspect; on the other hand, Aristotle's conceiving of rhetoric as an aspect of politics, especially in the internal chapters of the *Rhetoric*, clearly reflects his (natural) awareness of its ὕλη. On the one hand, emphasizing the persuasive argument – or to be more precise, looking at the process of finding the persuasive argument as the ἴδιον of rhetoric and even finding the τάναντία – brings rhetoric very close to the neutral aspect. On the other hand, Aristotle's emphasis on rhetoric's χρήσιμον brings it very close to a beneficial art. If we compare Aristotelian formulations which deal with rhetoric's beneficence with the formulations taken from the *Prolegomena* collected in the edition of Rabe, we can see how far rhetoric has progressed. However, such a clear conception of a neutral art, in the way it appears in the *Prolegomena*, does not arise «out of the blue». No doubt, there have been a few stages towards such a clear conception of neutral art. We may not be wrong in seeing Aristotle as reflecting one of those stages, and perhaps the main one. On the other hand, I am sure that it would be wrong to see him as one who reached the final clear conception of neutral art.

Aristotle's ambivalence towards rhetoric is a very well-known problem in Aristotelian scholarship. Some scholars see in these inconsistencies a proof of different stages in the development of his thought, which have been left side by side in his «notes». Others simply judge him as inconsistent. In this article I have tried to offer a third option. Aristotle's vacillation concerning formal and neutral art reflects an intermediate state of rhetoric in his times. Even Plato in the *Gorgias* feels that rhetoric is on its way from being a political and beneficial profession towards a sort of «art of all things whatsoever» which is not based on knowledge and tends to harm. While Aristotle was composing his lectures, rhetoric had already progressed quite a way towards being a formal and neutral art. However, despite the changes Greek society had gone through after the Macedonian conquest, Aristotle and his age still saw the *polis* as the natural social unit, and rhetoric as one of the main instruments in running it. Aristotle already identifies in the rhetoric of his time formal and neutral elements – hence his restrictions. However, he still insists on rhetoric as an indispensable part of life in the *polis*. Therefore, it cannot be given up.

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**ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΙΚΗΣ ΡΗΤΟΡΙΚΗΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ.
ΤΥΠΙΚΗ - ΑΤΥΠΗ ΤΕΧΝΗ,
ΤΥΠΙΚΑ - ΑΤΥΠΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ**

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Ένα από τα κύρια προβλήματα της σπουδής των αριστοτελικών κειμένων είναι ή διακρίβωση της στάσεως του Ἀριστοτέλους έναντι της ρητορικής. Τὸ θέμα αὐτὸ σχετίζεται πρὸς διάφορα προβλήματα της ρητορικής θεωρίας καὶ πρακτικῆς. Τὸ κύριο ἐρώτημα συνδέεται πρὸς τὴν ὑλική χροιά της ρητορικῆς τέχνης. Στὸ ἄρθρο αὐτὸ θὰ ἐπισημάνουμε ὅτι ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ταλαντεύεται μεταξύ της ὑλικῆς καὶ ὑλικῶς οὐδέτερης θεώρησης της ρητορικῆς τέχνης. Πιθανῶς αὐτὸ νὰ προκύπτει ἀπὸ τὸν χαρακτῆρα σημειώσεων τῶν ὁσων κατέλειπε· πιθανῶς ὡστόσο νὰ σχετίζεται ἀπλῶς μὲ τὰ διαφορετικὰ στάδια της ἐξέλιξης τοῦ στοχασμοῦ του, μ' ἀποτέλεσμα τὴ φαινομενικὴ ἀσυνέπεια μεταξύ τῶν θέσεων ποὺ ὁ ἴδιος ὑποστηρίζει· σὲ κάθε ὡστόσο περίπτωση, ἐκεῖνο ποὺ ἀταλάντευτα ὑποστηρίζει εἶναι ἡ λειτουργικότητα της ρητορικῆς, ὡς θεωρίας καὶ πρακτικῆς, στὸ πλαίσιο τῶν πολιτικῶν διαδικασιῶν.

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