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ABSTRACT

Contemporary rhetoricians are concerned with the re-examination of classical doctrines in the hope of finding solutions to current problems. In this study, the author presents a methodological perspective consistent with current interests, by re-examining the assumptions that underlie each classical precept. He outlines an inventional system based upon an Aristotelian model, and offers an analysis and application of Aristotle's doctrine of topical invention, by considering: (1) Aristotle's conditions for the application of rhetorical invention; (2) their application to contemporary public speaking; (3) the constituents of Aristotle's inventional system; and (4) the outlines of an Aristotelian inventional system based upon contemporary conditions. He concludes that in some areas of contemporary concern--where no single established theories exist--the use of purely rhetorical argument may be our only course for inquiry and argument. (Author/RN)

CONTEMPORARY INVENTIONAL THEORY: AN ARISTOTELIAN MODEL

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Many of the unresolved problems facing those of us interested in contemporary inventional theory arise from questions dealing with the relationship of rhetoric to the learnings provided by other academic disciplines. Most public speaking and composition texts which deal with invention do so by recommending strategies of library research. That is, the inventional process depicted by many of our textbooks consists of finding the appropriate books or articles, digesting the materials, and adapting the discovered materials to the abilities and interests of the audience. Depicted in this manner, invention ceases to be a rhetorical operation.

The conception of rhetorical invention fostered by these texts is unfortunate if only because it sacrifices a considerable portion of our academic heritage. Moreover, this conception of invention is dangerous to our profession because it tends to promote an all too popular picture of skilled rhetoricians and public speakers. The picture, of course, is that of a master of linguistic duplicity and purveyor of psychological chicanery.

If we wish to avoid this characterization of our profession and of the skilled public speaker, I believe we need to offer an inventional system based upon the role of purely rhetorical elements in the total invention process. The purpose of this paper is to outline such an inventional system based upon an Aristotelian model. In this paper, I consider (first) Aristotle's conditions for the application of rhetorical invention, (second) the applicability of Aristotle's conditions to contemporary public speaking, (third) the constituents of Aristotle's inventional system, and (fourth) the outlines of an Aristotelian inventional system based upon

contemporary conditions.

I

Implicit in Aristotle's discussion of the inventional process are two conditions which must be fulfilled if rhetorical invention is to be employed. First, Aristotle requires that certain claims be recurrent and necessary elements of public disputes. The Roman rhetoricians formalized this condition as the doctrine of status and identified the key claims as those dealing with fact, definition, quality, and procedure. The claims which are foremost in Aristotle's mind--and which he says are common to the three kinds of oratory--are those dealing with past and future fact, the possible and impossible, and magnitude or amplification and depreciation.[1] Unfortunately, the character of this condition has been obscured by modern translations of the Rhetoric[2] and by a number of commentaries[3] which persist in identifying these claims as "topics." It should be carefully noted, therefore, that Aristotle never identifies these common claims as topics [τόποι] and consistently refers to them as "[the] commons" [κοινοί].[4]

Aristotle's second condition is that establishing certain claims necessarily requires inference beyond the available evidence. Thus, Aristotle distinguishes between artificial and inartificial proofs and argues that only artificial proofs fall within the province of rhetoric.[5] Inartificial proofs, Aristotle says, are those things which need not be invented by art and may be simply discovered and applied. Artificial proofs, on the other hand, always depend upon the speaker's invention and derive from one of the three sources of artificial proof. As examples of inartificial proofs, Aristotle lists

witnesses, tortures, contracts, laws and oaths.[6] The fact that Aristotle devotes an entire chapter to discussion of inartificial proofs suggests that he considers them to be by no means unimportant.[7] What should be noted about Aristotle's discussion is that each example of inartificial proof he cites establishes a claim immediately, i.e., without an inferential process. The artificial proofs, on the other hand, always require an inferential process. Thus, the distinction between artificial and inartificial proofs is simply a distinction between inferential and non-inferential demonstration. In Aristotle's view, only those proofs requiring inference fall within the province of rhetorical art.

II

Thus, the two requisite conditions for the application of an Aristotelian model are that (1) certain claims are necessary elements of public disputes and (2) some of these claims require inferential demonstration. Our task now is to identify the necessary claims in contemporary public speaking and to specify those requiring inferential demonstration.

First, if we assume that a typical public speech is generated by a problem demanding solution,[8] we can distinguish three claims which we expect any speaker to establish. Initially, we expect the speaker to demonstrate the existence of the situation. This type of claim I shall call "descriptive." Once the descriptive claim is established, we expect the speaker to show that the situation is harmful and so constitutes a problem demanding action. This type of claim I shall call "evaluative." Finally, if both descriptive and evaluative claims have been established, we expect

the speaker to identify the cause of current difficulties. This type of claim I shall call "causal." By recognizing descriptive, evaluative, and causal claims as necessary elements of public disputes, we have fulfilled the first condition for the application of an Aristotelian model to contemporary inventional theory.

Our second task is to specify the claims requiring inferential demonstration. Descriptive claims may occassionally require inferential demonstration, but this is typically not the case. Usually, a body of inartistic evidence including testimony, statistical data, and physical artifacts is available to immediately establish descriptive claims. Only in rare instances are such materials unavailable and inference required. For this reason, the Aristotelian model would not recommend attempts to articulate rhetorical inventional procedures for establishing descriptive claims. Such procedures, Aristotle would probably argue, are beyond the province of rhetorical art.

On the other hand, both evaluative and causal claims necessarily require inferential demonstration. According to a pair of philosophical commonplaced articulated by David Hume[9]—and still largely accepted by philosophers and logicians—sense data alone are incapable of demonstrating either causation or evaluation. In the case of causation, sense data alone may display constant conjunction of phenomena but will never reveal the relationship implied by the term "cause." Similarly, in the case of evaluation, sense data may display the existence of a thing but evaluation necessarily requires the application of a non-empirical premise derived from the "moral sense" or "sentiment." Thus, by specifying evaluative and causal claims as claims which necessarily require inferential demonstration,

we have fulfilled the second condition for the application of an Aristotelian model to contemporary inventional theory.

III

For claims which fulfill the two conditions of being necessary elements of public disputes and requiring inferential demonstration, Aristotle recommends an inventional system consisting of three components. These components are (1) a means of codifying the materials from which proofs may be constructed, (2) a list of the inferential modes to be employed in constructing proofs from these materials, and (3) the unit of proof resulting from the combination of material with mode.

The materials of proof which interest Aristotle are those derived from the character of the speaker [ἦθος], from the emotions of the audience [πάθος], and from the "rational, intellectual aspects of the subject under discussion" [πρᾶγμα].[10] The important point is that these materials terminate in proofs only when combined with an inferential mode.

Modes of inference may be applicable to only particular subjects or common to all subjects of discussion. Modes of inference which apply only to particular subjects are labeled eida [εἴδη] by Aristotle and commonly identified as "special topics" or "special lines of argument" by modern translators. Modes of inference common to all subjects are labeled topoi [τόποι] by Aristotle, and he enumerates twenty-eight legitimate topics in Book II Chapter xxiii and nine sham topics in Book II Chapter xxiv. The point which needs to be emphasized is that Aristotle believes that both types of inferential modes are capable of producing enthymemes when

combined with premises derived from the sources of artistic proof.[11] Immediately after distinguishing between propositions applicable only to particular subjects—i.e., eida—and propositions applicable to all subjects—i.e., topoi—Aristotle claims that rhetoric and dialectic proper use only propositions common to all subjects. Then, as if to caution us against unduly restricting our studies, Aristotle adds that most enthymemes are derived from the eida. His summary remark at this point reads:

> Most enthymemes are constructed from these specific topics [εἰδῶν], which are called particular and special, fewer from those that are common or universal [i.e., from τόπων].[12]

The point which Aristotle is here stressing is that relatively few of the arguments employed in a speech will derive solely from rhetorical materials and that both purely rhetorical and non-rhetorical arguments may be employed.

The final component of Aristotle's inventional system is the unit of proof, the enthymeme, which results from the combination of an inferential mode—either eida or topon—with materials derived from the sources of artistic proof. While avoiding for now questions about the nature of enthymematic reasoning, I wish to point out only that Aristotle distinguishes between enthymemes which belong properly to rhetoric and those which apply only to particular subjects.[13] The distinction which Aristotle draws here parallels that which he draws between eida and topoi, and the context of the chapter strongly suggests that the distinctive feature of properly rhetorical enthymemes is their reliance upon topoi as modes of inference. Enthymemes applicable only to particular subjects are distinguished by their reliance upon eida.

The pattern which Aristotle has in mind is as follows: the

materials of rhetorical proof are always derived from the character of the speaker, the emotions of the audience, or the subject under discussion. When a given piece of material is combined with one of the eida, the result is an enthymeme which is not properly rhetorical and is applicable only to the subject from which the eida was derived. On the other hand, when the same piece of material is combined with one of the topoi, the result is a properly rhetorical enthymeme which is applicable to all subjects.[14]

The consequence of Aristotle's distinction between eida and topoi and between properly rhetorical enthymemes and non-rhetorical enthymemes is this: if we wish to systematize rhetorical invention, we must focus our attention upon general modes of inference which are applicable to all subjects of discussion. To rely upon modes of inference derive from particular subjects is to step beyond the bounds of the purely rhetorical elements of the total inventional process.

IV

The Aristotelian model indicates that the purely rhetorical elements of a contemporary inventional system are a set of inferential modes, applicable to all subject, for use in establishing causal and evaluative claims. I now direct my attention to the outlines of such an inventional system.

Starting with the procedures for establishing causal claims, we probably would not go far wrong by identifying John Stuart Mill's five canons as general warrants underlying all demonstrations of causation.[15] Mill argues that causation can be established only by applying the methods of agreement, difference, agreement and

difference, concommitant variation, and residues. My suggestion is that we simply outline for our students the five canons which Mill postulates and recommend the use of these canons as warrants in arguments establishing causal claims. As a demonstration of the invantional function these warrants might serve, consider the following example. If a student wishes to show that integration causes racial conflict, he might start with Mill's method of agreement. In that case, the student's warrant would read "if two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree is the cause of the given phenomenon." Given this warrant and the desire to establish the claim that integration causes racial conflict, it is analytically obvious that the data for the argument must read "the only factor common to all instances of racial conflict is integration." The student's research would then carry him in search of statistical information to support the data. An opponent of the claim that racial integration causes racial conflict could employ the same warrant but challenge the data by providing a counter-example or by identifying some other common factor.[16]

In the case of general evaluative warrants, we probably need nothing more than a propositional list of the dominant American social values. Extensive catalogues of the "American value system" have been compiled by a number of sociologists[17] and my suggestion is that we transpose the values listed into propositional form and recommend the use of these value propositions as warrants in arguments establishing evaluative claims. Consider the following example. One of the central values of American society is emphasis

upon personal achievement. Given this bit of information, we might offer a topic or warrant stating "anything which promotes personal achievement is desirable and anything which thwarts personal achievement is undesirable." A student favoring integration might employ this warrant with data showing that integration promotes personal achievement to form an argument claiming that integration is desirable. Conversely, an opponent might employ the same warrant but point out that integration requires busing which thwarts personal achievement because of the wasted transportation time.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have argued for an inventional system based upon the purely rhetorical elements in the total invention process. I have used an Aristotelian model largely as a convenient vehicle for making the distinctions which must be made. Many other models might be equally useful but I prefer the Aristotelian model largely because it recognizes the role of both rhetorical and non-rhetorical elements in the total invention process. I believe we would be wise to found our efforts upon the same recognition. There are many areas of inquiry and argument in which purely rhetorical invention is unnecessary. For example, in dealing with economic questions, the well established Keynesian doctrines can provide both causal and evaluative warrants. But in areas where there is no single, established theory—in areas such as race relations or international affairs—the use of purely rhetorical argument may be our only course. As Professor Bryant noted some years ago

> rhetoric is the method, the strategy, the organon of principles for deciding best the undecidable questions, for arriving at solutions of unsolvable problems, for instituting method in those vital phases of human activity where no method is inherent in the total subject-matter of decision.[18]

NOTES

[1]1391b25ff. All citations of the Rhetoric are from the translation by John Henry Freese. Bracked emendations are my own.

[2]The translations in which this error is made include those by Cooper, Roberts, and Freese.

[3]Erroneous commentaries include James H. McBurney, "The Place of the Enthymeme in Rhetorical Theory," Speech Monographs, III (1936), 60; Edward M. Cope, An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric (London: MacMillan and Co., 1867), pp. 128-139; and George Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion in Greece (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 100.

[4]This point is clearly made by Donovan J. Ochs, "The Tradition of the Classical Doctrines of Rhetorical Topoi" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1966), pp. 52-56. See also, William M. A. Grimaldi, "The Aristotelian Topics," Traditio, XIV (1958), 1-16. I have checked the references cited by Cope in support of his view that the "commons" are topics and have been unable to verify his claim.

[5]1355b35ff.

[6]1355b37 and 1375a24.

[7]Book I, Chapter xv.

[8]I am borrowing from Lloyd Bitzer's influential "The Rhetorical Situation," Philosophy and Rhetoric, I (1968), 1-14.

[9]Relevant primary texts include Treatise of Human Nature, I,iii, 3-16; "An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature"; An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, §§ IV-VII; An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, Appendix I; and "Of the Standard of Taste." An excellent survey of recent work on Hume can be found in V. C. Chappell, Hume: A Collection of Critical Essays (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966).

[10]For this interpretation, see William Grimaldi, "A Note on Pisteis in Aristotle's Rhetoric, 1354-1356," American Journal of Philology, LXXVIII (1957), 188-192. Grimaldi's interpretation has been challenged by G. H. Wikramanyake, "A Note on the ΠΙΣΤΕΙΣ in Aristotle's Rhetoric," American Journal of Philology, LXXXII (1961), 193-196, but the challenge seems poorly reasoned. See also, Joseph Lienhard, "Meaning of Pisteis in Rhetoric," American Journal of Philology, LXXXVII (1966), 445-454. Grimaldi's most recent work is Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1972) which reflects no change in his original position.

[11]Most commentators argue that the "special topics" provide material for the forms enumerated as topics. Erroneous commentaries on this point include McBurney, 62; Ochs, pp. 51-57; Grimaldi, Traditio, 1-16. Cope's position on this issue is unclear, see, pp. 124-131.

[12]1358a26.

[13]1358a1-5.

[14]In more modern term, these relationship may be understood by analogy to the informal system of logic sketched by Stephen Toulmin in The Uses of Argument (Cambridge: At The University Press, 1964), pp. 94-145. Employing this analogy, the sources of proof provide promises which serve as data, the eida constitute "field dependent" warrants, and the topoi constitute "field independent" warrants. The "range of application" for a unit of argument (i.e., enthymeme) is determined by the character of the warrant such that arguments employing field dependent warrants are applicable only to the field from which the warrant was derived while arguments employing field independent warrants are applicable to all fields of argument. For a careful statement of this analogy, see Otto Bird, "The Re-Discovery of the Topics: Professor Toulmin's Inference-Warrants," Mind, NS 70 (1961), 534-539. Additional commentary by Bird includes "The Tradition of the Logical Topics: Aristotle to Ockham," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXIII (1962), 307-323.

[15]A System of Logic (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1852), pp. 222-237.

[16]I have employed an invantional system as described here for approximately two years in the classes I teach. The results have been more than satisfactory and I find the system works equally well with either syllogistic or Toulmin logic.

[17]See, for example, Robin M. Williams, Jr., American Society: A Sociological Interpretation (2nd ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 397-470.

[18]"Rhetoric: Its Function and Its Scope," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIX (1953), 407.