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Eugene Garver

*Saint John's University, Collegeville Minnesota, [egarver@csbsju.edu](mailto:egarver@csbsju.edu)*

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**Deception in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*:  
How to Tell the Rhetorician From the Sophist, and Which One To Bet On<sup>1</sup>**

Eugene Garver  
Saint John's University

ODYSSEUS: "As the occasion demands, such a one am I. When there is a competition of men to see who is just and good, you will find none more scrupulous than myself. What I seek in everything is to win" (*Philoctetes*, 1048-1051).

**I: *Energeia* and *Praxis***

Whenever I give a talk about the *Rhetoric*, audiences ask about rhetorical deception and fraud, about the morality of rhetoric, and about how to tell a good rhetorician from a sophist. The first and most important thing to say about the *Rhetoric* in connection with such questions of the morality of rhetoric is that Aristotle has very little to say about them, and, as far as I can tell, very little interest in them. Contemporary readers of the *Rhetoric* see people constantly duped by slick commercial and political advertisements, and hope that the *Rhetoric* can help them become conscious of hidden persuasion, or to make more morally based discriminations between decent appeals, which they should trust, and immoral ones, which they should reject. Rhetoric is often promoted today as an equivalent to defensive driving. It is worth asking why these questions have so little interest for Aristotle.

People today not only see rhetorical strategies deployed to achieve ends they deplore; even worse, they assume that the sophist, unrestrained by moral or artful considerations, will best anyone who answers to Aristotle's description of a rhetorician as someone whose appeals are limited to rational argument. Sophists appeal to the emotions, and ignore rational appeals. The sophist asks to be acquitted because he is truly sorry, was just following orders, has learned his lesson, just couldn't help himself because he had such a terrible childhood. He'll appear in a military uniform, with wife and children at his side. The prosecuting orator who does nothing but provide evidence hasn't a chance. To be guided by knowledge and one's rhetorical faculty is to argue with one hand tied behind one's back. The rhetorician follows the demands of his art, the sophist will do anything to win. Art, with its limited means and ends, here seems not to improve practice, but to make things worse.

Aristotle has a simple answer to questions about the morality of rhetoric: he distinguishes the rhetorician and the sophist. What sets the sophist apart from the rhetorician is "not the faculty

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an adaptation of Chapter VII of my book, *Aristotle's Rhetoric and the Professionalization of Virtue*, forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press. I have tried to make this version somewhat self-contained. The remaining references to other chapters are meant to reassure the reader that I do argue for some of the claims that can only be asserted here. David Depew and Charles Young gave constructive advice on earlier drafts.

(*dynamis*) but the moral purpose (*prohairesis*)" (I.1.1355b17; see *de Soph Elen* 1.165a30). Keep straight the difference between sophist and rhetorician and all moral problems will evaporate. He certainly doesn't think telling them apart needs great philosophical development or exquisite ethical judgment. Distinguishing them requires neither *phronesis* nor familiarity with the *Rhetoric*. He gives his distinction all the explanation he thinks it needs by saying:

In rhetoric, the person who acts in accordance with knowledge (*kata ten epistemen*), and the one who acts in accordance with purpose (*kata ten prohairesein*), are both called rhetoricians; but in dialectic it is the purpose that makes the sophist, the dialectician being one whose arguments rest, not on moral purpose (*ou kata ten prohairesein*) but on the faculty (*kata ten dynamin*) (b19-22).<sup>2</sup>

But his distinction between the rhetorician and the sophist seems too offhand for such weighty issues. We have to wonder why he thinks it adequate.

The distinction between the rhetorician and the sophist directs attention of the legislator to the *effects* of sophistic rhetoric. There is nothing in the activity of sophistic itself that warrants attention, since there is nothing unique to sophistic *qua* activity. The effects of bad rhetoric are out there to be treated just like anything else bad in the polis; they are not uniquely rhetorical or sophistic problems. We might construe analogous problems as problems for moral assessment, but Aristotle approaches them as problems calling for political deliberation.

So the problems of the "ethics of rhetoric," which interest so many modern readers, fall between stools. There are no special problems of the ethics of the effects of rhetoric; those problems are simply subsumed under general legislation about bad consequences. There are no ethical problems with sophistic *activity*, either, because *qua* art and activity, rhetoric and sophistic are not different. They only differ in the motives and purposes, not in the activities themselves. The moral problems that may have generated modern interest in the *Rhetoric* in the first place have disappeared. I want to reconstruct the approach to rhetoric that would make such a casual dismissal of the difference between the rhetorician and the sophist plausible.

Arts differ from other skills that Aristotle, and Plato, would classify as *empeiriai*, because arts, like the moral virtues, possess internal, guiding, constitutive ends, and consequently internal standards of excellence. Both for the virtues and for arts such as rhetoric and medicine, guiding ends don't simply replace given ends.<sup>3</sup> When I act courageously, I subordinate my feelings of fear

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<sup>2</sup> The relation of sophistic to rhetoric is slightly different from the relation of sophistic to dialectic, as Aristotle indicates. I think that the difference asserted here is that sophists do not stop being rhetoricians on adopting ulterior motives, but they do stop being dialecticians. This semantic difference reflects the fact that there is no neutral position from which one can arbitrate boundary disputes in rhetoric, while there is in dialectic. To be neutral is to take a position politically, but not dialectically. Accusing someone of being a sophist always has a rhetorical point, but not a dialectical one. There is a "logical" distinction between dialectic and sophistic, such that sophistic deserves distinct treatment in the *Organon*, but there is no parallel "rhetorical" distinction between rhetoric and sophistic, and no rhetorical counterpart to the *De Sophisticis Elenchis*.

<sup>3</sup> Here I am asserting some theses that I argue for in Chapter I of my book.

and confidence to my desire for the noble, but I never forget that I am also trying to win a military victory. States come into existence for the sake of life, but once they reach their *telos* of existing for the good life, they do not start neglecting the needs of mere life. In persuading artfully, I am presenting a proof with its own standards of excellence and completeness, but I never forget that I am trying to get the audience to decide things my way.

Artful rhetoric has an internal purpose, finding in any given case the available means of persuasion. Artful rhetoric also shares with its less scrupulous competitors an external end, winning an audience's assent. Why should we not conclude that concentration on the internal end makes one *less* able to achieve the external end? What MacIntyre says of the virtues seems to hold for artful rhetoric as well: "Virtues stand in a different relationship to external and to internal goods. The possession of the virtues--and not only of their semblance and simulacra--is necessary to achieve the latter; yet the possession of the virtues may perfectly well hinder us in achieving external goods."<sup>4</sup>

Aiming at the guiding end can sometimes help a speaker, or any agent, in accomplishing the given end by offering a goal within one's power and a restricted set of techniques and instruments about which it is easier to deliberate. But having a restricted set which points towards an internal end means that there are some ways of achieving the external end that are not available to the art. Not everything that someone could do to accomplish the given end also counts as a part of the guiding end. Aristotle says that good laws not only forbid emotional appeals but also success based on delivery (III.1.1402b32-35) and says that the speaker should not cause pain or delight (III.1.1404a4-5). If these methods weren't successful, they wouldn't be worth condemning. But we can't condemn the rhetorician for wanting to win. Aristotle himself realizes this and therefore gives advice on how to reach such external ends, instead of the guiding ends of the art. "The speaker should try to guess (*stochazesthai*) how his hearers formed their preconceived opinions and what they are, and then express himself in general terms in regard to them" (II.21.1395b10-11).

## II. The Internal Ends of Art and Virtue

The possibility that the sophist who aims directly at the external end might reach it more successfully than the rhetorician who sticks to his art is only half the problem, though. There are, we see, some things that might successfully bring about persuasion but which lie outside the art of rhetoric. There apparently are, in addition, some things that might successfully bring about persuasion but which no good man would stoop to. Is the restriction to means and resources that achieve the internal, guiding end of the art of rhetoric a restriction to means and resources that are noble, that is, the sort of things the good man would do? Do, in other words, artful and moral restrictions coincide?

Argument, as something that can be accomplished *in* an act of speaking and which has its own standards of success, is analogous to virtues which are their own end. But rhetorical argument and virtuous actions are not identical. The art of rhetoric has constitutive ends of its own, but the

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<sup>4</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 196.

art still should not be assimilated to the virtues. All *energeiai* are complete in themselves, and therefore have standards of excellence and values apart from achieving their instrumental purposes. Rhetorical arguments and virtuous actions both have internal, guiding ends as well as given ends. But not all guiding ends are the same, or even necessarily consistent with each other.

Plato and Aristotle both raise questions about the unity of the virtues, that is, whether there is in fact a single constitutive end for all of them, or that they at least form a consistent set. Here I am raising an analogous question about the relation between two sets of guiding ends, those of the virtues and those of the arts, or at least of rhetoric, the noblest and most practical art. Can the unity of the virtues extend still further, to a unity of the virtues *and the arts*? That is what it would mean for artistic and ethical limitations to coincide.

In fact, it seems at least possible that a conflict between rhetoric and morality would be aggravated, not removed, once rhetorical activity discovers its own internal values. It could be easier to subordinate rhetoric to moral concerns if rhetoric has no intrinsic values of its own. Once again, the *Rhetoric* might be a victim of its own success. Therefore, my question, Do artful and moral restrictions coincide?

Issues of the morality of rhetoric are worries first about the relation between its guiding and given ends, and then between the artful and ethical guiding ends of praxis. If there were a complete identity between artful and ethical guiding ends, then the abilities which comprise the art of rhetoric, and which carve it off from the wider set of powers that could accomplish the given end of persuasion, would simply coincide with what a decent man would do anyway. The good man would not stoop to winning a case by inflaming the passions of his audience. Neither would the artful rhetorician, not because it isn't decent or moral, but because it is not part of the art. The artful rhetorician wouldn't do some morally objectionable things because it would not help in accomplishing the internal, guiding end of the art, doing what is in one's power to persuade the audience. It is in one's power *qua* man to win by getting the audience angry, but not within one's power *qua* rhetorician or *qua* man of moral virtue.

But simply to state the identity between moral and artistic constitutive ends, and so moral and artistic restrictions, is to suggest its implausibility. If they were the same, Aristotle could never say: "These methods are most artful and unfair (*technikotatoi kai adikotatoi*)" (III.15.1416b9), a combination of properties which, echoes Medea's "Men say we women are most helpless for all good (*amechanotatai*) but of evil most cunning (*kakon panton tektones sophotatai*)." If all ethical standards and constraints were already present in action as demands of art, character and nobility would be supererogatory. All we would need would be technical skill in all areas of life, and no one would do anything underhanded. The artful rhetorician *qua* rhetorician respects his or her audience's autonomy, and no further moral problems exist.

It is easy to imagine a practical world in which the guiding ends of the arts were sufficient for all the important ends of life, so that there was no central role for further ethical virtues and ends. Technology would replace character; *logos* without *êthos* would solve all our problems. Morality would only come into play where the result doesn't matter. Art and morals, making and doing, would be related as they are in Socrates' refutation of Polemarchus in *Republic* I. There Polemarchus agrees that he would go to an investment counselor if he wanted to make more money, and to a just man if he wanted to keep the money he had, from which it follows that justice is useful only if the thing that justice is about is useless. There is a clear danger of

something like that happening in the relation of arts and morals, especially in arts like rhetoric. The ambitious speaker will be guided by success, not moral considerations, except when success is not a factor--as, say, in a hopeless case or one where victory is already a foregone conclusion--and then he can afford the luxury of responding morally.

To repeat: when the rhetorician--like a practitioner of any virtue or art--tries to achieve internal goods, he or she does not stop pursuing external ends. The doctor who understands health as constituted by an internal balance of humors still wants her patients to feel better. But when that overall thesis is applied to rhetoric, a surprising conclusion emerges, which makes rhetoric look different from the other arts. Powers like rhetoric and dialectic prove opposites, and powers in general bring about opposite results because they are rational potencies (*dynamis*). "Every rational *dynamis* is capable of causing both contraries, but every irrational potency can cause only one; for example, heat can cause only heating, but doctoring can cause sickness as well as health" (*Metaphysics* IX.2.1046b5-7).<sup>5</sup> Rational potencies are potencies for contrary results. When a doctor poisons someone, usually we blame the doctor, not the art of medicine. But when a lawyer helps a guilty client go free, or when we fall yet again for a politician's tricks, we typically blame rhetoric as well as those particular rhetoricians. If both are arts, and so rational *dynamis*, why do we respond differently?

I think Aristotle's distinction between internal and external ends, *kineseis* and *energeiai*, and between rational and irrational *dynamis*, can help us to look on these problems in a new way. Rational powers can bring about contrary effects *because* they are rational. When rhetoric becomes an art with internal, autonomous values, it does not stop being a power which proves opposites. The restriction to artistic proofs is a limitation on *means*, not ends. The restriction of persuasion to argument does not stop rhetoric from proving opposites; it fulfills and completes the ability to prove opposites! There is, then, no reason to think that concentration on the constitutive end of rhetoric will make speakers act more "morally." Art and virtue are distinct masters.

From the outside, confining rhetoric to argument looks like a restriction, and so I started with the possibility that practicing rhetoric artfully might make the speaker less persuasive than the competition. But the restriction to argument simply displays what is essential to rhetoric *qua* faculty for proving opposites. Therefore, despite this ethically troubling status, rhetorical activity, *qua* activity--*qua* actualization of such a rational *dynamis*--will be part of the good life, and the good polis. Someone prevented from developing and exercising the capacity for argumentative

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Eudemian Ethics* II.10.1227a23-32;: "There are some things that cannot be employed for something other than their natural objects, for instance sight--it is not possible to see a thing that is not visible, or to hear a thing that is not audible; but a science does enable us to do a thing that is not the object of the science. For health and disease are not the objects of the same science in the same way: health is its object in accordance with nature, and disease in contravention of nature. And similarly, by nature good is the object of wish, but evil is also its object in contravention of nature; by nature one wishes good, against nature and by perversion one even wishes evil." I have discussed the rational/irrational *dynamis* distinction from the *Metaphysics* in connection to the definition of the moral virtues as *hexeis prohairetike* in "Aristotle's *Metaphysics* of Morals," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 27 (1989): 7-28.

persuasion would have a part of his or her life unfulfilled. Rhetorical activity, *qua* activity, is in itself valuable because it actualizes essential human powers.

Rhetorical activity, then, is in itself valuable, even if not all its products are desirable. A valuable power which frequently produces questionable products presents grave ethical problems. So there is an Aristotelian problem with the ethics of rhetoric after all. Even if rhetorical activity is a part of the good life, then, there is no guarantee that the *products* of that activity will be similarly welcome, and good reason to think that they will not. That lack of guarantee is a fundamental difference between the arts, including rhetoric, and the virtues, including *phronesis*. The prospect that good activity can have undesirable products is a reason why, for Aristotle, rhetoric can never become *phronesis*. For this reason, Aristotle says that there is excellence in art, but not in *phronesis* (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI.5.1140b21-24). There is excellence, and its contrary, in art, because we cannot presume that its products are excellent. No such separation of activity and product can exist for *phronesis*. After the constitutive ends of rhetoric are understood, there will still be the need for external regulation of those products and consequences. There is unity to the virtues, but not to the virtues and the arts.

In *Ethics* II.6 Aristotle says that the virtues both "render the thing itself good, and also cause it to perform its function well" (1106a17-19). Such a claim that the thing and its function are both good is trivially true for all irrational *dynamis*. To make something good *qua dynamis* is to make it perform its function well, because that is the good condition of a *dynamis*. You can't say that my body is healthy but I'm not able to perform the functions that healthy bodies have (external circumstances apart). My car heater pours out heat, and you can't distinguish its being good from its doing well. But the same claim can be false for rational *dynamis* in general, which is why there is no unity of the arts. My medical power can be in wonderful shape, and I can use it to make a lot of money in cosmetic surgery to the stars or in degrading or useless medical experiments. I am then not performing the function of medicine well.

My good *dynamis* produces bad *energeiai* because, as Aristotle's distinction between rhetorician and sophist makes clear, I am supplying the wrong *prohairesis*. Rational *dynamis* differ from irrational ones because they need a *prohairesis* to move from potency to act. Since they are indeterminate, the claim from II.6 can be false for the arts, including rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> Possessing the art of rhetoric might "render the thing itself [the power to persuade] good," without causing "it to perform its function well." That is why the fact that rhetoric can be misused seems to pose problems that are not motivated by the parallel fact that courage too often causes trouble. "If a man is foolish or unjust or profligate he would gain no profit from using [things that are truly good], any more than an invalid would benefit from using the diet of a man in good health or a

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, p. 195. "Health as ordinarily conceived is the starting-point of medical deliberation about how to treat a patient, in the sense of being the *raison d'être* of all steps taken with a view to treatment, including the deliberation; but the technical goal presented in the leading premiss is the starting-point that guides the physician to one conclusion rather than another. The former starting-point is what justifies engaging at all in the deliberation with a view to taking whatever action it will indicate; the latter explains why *this* conclusion was reached and *this* action taken."

weaking and disabled person from the equipment of a healthy man and of a sound one" (*E. E.* VIII.3.1248b31-34).

The situation is the same with dialectic as it is with rhetoric, and the comparison might help. Rhetoric and dialectic are faculties, rational powers for producing opposites. Therefore--and here I want to stress the direction of inference--facility at either, the *energeia* of either *dynamis*, will not, Aristotle says, constitute wisdom. That doesn't mean that the powers engaged in rhetoric and dialectic are not the same powers engaged in practical and theoretical wisdom. They are, just as *phronesis* requires the *dynamis* of cleverness (VI.12.1144a24-31). It does mean, though, that no one is wiser simply by exercising rational faculties (I.2.1356a32-34). Aristotle therefore appeals to the same topos of *dynamis* vs *prohairesis* in the *Metaphysics* to distinguish among sophistic, dialectic and philosophy:

Sophistic and dialectic treat the same *genos* as philosophy, but philosophy differs from sophistic by the kind of *dynamis*, and from dialectic in its *prohairesis* of a way of life. Dialectic treats as an exercise what philosophy tries to understand (*gnoristike*), and sophistic seems to be philosophy, and is not (*Metaphysics* IV.2.1004b23-27; see also *Politics* III.16.1287a33-b3).

### III: The Art and Virtue of Truth-telling

I want to turn for help in explicating the distinction between rhetorician and sophist to an unlikely parallel in the *Ethics*. His claim in the *Rhetoric* is so brief and casual-looking that turning to other Aristotelian texts makes sense. The passage from the *Ethics* I want to turn to isn't straightforward, so I cannot offer a sudden illumination of the *Rhetoric*. Its complications have interest and relevance for sorting out the relation between faculty and choice, between doing something for its own sake and for a purpose, and, eventually, between rhetoric and sophistic. Turning to the *Ethics* and noting a similar analysis in no way is an argument that rhetoric is a virtue, a moral activity, or part of the good life. I am interested instead in the relation between two distinct and possibly competing *energeiai*, rhetorical activity and virtuous activity, and therefore two distinct and possibly competing *dynamis*, the art of rhetoric and the *hexeis* of virtue. In fact, it will turn out that the moral virtues in Aristotle's hands look more like rhetorical and strategic skills than a modern reader might expect, not the other way around. If we judge that Aristotle is wrong to see no problem with the morality of rhetoric, the problem could be with Aristotle's conception of ethics, not rhetoric.

My ethical analogue to the rhetorician/sophist distinction appears in an unlikely looking place, the description of the boastful man in *Ethics* IV.7. There too he appeals to the same distinction between *dynamis* and *prohairesis* he uses to distinguish between the rhetorician and sophist, in a one-sentence parenthetical explanation: "It is not a person's *dynamis*, but his *prohairesis*, that makes him a boaster (*alazon*); for his state of character (*hexis*) makes a person a boaster" (1127b14-16, Irwin trans.). Many editors put this sentence in parentheses because it isn't clear what it has to do with the rest of the argument. *Aletheia*, truth-telling, truthfulness, or sincerity as it is sometimes translated, is a virtuous mean between boasting and ironizing self-deprecation. All these kinds of actions "may be done with or without an ulterior purpose (*heneka*); and someone's character determines what he says and does and the way he lives, if he is not acting for an ulterior



purpose" (IV.7.1127a26-27; cf. III.7.1115b18-22: "The end of activity is conformity to the corresponding *hexis*."). To act with an "ulterior motive" is precisely what the sophist does in acting from *prohairesis* rather than a *dynamis*. Aristotle's evaluations of boasting, truth-telling and ironizing will, I think, reveal a fair amount about his evaluations of rhetoric and sophistic.<sup>7</sup>

Truth is a good thing, and so truth-telling is a virtue. But truth-telling is not a virtue simply because truth is a good. The value of the guiding end for the practice of truth-telling is not derivative from the given end, truth. One sign of the complicated relations between given and guiding end here is that the extremes are not vices, as they should be according to the general definition of virtue. If truth is a good, then falsity is bad, and those who choose falsity are vicious: "Falsehood is in itself base and reprehensible, and truth noble and praiseworthy" (a28-30). Yet boasters and ironizers are not vicious. Telling the truth is good, but its goodness is not self-evident.

Instead, Aristotle has to explain why truth-telling, and truth, are good things. He questions their value, not because he is skeptical that they might not be good, but because the nature of their goodness is not evident. What is bad about boasting and ironizing? Are they bad because they misrepresent things, or because they do so for a bad motive? Are liars objectionable, or is it lies? Similarly, is the motive or the truth-telling itself the locus of praise for truth-telling? Do I praise the truth-teller because I value the truth or the telling? Is the locus of evaluation the act, or its motives, or its results? All these questions come up because, although truth-telling is a virtue, the extremes between which it is a mean are not vices.

Aristotle declares that truthfulness is a virtue because "the lover of truth, who is truthful even when nothing depends on it, will *a fortiori* be truthful when some interest is at stake (*en hois diapherei*), since having all along avoided falsehood for its own sake, he will assuredly avoid it when it is morally base (*aischron*); and this is a disposition that we praise" (1127b5-8). One might think that just the opposite was the case, that it would be easier to be truthful when nothing turned on it, but Aristotle seems not to think so. It gets even stranger because Aristotle then hedges: "The sincere man will diverge from the truth, if at all, in the direction of understatement rather than exaggeration; since this appears in better taste (*emmelesteron*), as all excess is offensive" (b8-9).

Acting for the noble and acting in good taste hardly seem to be the same. At the beginning I announced that my analogy between rhetoric and the virtue of truth-telling was not designed to make rhetoric into a virtue, and warned that the opposite was closer to the mark. Here truth-telling seems to become a rhetorical, strategic problem rather than one that requires character and acting virtuously for its own sake.

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<sup>7</sup> "It makes much difference what object one has in view in a study or pursuit; if one follows it for the sake of oneself or one's friends, or on moral grounds (*di' areten*), it is not illiberal, but the man who follows the same pursuit because of other people would often appear to be acting in a menial and servile manner" (*Politics* VIII.2.1337b17-22;). See also III.4.1277b2-7; *Rhetoric* I.9.1367a29; *Ethics* IV.3.1124b31-1125a2, all cited in Chapter 1. See also *E. E.* II.11.1228a11; "We praise and blame all men with regard to their purposes rather than with regard to their actions, although activity is a more desirable thing than goodness."

Truth-telling is not the only virtue Aristotle makes into a matter of taste and judgment, rather than finding the mean. In a similar way, the just man will take less than his legal share (V.10.1137b34-1138a3). The just man is not *akribodikaios*. Excessive precision is a character flaw, not just the mistake in argument we are warned against elsewhere in Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> Precision is not a logical property but an ethical one. The overly precise speaker is not persuasive because excessive accuracy is a sign of vice, not virtue. What does it take to be sincere and just? Are these virtues matters of character or taste? Are truth and tact conflicting standards? Both the truthful and the just person, by being ironical and imprecise, seem to do something other than what is right.

It is easier to say why boasting is a bad thing than why truth-telling is good, and this discrepancy will become important when we get to the third member of the trio, irony. I have already reported the whole of the little Aristotle had to say about the truth-teller, but the braggart allows more description. There are two possibilities: someone can boast with or without ulterior motive. Someone who claims merit he doesn't possess without further purpose "appears more foolish than vicious" (*mataios* vs *kakos*) (1127b12; see the similar remark about the prodigal man at IV.1.1121a26-28, and about the vain and "small-souled man" at IV.3.1125a18-19; cf. *Metaphysics* V.29.1025a1-13).<sup>9</sup>

It is foolish, not vicious, to state what is false for its own sake. Can it be virtuous, rather than smart or tasteful, to tell the truth for its own sake? The man who boasts without further motive is foolish, and that is all Aristotle has to say about him. How much blame accorded to the man who boasts with an ulterior object in view depends not on the falsehood but on that object. Boasting to gain honor isn't so bad, but boasting to get money is more unseemly (*aschemonesteros*) (b14), because "honor is the greatest of external goods" (IV.3.1123b20, 1124a17). Those who boast for profit "pretend to accomplishments that are useful and which can be counterfeited without detection, for instance, prophecy, philosophy (*sophia*) and medicine" (IV.7.1127b19-21; see also

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<sup>8</sup> E.g., *Metaphysics* I.2.982a25-26, I.3.995a11; *Ethics* I.3.1094b11-27; I.7.1098a26-33; II.2.1104a5-10, II.4.1106b9-10; *Politics* VII.1328a18, *Rhetoric* I.10.1369b31-32; III.12.1414a7-18; 17.1418a2-4;. Similarly we are told at *Republic* VI.486a; that *smikrologia* is incompatible with a philosophical nature. See also *Republic* I.340e, where Thrasymachus accuses Socrates of such excessive precision. In addition, we are told in *de Anima* II.9 that smell is less *akribe* than hearing and sight because we do not sense smells without either pleasure or pain (421a11-13); presumably those senses are more precise which can experience objects as they are apart from their causing pleasure and pain. For the later history of the contrast between precision and truth, see Wesley Trimpf, *Muses of One Mind: The Literary Analysis of Experience and Its Continuity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> None of these virtues seems to fit Aristotle's general account of virtue as a mean between two extreme vices. In fact, all the moral virtues present problems *vis-à-vis* the general account, just as each of the emotions in *Rhetoric* II presents discrepancies with the general account of II.1. I have explored a few of those problems for courage in "The Meaning of *Thrasos* in Aristotle's *Ethics*," *Classical Philology*, 77 (1983). For still more troubles, see Charles Young, "Aristotle on Justice," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 27 (1988): 233-249, and "Aristotle on Temperance," *Philosophical Review* 97 (1988): 521-542.

*de Soph Elen* 11.171b25-35). Rhetoric falls within this class of things that are useful but where fraud is likely to succeed, the fields of pretense and bragging (*prospoiontai kai alazoneuntai*) (b24).

Unfortunately, the more noble and desirable for its own sake some activity is, the harder it is to detect fraud. By this point in this exploration of the *Rhetoric*, we are in a position to see why things like prophecy, wisdom and medicine should be both useful and hard for users to judge. One would think that Aristotle should say, with Plato, that "in the case of justice and the honourable many would prefer the semblance without the reality in action, possession, and opinion, yet when it comes to the good nobody is content with the possession of the appearance but all men seek the reality, and the semblance satisfies no one" (*Rep.* VI.505d-e; see *Theaetetus* 172). Aristotle can say instead that the things we value most are also the easiest to fake because the more an internal end dominates a practice, the less it can be judged by external success, and so the more room for fraud.<sup>10</sup> The arts of prophecy, philosophy and medicine exemplify this pair of qualities.

The contrast between boasting for an ulterior motive and virtuously telling the truth corresponds to the distinction between the sophist and the rhetorician, the one acting for an external end and the other exercising a *dynamis*. The sophist does not correspond to the foolish man who brags without further purpose, but to the one who boasts for money or honor. The first member of each pair--braggart and sophist--has an external object that motivates and explains his actions. The sincere man tells the truth for its own sake--that is what makes him virtuous. The artful rhetorician persuades according to the demands of his art.

In neither of these latter cases does aiming at such an internal, constitutive end preclude having a further end in mind. To act virtuously is not to be a narcissist or aesthete, nor to value formal, procedural goods of following rules at the expense of desirable results.<sup>11</sup> The artful rhetorician can still try to win his case.

I want to pursue this analogy between rhetorical argument and virtuously telling the truth, and between sophists and boasters, a step further. Identifying what is blameworthy in boasting with the goals one has for boasting suggests that truth-telling is not inherently valuable. At least it shows that truth-telling's intrinsic value is not enough to ground our evaluations of true and false

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<sup>10</sup> Bacon observes that fields where the internal end is dominant are the fields of pretense and bragging: "The subject [of medicine] being so variable has rendered the art more conjectural, and left the more room for imposture. Other arts and sciences are judged of by their power and ability, and not by success or events. The lawyer is judged by the ability of his pleading, not the issue of the cause; the pilot, by directing his course, and not by the fortune of the voyage; whilst the physician and the statesman have no particular act that clearly demonstrates their ability, but are principally censured by the event." *Advancement of Learning*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>11</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, "Moral Rationality, Tradition, and Aristotle," *Inquiry* 26 (1983): 463. "Virtues practiced only for their own sake become exercises in moral narcissism." See also John Dewey, who calls "spiritual egoists" people who are "preoccupied with the state of their character, concerned for the purity of their motives and the goodness of their souls....The needs of actual conditions are neglected, or dealt with in a half-hearted way, because in the light of the ideal they are so mean and sordid." John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (Modern Library, New York, 1930), pp. 7-8.

conduct; the value of the guiding end does not follow from the value of the given end. The boaster is identified by his motive, as the sophist is by the *dynamis/prohairesis* distinction in the *Rhetoric*, but, as in that passage, the truthful man seems identified by his *lack* of motive, rather than a particular attachment to the truth or the noble. In this respect too truth-telling resembles the virtue of justice; Aristotle initially characterized both by the lack of ulterior motive and not a sense of intrinsic value.

That suspicion that truth and falsity have purely instrumental value and external justification seems confirmed when Aristotle turns to the ironist. Most other virtues are means between two vicious extremes. Here the one extreme, boasting is not itself a vice except when impelled by a base motive. The other extreme, irony, is not an object of blame at all. Ironists are more refined (*chariesteroi*) than boasters, because of the motive for their insincerity, which is not gain but dislike of ostentation.

By the time he is done it is unclear whether there are in fact three kinds of character here or only two. Irony and the truth-telling collapse into a single virtue, because irony is a virtuous way of telling the truth. That lack of clarity is captured in the summary at the end of the chapter: "It is the boaster who appears to be opposed to the truthful person, because he is the worse" (*antikeisthai ho alazon phainetai toi aletheutikoi. keiron gar*, 1127b33-4). Everything turns on what it is worse than, but the structure and position of the sentence suggest that boasting is simply worse than the alternative, so that truth-telling and ironizing have been identified.<sup>12</sup>

There is an ironic vice, but the vice has to do with disavowing trivial qualities. Such self-denial, Aristotle says, is really a kind of boasting. Denying esteemed qualities, as Socrates does, is graceful (*charotenes*) (1127b31). To pursue the analogy between the virtues of truth-telling and justice, Aristotle initially posits a distinction between legal justice and equity, but when the just man is characterized as taking less than he legally could, the equitable becomes the just, and merely legal justice, like telling some antecedently defined truth, is no longer a mark of virtue. From being an exceptional phenomenon at play only when legal justice breaks down, equity becomes the norm. Here too a virtue is first defined the external goods it achieves or preserves, and then becomes the measure of those goods. The constitutive end takes over from the external end. That does not happen with most of the other moral virtues, and therefore the extremes between which they fall are vices.

We can now fill in a little of what he means when he says that "when a man is acting without further purpose, his words, actions, and conduct always represent who he is" (IV.7.1127a26-27). Truth-telling is not a matter of transparency or accuracy of representation of thoughts in words but of appropriate self-presentation, finding the right amount to put forward about oneself in the circumstances. Even though the extremes are not vices, the virtue is still a habit of choosing a mean.

For that reason, Aristotle begins the ethical treatment of truth-telling by talking about virtue and achieving an external goal but he ends by talking about tact, taste and refinement. If truth-

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<sup>12</sup> Irwin consequently supplies his own interpretation in amplifying the translation, adding the passages in brackets: "It is the boaster [rather than the self-deprecator] who appears to be opposed to the truthful person, because he is the worse [of the two extremes]."

telling were an openness that let others see the truth about oneself, then it would be impossible to be artfully sincere, and the rhetorician would be faced with a series of choices between truth and accommodation to audience. Once truth-telling and ironizing are assimilated, the possibility for artful yet truthful self-representation becomes a live one.<sup>13</sup> To act artfully and to act virtuously need not be alternatives. These two *dynamis*, the art of rhetoric and the virtue of telling the truth, can issue in a single *energeia*. Technique and *êthos*, not just artful *êthos* defined within the act of persuasion, but real *êthos*, can co-exist.

The assimilation of truth and irony makes this virtue unusual for the *Ethics*, because when Aristotle is done there is no longer a difference between a mean and one of its extremes: we are left with the alternatives of boasting and something called either truthfulness or irony. Although unusual, it is the product of a kind of argument that Aristotle engages in his treatment of all the virtues. The internal end gradually emerges as authoritative. Courage, for example, is the ability cheerfully to withstand fear in battle, to stand rather than flee. But staying to fight is not the measure of courage; by the end of Aristotle's argument, the courageous man is the measure of whether he should fight or flee.

For that reason, as I noted in the last chapter, the treatment of courage ends on the note that "courageous men do not make the best soldiers (*kratistoi*). The best soldiers are men who are less courageous but have nothing of value besides life to lose; for these face danger readily, and will barter their lives for trifling gains" (III.9.1117b17-21). (Similarly, the liberal man is easy to cheat, so is not the most successful person in financial matters. IV.1.1121a4-5, 1120a14-20.) There is a discrepancy between courage's external, given end of military victory and its constitutive end of mastering fears. There is nothing unique to rhetoric in the prospect I noted in the beginning of the chapter, that the sophist might beat the rhetorician.

Consequently, internal and external ends provide distinct standards of evaluation for both the virtues and for rhetoric. It is better to *be* courageous than to be someone who risks his life because he doesn't have much to lose. But although I would rather be courageous, I might prefer to be protected by soldiers of the latter kind. Similarly, the just man will take less than he can claim, and so although I would like to *be* just, the justice might not figure in my job description for a tax accountant.

The analogy to rhetoric is obvious. I would rather *be* the artful rhetorician who persuades through the exercise of practical intelligence, but I might choose to hire a litigating attorney of the other kind. Aristotle is untroubled by the prospect of hiring others to do something which it would be ignoble to do oneself. There is nothing in Aristotle approaching the doctrine that if one wills the ends one must also will the means. If I need something done, and if doing it is ignoble, I

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<sup>13</sup> Annette Baier, "Why Honesty is a Hard Virtue," Owen Flanagan and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Identity, Character, and Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, p. 268. "The honesty of virtuous truth telling, and with it due trust in what others say, is at least as convention-dependent as the honest of respect for others' property, along with proper trust in others' honesty. Honest speech is a special case of respect for rights--namely for another person's right to occasional access to one's own naturally private states of mind. This is as complex a right as the right to have a debt paid. It is the right to get from another what is current in their secure possession."

should simply get someone else to do it for me. There's nothing ignoble in that. Nobility and slavishness are not transitive properties (see *Politics* III.2127b3-7). If there is a difference between Aristotle's morals and ours, this might be the place to find it.

Such a divergence between points of view shows a discrepancy between and internal and external ends characteristic of all true practices, whether virtuous or artful. To make citizens virtuous is to teach them to concentrate on the internal goods of practices, but such concentration cannot be to the full exclusion of external goods. Legislators have to be concerned that the external and internal ends do not diverge too much. Otherwise, courage, liberality, and artful rhetoric no longer have practical value. When all wars are foreign wars, when law is transformed from being reason without desire into a series of commercial treaties, when success is all, there are no longer any civic activities, and no longer any polis.

At the beginning of the discussion of truth-telling, virtue looked easy. It simply depended on the absence of a base motive. When virtue becomes the measure of how much of the given goal we should aim for, the virtue of truthfulness determines how much truth to tell, and how we should present ourselves. Virtue is no longer just a matter of avoiding ulterior motives, but of intelligently and sensitively figuring out what to say and do. Once again, there is a parallel between truth and justice:

Men think that it is in their power to act unjustly, and therefore that it is easy to be just. But really this is not so....How an action must be performed, how a distribution must be made to be a just action or a just distribution--to know this is a harder task than to know what medical treatment will produce health  
(V.9.1137a5-14).

Similarly, rhetoric, a *dynamis* or art, has its own standards for goodness not reducible to success, or to some antecedent standards of good behavior. There's more to being a good rhetorician than refraining from sophistic tricks. From the outside--and that is the point of view I might adopt in hiring someone to argue for me--virtue and the art of rhetoric are both systems of restraints by internal standards. From the outside, the sign of the sophist is his *prohairesis*. The *energeiai* of rational *dynameis* need additional determination from *prohairesis*. Rational *dynameis* are not self-actualizing; the sophist's powers are for sale, which shows that his *dynamis* and what he does with it are independent. That is why, as Socrates noted in his challenge to Protagoras, the ability to teach is the mark of other forms of knowledge, but the offer to teach is here grounds for suspicion (see *Ethics* X.9.1180b33-1181a4.)

From the inside, the essence of artful rhetoric is not its lack of such motive, but the presence of a subject-matter and an internal end for art. From the outside, the audience is the measure of successful rhetoric; from the inside, the art of rhetoric can criticize the judgments of the audience, just as the courageous man can look down on the fellow who is willing to risk his life because it isn't worth much. In the case of irony, from the outside there are three states of the soul, from the inside only two. From the outside, it looks as though justice is a mean between taking too much and too little of good things; from the inside, the just man takes less than he could, and becomes the measure of what things are good. From the outside, artful rhetoric, truth-telling and justice are all characterized by the absence of motive. From within, it is the dominance of the internal end.

The argument in both the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* moves from outside to inside, as Aristotle discloses the true nature of art and virtue, moving, as he characterizing scientific inquiry, from

things better known to us to things better known in nature. From the outside point of view, virtue is a mean located by its intermediate position between extremes; this is what Aristotle calls natural virtue. It is not hard to be good. From the inside, where natural virtue is replaced by a virtue informed by *phronesis*, the right state of character is what we use to define the extremes. Virtue now is difficult, and praiseworthy.

#### IV: The Moral Point of View and the Rhetorical Point of View

So far, I think I have softened the charges of immorality concerning rhetoric, by showing how analogous problems exist within the moral virtues themselves. But what does any of this have to do with distinguishing the rhetorician from the sophist, which I promised it would, and with the difference between Aristotle's rhetoric and an art of deception? Are we now in any better position to respond to the charge that the artful rhetorician hasn't a chance against the clever sophist?

If the difference is not one of art but motive, then there are no aspects of the art that cannot be used sophistically for external purposes. There is no distinction between rhetoric and sophistic, only between the rhetorician and the sophist. Everything the rhetorician does artfully, the sophist can also use for ulterior motives. There is no art of sophistic, only a sophistic use of the art of rhetoric.

In any given case there are some things that the sophist can do and the rhetorician will not. But these particular acts of restraint on the part of the artful rhetorician do not add up to a pattern of restrictions. The same things that only a sophist would do in one case can fall within the art of rhetoric on a different occasion: "Vote for me and I'll make you rich" can be a rational appeal to self-interest or a bribe. As we've seen, the same emotions that Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* I.1 should be excluded from rhetoric by good laws are the emotions treated in Book II, and there is no simple demarcation between real and apparent enthymemes.<sup>14</sup>

The sophists, at least when they are selling their talents, claim that they have an esoteric set of techniques to teach, but they are wrong. That's false advertising. What ability they have is parasitic on the actual art of persuasion analyzed in the *Rhetoric*. There is no art of poisoning; it is just the abuse of the art of healing.

Once Aristotle has constructed an art of rhetoric, he can say that to the extent sophists are successful, they are practicing, and abusing, the art of rhetoric, and not a separate art of their own. Since they are practicing rhetoric only accidentally--since they have no clear conception of it, and especially of its end--they aren't likely to do it very well. Aristotle sees no threat in the sophists and rhetoricians the way Socrates does. He doesn't need to promise that his own art will improve practice. The so-called arts of rhetoric produced by the sophists are not in Aristotle's eyes so much immoral as intellectually vacuous.

Being intellectually vacuous doesn't prevent the sophists from being practically powerful. In any given case, the sophist has things at his disposal that the rhetorician does not. But overall, the rhetorician has something the sophist doesn't. From an external point of view, the art of rhetoric

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<sup>14</sup> I argue for these claims in Chapters IV, "Deliberative Rationality and the Emotions," and V. "Why Reasoning Persuades." respectively, of my book.

seems to put the rhetorician at a disadvantage, arguing with one hand tied behind his back. The surprising lesson of the *Rhetoric* is that that external point of view has it backwards, for rhetoric as much as it does for the virtues, especially the virtues of my examples, truth-telling and justice. Rhetorician and sophist both aim at the given end of rhetoric, persuading an audience. The sophist aims at nothing but the given end of rhetoric, persuasion, while the rhetorician in addition aims at the artful end, finding in any case the available means of persuasion. Instead of the image of arguing with one hand tied behind one's back, I suggest a different picture. In the first chapter I used geometric proof as my paradigm for argument as *energeia*. I remember the feeling of arbitrary constraint in beginning geometry, where I was told that only straight-edge and compass were permitted in constructions, not rulers and protractors. There were, I quickly learned, some things I wanted to do which I couldn't do under the rules, trisect an angle for example. Learning geometry is learning that the limitation to straight-edge and compass is not an arbitrary and perverse restriction but a limitation partly constitutive of geometry. The art of rhetoric offers a similar kind of restriction. That is why, even if sometimes I choose to hire a sophistical lawyer, and even vote for sophistical politicians, I would rather not be one, but to be an artful rhetorician instead.

Just as the courageous man aims not only at military victory but at being a certain kind of person, and as the truthful man possesses not only the given goal of telling the truth but the constitutive goal of presenting himself well, the artful rhetorician will aim at persuasion by aiming at finding in a given case the available means of persuasion. Aristotle's insight, in both the *Rhetoric* and the *Ethics*, is that the constitutive end of these practices guides and *perfects* the achievement of the initially given end by offering a guiding end whose achievement is within the agent's power and which comprises--on the whole although not in each individual case--doing what is within one's power to persuade. The rhetorician *qua* rhetorician is in each instance constrained by his art or *dynamis*, because someone can always point to some sophistic trick he isn't considering. In good states, much of that constraint is institutionalized by good laws. It is a sign, then, that someone is persuading rhetorically that there are things he could do but won't. (The doctor sees more opportunities for killing than I can.) But such a sign is no more the essence of the rhetorical art than morality's struggle against inclination is its essence in Kant. Struggle against inclination there is a good sign of morality, but it would be a mistake to define morality by the struggle. Similarly, it would be a mistake to define rhetoric by the sophistic things it won't stoop to.

It is wrong to think that the rhetorician selects from among all the things that the sophist does those appeals that are admissible by his own standards of art. It looks that way to the sophist, no doubt. In fact, because of his own artful, constitutive end, the rhetorician has things to think about that the sophist does not. Specifically, he thinks think about rhetorical argument. Consequently the "arts" of the sophists are pretty meager affairs which Aristotle can describe, consistent with this line of argument, as the presentation of a collection of products, rather than any actual art (*de Soph Elen* 34.183b37-184a7).



The lack of art and the lack of attention to argument go together.<sup>15</sup> The claim that the earlier writers on rhetoric neglected argument could be true on one condition: that it is possible to engage in rhetorical *argument* only if one is aiming at artful persuasion instead of persuasion overall. Aristotle says that "proofs are the only things in rhetoric that come within the province of art," and I am claiming the converse, that proofs *only* come about artistically. Aiming directly at the external end, persuasion, is incompatible with arguing because the only direct relation a speaker can have with the external end, persuasion, is that of productive, efficient cause to effect.<sup>16</sup> To be a sophist is to be governed by *prohairesis* rather than the rhetorical *dynamis*, and that precludes argument in favor of moving the mind of the audience instead. Only the rhetorician can argue, just as only the geometer, not the empirical craftsman who will rely on any tool that will work, can prove anything.

The *Ethics'* discussion of truth-telling is, again, apposite, this time to the question of who has the advantage, rhetorician or sophist. Telling the truth for its own sake is virtuous. When Aristotle begins, he speaks as though there are psychic qualities each of us possesses, and sincerity consists in matching one's words and deeds to those qualities. If so, all it would take for sincerity is the absence of an effective motive to do otherwise. Virtue is easy: "Virtue can be attained by some process of study or effort by anyone whose capacity for virtue is not stunted or maimed" (I.9.1099b18-20; cf. I.2.1095b7, *Anal. Pr.* I.30.46a17). Similarly, it is easy to distinguish sophist from rhetorician and truth from falsehood (*Rhetoric* I.1.1355a17, a31; see also *Topics* I.1.100b29-101a1: "Usually the nature of untruth in eristic arguments is immediately obvious to those who have even a small power of comprehension"). By the end of IV.7, when irony and sincerity are assimilated, he is denying a distinction between personal qualities and their expression. Initially, a pre-existent truth--a correspondence between quality and expression--is the measure of virtue, but once the virtuous character is articulated, character becomes the measure of truth. Shaping one's self-presentation is truthful to oneself in relation to circumstances, including the circumstances of other people and their expectations. "Propriety (*to prepon*) of style will be obtained by the expression of emotion and character and by proportion to the subject matter" (III.7.1408a10-11). In that case, the virtuous man can see that there are on occasion better modes of self-presentation than what from the outside looks like truth. There are alternatives to truth-telling other than lying, such as reticence. The virtuous man will, of course, never be vicious, but he will do things that others may regard as vicious.

I have developed an analogy between the virtue of irony and the art of rhetoric, and have tried to avoid assimilating them. Without using the parallel to irony to claim that rhetoric is a virtue, I

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<sup>15</sup> I argue this thesis in Chapter VI, "Making Discourse Ethical: Can I be Too Rational?"

<sup>16</sup> James B. White, "The Ethics of Argument," *University of Chicago Law Review* 50 (1983): 878. "One cannot be a propagandist in the service of truth or an advocate in the service of justice, for the character and the motives are wrong. And character and motives are for these purposes everything, for 'truth' and 'justice' are not abstract absolutes, to be attained or not in materially measurable ways; these are words that defined shared motives out of which a community and a culture can be built and a character made for the individual and his world. They express an attitude, imply a process, and promise a community."

have been pointing to a parallel structure in their arguments. The movement from the pre-philosophic understanding of irony as a vice to the philosophic conception in which irony and sincerity are indistinguishable is a microcosm of the argument of the *Rhetoric*. Artful rhetoric is artful. Like irony--and this is the reason I have used irony as the point of comparison--sometimes the art is decorous and tactful presentation, and at other times it has an ulterior motive, and then the packaging becomes disguise. If Aristotle's *virtues* can look morally ambiguous, it is all the more likely that his arts, especially the art of rhetoric, will be morally ambiguous too.

### V. Conclusion: The Moral Ambiguity of Rhetoric, and of Morality

Anyone who feels moral discomfort with the *Rhetoric* should be equally troubled by Aristotle's other writing. The *Topics*, far more than the *Rhetoric*, contains advice about how to win that seems unconnected to the higher motives of dialectic, and the *Politics* is full of practical maxims aimed at success rather than achieving a fuller embodiment of justice. Part of the discomfort readers experience with the *Rhetoric* comes from failing to see how wide most of its difficulties spread, and how little is specific to rhetoric.

I want to make thing still worse by juxtaposing two more passages, one from the *Ethics*, in the discussion of magnanimity and the other from the account of anger in the *Rhetoric*. Irony turns up in both. The great souled man has all the virtues, knows that he has them, and acts, in Aristotle's eyes, accordingly.

He is open in love and in hate (*phaneromise kai phanerophilon*), since concealment shows timidity; and cares more for the truth than for what people think; and speaks and acts openly (*phaneros*), since as he despises (*kataphronetikon*) other people he is outspoken and frank, except when speaking with irony, as he does to common people (*pros tous pollous*) (IV.3.1124b27-31).

Here it is the same lack of motive that characterized the truthful and ironic man in IV.7 that is again the mark of a virtue of openness. The only difference is that openness comes not from no motive at all but the absence of a specific motive, namely fear. Truth and irony are not different conditions of the soul, but different manifestations of the single virtue of magnanimity in different circumstances. All that is of a piece with the earlier discussion of truth-telling. But one of the properties of people at whom we are angry, he notes in the *Rhetoric*, is that they use irony "when we ourselves are in earnest, for irony shows contempt" (II.2.1379b25). Irony is offensive not because it dissimulates some truth, as boasting does. It is offensive because it discloses. It looks like we're supposed to be aware of our superiority, but not display the awareness. That's what happens when internal and external standards of success diverge.

By making truthfulness into a *virtue*, rather than the *product* of the ideal communicative situation, Aristotle highlights the double nature of irony as both decency and deception, and the double nature of truth as both disclosure and as appropriate statement. Irony is one particular manifestation of the double nature of rhetorical accommodation to circumstances, where--throughout the history of rhetoric--accommodation is either a compromise of one's ideals and standards with necessity, or a way of making one's purposes real and effective. That double nature is symptomatic of Aristotle's overall project: everything, he says (e.g., *Politics* I.9.1257a8), has a double nature, and can be used either in accordance with its function or as an exchangeable good,

commensurate with everything else (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.3.1094b18-19, *Eudemian Ethics* VIII.1.1246a26-35, *Politics* I.3.1258a6-14). Rhetoric is no exception: as a faculty or art, it has a function, but it can also be used, bought and sold, and rented and hired. Persuasive activities can be the actualization of the *dynamis* of rhetoric, or can spring from an ulterior motive. All the techniques of the art of rhetoric can be used in order to win a debate, as well as to fulfill the function of the art. Consequently, the same technique will sometimes be displayed, and recommended, as part of the good functioning of the art in the *Rhetoric*, yet can, in another passage, be condemned and excused as simply trying to win at all cost. In the one case, it is the *dynamis* of rhetoric that is the basis of evaluation, in the other, the agent's *prohairesis*.

All the ambiguities and puzzles about the morality of rhetoric come from the relation Aristotle constructs between these internal and external ends for the virtues and the arts. To show they all have the same root, though, does not in any way solve the problems. It only lets us ask them in Aristotelian language and so avoid begging questions. I have framed the distinction between rhetoric and sophistic as the difference between an internal and an external principle of action. Earlier I noted that Aristotle says that there is excellence in art, but not in *phronesis* (*Ethics* VI.5.1140b21-24). From that Aristotle infers that "in *technê* voluntary error (*hamartia*) is not so bad as involuntary, whereas in the sphere of *phronesis* it is worse, as it is in the sphere of the virtues" (see *Metaphysics* V.29.1052a10-13). Because he sees these problems as questions of adjustment either between internal and external end, or between competing candidates for internal end, he can address these problems without moralizing them.

Intentional error is possible and justifiable in art because there is a difference between an art's powers and ends and an artist's powers and ends: one can violate the internal demands of art for the sake of the further end. Art does not deliberate (*Physics* II.8.199b26). Since there is no such further end in *phronesis*, there can be no justification, and so no voluntary error. The possibility of intentional error is just what prevents reducing ethical virtue or *phronesis* to knowledge or craft (cf. *E. E.* VIII.1.1246a32-1246b4). And, therefore, intentional error is legitimate in art and not in *phronesis* because an art itself doesn't have to take all facets of the concrete individual into account, but *phronesis* always does (e.g., *Metaphysics* I.1.988a13-24).<sup>17</sup> The *logoi* of the *phronimos* and of rhetorical argument must have a different sort of relation to particulars than the *logoi* of the crafts, one in which authority is divided between the *logoi* and particulars. That is why there can be no *technê* for *phronesis*, and why the idea of a *technê* for rhetoric must be so paradoxical.

There are no absolute moral rules in Aristotle (apart from a few categorical prohibitions such as that against adultery, which are not part of Aristotle's theories but marginal background for

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<sup>17</sup> Sarah Waterlow Broadie, "The Problem of Practical Intellect in Aristotle's *Ethics*," John Cleary (ed.), *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume III, University Press of America, 1988, p. 250. "The fundamental difference between the reasoning of the craftsman and of the ethical agent is not that the former is concerned only with means, but rather that there is a limit in the case of craft, but not in the ethical case, to the kinds of consideration that might reasonably claim the agent's attention. The fact that a certain drug has unhealthy side effects is a relevant consideration for the physician *qua* physician; the fact that it is expensive is not."

them). Irony done to deceive is illiberal and corrupt, but irony can not only conceal the truth but advance it. The internal standards of rhetoric *qua* art are not moral standards. Whether the goods of art and the internal goods of morality coincide, or even overlap significantly, is a political question concerning the place of rhetorical activity in the community.<sup>18</sup>

I see no happy ending here. I began by noting the fear people often express that the sophist will beat the rhetorician because he has more resources at his disposal and will stop at nothing to win--if art improves practice, other things improve practice even more. Aristotle isn't foolish enough to deny such a likelihood. To the extent that the sophist succeeds, his efforts are parasitic on the true art of rhetoric. But nothing in my argument implies that the rhetorician will in fact defeat the sophist. In any given contest, the sophist can use corrupting appeals to the passions, and the rhetorician can argue. Which of them has an advantage depends on all kinds of things other than the kinds of resources and powers they can deploy. But if you wanted to argue for the superiority of the rhetorician over the sophist on the basis of winning, you were barking up the wrong tree anyway.

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<sup>18</sup> Indeed I claimed in the first chapter, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: Between Craft and Practical Wisdom," that this is *the* political question which the *Rhetoric* is written to answer.