

# Studies on rhetoric



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Plato and Aristotle both believed rhetoric could be used to do harm. Plato said that this was especially true when the audience was ill informed of the subject that was being discussed. Plato saw rhetoric as only a means to accomplish evil. In his eyes it was manipulative of the rules and laws of society. I caused people to react with emotion, not with logic. Aristotle agreed with Plato, but he also believed that the use of rhetoric in trying to discover truth could be helpful. He felt that by coupling knowledge with rhetoric, people could be persuaded as to the true nature of things. Without knowledge, rhetoric was nothing more than tricking people with emotion. Rhetoric and knowledge combined is the most powerful way of convincing your enemies of your superiority. Aristotle believed good speaking involved two types of proofs. Inartistic proofs were things like facts, statistics and testimonies. Artistic proofs included three categories known as pathos, logos and ethos. Pathos is a proof that appeals to the emotions. Logos is a proof that concerns the use of logic. Ethos is a personal proof. Aristotle believed that every speech had to have all three of these artistic proofs and that they must balance each other.

Epideictic discourse is older, according to Jeffrey Walker, than political or legal discourse. This oldest form of rhetoric is used to place blame or to honor a person. The most important thing to be remembered according to Aristotle is that when using this form of rhetoric the speaker must keep the opinions of the audience in mind as they currently exist towards the subject of praise or criticism.

Cicero's five canons of rhetoric are invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. Invention deals with finding a way to persuade the audience through use of past experiences and ingenuity. Arrangement is organizing

the argument so it is effective and coherent. Style involves using emotion to be convincing. Memory means speaking without notes or prior preparation and delivery deals with effective use of facial expressions, voice and gestures while speaking.

Quintilian believed that the five parts of a speech were the exordium, the narratio, the division, the proof and the peroration. In the exordium, the speaker tries to make an emotional connection with the audience. In the narration the speaker explains the basics of the case through the use of facts. The division is where the speaker lists the points he aims to prove or how he will prove the opponent wrong. The proof is where the speaker offers the arguments and the peroration is where the speaker concludes, often appealing to the emotions of the audience again.

The second sophistic was characterized by a renewed interest in Greek oratory and rhetoric. Different forms of oratory became important in the Roman Empire after they conquered Greece. Some were emotional while others were based on facts. Once again, rhetoric was important. The Romans adopted the styles of the Sophists in their court proceedings. This gave them a connection to the glories of classical Greece, heightening the prestige of their empire.