FRIENDS, ROMANS, ARISTOTELIANS!

JOACHIM CUNNINGHAM, O.P.

HAKESPEARE would be the ideal author to explain the construction of a persuasive speech. He was, as his plays testify, a master of such speeches and it is always wise to seek from a master craftsman the secrets of his craft. Unfortunately, Shakespeare did not explain the principles which he so skillfully used, but left instead concrete examples of persuasive speeches. One might attempt to imitate these and thus gain some knowledge of the art, but an art is learned more rapidly, more completely, by understanding its principles.[1] There are many works that profess to teach the art of persuasive speech. We plan to proceed by studying the best one of these, checking its theory against a paradigm. This will insure that the principles are correct, for when theory clashes with fact, theory must give way.[2]

Such in brief is our aim. To achieve it, the familiar oration—"Friends, Roman, Countrymen"—assigned by Shakespeare to Mark Antony has been chosen as the paradigm;[3] the principles are drawn from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.[4] The selection of a Shakespearean speech requires no defense: it is his acknowledged contribution to literature. The choice of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, however, may occasion some surprise and therefore needs explanation.

The Greeks had a pressing need for the art of rhetoric: the most litigious people of antiquity, they required each man to

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[1] "The training given by the paid professors of contentious arguments . . . they used to hand out speeches to be learned by heart . . . they used to suppose they trained people by imparting to them not the art but its products, as though any one professing that he would impart a form of knowledge to obviate any pain in the feet, were then not to teach a man the art of shoe-making or the sources whence he can acquire anything of the kind, but were to present him with several kinds of shoes of all sorts: for he has helped him to meet his need, but has not imparted an art to him."—Aristotle: *On Sophistical Refutations*, Chap. 34 (184a O-5). Citations from the works of Aristotle made in this article are taken from *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. McKeon, Random House, New York, 1941; Oxford University Press English Translation.

[2] *Ibid.*, Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X, ch. 2 (1179a 22)—also, *On Generation and Corruption*, Book I, ch. 2 (316a 7).

[3] *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene ii.

plead his case personally. Since an unfavorable decision in a law suit involved financial loss, exile or even death, the study assumed great importance and spurred on even Athens' greatest scholars to provide the principles of the art. It is not surprising that Aristotle addressed himself to the task. Any picture that paints him as aloof to things human, as engrossed in narrow scientific pursuits is a caricature. It does not consider his contribution to drama, the Poetics. It leaves unmentioned the frequent citation of the poets and dramatists that one finds throughout his works. This indication of high literary culture on his part is confirmed by the praise Cicero accords the Stagirite for the style of his *Dialogues*.[5] Of even greater import is the extent to which the celebrated Roman orator depends upon Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in his own treatise on the subject. The later work of Quintillian also borrows freely from the Stagirite.[6] Finally, Shakespeare himself was influenced by Aristotle's work. Certainly, an influence through the Roman tradition of letters must be allowed. Possibly this may have been even more direct, since the *Rhetoric* continued to be studied long after the humanist reaction against Aristotle's other works set in.

Perhaps the basic credentials of the *Rhetoric* have been sufficiently established to indicate that its principles have wider application than in the construction of a formal speech. They are evidently useful for analyzing a speech, whether dramatic or narrative; with slight modification, they provide aid in composing written communications of all but the most technical nature. Finally, as the first text to be quoted suggests, they are applicable in ordinary conversation.

THE PERSUASIVE SPEECH — ITS PURPOSE

Aristotle notes:

> The use of persuasive speech is to lead to decisions. When we

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[4] The Modern Library has recently made available in a single, inexpensive volume the standard Oxford translation of the Rhetoric and the Poetics. In this edition, the Rhetoric alone occupies 220 pages. It is one of Aristotle's longer works, but certainly one of the easiest to read. Further, not every page is of equal value. It is possible to isolate the core of his teaching in a few chapters. They seem to be the following: Book II, chapters 18, 20, 21; Book III, chapters 1, 13, 14, 19. Of almost equal importance are Book I, chapters 1, 2; Book II, chapters 22, 23; and Book III, chapters 10, 11, and 12. Citations from these chapters will be indicated only by the Bekker pagination.

[5] *De Orat.* I, xi, 49. Aristotle's *Dialogues* are no longer extant.

[6] *Quintillian, The School Master* (Little translation), Vol. I, p. 104, 152, 203; Vol. II, p. 143. Nashville, Tenn., 1951.

> know a thing and have decided about it, there is no further need in speaking about it. This is so even if one is addressing a single person and urging him to do or not to do some thing . . . the single person is as much your judge as if he were one of many; we may say, without qualification that anyone is your judge whom you have to persuade. Nor does it matter whether we are arguing against an actual opponent or against a mere proposition; in the latter case we still have to use speech and overthrow the opposing arguments, and we attack these as we should an actual opponent. Our principle holds good for ceremonial speeches also: the "on-lookers" for whom the speech is put together are treated as the judges of it. (1391b 7-18)

Mark Antony, ascending the speaker's stand, certainly intends to lead his hearers to a decision. In the previous scene, as he bent over Caesar's bleeding body, he made clear his purpose: to "bring . . . woe to the hand that shed this costly blood" even at the cost of stirring up "domestic fury and fierce civil strife." At the conclusion of his speech, amid the rioting mob he can observe his success, "Mischief, thou art afoot," and acknowledge that even his enemies have taken "notice of the people, how I had moved them." Clearly, Antony has observed the Stagirite's dictum that a persuasive speech is to lead the audience to adopt the speaker's cause. Antony's particular objective will have a bearing on each aspect of his speech.

THE PERSUASIVE SPEECH — ITS NATURE

Aristotle has defined the persuasive through its final cause—to lead to decisions. Having done this, he next determines the elements the speech must contain in order to accomplish its purpose. Finally he analyzes each of these parts in particular. This may be done with all artifacts. Thus, the final cause of a house—to provide shelter—determines its form—a hollowed-out three dimensional object—and the distribution of material—stout walls supporting a roof of lighter material. This is but an application of the Stagirite's great central principle: the whole-part analysis of reality.

> Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated.
>
> Persuasion is effected through statements that are credible either because they are self-evident or because they are proved from other statements that are so.[7] (1356b 27-31)

[7] That a triangle has three angles is self-evident and thus immediately credible. . . . That the sum of these angles equals 180 degrees is not self-evident and must be demonstrated or proved through the medium of the parallel line postulate. Thus this statement is mediately credible.

Aristotle therefore concludes that:

> A speech has two parts. You must state your case, and you must prove it. You cannot either state your case and omit to prove it, or prove it without first having stated it; since any proof must be a proof of something, and the only use of a preliminary statement is the proof that follows it. Of these two parts, the first is called the statement of the case, the second part, the argument. . . . These are the essential parts of a speech. (1414a 30-b7)

To these may be added, as occasion demands, an Introduciton and Epilogue, but "a speech cannot in any case have more than Introduction, Statement, Argument, and Epilogue." (1414b 8) These parts will be considered in this order, for it is the order they naturally occupy in a speech.

THE INTRODUCTION

Aristotle points out that:

> The Introduction is the beginning of a speech, corresponding to the prologue in poetry and the prelude in flute-music; they are all beginnings, paving the way, as it were, for what is to follow. . . . (In them) a foretaste of the theme is given, intending to inform the hearers of it in advance instead of keeping their minds in suspense. Anything vague puzzles them; so give them a grasp of the beginning, and they can hold fast to it and follow the argument. . . . This is the most essential and distinctive function of the introduction, to show what the aim of the speech is; and therefore no introduction ought to be used where the subject is not long or intricate. . . . (Sometimes) introductions employed are remedial in purpose. . . . They are concerned with the speaker, the hearer, the subject, the subject's opponent. Those concerning the speaker himself or his opponent are directed to removing or exciting prejudice. The appeal to the hearer aims at securing his goodwill, or at arousing his resentment. . . . To make your hearer receptive, give him a good impression of your character. (Again) he will be ready to attend to anything that touches himself, and to anything that is important, surprising or agreeable. (1414b 20-15a 35)

Antony evidently has need of an introduction. The animus of the audience toward him is open and frankly stated. He was Caesar's favorite companion and the mob considers Caesar a tyrant and his death a benefaction. They attend to Antony only because Brutus entreated "not a man depart . . . til Antony have spoke."

> Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;

Intending to placate his hearers, Antony identifies himself with the audience, appealing to their strong civic and national pride. Note how his request for attention contrasts sharply with Brutus' brusque directive: "Hear me for mine honor."

> I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
> The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones;
> So let it be with Caesar.

Even a primitive society permits funeral orations for its more notable citizens; Rome cannot do less. Antony pretends he is simply Rome's spokesman for Caesar, duly appointed by the conspirators.

> The noble Brutus
> Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.

To prevent misgivings in his audience, Antony repeats the substance of Brutus' speech. This coupling of Brutus and nobility is probably uninflected here, but Antony will repeat such a combination with increasing sarcasm until the mob howls its hatred of Brutus and the conspirators. Thus one can use a man's merits to damage him. (1416b 7)

> The noble Brutus
> Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;
> If it were so, it were a grievious fault,
> And grieviously hath Caesar answer'd it.

This conditional syllogism gives a foretaste of the theme. It does this in the approved manner: it is not immediately obvious what Antony's own position is, for it is still too soon for him to expose his hand. This method of argument allows him to pose as justice' champion, approving the murder of an ambitious man. It softens resentment against Caesar, for justice is all that can reasonably be sought, and justice, it appears, has been served.

> Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
> For Brutus is an honorable man;
> So are they all, all honorable men—
> Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.

The attribution of honor to such a multitude lessens the value that such a word has when applied to one man alone. Further, if any one of the group is proven not to be honorable,

all are summarily condemned. Antony puts himself in a good light here. He is discharging a public function. He has the approval of the conspirators and the implication is that they consider him a fair representative of the truth of their cause. If their cause is discovered to be false, Antony has been simply the midwife of truth and not one of the conspirators. He is, as he later notes:

> . . . as you know me all, a plain blunt man
> That love my friend; and that they know full well
> That gave me public leave to speak of him:
> For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth. . . .
> . . . I only speak right on;
> I tell you that which you yourselves do know. . . .
> He was my friend, faithful and just to me.

This serves as transition from the introduction to the argument. It enlists whatever support Antony has gained among the mob. Again, it gathers further sympathy for himself, for everyone has friends and, esteeming friendship, respects those who are friends.

STATEMENT AND ARGUMENT

These form a natural unit and will be treated together. The Stagirite has observed that:

> Persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question. (1356a 19-21)

The statement, that is, the truth or apparent truth, is subject to an infinite variation: for it is the specific truth that this individual speaker seeks to prove to this particular audience on this definite occasion and all of these factors may change. As such, the statement cannot be handled systematically and does not fall to *Rhetoric's* consideration: "Rhetoric is a faculty for providing arguments." (1356a 34)

A few comments may be made concerning the position and form of the statement. A geometrical proof posits the statement both at the outset and the conclusion, each time in the same words. It is not always this way with a persuasive speech. The Introduction, as has been noted, gives an indication of the statement, veiled to a greater or lesser degree. Obviously then, the form the statement takes here will differ from the form it receives when a clear statement serves the speaker's purpose. The Epilogue,

since it is a summary, will contain the statement. And because the Epilogue presumes that the statement has been proved, it will assert the statement somewhat more emphatically and therefore in a different form. The statement does not always precede the argument as will be evident when the types of argument are known.

Aristotle writes at length of Argument.

> With regard to the persuasion achieved by proof or apparent proof: just as in dialectic there is induction on the one hand and syllogism on the other, so it is in rhetoric. The example is an induction, the enthymeme is a syllogism. . . . Everyone who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use enthymemes or examples, there is no other way. . . . When we base the proof of a proposition on a number of similar cases, there is induction in dialectic, example in rhetoric; when it is known that certain propositions being true, a further and quite distinct proposition must also be true in consequence, whether invariably or usually, this is called syllogism in dialectic, enthymeme in rhetoric. (1356a 36-b17)
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> The enthymeme must consist of few propositions, fewer often than those which make up the normal syllogism. For if any of the propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself. (1357a 16-19)
>
> When two statements are of the same order, but one is more familiar than the other, the former is an "example." (1357b 29)
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> Example . . . consist(s) in the mention of actual past facts, (or) in the invention of facts by the speaker, i.e., the illustrative parallel and the fable.[8] (1393a 25-28)

Prior to Antony's address, Brutus had defended the conspirators' action with the enthymeme "as he was ambitious, I

> And though we lay these honors on this man,
> To ease ourselves of divers slanderous loads,
> He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,
> To groan and sweat under the business,
> Either led or driven, as we point the way;

slew him." It is noteworthy that Brutus does not offer specific instances of Caesar's ambition; his charge is substantiated by vague generalities and an appeal to the orator's own honor.

Antony also argues by means of the enthymeme, but wisely allows the claim of Brutus for noble motivation to stand temporarily. For to directly impugn his character after the ovation Brutus received would be foolish. As noted above, Antony even-

[8] An effective use of an illustrative parallel is found in Act IV, Scene I. Anthony speaks to Octavius concerning the other triumvir, Lepidus.

tually uses even this quality of "nobility" against its claimant. Now, however, he contents himself with attacking the charge that "Caesar was ambitious."

> But Brutus says he was ambitious
> And Brutus is an honorable man.
> He hath brought many captives home to Rome
> Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
> Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
> When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
> Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
> Yet Brutus says he was ambitious:
> And Brutus is an honorable man.
> You all did see that on the Lupercal
> I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
> Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
> Yet Brutus . . .

The specific quality of these counter-arguments contrast sharply with the statements of Brutus. Aristotle had pointed out that:

> We must try to think out arguments for special needs as these arise; not vaguely and indefinitely, but by keeping our eyes on the actual facts of the subject we have to speak on, and gathering in as many of them as we can that bear closely upon it: for the more actual facts we have at our command, the more easily we can prove our case; and the more closely they bear on the subject, the more they will seem to belong to that speech only, instead of being commonplace (arguments). 1396b 7-13

Of the three arguments, the second depends upon Antony's veracity for its validity. It is, therefore, the weakest of the three but its position disguises its weakness. Older rhetoricians describe this as placing a weak soldier between two more valiant men.

The first argument—that Caesar gave Rome the spoils of war and therefore is not ambitious—proceeds from a fallible sign. For men desirous of power often sacrifice wealth to increase popularity and the possibility of attaining power. The conclusion is fallible but it carries some weight since the sign, although not infallible, is probable.

Refusing a crown can provide an infallible refutation of political ambition. Caesar's refusals, as described by Casca (Act I, Scene ii), indicated far less credibility should be attached. Antony, however, purposely omits these circumstances, giving his

argument an appearance of certainty. With the destruction of the conspirators' argument accomplished, Antony magnifies Caesar's qualities in order to heighten indignation. This done, he provides an epilogue.

EPILOGUE

Aristotle indicates the necessity and function of an epilogue.

> . . . speeches do not always need epilogues; not, for instance, a short speech, nor one in which the facts are easy to remember, the effect of an epilogue being always a reduction in the apparent length. (1414b 5-7)
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> (The translator here adds that this reduction is a "good effect where a speech may seem too long; bad, where it may seem too short already.")
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> The Epilogue has four parts. You must (1) make the audience well-disposed towards yourself and ill-disposed towards your opponents, (2) magnify or minimize the leading facts, (3) excite the required state of emotion in your hearers, and (4) refresh their memories. (1419b 10-13)

The artifice of reading Caesar's will serves Antony as an epilogue. It is not an objective recapitulation of the speech but one calculated to serve his interests, in accord with the canons that Aristotle listed. Thus, Antony has (1) the mob acting or not acting as he wishes—"Hear me with patience." He magnifies Caesar's generosity by this recital (2) and, since rectitude and generosity are ordinarily allied, this implicitedly reviews (4) Antony's main argument. The phrases are quite personal and serve to gather emotional impetus for his final words (3)—"Here was a Caesar! when comes such another?"

STYLE AND DELIVERY

These are not, properly speaking parts of a speech. But they have a real bearing on the persuasiveness of the speech as the Philosopher testifies.

> It is not enough to know what we ought to say; we must also say it as we ought; much help is thus afforded towards producing the right impression of a speech. The first question to receive attention was naturally the one that comes first naturally—how persuasion can be produced from the facts themselves. The second is how to set these facts out in language. A third would be the proper method of delivery. (1403b 15-20)

Having completed the first, Aristotle touches the third question only briefly before considering the question of style in detail.

His few observations on delivery are worth recording, nonetheless.

> (Delivery) is essentially a matter of the right management of the voice to express the various emotions—of speaking loudly, softly, or between the two; of high, low or intermediate pitch; of the various rhythms that suit various subjects. These are the three things—volume of sound, modulation of pitch and rhythm—that a speaker bears in mind. It is those who *do* bear them in mind who usually win prizes in the dramatic contests . . . the way in which a thing is said *does* affect its intelligibility. (1403b 25-a 10)

That Antony's speech must be read following these norms is a fact observed by anyone who has heard different actors recite it: the words are the same but the delivery varies greatly, distinguishing the levels of competence.

Style is discussed at greater length by Aristotle. He defines it and then explains each element of the definition.

> Style to be good must be clear, as is proved by the fact that speech which fails to convey a plain meaning will fail to do just what speech has to do. It must also be appropriate, avoiding both meanness and undue elevation; poetical language is certainly free from meanness, but it is not appropriate to prose. Clearness is secured by using words that are current and ordinary. Freedom from meanness and positive adornment is secured by using (metaphor and infrequently used words). Such variation from what is usual makes the language appear more stately. . . . It is well to give to everyday speech an unfamiliar air: people like what strikes them and are struck by what is out of the way. In verse such effects are common . . . in prose passages they are far less often fitting. Even in poetry, it is not quite appropriate that fine language should be used by a slave or a very young man, or about very trivial subjects; even in poetry the style, to be appropriate, must sometimes be toned down, though at other times heightened. . . . We can see now that a writer must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially. Naturalness is persuasive, artificiality is the contrary; for our hearers are prejudiced and think we have some design against them, as if we were mixing their wines for them. (1404b 1-22)

The preponderance of ordinary words in Antony's speech is quite noticeable. Further, these are used where they are most appropriate. Thus, in a passage already cited, Antony voices a long string of monosyllabic words as he strives to convince the mob of his simplicity.

> I am no orator as Brutus is;
> But as you know me all, a plain blunt man
> That love my friend; and that they know full well
> That gave me public leave to speak of him:

It is perhaps interesting to note that the meter used by Shakespeare—the iamb—was considered by Aristotle as the "most prose-like of meters," "the one representing (the movement) of life and action." (1404a 32, 1460a 1)

Besides the use of current and ordinary words, Aristotle allows that other words and devices be employed in a speech. These are three: metaphor, antithesis, and actuality or vividness. He gives the reason for their utility and examples of each.

> We all naturally find it agreeable to get hold of new ideas easily: words express ideas, and therefore those ideas are the most agreeable that enable us to get hold of new ideas. Now strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we best get hold of something fresh. When the poet calls old age "a withered stalk" he conveys a new idea . . . by means of the general notion of "lost bloom" which is common to both things. (1410b 10-15)
>
> (Nevertheless) a whole statement made up of such terms will be either a riddle or a barbarism. (1458a 24)
>
> Both speech and reasonings are lively in proportion as they make us seize a new idea promptly. For this reason people are . . . taken by those which convey their information to us as soon as we hear them, provided we had not the information already. . . . It is the antithetical form that appeals to us. (1410b 20-25)
>
> The more briefly and antithetically sayings can be expressed, the more taking they are, for antithesis impresses the new idea more firmly and brevity more quickly. (In addition) they should always have either some personal application or some merit of expression, if they are to be true without being commonplace—two requirements not always satisfied simultaneously.[9] (1412b 22-26)
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> (Vividness) By "making them see things" I mean using expressions that represent things in a state of activity. Thus, to say that a good man is "four-square" is certainly a metaphor; both the good man and the square are perfect; but the metaphor does not suggest activity. On the other hand, in the expression "with his vigor in full bloom" there is a notion of activity; and so in "Downward anon to the valley rebounded the boulder *remorseless*" giving metaphorical life to lifeless things. (1411b 22-35)

To these three may perhaps be added a fourth which Aristotle does not explicitly state but which is, on his principles, acceptable—alliteration. It is especially valuable in an uninflected

[9] The paradox as employed by Chesterton is obviously antithesis. It is also one type of parallelism familiar to readers of the Psalms and the writings of Saint Augustine. A second type, synonymous parallelism, although not as appealing, serves a useful function in speech: to repeat, without seeming to do so, the statement, thus assisting the hearer in understanding the speech.

language like English. For the absence of case endings deprives the writer of that ready source of similar sounds available in Greek, Latin, and German. Certainly it seems native to English for the most familiar maxims employ it, and common usage carries great weight.[10] Again, the use of alliteration in "Piers Plowman," by authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Hopkins gives additional evidence of its value in poetry and argues for its occasional use in persuasive speeches.

All of these devices are found in Antony's speech. Some instances may be cited here.

> The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones.
>
> When the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
>
> O judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
> And men have lost their reason.
>
> Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
> See what a rent the envious Casca made:
> Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
> Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,
> As rushing out of doors. . . .

CONCLUSION

With the discussion of the style and delivery finished, it is possible to conclude this article. The nature of a persuasive speech and its parts, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, has been analyzed in the words of Aristotle and exemplified through one of Shakespeare's masterly speeches. Perhaps the task could have been somewhat abbreviated by making fewer direct quotations from the *Rhetoric*. But paraphrasing Aristotle is a perilous charge, one seldom accomplished with gain of space and clarity: there is a deceptive simplicity to his words. In addition, such a course robs the reader of that refreshment which contact with genius always affords.

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[10] One is "as fit as a fiddle," others have "bats in the belfry," ideas come "like bolts from the blue."