

The Rhetoric of Aristotle. By Lane Cooper. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1988. 259 pp. Paper, \$20.00. Reviewed by T. Scott Christmas.

Lane Cooper begins the preface of his translation of Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric by describing the original Rhetoric as "one of the world's best and wisest books" (p. vii). Cooper views Rhetoric as "the greatest of all books on the philosophy and technique of persuasion" (p. viii), hence, his desire that the students of public speaking would become familiar with Aristotle's momentous work. Although other translations exist, Cooper aimed his translation at the undergraduate and graduate students of public speaking in America. He also targeted the large body of teachers of the subject who have not studied Rhetoric in its original source, and otherwise lack a classical background. His goal was to produce an inexpensive translation and to add every reasonable device that might assist the reading of the work in English (p. viii).

The Rhetoric of Aristotle is indeed an educational instrument. It is not enough for a public speaker to know what to say; he must also know how to say it. Aristotle's work teaches the student how to frame a persuasive speech. The Rhetoric of Aristotle is divided into three books. Book 1 seems to be directed toward the speaker. The speaker is instructed to be logical, clear thinking, and cogent in reasoning. Book 2 directs attention to the audience. The speaker is enjoined to know his audience well. This knowledge would include the general makeup of human nature as well as the specific characteristics and emotions of the particular audience being addressed. Book 3 focuses upon the speech itself. The speaker is directed to pay careful

attention to delivery. Appropriate language, arrangement, and length of discourse are all key elements in persuasive speaking.

Book 1 opens with a general introduction of the nature of rhetoric. Rhetoric is defined as the art of persuasion. This art seeks to find all the available means of persuasive speech (p. 6). Aristotle asserts that the essence of persuasive speech lies in its arguments or proofs. These proofs take the form of an enthymeme. An enthymeme is a type of syllogism.

Aristotle divides rhetoric into three branches, the first of which is known as deliberative speech. Deliberative speaking takes the form of exhortation and dissuasion (p. 17). These are speeches of counsel or advice and can be political in nature. This branch addresses future events. Its ends are expediency and in expediency.

The second branch of rhetoric is known as forensic speech, which takes the form of accusation and defense. Forensic speeches are judicial in nature, and are used in prosecution and defense (p. 17). The subject matter of this rhetorical form is past events, for it is those things done previously that are accused or defended. The ends of forensic speech are justice and injustice.

The third branch, or division, of rhetoric is known as epideictic speech, which centers on praise or blame. Aristotle asserts that epideictic speech focuses upon the present, for praise or blame is given regarding existing conditions or qualities (p.17). The ends of epideictic speech are honor and dishonor.

Further, Aristotle notes that a speaker's artistic proofs (proofs or arguments supplied by the speaker's own invention) are divided into three categories. The first category is called a speaker's ethos. Ethos is the ability of the speaker to demonstrate through his speech the personal character necessary to win the confidence of the listener. The second artistic proof is pathos. Pathos is the ability of the speaker to engage the listener's emotions. Argument is the final artistic proof. It is the ability of the speaker to prove a truth, real or apparent, by the necessary means (p. 9).

Through the first 18 chapters of Book 2, Aristotle deals with persuasion through emotion and character. The emotions described include anger, mildness, love, hatred, fear, confidence, shame, shamelessness, benevolence, the lack of benevolence, pity, indignation, envy, emulation, and contempt. Not only does Aristotle define each emotion, he also instructs the speaker to study the circumstances (or frame of mind) in which the emotion is felt, the persons toward whom it is felt, and the things that arouse it. Aristotle also does an outstanding job describing the character of youth, men of age, and men in their prime. After spending Chapter 19 discussing what is possible or impossible, Aristotle returns to address the subject of logical proofs. Included in the closing chapters is the discussion of the means of persuasion common to all three branches of rhetoric, namely example and enthymeme.

Finally in Book 3, Aristotle addresses the way in which the thoughts of the speaker are expressed, known as lexis. Lexis includes words, syntax, and delivery—everything having to do with expression. Attention is paid to diction or style, for one must not only know what to say,

but also how to say it (p. 182). Aristotle notes that the art of delivery has much to do with the voice. It must be managed properly in order to express the appropriate emotion. The speaker's style should be clear and appropriate. Proper style also includes the usage of current terms (p. 185). Further, Aristotle deals specifically with the ordering of parts of speech. In order to be persuasive, each case must be stated and then proved. This is accomplished through the four essential elements of the speech: proem, statement, argument, and epilogue (p. 220).

This book has several strengths. First, Cooper's translation of Aristotle's work is helpful because he supplies running explanations and examples intermixed in the text itself. These additions aided in shedding much needed light on the original work. Cooper's additional illustrations and lines to some of the Greek poems quoted make Aristotle's writing more intelligible to modern readers.

Second, this reviewer agrees with one of the "witnesses to the value of the rhetoric," in that, Aristotle's chief characteristic seems to be a resolute endeavor to get to the bottom of his subject, whatever it may be (p. xi). He continues to pursue his subject until every possible path of approach has been traveled. This is exemplified in Aristotle's incredible analysis of the emotion of anger (pp. 93-99). Not only does the author define anger, he describes the conditions under which men become angry (pp. 95-96), the persons and things that make men grow angry (pp. 96-99), and how the speaker can use the emotion of anger to his advantage (p. 99).

Third, it was especially interesting to note the heavy emphasis upon sound logic when reasoning. Persuasion is achieved via arguments or proofs. This approach to persuasion seems

foreign to most speakers of the 21st Century. For example, the primary tool employed by many political speakers today seems to be emotion instead of logic. As a matter of interest, Aristotle notes that to excite emotion in the hearer is to warp his judgment. “The man who is to judge should not have his judgment warped by speakers arousing him to anger, jealousy, or compassion. One might just as well make a carpenter’s rule crooked before using it as a measure” (p. 2). What does this say about the ability of today’s audience to listen objectively to these political arguments?

The Rhetoric of Aristotle also has some weaknesses. First, this reviewer agrees with Cooper that Rhetoric was not meant to be read as a novel. There is much material that needs to be thoughtfully processed. Much of the text is difficult to grasp because of the cultural and lexical gaps that exist between the ancient writer and the modern reader. Cooper’s additions and explanations are helpful. However, as one wades into the work, it can be quite intimidating. This is the first book this reviewer has read which begins with a preface, followed by “witnesses to the value of the rhetoric,” followed by an introduction, followed by an analysis. All of this much-needed preparation is given before the reader ever attempts to process the actual text of Aristotle. Some readers could be intimidated by the need of such extended introductory explanation in order to understand such a weighty text.

Second, the greatest tragedy of this work is that the references to God are those made via other writers quoted by Aristotle (pp.74, 123, 210). Instead of seeing a sovereign God in control of all things, Aristotle sees both good and bad as resulting from chance (p. 121). What a tragedy

for a man to be so observant of the detail of creation, and yet so blind to the Creator and Sustainer of that creation.

Considering the work as a whole, it is the estimation of this reviewer that the translator's goal was achieved. The reader comes away with a much more detailed approach and appreciation for the art of persuasive speech. Cooper's additions and explanations have indeed helped in bridging the lexical and cultural gap of the ancient writer and modern reader.

The original author's goal was partially achieved, as this reviewer has become a more careful student of the art of persuasion. However, because it seems extremely difficult to effectively digest this much material in a single reading, the author's goal suffers. That stated, this reviewer now better understands the need, as a speaker, to be logical, clear thinking and cogent in reasoning. Further, it is understood that much attention should be paid to the audience. Knowing one's audience well is vital to being persuasive. The speaker must be able to demonstrate through his speech the personal character or ethos necessary to win the confidence of the listener. He must also be able to persuade his hearers by engaging their emotions (pathos). Finally, it is understood that great care is to be given to the speech itself. It is necessary that the speaker prove a truth, real or apparent, by careful argument. A persuasive speaker must be able to state his case clearly and prove it logically. Delivery, appropriate language, arrangement, and length of discourse are also key in persuasive speaking. It seems that every part of this instruction is of value for the preaching event.

With all of that said, it is still understood by this reviewer, that this ancient, detailed methodology, when employed, will only accomplish so much. Paul was very clear in his letter to the Corinthians about where his confidence lay and why. He tells them in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God (NASB).

The preacher of God's Word should be faithful, logical, clear, and concise when bringing God's truth. But he should also remain ever mindful that the true persuader is the Holy Spirit. May the human vessel not impede the message through improper communication or improper confidence.