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Shifting Paradigms

Aesthetics, Rhetoric, and Musicology
in the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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1. An Unsettled Dispute

In view of their long histories, the arts of music and rhetoric have been late in coming together to form something like a ‘musical rhetoric’ or ‘rhetorical music’. The first phase of this symbiosis was the Baroque era; the second was the revival of that same Baroque musical rhetoric in practice and theory since the 1970’s.

This fact is reflected in the major reference works. Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians contains an article on ‘Rhetoric and Music’ since its sixth edition of 1980, when it was rechristened The New Grove (NG). Its German competitor, Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (MGG) includes an article on Musik und Rhetorik in its second edition (1994-2007).¹ Both are clearly a response to the late-twentieth-century rhetorical revival. A closer look however will reveal significant differences.

Starting with the New Grove’s second edition (2001),² the reader will find a historical overview in two sections, “Up to 1750” and “After 1750”; the first being more than twice as long as the second. In broad outlines, she will learn that the ancient art of rhetoric began to take a clearly identifiable hold on music only around 1500, through the humanist reappraisal of sources from Greek and Latin antiquity. Rhetoric achieved an almost total command over the way music was conceived during the Baroque. This is specified in sections devoted to ‘musical figures’ (analogous to the rhetorical ‘figures of speech’), and the emotions or ‘affects’, which music should represent and, like an orator’s speech, arouse in the audience.

Then, having arrived at the After 1750 section by Peter Hoyt, she will read that …

During the Enlightenment, philosophy and science developed new ideals of expression that greatly reduced the role of formal eloquence in intellectual life. (NG, Rhetoric and Music.)

A number of facts and tendencies are mentioned which have “undermined” the importance of rhetoric or “formal eloquence”: a hostility towards ornate discourse in philosophy and science; the rise of aesthetics as theory of the arts; the cult of creative genius and individuality; and a new ideal of subjective expression, which resisted rhetorical rules and categories.

Terminology and concepts drawn from the ars oratoria remained common in discussions of music, but by the middle of the 18th century new and often highly critical attitudes towards formal eloquence complicated the use of rhetoric as a source of imagery. (ib.)

Hoyt is therefore critical of efforts by contemporary music historians to apply rhetorical concepts and precepts to music of the classical and romantic eras, and even to

¹ The first edition of MGG (1949-1968) contains an article Figuren, musikalisch-rhetorische, but none on rhetoric as such. The same holds for the Brockhaus Riemann Musiklexikon (2nd ed., 1995).
that of the Baroque. Citing the examples of J. S. Bach and father and son Mozart, he casts doubt upon “the presumption that during their study of Latin composers of the past were thoroughly indoctrinated in formal eloquence”. He concludes that …

It is thus difficult to see classical rhetoric as part of a comprehensive Weltanschauung influencing the compositional choices of late 18th-century musicians. […] Numerous developments, including the interest in the biographies of composers, and perhaps the foundations of musicology itself, may be related to the declining position of rhetoric in Enlightenment thought. (ib.)

There is an unmistakable, and for a dictionary maybe unusual polemical tone in this passage, the target of which remains somewhat vague.

Turning to MGG’s Musik und Rhetorik by Hartmut Krones, the reader will notice that the relations between its historical and systematic overviews are reversed: history is embedded in a presentation which is primarily systematic, though its substance is taken mostly from the Baroque. Krones projects the history of musical rhetoric onto a developmental trajectory: through a long emergence (Entstehung, from antiquity till 1599) it reaches its zenith in the Baroque (Hochblüte, 1599-1745), continuing through the classical era (Weiterwirken, 1745-1821), with lasting aftereffects (Spätes Nachwirken).³ Both dictionaries agree that the high point in musico-rhetorical relations was achieved in the Baroque. But though the term Hochblüte seems to imply that the curve will slope downward, Weiterwirken emphasizes continuity. There is no suggestion here that the position of rhetoric was ‘undermined’ after 1745.

Hoyt’s article in NG contains no reference that explains his striking use of the word Weltanschauung,⁴ or the disputed contention that composers were “indoctrinated in formal eloquence”. Similar expressions are however found echoing through the literature. In their edited collection on Joseph Haydn, for instance, Beghin and Goldberg argue explicitly against Hoyt’s survey, maintaining that …

[…] oratorical training, as embedded in the humanistic education still common in the schools of eighteenth-century Europe, generated a rhetorical outlook on life, including construction of the arts, which in turn – especially in Habsburg Europe – included music. (Beghin and Goldberg 2007: 330; my emph.)

They blame Hoyt for imposing “a false simplicity on what was in fact a rich and complex process”, the decline of rhetoric in the eighteenth century. I find in Hoyt’s representation no suggestion, however, that this process was anything but complex, or that 1750, the year that conventionally marks the end of the Baroque, is more than a

³ This largely reproduces Krones’ earlier contribution to HWR (Musik), where he had proposed 1599-1821 as one undivided Hochblüte. The first remarkably precise date (1599) is taken from Burmeister’s Hypomnematum, the last from F. A. Kanne’s Versuch einer Analyse der Mozartischen Clavierwerke. Krones (2016) proposes yet another periodization, with a Hochblüte 1600–1788/1821/1826/1839, the last of these dates marking Carl Czerny’s Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule, op. 500. Why these publications have been singled out as of (diminishing?) epochal significance is unclear.

convenient demarcation. It is a widely shared, though not uncontested view, that 1750 also marks a turning point in the paradigm shift between an ‘era of rhetoric’ and an ‘era of aesthetics’.

While the authority of rhetoric was crumbling, aesthetics took over some of its functions. Such a rough generalization may involve numerous side issues, such as the individual strands or aspects of rhetoric, and their development or decline; which were the areas in which rhetoric and aesthetics competed; and whether this shift or conflict is recorded in the literature of the period.

The conflict between these views, of which the reference works are merely a reflection, never seems to have prompted an extensive scholarly exchange. The dispute may have lost some of its pungency, as the study of musical rhetoric has reached a point of exhaustion some ten years ago. But it leads us directly into a host of non-negligible questions about disciplinary definitions and boundaries (then and now), methods and standards of scholarly practice, as well as the controversial nature of rhetoric itself. With so many contentious side-issues, the subject may soon turn into quicksand. That might well be the reason why a fundamental discussion has not taken place.

I will attempt to navigate this treacherous terrain along the following path. First, a brief sketch of rhetoric and aesthetics in the eighteenth-century context, and the main sources for musical rhetoric. The next chapters are devoted to various definitions of rhetoric; its position in relation to the newly developed fine arts concept; the overlap and differences between aesthetics and rhetoric; and finally, an evaluation of the way eighteenth-century rhetoric has been dealt with in historical musicology.

1.1 A Disciplinary Shift?

The assumption that there has been a shift from rhetoric towards aesthetics, implies that these disciplines are at least in some respects comparable and competing. In most respects however they are very dissimilar: they have a different scope, different methods, and different histories. Rhetoric has its origins in classical antiquity, and is primarily a how-to discipline, an ‘art’ in the classical sense, which teaches students how to use language effectively, especially when speaking in front of an audience (oratory). It had its proper place within the educational framework of the liberal arts, the normative ordering of knowledge between late antiquity and the late seventeenth century, as the only discipline responsible for all ‘artful’ discourse and formal communication. It had largely subsumed poetics, which in the Aristotelian corpus had a status distinct from rhetoric as the theory of mimetic discourse; this included particu-
larly genres we now call ‘fiction’ (3.3. below). The authority of rhetoric therefore extended beyond oratory, acquiring applications to both literary and, eventually, even non-literary art forms, including music.

Aesthetics, on the other hand, is a fairly recent branch of philosophy. It was first given this name in Alexander Baumgarten’s dissertation on poetry of 1735, and has as its subject ‘the fine arts’ (as they then came to be called), the way we value art or the arts, and particularly the perception of beauty in the arts as well as nature.

Despite their recent origin, both ‘art’ and ‘aesthetics’ are terms that are routinely applied in an a-historical way. Aesthetic theory is without hesitation attributed to Plato, and the concept of ‘art’ may include even the earliest paintings and carvings of prehistoric humans. The examples that Baumgarten used to illustrate his newly developed aesthetics were all taken from the Latin and Greek classics. It is indeed easy enough, with an appropriate choice of terms, to demonstrate that every component of what constitutes ‘art’ and ‘aesthetics’ has always been a part of culture: artistic practices such as making likenesses in diverse media (mimesis), acting, dancing and making music, the appreciation of objects for their beauty, and the indulgence in fiction. Both the concept of ‘art’ (as a mass noun in the singular) and the discipline of aesthetics however have been in existence only since the eighteenth century. So what, if anything, was new about them?

Despite present-day habits of speech, it is not evident that the newly emerged ‘art’ concept is an anthropological universal. There is no obvious reason why story telling, singing, painting, making sculptures, acting, and so on, should all be manifestations of one cultural practice, ontological category, or what else the word ‘art’ may actually refer to. Nor is it obvious that what is now called ‘art’ (by an uncertain consensus) has always been implicitly understood to be ‘art’. The art concept has emerged after 1750 from the discussion about the definition and nature of the ‘fine arts’; about their experience and appreciation, in a way that is free from ordinary, practical concerns (‘disinterested’); and about the conditions of its production, particularly as a manifestation of creative genius, rather than skill and craftsmanship. If not all of these elements were new, the novelty was in the way they were made the subject of

6 A back projection of the history of aesthetics was made already in Georg Andreas Will’s Oratio sollemnis de aesthetica veterum (1756), which argues “that the antiquity of metaphysics proved that of aesthetics: Aristotele, Cicero, Quintilian, and Horace were aesthetici, and just as Homer came before poetics and Plato before logic, so the aestheticus existed before Baumgarten” (Vidal and Brown 2011: 171).

7 An early instance of Kunst as a mass noun, signifying a concept of art that is not ‘an art’, is Winckelmann’s Abhandlung von den Fähigkeiten der Empfindung des Schönen in der Kunst, und dem Unterrichte in derselben (1763). Cf. Riedel (1767: 402): “Genie ohne Geschmack durchbricht alle Schranken der Kunst […]”; Heydenreich (1790: 216, footnote): “Nimmt man vollends das Wort Kunst für das Kollektivum gewisser Werke, die wesentlich ähnlich sind […].” A similar use of the English word ‘art’ seems to have occurred before 1700 in connection with the visual arts, but has not been acknowledged by lexicographers before the nineteenth century (OED).

philosophical theory and debate. A constant output of essays and textbooks and the first university courses show that in Germany it began to take root as an academic discipline.\(^9\)

Though Baumgarten introduced the term ‘aesthetics’, the origin of the discipline is usually attributed to British philosophers such as Addison, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson. According to Kant, only the Germans at that time (1781) used the word for something that elsewhere was called “the critique of taste”.\(^{10}\) ‘Taste’ was a mental faculty (in the vaguest sense of that word), involved with the perception and judgment of beauty and related categories, particularly ‘the sublime’ (4.1).

As theory of the fine arts, aesthetics or the philosophy of taste had an area of overlap with rhetoric and poetics, though from a characteristically different perspective; its interest was in appreciation rather than production. Since rhetoric was the theory of artful discourse, it would seem that it can hardly be ignored in the historiography of aesthetics – and yet, this has been common practice until today.\(^{11}\)

In the first volume of his recent (and in many ways admirable) *History of Modern Aesthetics*, Paul Guyer derives much of the coherence of presentation from what he calls “the question […] at the heart of modern aesthetics”:

> [...] whether aesthetic experience […] is best considered a distinctive form of knowledge, an emotional experience, or an exercise of the imagination that is more like play than it is like knowledge or emotion – or whether it can only be understood through a combination of all three of these approaches. (Guyer 2018: 7.)

Those three functions, the cognitive, emotional, and playfully imaginative, closely match the three traditional methods of rhetorical persuasion: *docere*, *movere*, *delectare*, or ‘teaching’, ‘moving’, and ‘entertaining’. But in the five hundred pages of this volume, hardly any mention is made of eighteenth-century rhetoric. Maybe those three options are too obvious to be claimed as specifically rhetorical; they were however a prominent element of rhetorical discourse, and eliminating rhetoric from the historical perspective will leave the disciplinary context in which aesthetics emerged in the dark.

The establishment of the ‘fine arts’ concept (and hence, ‘art’) is part of the paradigm change which replaced the medieval ‘liberal arts’, in which rhetoric had occupied a central place, with the arts and sciences. There has long been a consensus that in the course of the eighteenth century rhetoric was eclipsed in this process –

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\(^9\) Aesthetics was taught as a university subject in the 1740’s; the first professorship was established in 1772 at Heidelberg (Reiss 1994: 656).

\(^{10}\) Kant (1977a: 70). In English, the word ‘aesthetics’ was imported from the German and became established only after 1800.

\(^{11}\) Rhetoric is not or barely discussed in Zimmermann (1858), Lotze (1868), Bosanquet (1904), Beardsley (2015, or. 1975), and not in relation to the eighteenth century by Gilbert and Kuhn (1953). Croce (1922, or. 1902) is an exception by devoting considerable space to rhetoric as one of several historical ‘errors’; Baeumler (1923: 168) by relating German aesthetics and rhetoric through poetics.
the view represented in Hoyt’s *New Grove* article. Some six decades of scholarship in the history of rhetoric have done much to undermine that consensus. The decline may have taken place later, or there was no decline at all. Divergent opinions are based on different evaluations or selections of data, but above all on different definitions of ‘rhetoric’.

1.2. Musical Rhetoric in the Eighteenth Century

Until the 1980’s, music of the eighteenth century\(^{12}\) was usually studied and performed on the basis of a variety of aesthetic premises that differed substantially from those of the period itself. These also differed strongly among themselves – the formalist doctrine of ‘absolute music’, the romantic view of music as the self-expression of creative genius, and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* approach that turned away from emotional expression; but what they tended to ignore collectively, was an idea that had dominated Enlightenment musical aesthetics: the idea that music has a strong affinity with language and speech, and derives much of its form and expressive qualities from this affinity. (A dissident, but negligible view held that music without text was mere ‘pleasant noise’). Though the speech-like expressive qualities of music have never been entirely lost to many musicians in the romantic tradition, the interpretation of pre-romantic music differed strongly from eighteenth-century standards in matters of articulation, phrasing, tone production and timbre. If the way music should sound at the time of its creation is part of its artistic identity, this could be seen as a falsification.

It was certainly seen that way by many practitioners of ‘early music’, who chose to play pre-classical music on period instruments, instructed themselves with the help of tutorials of the period, and studied theoretical treatises. With roots in the early 1900’s, this early music movement has become mainstream since the 1970’s, broadening its terrain towards and even beyond 1800.

What they found were references to a ‘rhetoric of music’, which given the quasi-linguistic features of the music of the time, seemed credible and practically valuable. A stimulus in this direction may have come from a contemporary revival of rhetoric in literary studies; traces of interdisciplinary connections are however rather sparse.

Within musicology, the study of musical rhetoric has until the 1970’s remained a somewhat isolated and narrow pursuit. It was practiced mainly by German scholars, and focused on the theory of musical-rhetorical ‘figures’ in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The turning point is marked by an article from 1973, in which George J. Buelow argues for a familiarity with rhetoric as an essential condition to the proper understanding of Baroque music.

\(^{12}\) I will use this term in a strictly chronological sense, including Late Baroque, Classical and what came in between, the Galant and *Empfindsam* styles.
To understand the theorists and to understand baroque music, one must understand rhetorical terminology and the rhetorical discipline of thought. Since the entire subject has vanished from our educational system, the task is not simple. [...] The very terminology of rhetoric is a new language that students must learn before baroque musical theory can be studied in any depth. (Buelow 1973: 251.)

Since then a minor paradigm shift has taken place in the study and practice of Baroque music. A rhetorical understanding of music and the application of rhetorical concepts has become, in part of the musical and musicological world, common practice, if not a kind of orthodoxy, which has extended onto the late eighteenth century and ‘Classical’ music, a period when rhetoric, according to Buelow, was “losing its influence slowly”.

For musical rhetoric of the late Baroque, we have an outstanding source in Johann Mattheson’s Der vollkommene Capellmeister (1739). Its famous definition of instrumental music as Klangrede or Tonsprache stipulates that music, as ‘sound-speech’, should evoke a particular emotion.

Since instrumental music is nothing other than a language in tones or a speech in sounds, it must always aim to excite a particular emotion; to this end the emphasis in the intervals, sensible subdivisions of movements, proper progressions etc. must be carefully observed. (Mattheson 1739: 82; 2012: 153; my transl.)

It is not clear whether Mattheson considered these expressions, ‘sound-speech’ and ‘tone-language’, synonymous, or was attentive to the difference – ‘a language’ relating to music, ‘a speech’ to a composition. In any case, he was using a metaphor with considerable literal substance. There are significant similarities between musical ‘tone speech’ and linguistic speech, which can be explained historically through the dominant position of vocal music as music sung to a text. Musical settings of poetic-dramatic texts have since the sixteenth century been shaped by an ideal of emotional expressiveness, which has allowed music, both vocal and (indirectly) instrumental, to assimilate and enhance many of the vocal-prosodic qualities of speech. As the Abbé Dubos pointed out in 1719, words are arbitrary and inexpressive signs, but the tone of voice in which they are articulated flows naturally from our physical-emotional being, and therefore has “a marvellous ability to move us”. It is this expressive quality of speech that the composer “imitates”.

13 Cf. Buelow in NG, Rhetoric and Music: “An entire discipline that had once been the common property of every educated man has had to be rediscovered and reconstructed during the intervening decades, and only now is it beginning to be understood how much Western art music has depended on rhetorical concepts”.
15 According to McCreless (2002: 868), “By the time of Johann Mattheson, whose active career encompassed fully the first six decades of the eighteenth century, the musico-rhetorical tradition had begun an irreversible decline”.
16 Selected original texts are found in the end notes.
17 Dubos (1733 Vol. 1: 444, 446).
Mattheson has elaborated this insight in music’s speech-like nature by borrowing concepts from the art of making speeches, rhetoric. But despite the well-established analogy between music and language, there are few sources after 1739 that make substantial references to rhetoric as a model for music. Mattheson’s main successor is Johann Nikolaus Forkel, who published the first volume of his Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik half a century later (1788). In the introduction, Forkel defines music as “a universal language of feelings” (eine allgemeine Sprache der Empfindungen), which is as comprehensive as regular language or the “language of thought”.\(^\text{18}\) Compared to Mattheson’s Klangrede, there seems to be a shift in emphasis from the product (speeches) to the more general and abstract level of language.

The expression Sprache der Empfindungen may have its origin in the common habit of speaking of some specific use of language as ‘the language of x’: of faith, power, or business. It is in this sense that Johann Andreas Fabricius (Philosophische Oratorie, 1724) has called the figures of speech, as uncommon expressions which carry an emotional force, “language of the affects” (Sprache der Affecten).\(^\text{19}\) Similarly, Johann Christoph Gottsched (Ausführliche Redekunst, 1736) calls the rhetorical figures “the language of the passions” (die Sprache der Leidenschaften); people create them involuntarily, as a reflection of their excited state.\(^\text{20}\) In fact, ‘language of the passions’ is itself a rhetorical figure (totum pro parte, the whole of language substituting for a speech pattern), but it might be hard to explain this as passionate utterance.

Without technical detail, and without explicit reference to rhetoric, an abundance of sources have since the middle of the century spoken of music as ‘a language’, particularly a ‘universal language’, ‘the language of feeling’, or the conjunction of both, ‘the universal language of feeling’. What has since become a faded cliché, expressed the musical aesthetics of the age. We find it in Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft (1790, §53), where he argues that the expressive intonation of speech is “like a universal language of feelings”; music exploits this same expressive potential, and is even without words “a language of the affects”, able to communicate the “aesthetic ideas” that are associated with these affects.\(^\text{21}\)

In Forkel’s exceptional elaboration of the musico-linguistic analogy, musical rhetoric provides the rules for the connection of musical phrases and sentences (Sätze) in discourse (§29). It therefore teaches at a higher level what grammar teaches at the basic level of tones and chords (§73); in modern terms, it is a ‘discourse grammar’. Adopting the commonplace of compositions as speeches, he characterizes them as

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\(^{18}\) Forkel (1788: 19). Translations of in-text quotations are my own.

\(^{19}\) Fabricius (1724: 189).

\(^{20}\) Gottsched (1975: 340). The same in Gottsched (1973: 382, Sprache der Affecten), with ref. to Lamy (“Les passions ont un langage particulier”, Lamy 1998: 181). One of the most influential handbooks of rhetorical delivery calls gesture “the common Language of all Mankind, which strikes the Understanding in at our Eyes as much as speaking does in at our Ears” (Le Faucheur 1727: 171; original French ed. 1657).

\(^{21}\) Kant (1977b: 432).
“speeches for feeling” (Reden für die Empfindung); they should contain an ordered succession of such elements as a main proposition, secondary propositions, analysis, refutation, doubt, proof and confirmation. This traditionally rhetorical schema Forkel calls, surprisingly, the “aesthetic ordering of ideas” (§§98, 99); the term ‘aesthetic’ here probably relates to the listener’s perception or Empfindung as an intuitive response.

In an alternative or complementary proposal, Forkel uses the term ‘rhetoric’ more broadly for a comprehensive system of music theory, loosely modelled on the various ‘tasks’ or officia of classical rhetoric. It comprises periodology (the creation of composite sentences), the invention and ordering of the musical ideas (rhetorical inventio and dispositio), musical figures (the rhetorical elocutio), the genres of church, chamber and theatre music, specific forms within the genres, concert performance (rhetorical actio), and even criticism (§134).

Despite all this, musical rhetoric, “even though undeniably the higher and true theory of music, is still hardly known even by name” (§69). The useful work done by Mattheson has had no continuation. Composition manuals “are neither more nor less than musical grammars, and moreover highly imperfect ones, even if some of them carry the splendid title musica poetica” (§72). In fact, few theorists between Mattheson and Forkel, and very few after have explicitly postulated a rhetoric of music. In his lexicon of 1802, Heinrich Christoph Koch explains that the term ‘rhetoric’ is used “by some music theorists”. He then admits that despite a wealth of disparate materials, no one has yet managed to bring “scientific order” into these matters, implicitly including Forkel, whose survey of rhetoric he quotes. Evidently, these writers saw musical rhetoric as a program yet to be realized – ironically, at a time when rhetoric was reputedly in an advanced stage of decline.

Forkel’s work can therefore, even by his own admission, be called somewhat eccentric. For Krones however, he is the key witness, whose “systematic survey of the complete edifice” allows us “to assume the (partial) existence of such a thing also for the time before”. For musical rhetoric in the later eighteenth century the evidence remains circumstantial: instrument tutors which advocate a ‘speaking’ or ‘singing’ manner, where ‘singing’ implies a ‘rhetorical’ performance with, as it were, a text that is ‘thought along’ with it. That the quasi-vocal qualities of instrumental music imply something like a silent text is plausible; we might think of such an imaginary text as the embodiment of the quasi-linguistic and poetic features of the music. But that

22 Ratner’s (1980: xiv) very broad conception of rhetoric seems to have been inspired by the schema in Forkel’s §73. Curiously, in Ratner’s table of contents Form is not under the heading Rhetoric, but occupies a section of its own. Since form rather than ‘periodicity’ relates to Forkel’s Periodologie, Ratner comprehends almost everything under rhetoric, except the most plausibly rhetorical aspect of music. In a later work, Ratner calls most of what he earlier included under rhetoric, ‘traditional syntax’ (Ratner 1992: 133).
23 Koch (1802: 1251-2).
24 MGG, Musik und Rhetorik.
these speech- and songlike features imply rhetoric, is true only if rhetoric has an undisputed authority over all forms of discourse.

2. The Art of Speaking Well

What has been understood as ‘rhetoric’ in musical scholarship of the past decades is primarily school rhetoric, a subject taught to young boys (including aspiring professional and amateur musicians) when they learned the Latin language. In the course of the eighteenth century, the status of rhetoric in education has declined together with that of Latin, though not everywhere, and not everywhere at the same pace.25

The school rhetoric of the period is a body of literary doctrine around a core that has been codified mainly between 100 BC and 100 AD in works by Cicero and Quintilian. After its sixteenth century revival, it has been substantially repeated through countless generations of textbooks.26 It is basically the theory of oratory, or public speaking, and comprises five *officia* or tasks, ranging from the invention of the main ideas, to delivery in speech and gesture.

Like the classical Latin with which it was primarily associated, development of the rhetorical system had stopped with the classical authors. According to Johann Georg Sulzer’s encyclopedic *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (1771), “the newer authors have left the theory of this art more or less at the same point where the ancients made halt”.27 He does not even think, in spite of so many generations of textbooks, that an adequate synthesis of this classical body of literature is available. The same opinion is expressed by George Campbell in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776):

> Considerable progress had been made by the ancient Greeks and Romans, in devising the proper rules of composition. […] And I must acknowledge that, as far as I have been able to discover, there has been little or no improvement in this respect made by the moderns. The observations and rules transmitted to us from these distinguished names in the learned world, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, have been for the most part only translated by later critics, or put into modish dress and new arrangement. (Campbell 1819: 11)

According to Aristotle’s definition,28 it is the function of rhetoric to find the means of being persuasive in domains where reasoning by strict logic may not apply. It is not on logic, but on mere plausibility that we have to base most of our decisions in life; and since we are living with others in complex societies, much depends on our ability to

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25 See Till (2004b: 259-60) and ref.
26 Till (2004a: 18); Till (2004b: 5).
27 Sulzer (1771, *Redekunst; Rhetorik*). Cf. Bod (2013: 229): “Despite rhetoric’s elevated status, we return home with virtually empty hands if we go in search of new insights, principles, or patterns in early modern rhetoric”.
build consensus. In most cases, it is impossible to prove that one is right; one has to persuade the others to agree, by presenting the most plausible arguments in the most appealing manner. It is therefore in a society where decisions are made in deliberative assemblies, that rhetoric has its origin and full application. Apart from the Athenian democracy and the Roman republic, such societies have been few. In eighteenth-century Germany, where the states were autocratic and the justice system had banned oral pleading, persuasive oratory had little employment beyond the pulpit and the classroom.\(^{29}\)

With the loss of its original function, the argumentative part of rhetoric had long been reduced in importance or even taken out of the package altogether, leaving the focus on matters of form, style, figurative speech, and delivery. These were applied to types of discourse that had not been rhetorical originally, particularly the literary genres that Aristotle had ranged under ‘poetics’. Due to such ‘literarization’ or ‘poetization’, rhetoric had become, in a broader sense, “a rational guide to true eloquence”, as Gottsched called it, without, however, losing its particular identity as “a skill […] of persuading and influencing the audience according to one’s will”.\(^{30}\)

### 2.1 Queen of the Arts

School rhetoric is merely the stable core of the broader and ill-defined cluster of everything that has passed, or still passes under the name of ‘rhetoric’. Competing definitions of rhetoric have been around long enough for Quintilian to devote a lengthy paragraph to the problem.\(^{31}\) The question of definition has become even more complicated since the second half of the twentieth century, when a revival of interest in historical rhetoric took place and various ‘new rhetorics’ emerged in literary studies, media studies, and other fields. Most of those ‘rhetorics’ have no direct relevance to the study of eighteenth-century music. However, they may have contributed to blurring the lines of what we should understand by ‘rhetoric’, and consequently, to confusion about its historical trajectory.

To get a hold on this confusing state of affairs, it may be useful to distinguish two trends or recent traditions in rhetorical studies. The first emphasizes the significance of classical rhetoric as a defining element of the European cultural tradition and humanistic values. As such, rhetoric will not lose its relevance; and if its disciplinary status has waned, it deserves a revival. The second transcends the historical-cultural framework, by identifying rhetoric with human communicative behaviour generally as an anthropological universal. Classical rhetoric figures within this scheme.

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31 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* II, 15.
as an exemplary codification of this behaviour, some elements of which may be of timeless value. In this perspective, there can be no decline, because wherever humans communicate, there is rhetoric.\(^\text{32}\)

A source of inspiration for the first trend or school has been found in Ernst Robert Curtius’ *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948). Curtius highlights the importance of rhetoric as an essential element of the classical heritage, as it has been handed on through the Middle Ages. Quite briefly, Curtius hints at its persistence as a foundation for literature through the eighteenth century.

This system of instruction, which Quintilian found in existence and which he learnedly elucidates, is the historical ground for the fact that from the Roman Empire to the French Revolution all literary art rests upon school rhetoric. (Curtius 2013: 436.)

Generalizing this thesis beyond the sphere of literature, Walter Ong (*Rhetoric, Romance and Technology*, 1971) has made the more sweeping proposition that rhetoric’s hold on education and thought was so strong and pervasive, that European pre-nineteenth century culture must be understood as a ‘rhetorical culture’.

Until the modern technological age, which effectively began with the industrial revolution and romanticism, Western culture in its intellectual and academic manifestations can be meaningfully described as rhetorical culture. (Ong 1971: 1.)

Here we encounter the enticing idea that knowledge of rhetoric is both the key and, through its remoteness from modern ways of thinking, an obstacle to our understanding of the past, or (as C.S. Lewis put it), “the greatest barrier between us and our ancestors”:

> Study of the rhetorical tradition enables us to interpret the past on its own terms and thus to discover many of the real roots out of which the present grows. It is thus one way to keep history from degenerating into antiquarianism.

> The mid-twentieth century first turned to the history of rhetoric because the rhetorical tradition enfolded a life style so different from the one in which modern technological man operates, a curious and intriguing life style, rich and strange. (Ong 1971: vii.)

A similar, but more forward looking revaluation of rhetoric as a cultural ‘force’ is found with a number of German scholars, who have identified their work after their academic base as *Tübinger Rhetorik*. It is their ambition to restore rhetoric’s original interdisciplinary nature by making it “an integral part of everyday practice”, redeveloped as “an educational system of the humanities”.\(^\text{33}\) As the founder of the Tübingen school, Walter Jens, put it with a fairy-tale metaphor:

> … it is high time that the *regina artium*, rhetoric as the old and new queen of the sci-

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\(^{32}\) This survey owes much to Till (2004b); for my purpose however I make different distinctions.

\(^{33}\) Ueding and Steinbrink (2011: 198).
ences, finally woke up from her enchanted slumber (*Dornrösenschlaf*) in our country too, and pursued her business: to enlighten and further the cause of humanity through action pertinent to the situation. (Jens 1969: 53; my transl.)

The monumental achievement of this school is the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (HWR, 1992-2014), published under the editorship of Gert Ueding, which “documents rhetoric as the most important, most differentiated and most influential (*wirkungsmächtigste*) educational system in European cultural history alongside philosophy”.

In this restorative vision, rhetoric is the framework within which the history of ideas has to be retold. This is evident in the opening sentence of the chapter on the eighteenth century in the introductory textbook by Ueding and Steinbrink (1986):

If the eighteenth century has been called the century of philosophy, this does not mean (in spite of Christian Wolff and his school) the dominance of school philosophy, but that of a rhetorically shaped culture of thought, which essentially continued humanistic impulses. (Ueding and Steinbrink 2011: 102; my transl.)

Surprising is the choice of a philosophical paradigm (instead of the rationalist school of Christian Wolff, ‘Hume and Kant’ might have been a more obvious choice). But above all, it is the fact that rhetoric is here moved from its competitive position “alongside philosophy”, to take the place of philosophy itself. Particularly if we take into account that the most likely source of that expression, “the century of philosophy”, is d’Alembert’s *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie* (1759), as quoted in the opening chapter of Ernst Cassirer’s *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (1932). What d’Alembert (an outspoken critic of school rhetoric) refers to is not a lasting humanistic heritage, but precisely the paradigm change (*révolution*) that has been brought about by the progress of the natural sciences. He sums them up in a resounding eulogy:

If we examine without prejudice the current state of our knowledge, we cannot deny the progress that philosophy has made among us. Natural science acquires new riches day by day; geometry has extended its limits to carry its torch into the bordering parts of physics; the true system of the world has become known, developed and perfected; the same sagacity which had subjugated the movements of the celestial bodies, has been applied to the bodies which surround us; [...] in a word, from the earth to Saturn, from the history of the heavens to that of the insects, physics has changed its face. (d’Alembert 1805: 9-10; my transl.)

It is ironic that scientific progress is identified by the authors as one of the causes of rhetoric’s breakdown: what they call the specialization and “imperialism of the indi-

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34 Cf. Kopperschmidt (1991: 3): “ein verspäteter, nostalgischer Nachruf”. The Latin phrase seems to have been derived from a line by the poet Pacuvius, quoted by Cicero (*De oratore, Tusculan Disputations*): *o flexanima atque omnium regina rerum oratio*, “O heart mover and queen of all things, speech!”. Theology is a competitor for the title.

individual sciences”. It has forced the humanities to follow the lead of the natural sciences, whose “persuasive power” resides only in their technical application and seems to make verbal persuasion superfluous. Rhetoric however, as a key element in humanistic culture, cannot be missed without putting that whole culture in jeopardy. It therefore plays a crucial role in the “two-cultures” paradigm that positions the sciences and the humanities as two different world views in need of mediation.

Most striking about the claims of the Tübingen school is their utopian-nostalgic mindset: the humanities are a domain of knowledge once unified and unchallenged by modern science. Rhetoric is therefore the gatekeeper to the humanistic tradition; it is ‘ubiquitous’ even if it is no longer recognized. This word, ‘ubiquity’, Ubiquität, fairly rare in German, has become a kind of catchword in rhetorical studies of the past half century. We find it in the title of the chapter on the nineteenth century of that same textbook: *Ubiquität der Rhetorik – Vom Verfall und Weiterleben der Beredsamkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*. It can be traced back to the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, a main inspiration for the Tübinger view of rhetoric as gateway to the humanistic tradition. In *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), Gadamer has argued that the dominant position of the natural sciences in present-day culture poses a risk: it might cause us to lose a “fount of truth” or certain “modes of experience” (Erfahrungsweisen) that belong to humanistic culture (Bildung), and are inaccessible to scientific method. Specifically, in the philosophical tradition from Plato to Hegel we find “a truth claim that contemporary consciousness can neither dismiss nor surpass”.

While it may be hard to fathom this Heideggerian concept of objectified ‘truth’ (it seems to be more a matter of experience than of fact), it is easier to acknowledge that the humanities cover a field that is not open to the methods of the natural sciences. But also, Gadamer maintains, the data and abstract insights that we gain from the sciences themselves cannot be interpreted and humanely understood unless they are communicated through language: we cannot understand something we cannot speak about. And rhetoric is the art of mediation through language.

It is along this path that Gadamer arrives at his thesis of rhetoric’s ‘unrestricted ubiquity’.

The ubiquity of rhetoric is unrestricted. Only through rhetoric does science become a social factor in life. What would we know about modern physics, which so

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37 Garsten (2009: 14): “For one reason or another, nostalgia is one of the most persistent vices of writings about rhetoric”.
38 Cf. Beghin and Goldberg (2007: 23): “[...] a fundamental fact of eighteenth-century cultural life, which was the ubiquity of rhetoric and its standing in European culture as a common basis for artistic discourse”.
39 Gadamer (1972, vol. 1: xxvii); my transl.
40 A rhetorical commonplace; cf. Cicero, *De oratore* I, 61 (2002: 72): “Physics, which you mentioned, and the subjects that you posited just now as the special property of mathematics and of the other arts, do belong to the expertise of those who make them their profession; yet if anyone wishes these same arts to be elucidated in speech, he must resort to the skill of the orator.”
visibly transforms our existence, from physics alone? All of its representations beyond the circle of experts [...] owe their effect to the rhetorical element by which they are conveyed. [...] All science that has to become practical depends on it. (Gadamer 1980: 63-4, my transl.)

The seemingly redundant qualification – *unrestricted* – signals that the proper domain of rhetoric is not only that of uncertain opinion; even the facts of science cannot be comprehended and integrated in our lives without being transmitted in ordinary language.

This ‘unrestricted ubiquity’ in turn alludes to another source, a laudatory review of *Wahrheit und Methode* by the Anglicist Klaus Dockhorn. Gadamer’s ‘ubiquity’ transcends the cultural-historical context in which Dockhorn had originally used the term.\(^{41}\) It is Dockhorn however who has most emphatically attempted to raise the status of rhetoric to that of a ‘world view’.

For Dockhorn, rhetoric’s particular province is human ‘irrationality’. Rhetoric has the task of discovering plausible (though unprovable) arguments, and bringing about persuasion through such arguments. That is the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric as ‘counterpart of dialectic’ (or ‘logic’), that is, a complement for the domain to which logic cannot apply. Most issues that have to do with social life belong to this domain; and what rhetoric should offer is plausible arguments, brought forward in a persuasive manner. One might think that it is eminently rational to recognize the limits of reason and logic; when we try to coordinate our actions, we try to do so according to the best of our limited knowledge and insight – it is “the rational compromise with the provisionality of reason”.\(^{42}\) In Dockhorn’s view however, the dominant factor in rhetorical persuasion is emotional influencing; and as our guide in matters of uncertain and subjective opinion, rhetoric is properly concerned with ‘the irrational’.

[...] for rhetoric, the irrational is not one problem among others, but its moving principle. It cannot be otherwise. As anti-philosophy, rhetoric [...] has developed at a time when speaking, exercising influence through speech on large crowds and colleges of judges, became and remained an epoch-making feature. (Dockhorn 1968: 49; my transl.)

This ‘irrationality’ claimed for rhetoric is not the direct opposite of rationality, but of rationalism: irrational is what does not lie within the grasp of reason, but is grasped intuitively or emotionally. The confusing term ‘irrationalism’ has been introduced in this sense in the late nineteenth century, and the choice is the more regrettable since ‘rationalism’ (of sixteenth-century origin) already implies a contrary, *empiricism*.\(^{43}\) Dockhorn’s understanding of ‘irrationalism’ has its source in study on eighteenth-

\(^{41}\) Dockhorn (1980: 64, or. 1966): “In view of what I would like to call the ubiquity of the rhetorical tradition, it is hardly astonishing that Luther uses rhetorical formulas in his treatment of key theological concepts”.

\(^{42}\) Blumenberg (2001: 427): “das vernünftige Arrangement mit der Vorläufigkeit der Vernunft”.

\(^{43}\) HWP, *Rationalismus; Irrational, das Irrationale, Irrationalismus*. 
century aesthetics by Alfred Baeumler (1923).\textsuperscript{44} For Baeumler, aesthetics, as a philosophy of intuitive and emotional response (see 4.1), was a manifestation of philosophical irrationalism, against the rationalism dominant in German Enlightenment philosophy (that is, the school of Leibniz and Wolff). Aesthetics too, as a philosophy of intuitive judgment and experience, deals with the ‘irrational’ in this sense. It has its roots in rhetoric, as the art of the irrational par excellence.

Dockhorn’s peculiar, but still influential view of rhetoric as ‘anti-philosophy’ can most plausibly be explained as a merger of two simplified contrasting pairs: philosophy versus rhetoric, and rationalism versus irrationalism. Contributing elements in that construction are, first, the philosophical critique of rhetoric: from Plato to Kant, there has been a tradition of attacking rhetoric as the legitimation of unfounded belief, and rhetorical persuasion as an unethical practice of irrational influencing. Second, the identification of this critique with the Platonic-rationalist tradition – even though some of the most outspoken critics, such as Hobbes and Locke, are to be classified as empiricists. Third, the unfortunate historical construction of philosophical irrationalism as opposed to rationalism; and finally, the narrowing of philosophy to rationalism, and the identification of irrationalism with rhetoric. In this way, Dockhorn seems to have come to his unprecedented assessment of rhetoric as “anti-philosophy” and “irrational world view”, “a world view in the fullest sense of the word […] with its own epistemology, its own ethics and, above all, its own anthropology”.\textsuperscript{45}

World views may come to an end; but not philosophy, as the practice of creating world views; nor rhetoric, if it fills a void left by philosophy in that task. We will always have to negotiate about our beliefs.\textsuperscript{46} If we choose to ignore the historical trajectory of rhetoric as a discipline, and define it exclusively in terms of its subject matter, its ubiquity becomes a timeless given.

### 2.2 Rhetorical Man

With this conclusion, German revisionist historiography has crossed the borders of the history of humanities and ideas, approaching a redefinition of rhetoric broadly as a theory (or the theory) of human communicative behaviour. This is the second of the two trends, which however is grounded primarily not in the classical tradition, but in universal features of the human species.

A very broad scope had already been accorded to rhetoric by Quintilian, at least in appearance, when he terminated his discussion of the question ‘what is rhetoric?’ by proposing simply: “the theory of speaking well” (\textit{bene dicendi scientia}). ‘Well’ implies

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\textsuperscript{44} Dockhorn (1968: 48). It is impossible to refer to Baeumler without taking into account that since the early 1930’s he assumed an active and prominent role in National-Socialist control over German culture and education.

\textsuperscript{45} Dockhorn (1974: 17), my transl.

\textsuperscript{46} Till (2004b: 19), discussing Dockhorn.
more however than ‘fluently’ or ‘effectively’; it includes professional, artistic-technical standards as well as the character or moral standing of the orator, “since no man can speak well who is not good himself”. The ethical demand should safeguard rhetoric from including the persuasive techniques of such individuals as “harlots, flatterers and seducers”.

Quintilian's apparent bare-bones definition has been reduced still further in the late seventeenth century by Bernard Lamy in his often reprinted L’art de parler (1676): rhetoric is, as simply as the title says, ‘the art of speaking’, since one never intends to speak badly. Nor do we need to add ‘in order to persuade’: we never speak without the intention of being believed. With such a broad definition, rhetoric may be thought to include all effective verbal (or even nonverbal) communication; if it is true that persuasion, broadly conceived, is always our aim.

Without the humanistic nostalgia that characterizes the Tübingen school, and sometimes without even much interest in the classical tradition, scholars in the United States have revived rhetoric on the basis of such a broad interpretation of ‘persuasion’. The classicist George A. Kennedy goes further Lamy by holding that all human (or even animal) communication is persuasive, therefore rhetorical. ‘Persuasion’ must be understood in a sense much broader than that of ‘winning over’; it involves any technique “to affect the beliefs, actions, or emotions of an audience”.

Though one may plausibly think of communication as attempting to bring about something in another person, the model of communicating to an audience (rather than with a partner) already narrows down communication to a specific range of situations: typically, that of oratory.

A new approach was made in the 1950’s and ‘60’s in literary studies, when Wayne C. Booth and Kenneth Burke independently reacted against the postulate of artistic autonomy. This had eliminated the author and her intentions from the reader’s per-

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47 Inst. or. II, xv, 34.
48 Quintilian (1920 vol. 1: 305, Inst. or. II, xv, 11); Till (2004b: 382). The argument that ‘artistic’ quality rather than persuasion is the orator’s aim is often ascribed to Quintilian (Inst. or. II, xvii, 25) on the basis of the brief sentence, “So too the orator’s purpose is fulfilled if he has spoken well” (Ina oratori bene dixisse finis est). The comparison made is that with a pilot and a doctor, who may fail to save the ship or the patient due to circumstances out of their control. He is unlikely to imply that both have in that case have achieved their aim. The point is a different one: the accomplished orator does not lose his status when he fails to persuade. Maybe we should translate: “In the same way, his limit is to have spoken well”.
49 The title La rhétorique ou l’art de parler dates from the 1688 edition. In the original edition, persuasion was defined more narrowly (Carr 1990: 130).
51 Kennedy (1999: 2). This contradicts his own characterization of what he calls ‘secondary rhetoric’ as non-persuasive (ib. 3).
52 Kennedy (1999: 2). Kennedy (1999: 4) makes a confusing distinction between ‘traditional rhetoric’, the discursive practices of non-literate societies, and ‘conceptual rhetoric’ or ‘metarhetoric’, which is rhetoric-as-theory. This more or less covers the classical-traditional distinction between rhetoric (theory) and eloquence (practice).
spective: the literary work should be understood on its own terms exclusively, without thinking of what the author might have ‘meant’. Booth and Burke applied the notion of persuasion in a literary author-reader context. For Booth, the notion of persuasion is at least as comprehensive as it is for Kennedy:

Rhetoric is employed at every moment when one human being intends to produce, through the use of signs or symbols, some effect on another – by words, or facial expressions, or gestures, or any symbolic skill of any kind. (Booth 2004: xi)

This category of rhetorical symbols is broad enough to include even murder, “if the intent is to change the mind of the survivors”.53

Burke, on the other hand, replaces a more narrowly conceived traditional ‘persuasion’ with ‘identification’, or the creation of a community feeling through communicative acts.

The key term for the old rhetoric was ‘persuasion’ and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the ‘new’ rhetoric would be ‘identification’, which can include a partially ‘unconscious’ factor in appeal. ‘Identification’ at its simplest is also a deliberate device, as when the politician seeks to identify himself with his audience. […] But identification can also be an end, as when people earnestly yearn to identify themselves with some group or other. (Burke 1951: 203)

Along similar lines, the term ‘rhetoric’ has come to be employed whenever people voice their concerns. In the service of a revisionary history, it should apply to “the suppressed rhetorics of women, workers”, “the rhetorics of slaves and women in Athens and Rome and the United States”, “the rhetorics of the working class when a Neo-Ciceronian bourgeois and elitist rhetoric was shaping the formation of our constitution”, and “other marginalized and silenced groups”.54 In this extravaganza of labelling a crucial point seems to have been missed – that groups that are silenced have no chance of developing a rhetoric.

In such multifarious ways, rhetoric has dissolved into a broad anthropological or semiotic theory of communication, if not a mere catchword for any kind of ‘theorizing’. A fairly recent Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition refrains from a definition of its subject, arguing that “Rhetoric, though the oldest and broadest of the humanities, is becoming ever more difficult to locate in a conceptual framework because it draws increasingly on disciplines like anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, and psychology.”55 It contains entries on Rhetoric and Cultural Studies, Fiction, Technology; on Rhetoric of Inquiry, Film, and even of Silence; but, alas, not of Music.56

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53 Cf. Booth’s Rhetoric of Fiction (1961), which hardly refers to the classical tradition and only casually defines its subject as “the author’s means of controlling his reader” (Booth 1983: xiii).
To distinguish this modern enterprise from classical rhetoric, the word ‘rhetoric-ality’ has been proposed. However, defined as “something like the condition of our existence” it seems to lack any clear target.

[…] Modernism is an age not of rhetoric, but of rhetoricality, the age, that is, of a generalized rhetoric that penetrates to the deepest levels of human experience. […] Rhetoric is no longer the title of a doctrine and a practice, nor a form of cultural memory; it becomes instead something like the condition of our existence. (Bender and Wellbery 1990: 25)

As the common denominator in this variety of theories or practices, ‘rhetoric’ has become a vaguely anthropological concept, the image of the human being as ‘homo rhetoricus’.

Undeniably, communication, specifically verbal communication, is a distinguishing feature of our species. The epithet ‘rhetoricus’ would imply that rhetoric or rhetorical behaviour, over and above language, is a biological trait and hence a human universal. It seems somewhat ironic however that after a continuous tradition of some twenty centuries, rhetoric has disappeared from the curriculum precisely in an age when anthropology and evolutionary biology became established as disciplines.

What is presented under the flag of ‘homo rhetoricus’ is, according to Peter Oesterrich, a ‘fundamental-rhetorical image of man’ (fundamentalrhetorisches Menschenbild). Persuasive speech “forms the principle of human life”. The relation with classical rhetoric is maintained by recognizing some of its basic principles, including the officia, as having a basis in universal human behaviour.

The negative consequence of calling all communication ‘rhetorical’, and any communicative intention ‘persuasion’, is a loss of distinctions. At the very least, we would have to distinguish the narrow and broad senses of those terms. The subject matter of rhetoric thus becomes indistinguishable from that of discourse theory and linguistic pragmatics, philosophy of language, aesthetics, and other disciplines – those that the Tübingen school has curtly dismissed as rhetoric’s “atrophied stages”.

Oesterreich (2013).

A similar direction is taken by the International Rhetoric Culture Project by Strecker et al., http://www.rhetoric-culture.org/outline.htm.


Ueding and Steinbrink (2011: 159); similarly in HWR (vol. 1: 11, Vorwort); critically Till (2004b: 22).
3. Rhetoric among the Arts

If rhetoric has ever been *regina artium*, her reign was over the liberal arts. As the companion of logic and grammar, together the *trivium* of the arts of language, it had since the early Middle Ages been the only discipline responsible for all forms of ‘artful’ discourse, which gave it a much broader responsibility than oratory alone: it included genres that Aristotle had discussed independently from rhetoric in the *Poetics*, genres that now would be called ‘fiction’. As a consequence, rhetoric became more of a literary art; on the other hand, the poetic genres were ‘rhetorized’.

When the distinction between mimetic (fictional) discourse and ordinary discourse was no longer considered basic, the imaginary and fictional element could be accommodated as ornament of figure of style, such as example, allegory, and metaphor. The paradigmatic form of discourse remained oratory, or persuasive monologue.

The liberal arts formed a propaedeutic curriculum and ordering of knowledge, which was crowned by philosophy (in its then very comprehensive sense) and theology. With the rise of humanism and its revaluation and rediscovery of classical sources (including Aristotle’s *Poetics*), rhetoric lost its former exclusive status due to the more comprehensive *studia humanitatis*, which could include grammar, rhetoric, poetics, logic, ethics, and history. It is not easy to say, generally, to what extent this affected rhetoric’s regulatory status over all discourse; maybe no generalization is possible without misrepresentation. Around 1700 the position of rhetoric in elementary education may have been basically unaffected, but the intellectual landscape was very much in the process of being reshaped.

About the definition of the liberal arts there are “very different opinions”, according to Walch’s *Philosophisches Lexicon* of 1726, though what these differences are is not made very clear: “Some take these to be all the arts and sciences; others all worldly learning; still others all the arts and branches of philosophy […].” Rhetoric is discussed under the heading *Eloquenz*, with a distinction between *Redekunst* (theory) and *Beredsamkeit* (oratory as practice). What is more remarkable, is that this lexicon manages to discuss the general concept of discourse (*Rede*) over sixteen columns without speaking of rhetoric, or citing classical authorities.

Uncertainty about rhetoric’s position among the arts is increased by equivocation between ‘rhetoric’ (the theory), ‘eloquence’ (speaking skills or style), and ‘oratory’

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61 This seems to have been an Aristotelian innovation; according to Walker (2017: 86), this basic distinction was “foreign to archaic [pre-Aristotelian] Greek thought”.


63 According to Bornscheuer (2010), a decline of classical rhetoric as oratorial art has already set in with the break-up of the trivium.

64 Walch (1726: 1593-4); my transl.
(making speeches). As oratory became less the centre of attention, ‘eloquence’ could take on the meaning of ‘rhetoric’. In German, Redekunst became the more common term for rhetoric, with (informal) eloquence being translated literally as Wohlredenheit, oratory as Beredsamkeit.\(^65\) Gottsched’s *Ausführliche Redekunst* (1759) makes this distinction, “even though until now they have been used nearly equivalently”.\(^66\) Sulzer (1771) does the same, including oratory (Beredsamkeit) among the arts as a subdivision of the arts of speech (redende Künste). As for English usage, according to Chambers’ *Cyclopaepedia* (1741), “Rhetoric and oratory differ from each other as the theory from the practice […] Ordinarily, however, the two are used indifferently for each other”.\(^67\)

The temporary coexistence of the liberal arts and the more recent category of the ‘fine arts’ or beaux arts has sometimes produced confusion, though there was little overlap between them (only the literary arts and music theory belong to both). The most common grouping of the fine arts strongly resembles that of the mimetic or representational arts discussed by Plato and Aristotle: poetry, music, painting, sculpture, dance, and acting.\(^68\) Charles Batteux’ influential *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (1747) groups these together precisely on the basis of that same principle of mimesis, traditionally but inaccurately translated as ‘imitation of nature’, or more particularly, ‘beautiful nature’.\(^69\) the ‘single principle’ which unites the arts is that they represent something, exposing its beautiful aspects, by literary, pictorial or musical means.

Besides uniting the fine arts on the basis of their representational nature, Batteux also distinguishes them from other ‘arts’, in the broad sense of skills and practices, by their purpose. While the fine arts serve pleasure, the others have either a useful, practical application (the crafts or ‘mechanical’ arts, the traditional counterpart of the liberal arts); or they are primarily practical, but go beyond this in a quest for higher, pleasurable perfection. Prime examples of this are architecture and rhetoric (éloquence). This division, which separates rhetoric from the fine arts and therefore from poetry, helped establishing the still familiar convention which views fiction (‘literature’) and nonfiction as basically different modes of discourse. It was not widely adopted however for the next three or four decades (3.3).

### 3.1 ‘Belles-lettres’, ‘schöne Wissenschaften’

A radically unconventional ordering of the arts and sciences is found in the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert (1751). In the *Discours préliminaire*, D’Alembert in-

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\(^65\) The online *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (https://www.dwds.de/) gives chronological statistics.

\(^66\) Gottsched (1975: 89).

\(^67\) Chambers (1741, *Rhetoric*).

\(^68\) Halliwell (1986: 51); Young (2015: 4-5).

\(^69\) A misinterpretation of Aristotle’s principle that ‘art imitates nature’, which means that all ‘art’ (techne, craft, technology) follows the example of nature, or: if you want to make a tool, make it as nature would have made it. There is an analogy between the procedures of nature and human technique (Halliwell 1986: 47).
cludes the *beaux arts* among the *arts libéraux*, defined in the traditional way as intellectual pursuit against craftsmanship. *Beaux arts* are those which have as purpose the imitation of nature (mimesis), and they have hardly any rules except those of genius. These categories have no place however in his schematic tree of knowledge or *système figuré*, which presents a taxonomy of human knowledge according to the mental faculties of Memory, Reason, and the Imagination. It does not include the term *beaux arts*, but places under the Imagination a very broadly conceived *Poésie*, which “in its natural signification is nothing other than invention or creation”, and includes the fine arts. In this taxonomy rhetoric belongs, along with versification, to the *Science des qualités du Discours*, which falls under communication, logic, and ultimately under the faculty of Reason. There is in this system no connection between music and rhetoric.

This rational system reflects an ideal ordering rather than practice, and it has not been consistently carried out even in the *Encyclopédie* itself. Its innovative quality seems even more striking once we realize that it was more than a century old, having been adopted from Francis Bacon’s *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623). Contrary to the system, the *Encyclopédie*’s anonymous and brief article *Rhétorique* assigns rhetoric to the category *belles-lettres*, which however has no lemma of its own. *Belles-lettres* is the term that had since the seventeenth century come to cover, first, the broad category of the *literae humaniores*, then literature in the modern, restricted sense, giving way to the term *littérature*. The *Encyclopédie* uses these terms without clear distinctions or hierarchy.

‘Belles-lettres’ has become established as a loanword in English through a translation of the works of the educational writer Charles Rollin (1734). The title shows the broad scope initially accorded to the term (in fact, an extended *humaniora*): *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres or An Introduction to Languages, Poetry, Rhetoric, History, Moral Philosophy, Physicks, &c.* The subsequent narrowing of the concept is exemplified by the four volume textbook *Cours de belles-lettres ou Principes de la littérature* (1753) by Batteux, which includes traditionally rhetorical subject matter embedded in a panorama of literary genres. In the 1764 edition the term ‘belles lettres’ was dropped from the title.

It had grown firmer roots in Scotland, where Hugh Blair was the first in 1762 to be appointed to a professorship in ‘Rhetoric and Belles Lettres’. In his influential

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70 *Encyclopédie, Discours préliminaire.*  
71 *Encyclopédie, Discours préliminaire.*  
73 Howell (1971: 520-531); Caron (1992); France (1999: 976).  
74 The Swiss *Encyclopédie* (1770-1780), edited by Fortunato de Felice creates a new pattern by dividing the field of knowledge along the categories of history (about facts), philosophy (relations between facts), and the arts. It classifies rhetoric along with other arts of writing (including paleography and and philology) as symbolic art; eloquence with the beaux-arts and as imitative arts. Its inclusion of aesthetics (*aistétique*) reflects the influence of Sulzer’s recent *Théorie*, from which extensive borrowings have been made.  
75 New editions have appeared until 1810.
volume of lectures on that subject (1783), which has remained in print through the nineteenth century, the term *belles lettres* remains undefined – in fact, it plays no part at all. Oratory is dealt with under the name of “Eloquence, or Public Speaking”; it is followed by historical and philosophical writing and ‘poetry’, or what now would be called ‘literature’. These lectures are on the whole conservative and derivative, with some concessions to the rising tide of aesthetics; the opening chapter is devoted to a discussion of *taste*, defined as “the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art”. Persuasion, the core concept of traditional rhetoric, is mostly restricted to the chapters on oratory; the task of poetry is not to persuade, but “to please, and to move”. The effects on the reader’s imagination and emotions (*delectare* and *movere*) are set apart from persuasion, which is associated with *docere* exclusively.

The historian, the orator, the philosopher, address themselves, for the most part, primarily to the understanding: their direct aim is to inform, to persuade, or to instruct. But the primary aim of a poet is to please, and to move; and, therefore, it is to the imagination, and the passions, that he speaks. (Blair 1839: 511)

In its association with belles lettres, the focus of rhetoric has shifted from persuasion towards taste, from oratory towards criticism, and from speaker-writer towards reader. Those who are not writers and orators may study rhetoric not as a “practical art” but as a “speculative science”; “the same instructions which assist others in composing, will assist them in discerning, and relishing, the beauties of composition”.76

In Germany, in a similar process the *humaniores* were renamed *schöne Wissenschaften*. Rhetoric and poetics could be grouped together either as *schöne Wissenschaften* or as *redende Künste*.

In an essay on the origins and connections between the ‘fine arts and sciences’ (*schöne Künste und Wissenschaften*) of 1757, Moses Mendelssohn dismisses the mimetic principle proposed by Batteux. The unifying factor of the fine arts is not their representational quality, but beauty, or more precisely, the sensitive expression of perfection. The arts of speech, both poetry and oratory, fall under the notion of what Baumgarten had called *oratio sensitiva perfecta*, rendered by Mendelssohn as *sinnlich-vollkommene Rede*, ‘sensitively perfect discourse’; it is the kind of discourse which achieves beauty (‘perfection’) through vivid, imaginative representation (cf. 3.3 below). On this point Mendelssohn made a significant change when he reissued his essay. Originally, he had granted oratory a lower degree of ‘perfection’ because it is more abstract, less *sinnlich*.77

By adding the adjective ‘perfect’, poetry is distinguished from *oratory*, in which the expression is not so perfectly sensitive as in *poetry*. (Mendelssohn 1757: 244; my transl.)

76 Blair (1839: 4-5).
77 *Sensitiva* is often translated as ‘sensate’. Since the OED calls ‘sensate’ in its most relevant sense – ‘of the nature of or involving sensation’ – ‘obsolete’, I prefer ‘sensitive’.
When he published the essay under a new title (*Über die Hauptgrundsätze der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften*, 1761), he distinguished poetry and oratory according to their purpose, that of pleasure versus persuasion. Both however fall within the aesthetic notion of sensitively perfect discourse:

Poetry differs from eloquence in its ultimate purpose. The main, ultimate purpose of poetry is to please by means of a sensitively perfect discourse; that of oratory is to persuade by means of a sensitively perfect discourse. (Mendelssohn 1761 vol. 2: 88-89; 2011: 199; my transl.)

Here Mendelssohn clearly avoids the conclusion that had seemed obvious before: since the supreme purpose of the ‘fine arts and sciences’ is the pleasure we experience through sensitive perfection, oratory has no place among them.

Sulzer does not speak of *schöne Wissenschaften*, but includes rhetoric (*Redekunst*) and oratory or eloquence (*Beredsamkeit*) among the fine arts or *schöne Künste*. He rejects the distinction Batteux had made between non-functional art and functional non-art; the defining feature is their ability to make “lasting impressions upon the mind which are aimed at the enhancement of the powers of the soul”.*^78^* This is a purpose poetry and oratory have in common. Though oratory speaks less to the imagination than poetry and the other mimetic arts, it has the advantage of presenting more distinct ideas. Sulzer even makes the unpromising attempt to include oratory among the mimetic arts: he compares the verbal expression of the orator’s subject, and its evocation in the mind of the listener, to the painter’s representation of his own mental image on canvas – ignoring both the difference between pictorial representation and the conventional signs of language, and the generally argumentative nature of oratory.

What is expected from the painter is not only the skill of expressing every object as he sees it; he must be able to imitate it in such a manner, that it catches the eye most favourably, and produces the most vivid impression. In the same way the orator is expected to present his topic in the most favourable light, and in such a way that it will be most effective for the purpose of teaching, convincing, or touching emotionally. (Sulzer 1771, *Beredsamkeit*, my transl.)*^79^*

Sulzer’s idealizing observations show the difficulty of resituating rhetoric within an intellectual landscape where skill and talent, artifice and nature have become increasingly polarized. Favouring talent and nature ultimately results in the disrepute of rhetoric as a learnable system. Rhetorical invention (*inventio*), traditionally guided by the use of commonplaces (*loci communes*), is becoming the playground of talent. Though

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*^78^* Sulzer (1771, *Beredsamkeit*).

*^79^* The pictorial simile is found in Lamy (1998: 35), and no doubt elsewhere: “Puisque les paroles sont des lignes qui représentent les choses qui se passent dans l’esprit, on peut dire qu’elles sont comme une peinture de nos pensées, que la langue est le pinceau qui trace cette peinture, et que les mots dont le discours est composé en font les couleurs”.

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theory may be of help here, in this respect the rhetoricians have said rather “too much”, and it is more productive to study “the nature of things” directly and discover the rules for oneself.\textsuperscript{80} It is significant that Sulzer makes style (\textit{Schreibart, Styl}), which may apply to all works of art, the domain of individual expression. In the rhetorical tradition style is primarily an adaptation of discourse to subject and audience; here it becomes the mark of the author's individuality, “the particular imprint upon the work by the artist’s character and momentary emotional state”.\textsuperscript{81} Here, at least, Sulzer makes a “lasting break” with rhetorical tradition.\textsuperscript{82}

Near the end of the century, Kant still ranks both poetry and rhetoric under aesthetics as ‘arts of speech’ (\textit{Kritik der Urteilskraft}, 1790, §51). His conception of art however implies that both occupy a different rank. The role played in Mendelssohn’s and Sulzer’s conceptions of art by ‘sensitive perfection’ and its uplifting or enhancing effects on the mind (a notion that had been most amply developed by Baumgarten, see 4. below), is in Kant’s system given to the “free play of the imagination”. This is what poetry affords, by offering ideas and images for our personal contemplation and association; oratory, on the contrary, conveys a message that must be understood. For this reason, Kant ranks poetry higher as an art form. When he speaks of oratory as “borrowing” from poetry devices which must help to captivate the listener, he alludes to the commonplace that imaginative illustrations may enliven rhetorical discourse (3.3). But such devices actually distract from what is its true purpose, “namely, to employ the understanding effectively” (§51).

One might argue that since this is oratory’s purpose, it should not have been discussed in the context of aesthetic judgment at all. Here Kant seems to have simply adopted the traditional view of rhetoric as ‘art of speech’. One might also suspect that Kant has been trapped in his own rhetoric. He has started his argument with a superficially attractive, but not very convincing inverted parallel (antimetabole):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Oratory} is the art of treating a matter of the understanding as a free play of the imagination; \textit{poetry}, that of carrying out a free play of the imagination as if it were a matter of the understanding. (Kant 1977b: 422; my transl.\textsuperscript{v})
\end{quote}

The second half is plausible particularly if we think of fiction: a fictional narrative may present itself to the reader as history, with a quasi-factuality which seems to address the intellect, while in fact it calls upon our ability and willingness to circumvent much of the intellect’s control, and to let the story unfold in the imagination. That oratory presents itself as “a free play of the imagination”, rather than merely employing imaginative devices for other purposes, is much less plausible. Even as non-artistic discourse however oratory must fail to meet Kant’s ethical standards, since its

\textsuperscript{80} Sulzer (1771, \textit{Erfindung (Schöne Künste); Studium})
\textsuperscript{81} Sulzer (1771, \textit{Schreibart}).
\textsuperscript{82} Till (2004b: 367).
stated purpose is persuasion. Persuasion seeks to outmanoeuvre critical understanding by relegating serious matters to the imagination and feeling; it is therefore insincere and manipulative. The consequence, for Kant, is an emphatic distinction between oratory and eloquence. Eloquence can and should be transparent; oratory is disqualified by its inherently deceitful persuasive nature.\(^3\)

That the comparison between oratory and poetry as ‘arts’ involves a category mistake may have seemed obvious to some of Kant’s contemporaries. Around 1790 there is among German authors an increasing sense that rhetoric should be excluded from the arts by the criterium of utility (which it has) versus artistic status (which it lacks). This seems to have become the established view in Germany after 1800. In a textbook \textit{Theorie der schönen Wissenschaften} (1789), Andreas Heinrich Schott, professor of philosophy and eloquence in Tübingen, presents aesthetics, the theory of the \textit{schöne Künste} and \textit{schöne Wissenschaften}, as the successor of rhetoric, which as a “not purely fine art” cannot be the model or lawgiver for poetry. He criticizes the fact that educational textbooks in literary criticism still follow the patterns of “the old rhetoric”. As in British and French \textit{belles lettres}, there is a shift from production to consumption: the purpose of literary education is not to raise orators or poets, but cultured citizens capable of aesthetic judgment.

\[\ldots\] the rhetorical writings of the ancients have been made the basis of all teaching in literary criticism; but at the same time they have placed many obstacles in the way of its further advance: by following too closely the concepts, divisions and rules of the old rhetoricians, and establishing a not purely fine art \[\ldots\] as the norm of the other fine arts, one was prevented from fully specifying all forms and expressions of the beautiful, and often prescribed laws to poetry that apply only to oratory.

Also, we no longer have the purpose nowadays of raising true orators, like the ancients, much less poets; our criticism is limited to familiarizing young people with the various forms, effects and means of the beautiful, with the principles of art, and with the tried and tested models of beauty; and to giving them the means to develop their taste further. (Schott 1789 xvi-xvii, lvi-lvii; my transl.)

In the work of his Leipzig colleague Karl Heinrich Heydenreich (\textit{System der Ästhetik}, 1790), the function of art has shifted from representation and perception towards subjective expression: the purpose of a work of art is “to represent a state of sensibility” (\textit{einen Zustand der Empfindsamkeit darzustellen}).

The impulse to represent one’s feelings, which in some measure lies in all human souls, is the common root from which all the works [of the fine arts] emerge. (Heydenreich 1790: 152-3; my transl.)

\(^3\) Cf. Quintilian, \textit{Inst. or.} II, xvii, 27 (1920 vol. 1: 337): “Even a philosopher is at times permitted to tell a lie, while the orator must needs excite the passions, if that be the only way by which he can lead the judge to do justice. For judges are not always so enlightened and often have to be tricked to prevent them falling into error”.

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What Heydenreich favours is in fact both representation and communication, specifically, of the author’s own inner states. This can never be the main purpose of rhetoric, which therefore should not be included among the fine arts.\(^{84}\)

### 3.2 Tensions and Transformations

Although the decline of rhetoric is generally dated to the eighteenth century, there is no consensus about the nature and significance of this process. Ueding and Steinbrink acknowledge that in the eighteenth century, “such heavy upheavals” have taken place in rhetoric, “that they have often been described as the end of the rhetorical tradition”. But this view has been fundamentally altered by “more accurate historical research”. The actual decline occurred in the nineteenth century; during the Enlightenment there still was an unbroken “unity of rhetoric and poetics”. Even so, they admit that school rhetoric was a “petrified system”, that has contributed to rhetoric’s disciplinary decline since 1750.\(^{85}\)

On the basis of the sources cited above, it seems clear that the status of rhetoric has been a debatable issue throughout the eighteenth century. Whether rhetoric was still alive by 1800 depends on which aspects of rhetorical or literary practice we consider to be vital signs.\(^{86}\) Evidently, people have continued to speak and write, and to reflect on those activities; and inevitably, they did so in terms that were part of the rhetorical vocabulary. While oratory ceased to be the centrepiece of rhetoric, audiences didn’t lose their appreciation for public eloquence, particularly when new opportunities for political oratory emerged during and after the French Revolution.\(^{87}\) Some parts of the rhetorical package stayed alive or even flourished. Rhetorical *actio* or vocal-gestural delivery has continued in Germany as the theory and practice of declamation or *Vortragskunst*, and in Britain and the United States under the name of ‘elocution’, actually a misnomer after rhetorical *elocutio*, or style; the latter subject was studied from a reader’s perspective in literary criticism, or *belles lettres*.\(^{88}\)

This was a multi-layered process, which cannot be described along a single timeline. It seems to have begun earliest and progressed most swiftly in the protestant regions of Germany, where the decline of rhetorical education went hand in hand with the introduction of literature in the vernacular. Despite Gottsched’s *Ausführliche Redekunst*, rhetoric did not make a successful, lasting transfer from Latin to German. Professorships in rhetoric were discontinued around mid-century.\(^{89}\) For this part of

\(^{85}\) Ueding and Steinbrink (2011: 1, 140, 110, 8); on the accuracy of this research, see Till (2004b), Ch. 1.
\(^{87}\) Till (2008: 113).
\(^{88}\) On German declamation, see Muns (2017).
\(^{89}\) Till (2004b: 52) and ref; (Till 2008: 117); Jäger (1979); France (2007). According to data cited by Krause (2012: 291), around 1720 a minority of teachers at protestant universities taught in Latin; around 1800 the vernacular is the rule at universities in German speaking countries. On nineteenth century British and French rhetoric,
Europe, at least, the end of rhetoric as a discipline may have come well before 1800, if we define ‘discipline’ by the coherence of its subject and methods, continuity of critical discourse, and a position in higher education.\textsuperscript{90}

Among historians of rhetoric, the most favoured term for this process of decline is ‘transformations’.\textsuperscript{91} When artistic production became (in theory) a matter of creative genius, the rules of rhetorical \textit{inventio} became irrelevant. The other rhetorical competences were shifted towards literary criticism, linguistics, the philosophy of language, and on the practical side, towards stage declamation. Describing this as ‘transformations’ does not exclude the possibility that rhetoric transformed itself out of existence; though for a limited range of application, particularly preaching (homiletics), a restricted rhetoric was kept alive through the nineteenth century.

The causes of these transformations are likely to be found in certain tensions that have existed in the system since antiquity. Given these tensions, the fact that rhetoric has survived until the Enlightenment is less easily explained than its eventual demise, which can be attributed to the broader scientific and educational paradigm shift of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1.1).

Throughout its history, rhetoric has been exposed to criticism, particularly from philosophers, in a tradition of antagonism that extends from Plato through Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Kant, to the present day. Its main themes are, in order of ascending severity: pedantry and pomposity, artificiality, and deceitful manipulativeness. These issues can be related to certain structural tensions or inner contradictions within the system. (As the history of ideology and religion shows, such systems may live long despite, or even thanks to a lack of consistency.) These tensions may help explain why rhetoric’s eventual transformations were a centrifugal process, destroying any chance of an integral transformation from ‘art’ into ‘science’, or a modern theory of discourse.

One area of tension is the contrast between rhetoric’s nature as a practical and composite how-to discipline, which combined such disparate skills and sources of knowledge as argumentation, mastery of style, and speaking with the appropriate gestures, and its higher ambition to be a ‘science’ with its own subject matter. A second is that between its descriptive and prescriptive qualities; and a third, that between oratory, as the paradigmatic rhetorical form of discourse, and verbal discourse in all its varieties. Since the last point is most interesting in relation to aesthetics, I will discuss it in more detail under a new heading. To add a few words on the second: it is a commonplace of rhetorical theory that rhetoric has its origins in practice. The rules and categories of rhetoric (\textit{ars}) are an inductive codification of this living practice (\textit{natura}). They should not be unthinkingly applied, and are no substitute for experi-

\textsuperscript{90} Vickers (1988: 197).
\textsuperscript{91} Till (2008: 117); Till (2004b: 51-53).

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ence.

[...] as Cicero so aptly puts it: eloquence was not born of art, but art was born of eloquence; these reflections, in an ordered fashion, have become what is called rhetoric. (*Encyclopédie* 1751, *Rhétorique*; my transl.)

Du Marsais, a grammarian who has contributed to the *Encyclopédie*, is convinced “that more figures are produced on a market day in Les Halles, than during several days of academic conferences”. And he makes the significant observation that avoiding figurative speech would be an impossible task, given the fact that language is permeated with ‘figures’.

This raises an obvious problem: if eloquence is natural, why do we need a theory? Or, if it is a support and enhancement, for instance, for when we feel less secure, may the rules not also become a hindrance? Moreover, any system that turns observation into prescription tends to get rigid in the educational treadmill. By deriving its rules from approved models, it puts a straightjacket on natural abilities and innovation. By laboriously spelling out what is largely common sense, by endless categorizing and labelling under pompous Greek and Latin names, it becomes pedantic.

D’Alembert, in a famous paragraph of the *Discours préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie*, regards eloquence as the natural communication of emotion. This is a matter of individual talent, for which rules are useless.

As for those pedantic puerilities which have been honoured with the name of Rhetoric, or rather have served only to make this name ridiculous, and which are to the art of oratory what scholasticism is to true philosophy: they can only give the most false and barbaric idea of eloquence. (*Encyclopédie* 1751, *Discours préliminaire*; my transl.)

Sulzer does not go as far as d’Alembert, but stresses that eloquence should be based above all on the orator’s ability to express himself naturally, without artifice and ostentation. Oratorial ‘force’ cannot be acquired by studying the rhetorical figures, but only by inner conviction and sincere feeling. His ideal model among contemporaries is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who is mentioned in one breath with Plato and Cicero. Rousseau (ironically, not an orator: he was too shy to speak with ease in public!) claimed to derive his powerful style not from art, but simply from the sincerity of his belief: “nothing resembles eloquence more than the tone of a man with a strong conviction”. Like d’Alembert, Sulzer thinks the figures and tropes of school rhetoric

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92 The ref. is to Cicero, *De oratore* I,146; cf. Quintilian, *Inst. or.* II 5, 15; V 10, 120; Till (2013: 458).
94 France (1972: 4): “General rhetorical theory is usually boring, when it is not absurd, but the rhetorical behaviour of individuals is full of interest.” On pedantry, see also Till (2004b 148-151); France (1972: 21-27); France (2007).
95 Sulzer (1771, *Beredsamkeit*).
96 *Fragment biographique* (ca. 1755), quoted after the French in France (1972: 246). Beghin (1997: 205) calls at-
are to true rhetoric what scholasticism has been to philosophy: “mere verbiage”.  

Many a bright student acquires a distaste for rhetoric when he is forced to learn the desperate names and explanations of all the figures by heart [...]. (Sulzer 1771, Fig-ur; my transl). The charge of pedantry, like all the others, dates back to antiquity. Unnaturalness and pedantry are charges to which rhetoricians could have responded by reforming rhetoric, as they have in fact attempted to do many times over. Near the end of the seventeenth century, Lamy weakens the link between rhetoric and oratory, which he associates with ornateness (“abundance and richness of expressions”), taking his distance from what he calls “the ordinary rhetorics”, which are limited to precepts for lawyers and preachers – but are “not very useful even to them”. The result however is that the traditional rhetorical part has shrunk to less than half of his book, leaving much space to grammar. Buffier (Cours de sciences, 1732) finds “much eloquence in ordinary people, and little of it in certain orations, made according to the ordinary rules of rhetoric”. As for Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, he denies that their rules have produced eloquence in their students. For Buffier, then, the tension between rhetoric’s descriptive and prescriptive aspects is evident. And yet, he does not offer an alternative: after criticising the rules, he sees no other option but to reproduce them.

The tension between prescriptive and descriptive aims may not have become a critical issue as long as practice followed the ideal of imitating a classical, exemplary body of works. Even what is ‘natural’ may change with the framework within which it is seen. With the end of classicist standards, and an increased emphasis on individuality and talent or genius, the validity of such rule-based practice would increasingly be called into question, no matter what claims on naturalness the rhetoricians themselves may have made.

3.3 Oratory and Fiction

The type of discourse that has traditionally been central to rhetoric is oratory, or as-
assertive and persuasive monologue. As a general theory of discourse, ‘the art of speaking’, rhetoric has acquired a much larger competence, and has come to absorb poetics as the theory of literary genres. Though it has been said that rhetoric was ‘poeticized’ through this association, its focus on oratory as monological-persuasive discourse has also worked in the opposite direction, resulting in a rhetoricized poetics.

The consequences are most notable in the realm of fiction. The distinction between fiction and nonfiction seems intuitively obvious, and must have been so as long as narrative fiction exists: without both the cognitive capacity for making it, and conventions for exploiting it, we couldn’t distinguish between fiction and lies or nonsense. Even so, fiction has remained a philosophically thorny subject. Difficulties arise as soon as we try to draw clear borders, or try to explain what fiction is in terms of something else.¹⁰⁴ Even though the distinction seems fundamental, as a matter of black and white, this does not imply that there can be no shades of grey. Though we may tend to demand of nonfiction that it is ‘pure’, fiction would be unthinkable without a realistic basis – a kind of ‘truth’.

Despite its long history, and its prominent, if not dominant role in literary art, the concept of fiction has not become easily integrated into aesthetic discourse; nor has it got the attention it deserves in the history of aesthetics. The latter might be a consequence of the former: if we write the history of aesthetics in its own terms, as a paraphrase of aesthetic texts, the problem of fiction may not even surface at all. This doesn’t justify ignoring it in retrospect.

An explanation for this hesitant entry of the problem of fiction in aesthetic theory could be that the rhetoricization of poetry had reduced fiction to an ornament. It could be accommodated as a minor feature of poetry, which was defined primarily by the formal characteristic of versification. For Aristotle, this was an incidental feature: put Herodotus’ Histories into verse, and it is still history.¹⁰⁵ Distinctive is that poetry is mimetic: it is a representation of discourse, not the thing itself. A stage actor may deliver a fiery piece of oratory, but as an act of persuasion this is aimed at the other characters on stage, not at us, the audience. Though the concept of fiction has no precise equivalent in Aristotle’s Poetics, it is implied in his view of poetry as a representation of events that need not actually have occurred.¹⁰⁶

This fundamental difference between the poetic genres and oratory seems not to have been fully appreciated even after the recovery of the Poetics in the early sixteenth century. Buffier’s Cours de sciences (1732) discusses rhetoric in a chapter titled Traité philosophique et pratique de l’éloquence. Eloquence, or “speaking well”, is any method of

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¹⁰⁵ Aristote, Poetics 1451b1.
¹⁰⁶ Halliwell in Aristotle and Halliwell (1987: 72): “[…] Ar. implies what can best be described as the fictional status of works of mimesis: their concern with images, representations, simulations or enactments of human life, rather than with direct claims or arguments about reality”.

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“impressing upon the minds of other people the sentiments we choose”: the distinctions between eloquence, persuasion and oratory have collapsed. Buffier defines poetry as “a very lively kind of eloquence, in which verse is used instead of ordinary language, and fiction instead of reasoning”, aimed at “creating the impressions of feeling that the poet intends […]”. Both verse and fictionality are distinctive; but versification is the more stringent criterium, because the word poème is used more readily for nonfictional verse, than for works in prose.

In Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776), oratory in the traditional sense is little discussed, and ‘rhetoric’ is, despite the title, a term he seems to avoid. He prefers to speak of ‘eloquence’, defined as “that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end”; more emphatically, it is “the grand art of communication, not of ideas only, but of sentiments, passions, dispositions, and purposes”. Poetry “is properly no other than a particular mode or form of certain branches of oratory”, which has the aim of pleasing and moving (delectare and movere). He acknowledges that versification is merely an “appendage” of poetry; what is distinctive is its fictional nature. This, however, too falls within the province of the orator:

[…] to delight the fancy as in epic, or to move the passions as in tragedy, is avowedly in part the aim, and sometimes the immediate and proposed aim, of the orator. (Campbell 1819: 8.)

For Campbell, fiction is not simply excused for being untrue. The truth of fiction is of a higher generality, “regarding character, manners, and incidents”. What is literally untrue, may exemplify truth at a higher level of abstraction.

As noted before, Kant includes rhetoric with poetry among the ‘arts of speech’, and discusses both within the context of aesthetics. It allows him to make the comparison, odd from today’s perspective, between poetry and political speeches. Both the appreciation of art and citizenship however are based on the ability to make up one’s mind freely; hence the uncommonly temperamental outburst in his famous-notorious footnote:

Fluency (Beredtheit) and eloquence (Wohlredenheit) (together rhetoric) belong to fine art; but oratory, as the art of abusing people’s weaknesses for one’s own purposes (however well these may be intended, or really be), is not worthy of any respect at all. (Kant 1977b: 431; my transl.)

107 “[…] tout ce qui sert à imprimer dans l’ame des autres, les sentimens qu’il nous plaie, peut s’appeler éloquence […]”. (Buffier 1732: 300 )
108 Buffier (1732: xii, 421, 424).
109 Campbell (1819: 15, 8).
110 Campbell (1819: 57).
112 In conversation with Eckerman, Goethe applauded Kant’s discussion of oratory. About the term schöne Re-dekünste he wrote in Noten und Abhandlungen zum West-östlichen Divan (1819): “Durch jene von uns gerügte
In his condemnation of oratory, Kant focuses upon its strategies and effects, but ignores the fact that its purpose, or the very fact that it has a purpose (even if under the pretense of a “mere play with ideas”, §51), precludes the disinterested attitude which belongs to aesthetic appreciation. One might say that Kant here has missed an obvious point that Batteux, a superficial Popularphilosoph and a teacher of rhetoric, had made clear when he excluded eloquence from the fine arts, on the grounds that it does not have ‘pleasure’ (a cruder version of ‘disinterested interest’) as its primary purpose.

This does not resolve the issue of fictionality. Batteux’ definition of the fine arts depends on two criteria: what distinguishes them from other arts is their pleasurable, non-utilitarian purpose; internally they are defined (réduits) by the principle of mimesis or representation, in Batteux’ terms ‘imitation of beautiful nature’.

Factual discourse (say, a history book or an article on physics) is about certain facts of the world, and in this sense ‘represents’ a part of reality; but because this entirely depends upon the conventional signification of language, without any relation of likeness or similarity, it is not mimetic representation. Aristotle’s poetic mimesis is focused upon drama, because the actors’ performance is a simile of what they represent. (In epic Aristotle prefers dramatic speeches over the narrator’s voice, which he considers non-mimetic.) Batteux’ concept of imitation lacks this aspect of mimesis, since nonfictional discourse (“eloquence”) too is said to imitate nature. What distinguishes poetry from eloquence is that it imitates (represents) not nature as such, but “beautiful nature”. Both genres however are sufficiently similar for eloquence to “borrow” devices that belong to the domain of poetic beauty (the occasional similarities between Batteux’ and Kant’s formulations might be non-accidental). For poetry, beauty belongs to its essence; in eloquence, it is merely instrumental.

[…] in poetry or sculpture, when the subject is taken from history or society, the truth of the model is no excuse for a poor work; what we expect from them is not truth, but beauty […]. (Batteux 1747: 49, 46; my transl.)

In this way we see the fictional element piggybacking on beauty: by imitating nature under its aspect of beauty, the poet is bound to the verisimilar rather than to truth. Unlike the orator and the historian, he is supposed to make up his models, even “without bothering with reality”.

The orator’s task is to say what is true in a credible manner, with persuasive force and simplicity. The poet’s task is to say what is verisimilar in a pleasing manner, with all charming grace and astonishing energy.


113 For Aristotle, mimesis distinguished the mimetic arts from other arts (cf. Kivy 2012: 68). On the meaning of belle nature, see Young in Batteux (2015: xix-xxi).

114 Aristotle, Poetics 1460a5.
Neither the orator nor the historian create anything; they only need a talent for discovering what their subject really looks like, without adding anything or taking anything away; they scarcely dare to make some occasional rearrangement; while the poet creates his own models, without bothering with reality. (Batteux 1747: 48-9; my transl.)

This leads Batteux to his main conclusion about the distinction between poetry and oratory or prose: poetry is assimilated with both verse form and the imitation of beautiful nature, eloquence with regular prose:

If therefore we want to define poetry in contrast to prose or eloquence, which I here consider to be the same, we should always say that poetry is an imitation of beautiful nature expressed in verse; and prose or eloquence is nature itself expressed in ordinary language. (Batteux 1747: 49; my transl.)

It is not clear, however, what Batteux here understands by ‘nature’. It might be ‘life’ or ‘reality’ (or Aristotle’s ‘human actions’). However, when Batteux grants that poetry may lend eloquence its devices, he speaks of this as “art serving as the model for nature”. This makes more sense if rhetorical ‘nature’ is speech itself: the act of speaking, rather than what is spoken about. Poetry (art), with its fictional ‘embellishment’, becomes the model for ordinary speech (nature).

It was art which then served as the model for nature. This often happens, but on one condition, which must be regarded as the essential basis and fundamental rule of all the arts: which is that in the utilitarian arts, embellishment assumes the character of necessity itself; it all must be there to meet a need. (Batteux 1747: 45-6; my transl.)

In this way, too, it makes sense that poetry is “an imitation of beautiful nature in verse”: for what we can ‘imitate’ in words is not situations and events (which we can only describe), but words, or discourse, acts of speech. Whether this is what Batteux had in mind is doubtful. His distinction between fiction and nonfiction is too much messed up with that between verse and prose; for him the novel, or fictional prose, and nonfictional verse are mixtures and “quirks designed to break the rules.”

There are poetic fictions which show themselves in the simple garb of prose: these are novels and everything of that sort. In the same way, there are real subjects which appear dressed up and adorned with all the charms of poetic harmony: these are didactic and historical poems. But these fictions in prose and verse narratives are neither pure prose nor pure poetry: it is a mixture of the two kinds which definition must ignore; they are quirks designed to break the rule. As exceptions they do not affect the principles at all. (Batteux 1747: 50-1; my transl.)

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115 Young (Batteux 2015: 24) translates: “[...] poetry is an imitation of belle nature expressed in rhythmic language. Prose or eloquence is the imitation of ordinary reality by ordinary language”.

116 The ut pictura poesis doctrine, attributed by misquotation to Horace, taught that poetry ‘depicts’ nature (Braider 1999). This was also Batteux’ belief (1747: viii). Cf. Muns (2021).
As Batteux recognizes, in poetic (fictional) genres truth is not a primary requirement. From this we might conclude that fiction cannot be genuinely persuasive: if we cannot credit it with any claim to truth, we will not blame the author for making things up; but neither will it be able to influence our conduct.

This has been stated with a kind of fundamentalist rigour by Adam Smith, who held lectures on *Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* between 1748 and 1763. Smith had a critical attitude towards the classical authorities of rhetoric, and particularly those textbooks – “a very silly set of books” – that provide endless “divisions and subdivisions” of the rhetorical figures. Despite his critical view of the rhetorical tradition, his view of literature is more determined by the model of oratory than that of most of his contemporaries. The novel and romance are criticized as a genre in which only novelty and suspense counts. Since narrative fiction has but one purpose: to entertain, it is irrelevant whether what is told is true or not. But since we can only learn from facts, fiction cannot help us in guiding our actions; it therefore lacks a properly persuasive function.

A well contrived Story may be as interesting and entertaining as any real one: [...] but still as the facts are not such as have really existed, the end proposed by history will not be answered. The facts must be real, otherwise they will not assist us in our future conduct, by pointing out the means to avoid or produce any event. Feigned Events and the causes contrived for them, as they did not exist, can not inform us of what happend in former times, nor of consequence assist us in a plan of future conduct. (Smith 1983: 91.)

Unlike Smith, most philosophers and rhetoricians thought that fiction could be accommodated under rhetoric with its persuasive function intact. It did not lack truth; but it was truth in disguise.

When it is merely an element within a non-fictional framework, fiction can serve as allegory, metaphor, or illustration. It is a rhetorical commonplace that people are more easily persuaded by concrete examples than by abstractions. In that way, as a hypothetical, imaginary example, fiction may be a helpful device in argument.

’Tis difficult for us to withhold our assent from what is painted out to us in all the colours of eloquence; and the vivacity produc’d by the fancy is in many cases greater than that which arises from custom and experience. (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739; 2007: 84)

‘Vivacity’, the word used by Hume, is a rhetorical key concept. It is discussed by Aristotle as ἐνάργεια (enargeia), and is also known as hypotyposis, or, in Latin, evidentia. Aristotle recommends enargeia or vivid pictorial description as an effective technique to

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put something “before the eyes” of the listener. Moses Mendelssohn explains the concept as an evocation so full and vivid, that we feel as if we perceive through our senses what is merely described by words.

The means of making a speech sensitive (sinnlich) is to choose expressions that remind us of a multitude of characteristics all at once, so that we experience what is signified more vividly than the sign. In this way our cognition becomes perception. The objects are presented to our senses as if they were really there, and the lower powers of the soul are deceived by repeatedly forgetting the sign, and believing they behold the thing itself. According to this general maxim we must judge the value of poetic images, parables, and descriptions, and even of individual poetic words. (Mendelssohn 1761: 89; my transl.)

As a concept crucial to literary value and technique, ‘vivacity’ still figures under various names (such as ‘thick’ versus ‘thin’ representation) in contemporary theory; in fact, it belongs to the commonplaces of media and journalism. It may help explain the opinion held by many eighteenth-century authors, that the difference between oratory and poetry is not essential, but gradual, relating to the degree of vividness and pictoriality of the presentation. (As I suggested earlier, it may be gradual and yet essential.) An imaginary example may not be accurate in details, but it can help getting the message across if it is specific and emotionally appealing. From the rhetorical perspective, the untruthfulness of fiction seemed less distinctive than its ability to stimulate the imagination, and thus to contribute to its persuasiveness.

In German aesthetics, another, less obvious justification of fiction as truth-in-disguise has been proposed in metaphysical terms. In the rationalist tradition of the philosophers Leibniz and Wolff (and further back to Plato), ‘truth’ has a significance that is at once broader and much narrower than truth as ‘correspondence to facts’; truth is a state of order, harmony, and unity, which underlies the endless variety of phenomena. As a Wolffian rationalist, Baumgarten worked within the same framework. Truth can be grasped by the intellect at the highest level of abstraction; however, truth or beauty may also shine through in what we experience as sensitive beauty, a unity in the manifold of phenomena. Baumgarten agrees with Shaftesbury, “one of the most distinguished arbitrators in matters of taste among the English”, that “all beauty consists in truth, and […] even in poetry (Dichtung), where all is fiction (Erdichtung), truth reigns and constitutes the perfection of the whole”.122

Because the higher order of which all phenomena are merely reflections is truth, everything that falls within this order is true; and since everything that is logically

120 Aristotle, Rhetoric 1410b. It is uncertain whether energeia here spoken about can be equated with enargeia. What matters here is the traditional explanation.
122 Baumgarten (2007: 533, §556), my transl. Cf. Shaftesbury (2001 vol. 1: 89): “For all Beauty is TRUTH. True Features make the Beauty of a Face; and true Proportions the Beauty of Architecture; as true Measures that of Harmony and Musick. In Poetry, which is all Fable, Truth still is the Perfection.”
possible belongs to this order, what is logically possible is true. Actual reality is a subset of everything that is logically possible. Whatever belongs to a logically ‘possible world’ is therefore true, even if not factually true in the ordinary sense. Wolff explicitly related this to the novel:

Such a thing can also be explained with those fictional stories known as novels. If a narrative of this kind is arranged in such a way that we can find no contradiction in it, I can only say than it is possible that such things may happen. […] And in this way I must think of such a story as a narration of something that can take place in another world. (Wolff 1720: 307; my transl.)

In this way, fiction can be a cognitive tool. According to Baumgarten, it allows us to think “in a beautiful and sensitive manner” of true things that are not known from experience, as well as things that never happened but could have happened, of philosophical cosmogonies (“not even excluding that of Descartes”), ancient theogonies, mythology and sagas.

In this perspective, Baumgarten’s invention of aesthetics was primarily an attempt to raise the appreciation of poetic vivacity to a higher level, and thereby to release poetry and poetics from rhetoric.

From adding some vivid, fictitious detail in the description of a real case, to fictional case histories is not a big step. A somewhat bigger step is interpreting a whole novel as such a case history, an example which should serve the author’s implied argument or hidden moral. The novel was no doubt the genre that would fit a rhetoricized poetics least easily. Consequently, it has often been placed low in the hierarchy of genres.

In what is nowadays considered ‘literature’ in the ‘literary’ sense, the paradigmatic genres are no doubt narrative fiction (novels, short stories) and lyrical poetry. But before the romantic movement, ‘poetry’ included genres very different from what since has come to be seen as eminently ‘poetic’. Much poetry was didactic or philosophical, rather than lyrical and subjective. With narrative fiction or ‘romance’ at the bottom of the ladder, it may have been easier to classify fictionality not as a property that distinguishes literary art from non-art, but as a optional feature of discourse, an artistic element that may enhance the quality of regular, nonfictional discourse.

Adam Smith’s low opinion of the novel has already been noted. Hugh Blair gives

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124 Revived as a possible-worlds semantics of fictionality by Doležel (1998), who thinks of it as an alternative to mimesis.
125 Cf. Baumgarten (2007:489, §511) and Berndt (2020: 124), quoting Baumgarten (1735 §§51, 53): “The objects of such representations are either possible or impossible in the real world. Let the latter be called fictions and the former true fictions. […] Only true and heterocosmic fictions are poetic.”
127 This is an inversion of the thesis that aesthetics was developed out of a theory of the rhetorical example (Baeumler 1981: 210), which assumes the primacy of rhetoric. There was, obviously, poetics before Baumgarten’s aesthetics, and probably, poetry before there was rhetoric.
the novel a somewhat hesitant recognition: its value lies in its function as a vehicle for moral instruction.

There remains to be treated of, another species of composition in prose, which comprehends a very numerous, though, in general, a very insignificant class of writings, known by the name of romances and novels. These may, at first view, seem too insignificant to deserve that any particular notice should be taken of them. But I cannot be of this opinion.

In fact, fictitious histories might be employed for very useful purposes. They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for showing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious. The effect of well contrived stories, towards accomplishing these purposes, is stronger than any effect that can be produced by simple and naked instruction. (Blair 1839: 506)

Among German authors, Sulzer merely mentions, but does not discuss the novel (Roman) under Romanze. Johann August Eberhard’s Theorie der schönen Wissenschaften (1786) defines the novel only by what it is or has not:

An epic poem, the plot of which does not have the highest degree of aesthetic perfection, and in particular is not of a fantastic nature, nor of large or strong substance, or which does not contain characters of most dignified comportment, is the novel of recent times. (Eberhard 1786: 203; my transl.)

Johann Joachim Eschenburg, Brunswick professor of philosophy and belles lettres (schöne Literatur), has more appreciation for the particular qualities of the novel, favouring particularly British authors (he mentions Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Goldsmith, and Fanny Burney), and defending it on similar grounds as his Edinburgh colleague Hugh Blair: it may “refine our feeling, make us better acquainted with the world and human nature, and at the same time keep our minds innocently and pleasantly entertained” (Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften, 1789).128

The novel still causes some trouble of classification, because Eschenburg holds on to the basic distinction between poetry (in verse) and oratorial prose; as a prose genre, the novel is positioned between biography and history, but “can to a certain extent also be viewed as a poetic genre”.

That in the course of the eighteenth century the novel has become the prominent and multiform genre it still is, can be seen as an emancipation of fiction from the rhetorical appropriation of poetics. It gives independent status what is only an added feature under rhetoric, the fictitious case history – as had narrative fiction been doing centuries before, with the consequence however that it ranked low in the canon of genres.

Experimentation with a multiplicity of modes of discourse was one of the fea-

128 Eschenburg (1789: 338).
tures with which the novel subverted this hierarchy. The novel resists the rhetorical focus on monologue. Monological narration is just one option besides soliloquy, or interior, typically non-persuasive monologue, and dialogue or conversation.129 ‘Conversational rhetoric’ has no real presence in the classical tradition.130 An interesting mixture of modes of discourse is created in the art of letter writing, which, like conversation, reached a high level of cultivation during the eighteenth century. It tends towards soliloquy, because there is no audience present, and no direct response possible; and yet, by indirect response and its anticipation, something like a dialogue in slow motion can take place. This provided opportunities for the epistolary novel, which creates a fragmented fictional world wholly through the subjective perspectives of one or a few characters.

When the novelist chooses the monological mode, he may use it in an ironic play with rhetorical convention; particularly in the frequent, quasi-oratorial device of the narrator’s address to the reader. Since the narrator cannot be equated with the author (even if he pretends to be speaking in his own voice), we cannot be sure who’s talking, and whether he is serious. Any seemingly persuasive utterance will remain suspended in an undefined space between sender and receiver. In this realm of ‘free play’ even fiction’s rhetorical defence may be fictional.

This is how we could interpret the opening sentence of Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742), a quasi-nonfictional address to the reader, which rehashes the rhetorical commonplace about the usefulness of examples mostly in order to remind us of its triviality:

> It is a trite but true observation, that examples work more forcibly on the mind than precepts […]

… and later on that of allegory:

> […] I declare here, once for all, I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species.131

The narrator then proceeds to describe a character that has been alive “these four thousand years”, that “hath not indeed confined himself to one profession, one religion, or one country”; and in this way, turns the relation between truth (the general type) and fiction (the specific token) upside down.

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130 Cicero thinks (unlike Quintilian) that a rhetorical theory of speech should include conversation, but acknowledges that there are no precepts (Till 2004b: 146, cf. 296). “A theory of conversation was left to the philosophers. To this day there is no developed or theoretically well founded modern theory of the rhetoric of conversations” (Knape 2012: 11).

131 Fielding (1743 vol. 1: 1; vol. 2: 5).
4. Aesthetics and the Human Mind

When Baumgarten proposed the term ‘aesthetics’ for a new discipline in his *Meditationes* (1735) and unfinished *Aesthetica* (1750), he did not intend to invalidate and replace rhetoric. Aesthetics should be, in his view, a theory of the appreciation and value of (primarily) poetry. Writing in Latin, he took his examples from classical rhetoric and poetics, particularly Cicero and Horace. He did however change the system by positioning poetics and rhetoric on equal footing under aesthetics as their ‘mother’.\(^{132}\) He seems to have accepted as evident that the domain of aesthetics should include at least music and painting, besides poetry and oratory. It should therefore go beyond both poetics and rhetoric, offering principles of higher generality.\(^{133}\)

Baumgarten’s debt to rhetoric is a controversial issue.\(^{134}\) For Benedetto Croce, who may have had only superficial knowledge of his work, Baumgarten’s aesthetics was a conservative extension and generalization of rhetoric, “covered with the mould of antiquity and commonplace”.\(^{135}\) Frederick Beiser calls Baumgarten “a conservative revolutionary or a revolutionary conservative” in his relation to Wolffian philosophy, but does not relate his aesthetics to rhetoric.\(^{136}\) Stephanie Buchenau, on the other hand, argues (with reference to Dockhorn) that Baumgarten’s proposal in the *Meditationes* was effectively a rehabilitation of rhetoric; and it is this supposed rhetorical turn she calls “revolutionary”.\(^{137}\) If true, this rhetorical turn would make him a conservative, if not reactionary thinker. It would be an overstatement anyhow to maintain that Baumgarten’s summary proposal in his dissertation, or even his *Aesthetica*, defines “modern aesthetics”: the discipline owes its name, but only limited substance to Baumgarten. Above all the *Meditationes*, which contain quotations from Horace’s *Ars poetica* on nearly every page, are an attempt to apply the rationalist psychology of

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132 Baumgarten (2007:13, 855 (§§5, 834)).
133 Poppe (1907: 67, 69). *Aesthetica* §1 defines aesthetics as (among other things) *theoria liberalium artium*; §69 mentions “rhetoric, poetry, music etc.”; in §83 he enumerates the muses, as well as nature as object of aesthetic contemplation. Cf. Jäger (1980: 10-11). Beiser (2009: 120) thinks that Baumgarten “has no conception of the fine arts”, that he intends *artes liberales* “in its traditional sense to refer to all the skillful ways of using our higher intellectual powers”, and that a conception of the fine arts became common only after the publication of the *Aesthetica*. Given the fact that Batteux’ *Les beaux arts* was translated into German in 1746 this is unlikely. *Aesthetica* §4 has been interpreted as specifying philology, hermeneutics, etc. among the aesthetic arts (Franke 2018: 42), but these are domains to which aesthetics may be applied. It is unclear on what principle Baumgarten thought to include music; Buchenau (2013: 122, 232) attributes to him contradictory views, calling music both semantic and asemantic.

135 Croce (1922: 218).
137 Buchenau (2013: 135): “[…] far from originating in the emancipation from the rhetorical tradition, modern aesthetics results from a conscious return to and inversion of rhetoric” (meaning a turnaround of “the former negative perspective on rhetorics”, 232).
Leibniz and Wolff to a classicist poetics.

In his fully developed aesthetics, however, Baumgarten goes beyond poetics by describing, in an analytic way, the nature of our engagement with works of art, particularly poetry, under the aspect of beauty. Though his analytical categorizing and the many postulated mental ‘faculties’ may look somewhat esoteric nowadays, what is most novel and interesting is the psychological focus of his system, or its “fundamentally cognitive” nature. It would be a gross anachronism to interpret Baumgarten’s conception of ‘cognition’ in the sense it has nowadays in cognitive science; the latter is not so much concerned with cognition as the process of acquiring knowledge (in this case, of an objective realm of truth and beauty), as with processing information. But it would be a mistake to deny all similarity. In both senses, ‘cognition’ relates to mental processes, and to the question how the human mind is equipped to its tasks. This psychological focus has no precedent in rhetoric.

The key concept in Baumgarten’s aesthetics is cognition through sense perception or ‘sensitive cognition’ (cognitio sensitiva), in Greek: αἴσθησις (aisthesis). Following the philosophical tradition of Leibniz and Wolff, he thinks of the human mind as divided in intellect and senses; but, significantly, the latter are internal as well as external; the inner senses are specific mental capacities.

The mental faculty that is most generally responsible for sensitive cognition he calls ‘lower cognition’ (gnoseologia inferior) and ‘the analogue of reason’ (analogon rationis). This ‘analogue of reason’ is the instinct that guides both human and animal behaviour in making smart (rational) choices, without involving thought and abstract concepts. The intuitive knowledge we acquire through this faculty is not irrational and does not lack ‘clarity’, but it is indistinct or ‘confused’, because it is not fully conceptualized. When we respond to poetry with mental images, associations, and feelings, we do so without rational, critical and analytical considerations. Distinct conceptualization involves a process of abstraction, which belongs to the higher faculty of reason.

Aesthetics is not a philosophy of what we experience through perception generally, but of an experience that is geared towards ‘perfection’, that is, beauty, conceived as order or harmony, or unity in multiplicity. Beauty will become fully manifest (‘clear and distinct’) only in intellectual abstraction. Baumgarten followed Leibniz in stipulating that in the human mind the ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ faculties – reason and its ‘analogue’ – are not discontinuous. We may climb the scale of abstraction, from indistinct to distinct; but as we gain in intellectual insight, we also lose particularity and

139 Beiser (2009); Franke (2018:18); Buchenau (2013: 156-7).
140 In the Metaphysica, 4th ed. (§533) Baumgarten gives as German explanation of aesthetica “die Wissenschaft des Schönen” (Baumgarten 2007: xxvi). On Leibniz’ view of unity in multiplicity, see Cassirer (2009: 121-2).
vividness: “For what is abstraction, if not a loss?”.

The psychological significance of Baumgarten’s aesthetics has been evident to contemporaries. Already in the Meditationes (§116) Baumgarten has referred to psychology as a science which “affords sound principles” for aesthetics. Moses Mendelssohn, who in basic principles follows Baumgarten, thinks that “Every rule of beauty is at the same time a discovery in psychology”. According to the lesser-known Philipp Gäng (Aesthetik oder allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften, 1785), the basic principles of aesthetics “are almost completely interwoven with the first truths of psychology, and consequently no aesthetic doctrine could be properly developed without knowledge of those psychological concepts”.

In German rationalist philosophy, psychology was a branch of metaphysics, even though its ‘rational psychology’ was complemented with ‘empirical psychology’. Its empirical content was observation, mostly through introspection; and its method was essentially a practice of theorizing on the basis of words and concepts. Since it was primarily by means of conceptualization and language, rather than measurement and quantification, that the mind was studied, it would hardly qualify as scientific by present day standards. However, undogmatic conceptualization was a crucial stage in the establishment of psychology as a science, at a time when there was no clear distinction yet between ‘science’ and ‘philosophy’.

For Enlightenment philosophers, the human being was the next frontier, after the system underlying the physical world had – or so they thought – been revealed by Newton. With characteristic optimism, d’Alembert compares Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), as an “experimental [that is, empirical] physics of the soul”, with Newton’s achievements.

In short, he reduced Metaphysics to what in fact it should be, the experimental physics of the soul; a species of physics very different from that of bodies, not only as to its object, but by the way it is to be considered. In the latter we can discover, as we often do, unknown phenomena; in the first, facts as old as the world apply equally to all human beings: so much the worse for those who think they find any new. (Encyclopédie, Discours Préliminaire; my transl.)

More comprehensively than psychology, the newly developing anthropology studied the human being as a mental-physical whole, and with that mission presented a project “characteristic of the entire culture of the eighteenth century”. Though the term ‘anthropology’ seems to have been limited to German philosophers and ‘philosophical physicians’, these have much in common with the British (particularly

142 Baumgarten (1750: 363, §560).
145 Cassirer (2009: 353), with ref. to Meier (1754 vol. 1: 25, §15): “Die schönen Wissenschaften beleben den ganzen Menschen”. In particular, they make the closet scientist more human.
146 It is recorded with the appropriate sense in Chambers (1741, Anthropology): “[…] a discourse, or treatise upon
Scottish) philosophers whose interest was in human nature. By analogy with the body, the study of the mind could be seen as a kind of ‘anatomy’,\textsuperscript{147} or, as David Hume called it, a ‘mental geography’. The metaphor implies that specific mental functions, powers or ‘faculties’ can be distinguished with their individual regularities, and possibly, their instantiation in the brain.

The concept of mental faculties has a long history in philosophy and folk psychology. It would indeed be difficult to speak of human behaviour without implicitly stipulating such mental functions as sense perception, conscious thought, intuition, desire, imagination, emotions, and so on; all of which seem to imply, in some sense, a compartmentalization of the mind. What Hume emphasizes in his \textit{Enquiry} (1748) is that ‘real and certain’ distinctions can be made between these faculties, and that charting this ‘geography’ is a serious scientific task.

It cannot be doubted, that the mind is endowed with several powers and faculties, that these powers are distinct from each other, that what is really distinct to the immediate perception may be distinguished by reflection; and consequently, that there is a truth and falsehood in all propositions on this subject, and a truth and falsehood, which lie not beyond the compass of human understanding.

This task of ordering and distinguishing, which has no merit, when performed with regard to external bodies, the objects of our senses, rises in its value, when directed towards the operations of the mind, in proportion to the difficulty and labour, which we meet with in performing it. And if we can go no farther than this mental geography, or delineation of the distinct parts and powers of the mind, it is at least a satisfaction to go so far […]. (Hume 2014: 10-11)

As a mere categorization of functions, this ‘geography’ need not imply that the faculties are physiologically real, and reducible to specific areas in the brain. As critics have maintained since antiquity, however, it is all to easy to ascribe each and every kind of behaviour or capacity to a ‘faculty’; such labelling does not explain anything.\textsuperscript{148} Without classification, however, empirical study has nothing to work with. It makes sense to ask the question: what basic mental functions, and therefore capacities are involved in behaviour such as riding a horse, reading a story, or listening to music?\textsuperscript{149} Clearly, most of these are quite complex and non-basic; others, such as our (biologically exceptional) sense of rhythm are highly specific. Conceptualization of such functions necessarily precedes experiment. The comeback of faculties in mod-
ern psychology and cognitive science has cast a more favourable light upon Enlight-
enment speculations in this direction.

What we can conclude is that aesthetics, in its early stages, evolved in a psycholo-
gical context of cognitive capacities. Since these were of the ‘lower’ order of percep-
tion and intuition, they had a ‘cognitive’ function significantly different from that in
the rational-epistemic sense. Aesthetics thereby broadened the scope of philosophy
into the domain of the intuitive and preconceptual, and contributed to the anthropo-
logical study of the human being as an essentially mental-physical whole.

4.1. The Philosophy of Taste

Beyond Baumgarten’s system, the core concept of Enlightenment aesthetics that
could be interpreted as a psychological faculty was ‘taste’ (gusto, goût, Geschmack); and
‘the philosophy of taste’ was the international equivalent for what the Germans
called Ästhetik. According to Joseph Addison (On the Pleasures of Imagination, 1712),
taste is “that faculty of the soul, which discerns the beauties of an author with pleas-
ure, and the imperfections with dislike”. 150 Given its present-day association with old-
fashioned, socially conditioned ideas of ‘good’ versus ‘bad taste’, this metaphoric use
of the word may seem not very promising as a psychological concept. For a while,
however, it could assume the role of a speculative mental faculty for intuitive, non-ra-
tional, but not entirely subjective judgment, regarding the important and non-arbit-
rary matters of beauty and morality.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that our basic moral and aesthetic instincts are
universally shared. At least within our cultural horizon, we tend to converge on ca-
nonical instances of beauty, and there is broad agreement about the beauties of
nature. An explanation, however vague, would be that such judgment is rooted in
some mental disposition, inner ‘sense’, ‘sentiment’, or ‘feeling’, which is part of hu-
man nature, and, like the physical senses, is specialized for its function, unlike the
supposedly general faculty of reason. 151

Since it is obvious that intuitive judgment plays an important part in the appreci-
ation of works of art (however ‘art’ is understood), the concept of taste can hardly
have been a complete novelty. It is not surprising therefore that Dubos (1719) follows
the lead of Cicero in his belief that uneducated audiences have an unerring intuitive
judgment in matters of art.

The public gives not only a disinterested judgment of a work, but judges likewise
what opinion we are to entertain of it in general, by means of the sense, and ac-
cording to the impression made thereon by the poem or picture.

150 Addison and Steele (1853: 20).
151 Cassirer (2009: 304).
Wherefore the public is capable of judging right with relation to verses and pictures, without being acquainted with the rules of poetry and painting; for, as Cicero says, \textit{All men are capable of judging by the help of an inward sense, tho’ unacquainted with rules, whether the productions of arts are good or bad, and whether the reasons they hear be conclusive.\textsuperscript{152}} Dubos (1748 vol. 2: 237, 243).

The faulty translation in the quotation\textsuperscript{153} obscures the fact that Cicero’s confidence in the instinctive judgment of the uneducated public applies particularly to vocal (verbal-musical) performance; “because these [rhythms] are deeply rooted in our normal instincts, and nature has wanted no one to be entirely devoid of a feeling for such matters”.\textsuperscript{154} Hugh Blair quotes the same favourite passage in a footnote, noting all the same that “On the subject of Taste, considered as a power or faculty of the mind, much less is to be found among the ancient, than among the modern rhetorical and critical writers”\textsuperscript{155}.

As little as we should qualify Cicero as a psychologist on the basis of his ‘instinct’ or ‘inarticulate feeling’ (\textit{tacitus quodam sensus}), we should assume that whenever philosophers speak of ‘taste’ as a ‘faculty’, this has clear psychological implications. Dubos actually does not speak of ‘taste’, and his idea of aesthetic judgment remains psychologically superficial. For him, “the chief end of poetry and painting is to move us”; therefore, “the productions of these arts can be valuable only in proportion as they touch and engage us”.\textsuperscript{156} His aesthetics is therefore one of emotional response, and the relevant ‘inward sense’ is not taste, but \textit{sentiment}, also called the ‘sixth sense’, or simply ‘the heart’. We judge the likeness of a painting, sculpture, or piece of music with the relevant outward senses: sight and hearing. Their quality as a work of art is judged by its impact upon the ‘sentiment’.

The concept of taste as an inner sense was discussed mainly by British philosophers, and its development from Francis Hutcheson (1725) to Dugald Stewart (around 1800) can be described as “a progression in which mental processes play an increasingly important role”.\textsuperscript{157} Hutcheson opens his \textit{Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue} with the observation that “There is no part of Philosophy of more importance, than a just Knowledge of Human Nature, and its various Powers and Dispositions.” We may have pleasure in the impression we get from our senses, which are simple or one-dimensional: form and colour from the eyes, sound from the ears. Our innate, inner sense for beauty enables us to receive pleasure from impressions that are complex. Clearly, the kind of explanation he seeks for our appre-

\textsuperscript{152} Cicero, \textit{De oratore} III 195. Dubos’ next quotation from Quintilian (\textit{Inst. or.} 6.3.6) is completely misplaced: Quintilian specifically speaks of the difficulty of cracking jokes.

\textsuperscript{153} Ratio here means either proportion or rule, not reason. The English of 1748 here follows the French.


\textsuperscript{155} Blair (1839: 11).

\textsuperscript{156} Dubos (1748 vol. 2: 237).

\textsuperscript{157} Kivy (2003: 220).
ciation of beauty is in terms of the workings of the mind.\textsuperscript{158}

Among German authors, Sulzer calls taste, or the ability to experience beauty, a basic faculty alongside reason and the moral sense (Gefühl). Since beauty has objective existence, the ability to recognize it must be “a faculty which is really present in the mind, and is distinct from all others”.\textsuperscript{159} At this point his psychology becomes confused, since reason, taste, and the moral sense are in essence the same faculty, applied to different objects; this is the ability to recognize perfection in any of the three areas of truth, beauty, and goodness. “The same dispositions which give access to reason, also guide towards taste and towards the moral sense.”

Andreas Heinrich Schott, who explicitly rejects rhetoric as the basis for literary education, proposes psychology as the necessary alternative. Criticism of art is based on the judgment of taste, which should be understood in psychological terms.

If we cannot rely on mere appearance, mere arbitrariness, and deceptive feelings, we will have to derive the rules and explanations of criticism from the nature of the human soul and trace them back to the inner sense! These psychological investigations will not directly result in practical application and formation of taste, but they will help in the creation of a more solid scientific foundation for the criticism of taste, in a reliable assessment of works of art, and in improving the knowledge of beauty (schöne Erkenntnis). (Schott 1789: xviii; my transl.)

In the 1770’s Kant thought that psychology had grown enough in substance to be viewed as a counterpart to physics, and therefore should be established as an academic discipline.\textsuperscript{160} Part of Kant’s aesthetics is contained in his anthropology, which is largely coextensive with empirical psychology. Both his Critiques and the Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht (1798) are based upon a mental ‘anatomy’ of the faculties of cognition, feeling, and desire. But it has always been a matter of debate how much psychology is actually contained in the transcendentental Critiques, which go beyond psychology in the attempt to define the limits of what the human mind can achieve in secure knowledge.\textsuperscript{161}

After Kant, the German Idealists have turned away from the concept of taste as a psychological entity, and made aesthetics a strictly non-empirical subject. Friedrich Schelling’s lectures on the philosophy of art (Philosophie der Kunst, 1802-1805) set the tone of an outspoken anti-Enlightenment, anti-empirical philosophy of art:

In the period immediately before Kant, when shallow popularity and empiricism dominated philosophy, those well-known theories of the fine arts and sciences were constructed, which were based on the psychological principles of the English

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{158} According to Kivy (2003: 36-7), who is rather hostile to faculty psychology, the fact that we have (according to Hutcheson) “an innate, internal, implanted sense of beauty” means no more than “that sometimes we enjoy things (in a special way) with nothing else in view”. This seems to me a reduction to meaninglessness.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{159} Sulzer (1771, Geschmak).
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{160} Vidal and Brown (2011: 4-5, 98-9).
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{161} Cf. Hatfield (1992); Kitcher (1994: 7-8); Gundlach (2012); Frierson (2014); Falduto (2016).
\end{flushright}
and French. Philosophers tried to explain the beautiful in terms of empirical psychology, and gave the wonders of art the same treatment as they did in those days to ghost stories and other superstitions: enlightening and explaining away. Fragments of this empiricism are still found in later writings, even if these are conceived according to a better view. (Schelling 1859: 362; my transl. xvi)

In the idealist alternative, the human being is a spiritual, rather than a mental-physical being; ‘the Absolute’ and ‘genius’ replace the mental faculties as explanatory notions. According to my entire view of art, it is itself an effluent of the Absolute. The history of art will most clearly reveal to us its immediate relations to the conditions of the universe, and thereby to that absolute identity, which contains their predetermination. It is only in the history of art that the essential and inner unity of all works of art reveals itself, that all are the poetry of one and the same genius, which even in the contrast between ancient and new art merely shows itself in two different forms. (Schelling 1859: 362; my transl. xvii)

Since then, aesthetics has been more of a metaphysics of art than a psychology of the aesthetic experience, often obscuring its original inclination. Ernst Cassirer’s emphatic recognition of the psychological nature of eighteenth-century aesthetics in his Philosophie der Aufklärung (1932), by contrast, appears refreshingly insightful:

Psychology and aesthetics now enter into so intimate an alliance that for a time they appear to be completely amalgamated. (Cassirer 2009: 298).

This insight however met with a firmly entrenched, and retrospectively active antipsychologism. Revealing is the evaluation of Baumgarten by Cassirer’s younger colleague Alfred Baeumler, in a still highly regarded study of 1923:

The actual as well as historical significance of Baumgarten’s theory of beauty is grounded not least in its unpsychological character. It is an aesthetics of the work as a more objective entity, not an aesthetics of effect. (Baeumler 1981: 228; my transl., my emphasis.)

A characteristic assumption is here implicitly made: that aesthetics can only be psychological, if it is an aesthetics of effect (Wirkungästhetik). It betrays a view of psychology as an experimental science, limited to explanations in terms of stimulus and response. That may have been a consequence of the ‘experimental aesthetics’ introduced in the late nineteenth century, which was an ‘aesthetics’ in an un-Baumgartian, literal sense, dealing with sense impressions in a laboratory setting, instead of the appreciation of art. With the development of behaviourist psychology in the 1930’s, the rift between aesthetics and psychology has persisted. Complex mental processes that could not be registered and measured as outward behaviour did not qualify as scientific data. This is probably the reason why in 1938 Ludwig Wittgenstein thought

162 The ‘now’ does not refer to any specific date or event.
163 Cf. Beiser (2009: 137), for whom Baeumler’s Irrationalitätsproblem still is “one of the most brilliant works on eighteenth-century aesthetics”. See also n. 44.
that the very idea of psychological explanations for aesthetic experiences should be laughed away as a joke – “very funny indeed”.\textsuperscript{164}

With the advent of cognitive psychology, cognitive science and more recent techniques of neuroimaging, it is easier to appreciate late Enlightenment aesthetics as a study of human cognition, at least in intent.\textsuperscript{165} That it failed to fulfil its optimistic promise by radically altering its premises, is due to major changes which brought the Enlightenment to an end. In this process the demise of psychological-anthropological aesthetics coincided with that of rhetoric.

### 4.2 Old Affects and New Feelings

The psychological content of aesthetics is only partially defined by ‘taste’ as the human sense for beauty, and by sense perception as the realm in which beauty may be experienced. Another aspect is the emotional experience; and this involves a larger interface with rhetoric. As a practical and composite art, rhetoric has absorbed much wisdom that can be applied in its task of persuasion. Since persuasion always involves an emotional component, the study of emotions or affects, in Latin \textit{pathologia}, has in some way or another served rhetoric as a kind of applied psychology. In classical rhetoric, it is not an integral part of the system.\textsuperscript{166} In the seventeenth century, French rhetoricians had to deal with the challenge of Cartesian rationalism, which was hostile to persuasion as an art; persuasive force is not the result of any learned technique, but a natural consequence of the speaker’s own sincere conviction. This preference of ‘nature’ over ‘art’ has become an antirhetorical \textit{topos}, which could apply to the rational as well as emotional aspects of persuasion. Descartes (1637) attributes the greatest persuasive powers to “those who reason most cogently, and who best digest their thoughts, in order to make them clear and intelligible, […] even though they only speak Low Breton, and have never learned rhetoric”\textsuperscript{167}. It is applied to the spontaneity of true emotion by La Rochefoucauld (1678), when he ascribes the powers of oratory to the affects themselves, which lie in the command of “the simplest man”.

The passions are the only orators that never fail to persuade. They are like an art of nature whose rules are infallible; and the simplest man who has passion persuades better than the most eloquent person who has none. (Transl. after the French in Till 2004b: 106.)

Eloquence that is the spontaneous expression of emotional states is, however, not a

\textsuperscript{164} Wittgenstein (1972: 19). It is characteristic that Kivy (2003: 156, 250) rejects Hutcheson’s quasi-psychological, causal explanation of the experience of beauty (as caused by the perception of uniformity amidst variety) as “perverse” and leading “aesthetics astray”.

\textsuperscript{165} Cf. Currie et al. (2014).

\textsuperscript{166} HWR, \textit{Afftektenlehre}: “Affekterregung war die ganze Antike hindurch in der rhetorischen Praxis sehr wichtig, in der Theorie hingegen nicht oft”.

\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Discours de la méthode}, transl. after the French in Till (2004b: 300).
concept of classical rhetoric.\textsuperscript{168}

The difficulty of striking a balance between the Cartesian criticism of rhetoric, the classical authorities, and the emphasis on sincere emotion is visible in the most influential handbook of around 1700, Lamy’s \textit{l’Art de parler}. Despite its straightforward style and the confidence of its assertions, there is a lack of consistency even in the final revision. Lamy deals with persuasion specifically in the final part of his work, arguing that rhetoric is both the art of speech and that of persuasion; however, he goes on to claim that speech is inherently persuasive (“we have this intention whenever we speak”).\textsuperscript{169} This would imply that there can be no real distinction between both arts – contrary to what he had argued in the first editions: “Not all those who speak well know the secret of conquering the hearts, and of winning over those who do not share their sentiments: what is called persuading”.\textsuperscript{170} In fact, the distinction he implicitly makes is that between informal persuasion, as an element of all speech, and formal persuasion, or oratory (the terms \textit{l’art oratoire}, or \textit{oraison} are however not used).

Figures of speech are discussed as grammatical aspects of language, rather than as a device of oratory, because of their spontaneous, artless origin; they are natural signs that belong to “the language of the passions”.\textsuperscript{171}

The best book to study is one’s own heart, and it is foolish to look in the writings of others for what one finds in oneself. (Lamy 1998: 218, my transl.)

Their purpose is threefold: expressive, emotive (causing others to share our emotions), and persuasive – a function for which he uses the odd comparison of a soldier (the orator) and his weapons (figures). Elements of oratory have thus come to be included in the the informal art of speech; what remains for the later part on formal persuasion is only \textit{inventio} and \textit{dispositio}. This also includes a merely rudimentary \textit{pathologia}, a definition of a few emotions; Lamy refers to natural and moral philosophy (\textit{la Physique et la Morale}) as disciplines that should provide a better understanding.\textsuperscript{172}

In its conventional form, \textit{pathologia} consisted of a classification of the affects, and a coordination between those affects and certain rhetorical devices (such as the rhetorical figures). Such a \textit{pathologia} counts as a core element of the more conservative German seventeenth-century rhetoric, and is discussed in “voluminous treatises”, though the quality of this body of work has been disputed.\textsuperscript{173}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[169] Lamy (1998: 438).
\item[172] Lamy (1998: 492).
\item[173] HWR, \textit{Affektenlehre}: “Am Ende des 17. Jh. erlangt die A. eine erstaunliche Wirkungsbreite”. At the same time, it is said to be the beginning of a “Prozeß der Verlagerung der Affektenlehre aus dem Bereich der Rhetorik in die Philosophie”. Campe (1991: 117-8): “Obwohl gerade die Rhetorik des 17. Jahrhunderts ununterbrochen
\end{footnotes}
The German term *Affektenlehre* is more common as a translation for *pathologia* than its various English equivalents. It has been introduced only in the late nineteenth century, with applications to philosophy rather than to rhetoric; since then it has become prominent particularly through studies of Baroque music.¹⁷⁴ But, although the expression and arousal of affects was a matter of great concern to musicians of the Baroque, this has never taken the form of a *Lehre* or ‘doctrine’; according to Buelow, “in no instance in the seventeenth century can one find any writer who advocates or establishes a doctrine – that is, a set of rules – for expressing the Affections”.¹⁷⁵ Definitions of *Affektenlehre* in the musicological literature of the last century are “confused, frequently misleading, and at times grossly in error”.¹⁷⁶ This should have been a warning against the overenthusiastic use of borrowed concepts.

That the term *Affektenlehre* caught hold despite such a lack of historical justification, may be due to the fact that it corresponded to a perception of Baroque music as associated with a range of fairly static and stereotyped emotional states; it may be considered a kind of ‘silent doctrine’, or rather, shared practice. The Baroque has been astonishingly fertile in the creation of variable expressive patterns, which have in fact continued to be of service even until today – though they have never been the subject of comprehensive music-psychological study. They have a basis in certain obvious, natural relations between emotional states and their physiological expression, which in turn can be related to what we perceive as musical ‘movement’ of a certain kind (fast or slow, hectic or smooth, etc.). A list drawn up by Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg (*Kritische Briefe*, 1763), which remains musically rather abstract, purports to reproduce such a consensus about musical-emotional correlations (“All music teachers agree that …”): sadness is slow, with a “sleepy” melody, full of sighs; joy is vivacious, etc.¹⁷⁷

It is possible that despite the lack of a formal *Affektenlehre*, rhetorical *pathologia* has had an influence on the musical representation of emotional states as static, “rationalized emotional states or passions”.¹⁷⁸ Characteristic is the way Goethe has

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¹⁷⁴ According to a search in worldcat.org, the earliest book titles containing the word *Affektenlehre* are dissertations on Spinoza (1887), J. L. Vives (1893) and Hume (1904). It was first applied to music by A. Schering (1907), followed by H. Kretzschmar (1911).

¹⁷⁵ Buelow (1983: 396). The term occurs three times in Mattheson, but “Even in Mattheson’s unusual and inventive applications of the term we shall see that he too had no intention of associating it with a general theory of musical Affections” (ib.: 397).


¹⁷⁷ Marpurg (1763 vol. 2: 273-6).

spoken of the French dramatist Crébillon (1674-1762):

He treats the passions like playing cards that you can shuffle, play, reshuffle and play again, without changing them in the least. There is no trace of the delicate chemical affinity by which they attract and repel, unite, neutralize, separate and restore themselves and each other. (Letter to Schiller, 23 October 1799; Goethe 1990: 761; my transl.)

The contrast between the two metaphors, a pack of cards versus chemistry, seems to apply to rhetorical pathologia and the emerging empirical psychology. Goethe notes the suitability of such a treatment of the affects for “compositions of the second rank” (subalterne Compositionen), including opera. Indeed, as long as operatic dramaturgy relied on patterns of action and stasis on emotional high points (aria’s), stereotypes of the affects have continued to be effective.

Together with the rise of aesthetics, stereotyped, static affects gave way to a more fluid, variable, and individualized conception of emotions. This is the traditional view represented in Hoyt’s New Grove article on music and rhetoric:

A concern with the passions thus remained central to the later eighteenth century (and writers could thus still find rhetorical terminology useful), but the affections were no longer considered universal emotional states subject to codification according to rational principles. Instead, the passions were held to be highly changeable and uniquely individual, and the conventionalized representations of the affects found in earlier works began to seem stereotyped and unnaturally static. (NG, Rhetoric and Music)

An example of traditionalist, ‘card-shuffling’ Affektenlehre is the chapter in Gottsched’s Redekunst (1759) devoted to “arousing and dampening the passions” (Von Erregung und Dämpfung der Gemüthsbewegungen). Emotive devices are traditionally used to bring an oration to an effective conclusion. The orator must have knowledge of the human mind from both experience and moral philosophy (Sittenlehre); Gottsched refers however to Aristotle’s Rhetoric as the best source. He then proceeds to discuss a series of emotions individually: love, hatred, anger, pity, joy, sadness, fear, hope, shame, and regret. The theory however does not rise above platitudes (if you want to arouse hatred, show your listeners what imperfections a thing or person has …) followed by an example from Cicero or Demosthenes.

Baumgarten had intended to transform rhetorical pathologia into a pathologia aesthetica, but did not complete his work. His student Georg Friedrich Meier, who gave his teacher’s work a public resonance which Baumgarten’s own Latin Aesthetica lacked, was quick to produce a Theoretische Lehre von den Gemüthsbewegungen überhaupt (“Theory


The term pathologia aesthetica was first used by Baumgarten in his Metaphysico (1739), then by Meier in his Anfangsgründe (1754 vol. 1: 421), though not in the Theoretische Lehre; Van Hoorn (2004: 82).
of the Emotions Generally”, 1744), which is precisely such an aesthetic pathology. For Meier, the framework for a theory of the emotions is psychology, which he understands, like Wolff and Baumgarten, as a branch of metaphysics. Rhetoric and poetics have attempted to deal with the question how emotions are to be managed in works of art, but have failed to do so adequately. The task therefore falls to aesthetics.

Since the touching and pathetic is by far the greatest beauty of sensitive cognition and its beautiful representation, aesthetics must also demonstrate how this is to be obtained; consequently, it must treat in some way of the emotions. […] This science presents everything that an orator, a poet or any other aesthete (schöner Geist) has to observe relating to the emotions in the beautiful works of his art. This part of the theory of emotions has hitherto been dealt with partly in rhetoric and poetics, and experience teaches that those explanations are in various aspects still highly inadequate. (Meier 1759: 12-3; my transl.)

Meier follows rhetorical tradition by providing chapters on how to ‘arouse’ and ‘dampen’ emotions. His explications match those by Gottsched in triviality, while far exceeding them in length and also, since he avoids discussing specific emotions, in abstraction. Instead of answering questions such as: how should I arouse anger?, he provides tortuously worded rules such as: “if one wishes to induce an emotion in someone, the knowledge of the good and bad should be made very clear, vivid, or distinct extensionally”. Though he has little to offer instead, his avoidance of stereotyped affective states seems to make a decisive step away from traditional Affektenlehre.

An attempt to complement Kant’s critique of taste with an empirical psychology of aesthetics are the Ideen zur psychologischen Aesthetik (1793) by a youthful Heinrich Zschokke (who was at the time mainly known as an author of pulp fiction). It is based, in fact, on a thoroughly un-Kantian premise of Wirkungsaesthetik: “The fact that the artist wants to excite and communicate feelings (Empfindungen) through his work requires no proof at all”. Like Kant, but unlike some other contemporaries, Zschokke includes rhetoric among the fine arts. His “aesthetic pathology” looks back toward the rhetorical tradition by teaching “how sensations must be aroused, increased, diminished, suppressed, and designated”. Since those sensations however are not the traditional affects or passions, but various ways of experiencing beauty, the result is a singular aestheticized Affektenlehre without Affekte.

For Zschokke, an Affekt is an intense, but passing sensation of pleasure or displeasure, unlike a Leidenschaft, which is longer lasting an more absorbing, and must be

181 Meier (1759: 3).
182 Meier (1759: 273).
184 Zschokke (1793: 230).
banned from aesthetics.\textsuperscript{185} His use of the word \textit{Affekt} is however untypical of the age; after a peak around 1750 its use has been in steep decline.\textsuperscript{186} More frequent are \textit{Gefühl}, a weaker sensation of pleasure or displeasure, and \textit{Empfindung}, which for Zschokke is a feeling associated with imagination (\textit{Vorstellung}).

Such changes in the vocabulary reflect changes in the ways emotions are perceived and experienced. Old words acquire a new sense, and a few new words come into vogue for affective states which themselves may have had some novelty, at least in the way they were experienced and thought about. This Zschokke touches upon in a significant footnote, commenting on a quotation from Christian Garve:\textsuperscript{187}

Where we can still be original, says Garve, is in the more subtle observations of the inner qualities and dispositions of the human mind, of the way of thinking, of customs. – In this way some of the newer ones have become original by perceiving some new class of feelings, discovering hidden differences and shades of otherwise similar changes in the soul, exploring with greater precision the concepts that lay hidden in a complex idea or desire. […] Our poets are already a kind of metaphysicians, and necessarily so. A feeling which the ancients would have simply expressed with one word, they analyse into the sum of the individual movements from which it can be explained. (Zschokke 1793: 135; my transl.\textsuperscript{xx})

Subtler shades of feeling call for other terms than ‘passion’ and ‘affect’. Typical for the age are \textit{sentiment, sensibility, Gemüt, Gefühl, Empfindung}. The \textit{Empfindsamkeit} or Age of Sensibility was the period in which the poetic metaphysics of feeling Zschokke speaks of began to be practised: a period of mannerisms and affectation, but also of explorations into the emotional self, which have made a lasting mark on artistic expression. Characteristic are an enhanced subjectivity, introspective self-awareness, not only of feelings but feelings \textit{about} feelings, and, in accordance with the anthropological turn, an obsession with the physical signs and components of emotions.

Moses Mendelssohn (\textit{Über die Empfindungen,} 1755) went further than Meier, and with much greater clarity and sense of style, in interpreting a basically Baumgartian aesthetics of sensitive cognition in terms of feelings, emotions, and the concrete physical sensations which belong to them.

We would be unhappy, if all of our feelings (\textit{Empfindungen}) were at once brightened to clear and distinct ideas. Beauty is grounded, according all the philosophers’ verdict, in the indistinct representation of a perfection: pleasure and joy, even quiet satisfaction itself, are accompanied in the body by a sweet undulation of the blood and by various pleasant movements in the limbs, without which they would be nearly indifferent to us.

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\textsuperscript{185} Zschokke (1793: 259).\textsuperscript{186} https://www.dwds.de/wb/Affekt.\textsuperscript{187} Garve, \textit{Betrachtung einiger Verschiedenheiten in den Werken der ältesten und neueren schriftsteller, besonders der Dichter}. Orig. published in \textit{Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste} 10, 1770.
\end{flushright}
The benevolent Creator has not without cause given this obscure feeling a charm, not without cause invested every beauty with the ability to stimulate this feeling. Reason alone cannot make a being happy that itself is not all reason. We should feel, enjoy, and be happy. (Mendelssohn 1974: 34-5; my transl.)

Like its English cognate ‘feeling’, the German Gefühl became increasingly frequent, reaching a statistical high point shortly after 1800. Its evolution, from the physical sense of touch towards the mental, parallels that of ‘taste’. Both ‘feeling’ and Gefühl may signify something like intuitive understanding, which combines imagination and emotion (‘a feeling for …’); specifically, a moral or aesthetic feeling.

The rise of the novel (3.3) and the new psychology and anthropology of feeling have contributed to the creation of the ‘psychological novel’, which has a remarkable example in Karl Philipp Moritz’ Anton Reiser (1785-6). As a meticulously introspective, partly autobiographical portrait, it is an exercise in applied empirical psychology or Erfahrungsseelenlehre. Moritz was cofounder of the first journal devoted to that subject, with the telling title “Know Thyself”, which could be understood as a call to introspection. Its mission was the collection of data and case histories (“facts, no moral title-tattle”), a practice which frequently crosses over into literary writing. As a new kind of pathologia, it should help the poet and novelist prepare properly for their work:

From the combined reports of several careful observers of the human heart, an empirical psychology could come forth, which in practical value would far surpass anything that our ancestors have achieved in this field.

[…] pious repetition and copying in works of the intellect will come to an end, and the poet and novelist will see the need to study empirical psychology before trying to work out his own ideas. (Moritz, Vorschlag zu einem Magazin einer Erfahrungs-Seelenkunde (1782), transl. after the German in Kosenina 2016: 33, 35)

It should not go unmentioned that Anton Reiser contains some of the most enthusiastic evocations of pulpit oratory, and of the profound effect it may have upon a young and oversensitive mind, for whom the church was his only access to something like artistic performance.

And now, as he started, what a voice, what expression! – At first slowly and solemnly, and then faster and in a stronger flow: as he penetrated his subject more

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189 Gottsched (1760: 760) (Geschmack); Dubost, Gefühl, in Cassin (2014: 359); HWP, Gefühl; Campe (1991: 385). “For Goethe in particular, Gefühl is at the source of any discovery and any truth. It is similar, then, to the immediacy of Anschauung, or ‘intuition’—which is, even more, the dimension of genius”.

190 ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ oder Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde (1783-1793).

deeply, the flame of eloquence began to flash in his eyes, to breathe from his chest, and to spray sparks right into his fingertips. Everything about him was in motion; his facial expression, posture and gestures transgressed all the rules of the art, and yet they were natural, beautiful, and irresistibly compelling. (Moritz 2014: 67; my transl.

The force of the pastor’s expressive-emotional persuasion breaks the rules of art; and yet, his performance is not a straightforward triumph of emotional nature over rhetorical art: it is natural and beautiful in spite of breaking the rules. Untamed eloquence will transcend any codification; but maybe that’s the ultimate rule of the art.

5. Attractions and Repulsions

There seems to be a double irony hidden in the parallel histories of aesthetics and rhetoric. Aesthetics started out as something rhetoric has attempted to become only recently: as a branch of anthropology. It ceased to be that precisely when it had almost eclipsed rhetoric, transforming itself into a rather marginal branch of speculative philosophy. The completion of the shift from rhetoric towards aesthetics coincided with a transformation of aesthetics itself, changing its focus from the human being towards art.

What relevance does all of this have for musical life of this period? Unless we believe in some kind of Zeitgeist, it is not obvious how the opinions and ideas voiced in printed sources from northern Germany, Paris, England and Scotland have influenced musicians and music lovers outside, or even within these regions. In retrospect, Vienna is recognized as the main musical centre of the late eighteenth century, but it is totally unrepresented in philosophical discourse. The only thing we can determine with certainty, is that a certain range of ideas was available, and that certain dogma’s could be doubted. It is equally clear, on the other hand, that those who lived in this period were not caught in some kind of rhetorical mind-set. We have little evidence about the schooling of individual musicians – Haydn learnt some Latin, and presumably rhetoric at school; Mozart didn’t go to school, and his Latin seems to have been rudimentary; Beethoven probably did not complete grammar school. We know even less about what any rhetorical knowledge they had may have meant to them. However, there is no reason to assume that school knowledge was valued more in adult life than it is now, generally speaking.192

Maybe the least expected conclusion that can be drawn from these source studies, is that there seems to be little evidence for a direct confrontation between rhetoric and aesthetics as competing disciplines. Among the disputes that entertained the intellectual world, none has produced prize essays on the question Whether Rhetoric and

192 Traces of rhetorical composition that may be found in formal letters, even if substantial, have no obvious relevance for creative work. Cf. Sisman (2007: 282); Hoyt (1997: 280).
Aesthetics Are Competing Disciplines, And If So, Which One Is the More Appropriate Framework for Understanding the Fine Arts. Even Kant, in his denunciation of oratory and praise of poetry, does not speak of aesthetics as rhetoric’s competitor or successor.

Maybe it is not so surprising that the shift as such was not a subject of debate. Aesthetics has not been conceived in opposition to rhetoric, but as a generalization over both rhetoric and poetics. Rhetoric was a propaedeutic school subject, whereas aesthetics has always been a branch of philosophy. The shift was not a confrontation between an old and a new theory of the same subject, but a gradual change in perspectives and disciplinary borders. Aesthetics could include rhetoric, in the view of some authors, but only by reducing the centrality of oratory.

A controversy that involves an outspokenly anti-aesthetic stance is the famous dispute in the 1740’s between Gottsched and the Swiss literary critics Bodmer and Breitinger, who had Baumgarten’s disciple Meier on their side. The issue however was not the relative merits of rhetoric and aesthetics, but preferences of style and the boundaries of poetic beauty. For the classicist Gottsched, ‘aesthetic’ came to stand for ‘obscure’, ‘pompous’ and ‘mystical’, qualities he associated with his adversaries’ idols Milton and Klopstock. In his dictionary of the arts (Handlexicon, 1760) he defines ‘aesthetic’ as “a new-fangled term, signifying pompous or, as lovers of the turgid literary style call it, sensual expression”. Of aesthetic theory Gottsched seems to have had only very dim notions. What excited his wrath was the Baumgarten-Meierian term sinnlich – ‘sensitive’, misinterpreted as ‘sensual’. In substance however, he thinks aesthetics is nothing but the old and respectable (untadelige) rhetorical theory of tropes and metaphor, sold under a new name.

Gottsched’s hostility towards aesthetics found some resonance among classical philologists. An article from 1789 by Johann Michael Heinze, a school rector in Weimar, calls aesthetics “a deficient, botched, and in some aspects exaggerated rhetoric”, which actually comes down to “the two chapters on the tropes and figures; and it is more of a rhetorical metaphysics of these parts than truly useful rhetoric”. Though this sounds like an echo from Gottsched, Heinze cites Johann August Ernesti, rector of the Leipzig Thomasschule, who has been grouped among the ‘neohumanists’ (a term which dates from the late nineteenth century). It seems that these neohumanists saw aesthetics as an inferior competitor of rhetoric.

194 Gottsched (1760: 49).
195 A satire titled Die ganze Aesthetik in einer Nuss, oder neologisches Wörterbuch was published in 1754 anonymously by Christoph Otto von Schönaich, an associate of Gottsched. Targeted at the enthusiastic style of Bodmer, Klopstock, and Haller, it does not satirize aesthetics as theory.
196 Transl. after the German in Hambsch (2007: 146).
197 Hambsch (2007: 146): “Sie alle [i.e. die Neuhumanisten] haben in der Tradition der humanistischen Metaphysikkritik die neue philosophische Disziplin abgelehnt. Die Ästhetik betrachteten sie entwicklungsgeschichtlich als metaphysizierte Rhetorik. Folgerichtig haben sie die Eigenständigkeit der Rhetorik als Disziplin dagegengesetzt.” Hambsch includes Ernesti’s predecessor in Leipzig, Johann Matthias Gesner, editor of Quintilian’s
In the broadest perspective, this conflict is a continuation of the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, with the ‘ancients’ confirming, once again, classical authority and rules-of-art, the ‘moderns’ advocating novel invention and restricted rational control. It was not so much a direct and transparent debate as an exchange of polemical attitudes, with a strong temperamental component. At least since the *Encyclopédie*, such polemics have continued to transpire in the nominally neutral art of lexicography; in that respect, the indirect dispute between NG and MGG is unexceptional. The following reference to “certain older humanists” in the brief article on *humaniora* in the *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexikon* of 1809 reads almost like the editor’s revenge on his school teachers:

It can hardly be denied that the old literature could contribute a great deal to the education of man, to the ennoblement of the human mind and heart: only it is certainly not unique in this, as certain older humanists would so much like to maintain; secondly, it is least able to do this, when it is carried out in the usual manner, in which it serves rather to dull the mind and heart. (my transl.)

5.1 Rhetorica pro rhetorica

It seems hardly possible to discuss rhetoric without being at least mildly passionate about it, negatively or positively. Any debate about this topic is likely to expose certain biases and personal dispositions; this has been the case since Plato’s quarrel with the sophists, and equally holds, no doubt, for my presentation of the ‘dispute’ in the opening chapter of this essay. However, if any involvement of ‘the passions’ would be an obstacle to scholarship, very little of value would ever be accomplished; it is always possible to keep some distance between one’s inclination and the method of research. What still needs attention, however, is precisely the way in which a positive bias has too directly influenced historiography, and particularly historical musicology, in the study of rhetoric.

Gottsched’s reduction of aesthetics to the rhetorical tropes and figures is an instance of a strategy which can also be identified in more recent scholarship. The conceptual resources of rhetoric are presented as so extensive, that they have always benefited other disciplines. Or the other way round: anything new can be traced to a rhetorical origin. One might call it a strategy of absorption: rhetoric is ‘ubiquitous’,

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198 See also the unusually combative entry on *Rhetoric* by Walde in Cancik et al., ed. *Brill’s New Pauly* (2006).
because everything that could potentially belong to its domain is rightfully hers.

This strategy can be identified in five types of arguments.

(1) ‘Language is rhetoric’. The thesis that language is rhetoric, or more accurately, that language is inherently rhetorical, can be attributed to Nietzsche, who lectured on rhetoric in 1872 as a philology professor in Basle. (That he had to be content with an audience varying between two and zero is a sign of the subject’s sunken reputation). With the catchphrase Die Sprache ist Rhetorik he summarized a sceptical argument against the view of language as a transparent relation between words and things, signifier and signified. Contrary to rationalist belief, language does not reflect the world of things and facts; there is no direct relation between a sign and an objective signified. Even what we perceive are not real, objective things, but sense impressions; what we communicate in speech is merely an ‘image’ (Abbildung) in sound of our perceptions (Empfindungen). Language is therefore expressive and persuasive, rather than purely assertory; it is more suitable for conveying opinions (doxa) than true knowledge (episteme).

There is no such thing as an unrhetorical ‘naturalness’ of language, to which one might appeal: language itself is the result of nothing but rhetorical tricks. The power which Aristotle calls ‘rhetoric’, the power of discovering and exploiting in all matters what works and makes an impression, is also the essence of language: for language relates no more than rhetoric to what is true, to the essence of things; it does not want to teach, but to communicate a subjective stimulation and assumption to others. […] That is the first point of view: language is rhetoric, because it only wants to transmit a δόξα, no ἐπιστήμη. (Nietzsche 1912: 149; my transl.)

There can, therefore, not be something like perfectly ‘plain speech’: the linguistic ideal that Locke opposed to rhetoric in the seventeenth century is unattainable.

Whatever merit this may have as a sceptical argument about language and epistemology, it must not be confused with the mistaken idea that classical rhetoric is a general theory of language or discourse, or that all questions of speech and text eo ipso belong to rhetoric.201 In recent musicorhetorical scholarship, that seems to have been the silent premise behind the assumption that any connection between music and language is evidence for the rhetorical nature of music.202

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201 Ueding and Steinbrink (2011: 9-10): “Die einzelwissenschaftlichen Interessen, die sich rhetorischer Theoriebildungen bedienen, sind so weit gestreut und trotz terminologischer Umformulierungen offensichtlich, daß hier einige exemplarische Hinweise genügen. Ihnen allen liegt die Erkenntnis zugrunde, daß jedes Wissen an Sprache gebunden ist und es kein Sprechen gibt, das sich rhetorischer Form oder Absicht entziehen könnte.” Similarly Ueding in HWR, Rhetorik, unter Schwundstufen der Rhetorik in den Einzelwissenschaften.

202 Krones (2009: 1938) goes even further by considering any kind of extramusical inspiration rhetorical: “Scheuring arbeitete hier schon heraus, dass noch Beethoven viele Einfälle aus außermusikalischen Vorstellungen bezog [...]."
It is striking that in all of antiquity, when rhetoric was not yet ‘classicized’ and music and poetry were closely connected as performance arts, no one seems to have spoken of music in rhetorical terms. Blake Wilson’s section on the Middle Ages and Renaissance in the NG’s *Rhetoric and Music* states that during the Middle Ages, “rhetoric exercised an influence […] at once pervasive and diffuse, and points of direct contact between rhetoric and music are consequently difficult to identify”. More significant traces appear around 1500; Krones (MGG) chooses 1599 as the end of what he calls the “emergence” of musical rhetoric. That effectively limits musical rhetoric to the Baroque, with an inordinate twenty centuries of mere preparation.

Language is not rhetoric, and verbal discourse has a much broader range than that of persuasive (and masculine!) monologue. Just like human beings learn the complex grammar of their languages without any conscious knowledge of grammar, they learn to converse in interactive practice. Classical composers, like their audiences and like us, had a practical, implicit understanding of language that far exceeds any formulated theory. They were familiar with a variety of formal and informal discourses which transcends the rhetorical canon. It would be odd to make our understanding of classical music dependent upon eighteenth century school grammar, informative though the experiment might be. It is no more imperative, on the basis of the linguistic analogy alone, that rhetoric should help us understand musical composition.

2. ‘If it is common sense, it is rhetorical’. This assumption is not explicitly stated, of course, but it appears to underly a practice of claiming fairly trivial ideas as specifically rhetorical heritage. As a practical art, classical rhetoric describes much of what any moderately gifted speaker will do according to his wits. Much rhetorical wisdom therefore belongs to what I.A. Richards has called “the usual postcard’s-worth of crude common sense”; …

… be clear, yet don’t be dry; be vivacious, use metaphors when they will be understood not otherwise; respect usage; don’t be longwinded, on the other hand don’t be gaspy; avoid ambiguity; prefer the energetic to the elegant; preserve unity and coherence. (Richards (1936: 8))²⁰⁵

Reduced to this common sense core, almost any artistic principle may become a mere reformulation of rhetorical lore. The unruly, subjectivistic aesthetics of the *Sturm und

²⁰³ Two cursory mentions of rhetoric from the fourteenth century are the first two state clearly “was seit den Anfängen der abendländischen Musikentwicklung, anschließend an die antike Musiktheorie, offenkundig war und nie angezweifelt wurde: daß die Musik selbst eine Art von »Sprache« sei und als solche rhetorischen Gesetzen zu gehorchen habe, desgleichen aber auch dieselben Hilfsmittel wie die (sprachliche) Rhetorik einsetzen könne.” (Krones 2016: 4).

²⁰⁴ Ong (1971: 14): “Rhetoric at its most impressive peak was heroic and masculinizing through its association with puberty rites. In the West, as several of the studies in this book will detail, the study of Latin had the characteristics of a male puberty ritual.”

Drang, that has long been seen as anti-rhetorical in intent, will simply be an application of the emotional effect strategy of persuasion. With some good will we may find rhetorical antecedents for any device, style, or aesthetic principle through Empfindsamkeit and romanticism. The result is a view of cultural history in which nothing is ever new.

3. Rhetorica contra rhetoricam. Just as the rebellious authors of the Sturm und Drang can be assimilated in the rhetorical collective, any critique of rhetoric can simply be classified as (seemingly self-refuting) anti-rhetorical rhetoric, particularly if it is well written. The argument confuses the theory with its subject matter, rhetoric with eloquence, and no critic of rhetoric (not even Kant) would want to exchange rhetoric for speaking badly.

This rhetorical defence is valid of the critic specifically attacks rhetorical devices while using them himself; in this way, it has been used against Hobbes’s and Lock’s rejection of metaphor. But when Vickers generalizes this to a “general truth”, “that those who attack rhetoric, or metaphor, invariably have to use rhetoric, and metaphor” he turns a valid argument into a fallacy similar to “if you don’t like fashion, you should stay naked”. The confusion of rhetoric and eloquence has been common at least since the early eighteenth century, possibly due to negative connotations evoked by ‘rhetoric’. Eloquence, as the rhetoricians have often claimed, is primarily a matter of natural talent, and someone who is naturally eloquent may not need rhetorical.

4. Confirmation bias. We may observe this in the process of gathering evidence to support the thesis (in this case, of rhetoric’s ubiquity), and of interpreting all data in the most favourable way, while ignoring or explaining away any evidence to the contrary. This is a flaw of method that may be hard to avoid in surveying a broad historical subject with selected samples of opinions (as I have done in the previous chapters).

It is particularly strong – amounting to tunnel vision – in the lexicon articles by Krones, where sources are cited without any evaluation of their intellectual merit or historical significance. In the same breath Schopenhauer is mentioned as a witness to rhetoric’s ubiquity (arguing that music is “an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the visible world” – not a rhetorical insight), along with Gustav Schilling’s musical dictionary, which has a reputation for superficiality and plagiarism. Krones quotes Schilling’s definition of musical rhetoric (“that science of the art of the musical composition, according to which individual melodic seg-

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206 Ueding and Steinbrink (2011: 115), with ref. to Dockhorn; critically Bornscheuer (2010: 13).
208 HWR, Rhetorica contra rhetoricam; Garsten (2009: 25).
ments are combined into a whole for a specific purpose”), without noticing that it is copied from the much longer lemma in Koch’s *Musikalisches Lexikon*, which is largely based on Forkel.

5. Conflationism. This word is not in the *Oxford English Dictionary*; I will claim it for the practice of conflating two theoretical perspectives which are actually mutually inconsistent. The parallel development in the last century of historical studies and anthropological rhetoric, which may incorporate some traditional elements, seems to have stimulated a view in which the historical discipline acquires the timeless features of the recent one. In this way, the restricted ‘ubiquity’ of rhetoric, which ties it to the humanist tradition, becomes its ‘unrestricted ubiquity’, which implies, basically, that where there are people, there is talking; and wherever there is talking, there is rhetoric. The result is a kind of a-historical historicism.

Methodological reflection has not been a strong factor in the musicological revival of rhetoric. A rare exception is Elaine Sisman’s plea for what she explicitly calls “conflating the ‘historical’ and ‘theoretical’ positions”, where by ‘theoretical’ she understands the application of rhetorical concepts “regardless of the known rhetorical leanings of its creators”.

[…] rhetoric is a venerable, formidable, and challenging analytical and explanatory tool; why need it be historically grounded before it is applied? Why should not any composer and any musical utterance be fair game? (Sisman 2000: 1178.) Separate arguments could be put forward for the rhetorical indoctrination of eighteenth century musicians (and thus for the supposedly rhetorical nature of their music); and for the application of literary-rhetorical analytical principles to classical or any other music. But these cannot be conflated without raising a historically bound theoretical-practical framework itself to supra-historical status.

This conflation might explain Sisman’s otherwise baffling definition of musical variations in the *New Grove* as “a form founded on repetition, and as such an outgrowth of a fundamental musical and rhetorical principle […]” (my emphasis). It should first be noted that the article fails to discuss the pervasive presence of variation procedures in jazz and all music outside the European tradition. Even if we accept rhetoric as an anthropological universal, it may be reasonably assumed that repetition and variation are simply basic to music and dance, or rather, are crossmodal constants of perception and creation. The article switches to a historical perspective by stating that “A specific correlation between rhetoric and variation can be grafted on to the common fund of rhetorical knowledge on which composers and

210 Schilling (1844: 343); Koch (1802: 1251-2): “diejenige Wissenschaft der Tonsetzkunst, nach welcher einzelne melodische Theile nach einem bestimmten Zwecke zu einem ganzen verbunden werden [...]”


Shifting Paradigms © Lodewijk Muns 2021 – 61
theorists can be assumed to have drawn […].” It remains obscure, however, in what sense Erasmus’ *De duplici copia verborum et rerum* (“On the double abundance of words and things”, 1512) “foreshadows” unnamed eighteenth century treatises on musical variation with its list of 150 variations on the sentence *Your letter pleased me very much*. Surely Erasmus does not propose to use them all in one letter. Yet this is, in a sense, exactly what musicians do; except that with each variation they may say different things.

What has attracted musicologists and musicians to rhetoric seems to have been, above all, its promise to offer a key to the past, a way of familiarizing themselves with its mentality and practices. It is a reasonable assumption that for a full appreciation of music, or generally works of art, we need to immerse ourselves in the historical heritage. In the case of Baroque and Classical music, such a historicist attitude has been stimulated by dissatisfaction with the way performances of the repertoire were shaped by standards dating from the late nineteenth century. Rhetoric posed a hurdle that must be overcome (a ‘new language’), but also promised insight of a broad scope (‘discipline of thought’, ‘world view’), which might open the portal to that ‘curious and intriguing life style’. With its touches of the esoteric, this was a rhetoric of discovery, but also one of power (*Macht und Wirkung*) and above all of vindication, which is a particularly strong emotive factor in scholarly discourse.

[…] scholars of rhetoric should check their defensive and embattled tone at the door and reassert forthrightly that rhetoric is central to Haydn and that new, historically grounded forms of rhetorical criticism are still to be developed and engaged.

(Sisman 2007: 281.)

Discovering unsuspected relations between seemingly unconnected things is the greatest joy of scientific and scholarly research (as well as a potential paradigm shifter). But it is often hard to distinguish significant relations (what makes them significant?) from subjectively projected similarities. At a certain level of abstraction, everything is like everything else. Given the vague contours of rhetoric, it may be easy to see rhetoric everywhere.

### 5.2 In Mattheson’s Footsteps

A somewhat dubious precedent for music theory was set by Mattheson in the *Vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), when he applied the sixfold *dispositio* of the oration to an aria by his contemporary Benedetto Marcello.\(^\text{212}\) What he wanted to demonstrate, is that a composition or *Klangrede* could be seen as a true oration; it should therefore follow the same plan that is (with small variations) described by the rhetorical handbooks: *exordium, narratio, propositio, confirmatio, confutatio, and peroratio*. How-

\(^{212}\) Mattheson (1739, Pt. 2 Ch. 14); first published as Ch. 7 of his *Kern melodischer Wissenschaft* (1737). The text of the aria is unknown; Mattheson treats it as an instrumental piece.
ever, he also clearly stipulates that composers did not intentionally and consciously follow a rhetorical recipe. And he admits that it would be pedantic to demand a fearful obedience to the rules. It is a result, rather, of a well-developed sense of form: “Experienced masters proceed orderly, even if they do not think about it.” The basic principles for a good speech coincide with those for good music. In this sense rhetoric may clarify, rather than determine, composition.

An obvious problem with this kind of analogy is that what distinguishes the sections of a speech is primarily semantic in nature. In Mattheson’s analysis, it is the musical themes, their transposition and variation that determine the disposition. But without textual semantics, concepts like ‘confirmation’ and ‘confutation’ (a counterargument to a counterargument) boil down to matters of contrast and similarity, of preparation, elaboration, and conclusion. The criteria by which the whole is split into sections may in themselves be valid, but their matching with the rhetorical schema remains arbitrary and vague. Contrasting material can be interpreted musically in various ways (as a side-track or doubt, for instance), but hardly as an objection in a chain of argument.

The analogy is also undermined by the homogeneous nature and repetition of the thematic material. Mattheson is, of course, aware of this difference between musical Klangrede and verbal discourse. The diversity of ‘ways of saying the same thing’ is much larger in music than in speech. It is mainly the contrasts between keys and between the vocal and instrumental sections that in his view allow us to trace the rhetorical disposition. It does not justify, however, his application of the basically argumentative and climactic structure of oratory to da capo form (with a repeat of the ‘peroration’).

The greatest discrepancy between verbal and musical ‘oratory’ is maybe the difference in scale of the units involved. The procedures identified by Mattheson relate to a level of detail that may be called grammatical rather than rhetorical, and the parts of the rhetorical dispositio are phrases or ‘figures’ rather than sentences or formal sections. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mattheson tends to mix up dispositio with a discussion of the ‘figures’ (particularly figurae sententiae), that typically play a role at this level.

It would be rather pointless to criticize Mattheson’s experiment in rhetorical analysis once again, had it not been interpreted as holy writ by some who have followed in his footsteps. In 1941, Georg Unger applied Mattheson’s approach to the first movement of Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. Unsurprisingly, he concluded that

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214 Forkel (1788: 51) interprets Gegensätze at the same time as examples and as proofs.
that the six parts of speech …

… can indeed be transferred to this purely instrumental concert movement without any arbitrariness and without violating the logical musical structure. The correspondence between the musical and rhetorical structural laws can be recognized with striking clarity precisely in the dispositio. (Unger 1969: 54; my transl.)

The most famous-notorious example of Matthesonian rhetorical analysis is that of Bach’s *Musikalisches Opfer* by Ursula Kirkendale (1980). Her purpose goes beyond mere formal analysis; she claims to have identified “the source” of Bach’s work in Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*. Whereas Mattheson makes recommendations for standard practice, which most composers may have observed unwittingly, Kirkendale claims that a very special relation exists between the musical work and its purported source; and that this relation solves a riddle that is posed by the form of the composition as a whole (which in the original print of 1747 appears to be indeterminate). In her view it is unlikely that the work would have been conceived as what it appears to be in the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*: a heterogeneous collection of contrapuntal variations upon a theme, with no compelling order.

But is it not more likely that a mature work of J. S. Bach, dedicated to a king and consisting of such carefully contrived components as the elaborate canons of the *Musical Offering*, would have been conceived also as a sophisticated and meaningful sequence? (U. Kirkendale 1980: 92.)

Since the clue to the ‘true’ order cannot be found in the work itself, it is found in an external source, Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*.

To what ancient authority may Bach have turned for counsel other than to his proven friend Quintilian? (ib.: 128)

After several rounds of criticism, her analysis still remains controversial. What has been neglected in this discussion is the methodological aspect; particularly, the rhetorical-persuasive quality of her reasoning. Both crucial arguments are framed as rhetorical questions, urging her readers through an emotive choice of words (“such carefully contrived components”, “trusted friend”) to share a particular evaluation of what are at best weak probabilities: that Bach knew the *Institutio oratoria*; that he made it his guide in composing the *Musical Offering*; and that the correspondence to Quintilian runs through the composition as a hidden programme. That the solution to

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216 Budde (1991) has subjected (with no reference to Unger) the very same work to rhetorical analysis. The problems remain the same: nothing forces upon us the correlation of musical form with the disposition of oratory, and very little makes it even plausible.


218 Bach might have become acquainted with Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* through Johann Matthias Gesner, a classical philologist and 1730-1734 rector of the Leipzig Thomasschule, where Bach had duties as Kantor. His
the “enigma” of this work consist in an obedience to the rules laid down by Quintilian – “even to smallest details” – goes far beyond what Mattheson (or Quintilian) would have recommended; even the work’s aesthetic legitimacy is derived from this conformity to the rules. Circumstantial evidence and vague analogies are piled up to a point that “there are so many correspondences that one cannot imagine that it is all coincidence”.219 That is actually an accurate definition of tunnel vision.

Most essays in musicorhetorical analysis have not attempted to solve riddles, but to articulate plausible and commonplace intuitions where the analyst finds something ‘rhetorical’ in a piece of music. In a very general sense, there is always a beginning, middle, and an end, and this may often be interpreted as initiating, elaborating, contrasting, confirming. This is almost self-evident in European music since the Baroque, but it is not a universal given. The European musical tradition has been shaped by an idea of form that might be called ‘discursive’, with a meaningful analogy to speech, without necessarily implying a dependency on the model of oratory. Analysts who have found a correspondence between a piece of music and a rhetorical schema, have done so by identifying musical features that we recognize independently from that schema. It is not clear what value the rhetorical model adds, unless it is a (mistaken) valuation of the schema as justifying musical form.

5.3 The Art of Not Being Persuaded

The comparison of a work of music with an oration in terms of form or dispositio is one of the two main attractions that music historians have found in rhetoric. The second, which has had a particular appeal to musical performers, is the emotive-persuasive function of oratory. An emphasis on emotional effect as the main, or sole factor in persuasion has been common since the seventeenth century; Lamy’s Art de parler is an example.220 Rhetorical actio or delivery has its counterpart in musical performance. The concept of rhetorical persuasion as emotional influencing is then easily transferred to music as Klangrede and as a particularly emotive art.

The parallel between the orator and the musician is explicitly made in an often quoted paragraph from Johann Joachim Quantz’ flute tutor (1752):

Musical performance may be compared to an orator’s delivery. The orator and the musician have the same aim regarding both the preparation and presentation of their works: to conquer the listeners’ hearts, to arouse or allay their feelings, and to transport them into one emotional state after another. It is for both an advantage to have some knowledge of each other’s duties. (Quantz 1752: 100; my transl.)

The German is ambiguous as to whether the musician’s performance can be com-

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pared to or with the orator’s. Anyhow, as Quantz notes, the comparison may be profitable to both. Sulzer suggests that the musician may teach the orator how to give rhythm and prosodic shape to his sentences, and refers to the authority of Quintilian.\textsuperscript{221} The main point of Quantz’ recommendation is that we prefer an expressive and communicative performance over one that is mechanical.

It may be doubted whether oratorial persuasion, with its raising and dampening affects, is a suitable and desirable model for the musician’s performance. Casting the musician in the orator’s role, ‘delivering’ the music as his own ‘message’, easily results in caricature.\textsuperscript{222} Persuasion always has an aim – beyond the emotion.

\ldots as the most important object of discourse is action, or conduct, the power of eloquence chiefly appears when it is employed to influence conduct, and persuade to action. As it is principally with reference to this end, that it becomes the object of art, eloquence may, under this view of it, be defined, the Art of Persuasion. (Blair 1839: 315)

When Orpheus persuaded the Furies, his performance was instrumental in his design to gain access to the underworld. Because the Furies were moved, they let him pass. But even the most emotionally engaging concert does not persuade me to anything. A piece of beautifully sad music may make me sad or leave my good mood intact – this is of secondary importance; what matters most is that it allows me to respond (in whatever way) to a beautiful representation of sadness.

We might compare Quantz’ suggestion with that by H.C. Koch, who compares a musical solo to “a monologue in passionate tones”, but qualifies this by terms that suggest soliloquy, rather than public address: “the soloist is turned inward, as it were, nothing external has the slightest influence on the expression of feeling”.\textsuperscript{223}

Koch’s description is more in harmony with the aesthetic appreciation of music, which is not based on the schema sender-message-receiver (or orator-oration-audience), but on the musical work as object mediated by the musicians and contemplated by the listener, in what Kant calls a ‘free play of the imagination’ (which, contra Kant, may include emotional imaginings and imagined emotions). In this schema, the musicians are less communicators and more contemplators themselves, who share their musical vision.

The aesthetic view of artistic creation has antecedents as far back as Aristotle, “for whom the poetic production of emotion is not a matter of manipulating an audience but of constructing a literary artefact with certain objectively emotive properties […].”\textsuperscript{224} The rhetorical-persuasive view of poetry, on the other hand, goes back

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} Sulzer (1771, \textit{Vortrag (Redende Künste)}).
\item \textsuperscript{222} Beghin (1997: 202) pushes this to the point of a fusion of composer, musical work and performer in the persona of the orator. Cf. Barth (1992).
\item \textsuperscript{223} Koch (1793: 331).
\item \textsuperscript{224} Halliwell (1986: 289).
\end{itemize}
to the Hellenistic age, and may have even have been older. It would seem that there is a long standing (and unexplored?) conflict between rhetorical and aesthetic views on artistic creation and performance.

In practice, the stage performer has several options. She can present herself either as a mere executant and intermediary, or as a quasi-actor who creates a stage persona. She may also choose to present above anything else herself – though in the act she will inevitably create a persona that is not quite her true self. Different solutions are associated with different styles and subcultures. A fine balance between the three options may for the musician be one of the most interesting challenges, but one which is most successfully resolved without too much thought.

In discussing the rhetorical-persuasive view of artistic performance, it is impossible to ignore the conflicting attitudes that oratory and persuasion have provoked through history. Part of the appeal of the orator as a role model may come from the historical “image of the orator as a culture-hero”. Its most prominent classical source and embodiment is Cicero.

As Cicero expounds in his dialogical treatise De oratore (55 BC), it is the power of language which distinguishes humans from animals, and has allowed them to create “the present humane and civilized state of society”. The ideal orator is the man who has among all others the best command of language and is most knowledgeable.

[Crassus:] But let us now turn to what is surely the most important point of all: what other force could have gathered the scattered members of the human race into one place, or could have led them away from a savage existence in the wilderness to this truly human, communal way of life, or, once communities had been founded, could have established judicial procedures, and legal arrangements?

What could be so wonderful as when out of an infinite crowd one human being emerges who – alone or with very few others – is able to use with effect the faculty that is a natural gift to all? [...] I assert that the leadership and wisdom of the perfect orator provide the chief basis, not only for his own dignity, but also for the safety of countless individuals and of the State at large. (Cicero, De oratore I 30-34; 2001: 64-5.)

By mouth of the figure of his former mentor Crassus, Cicero here makes a curious move from the universally shared gift of language and ability to converse, which provides the foundation of a republican society, to the excellence of single individuals, whose command of language and persuasive abilities call them to leadership. It seems to show a deep ambiguity inherent in his republican ideal: it is based upon individual superiority and leadership as much as, or even more than mutual understanding. The influence of this ambiguous republican ideal is all too obvious in the

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225 Halliwell (1986: 289); cf. 3.4 above.
227 Cf. Garsten (2009: 166): “As orators reflecting on their own interests and hence on the interests of oratory it-
present-day world. Even more obviously, we have moved a long way from the realm of musical performance. But that is the inevitable consequence of importing the model of oratory into music. Leadership attitudes (and responses to them) play a part in music as much as in politics. The political dimensions of oratory and the role model of the orator do not cease to be relevant when we consider their suitability for classical musicians of the present day.

The Ciceronian ideal has been the direct inspiration (and near-literal source) for Sulzer’s high-flown and unrealistic conception of oratory or eloquence (Beredsamkeit) as “the most perfect means to make people more sensible, more civil, better and happier”. All the arts aim at moral improvement, rather than pleasure or entertainment; in that function, oratory occupies among them the first rank.228

Eloquence cannot be denied the first place among the fine arts. It is evidently the most perfect means of making people more intelligent, more civil, better and happier. It was through eloquence that the first wise men have gathered the scattered people for social life, and given them customs and laws; through eloquence Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Rousseau have become teachers of mankind. It informs individuals and entire societies of their true interest; through eloquence the feelings of honor, humanity, and love of the fatherland are stirred in their minds.

Men of excellent disposition, who everywhere recognize the true and the good, and by these are inspired; who also have the gift of making others feel everything they recognize and experience, who possess that art of which it is truly said, that it directs the senses of men and calms their emotions: are such men not gifts from heaven? As teachers and leaders of the people, destined to propagate all profitable knowledge, every good disposition among a whole nation? (Sulzer 1771, Beredsamkeit; my transl.)

Though oratory’s primary arena is politics, the despotic rulership of most of eighteenth-century Europe did not allow political oratory any space of action. Sulzer therefore projects his ideal orator from rhetoric’s golden ages into an unforeseeable future, transformed into a kind of benign artistic demagogue, whose field of action remains vague, unless it is the popularization of philosophy (Popularphilosophie) – Sulzer’s own métier.

A stronger contrast with this idealization than Kant’s contemporary critique of oratory is hardly possible. While Ciceronian oratory is supposed to have had its shining hour at the height of the Roman republic (which de facto came to an end before De oratore was written), Kant thinks of persuasive oratory (as distinct from eloquence) not in the context of open deliberation and controversy, but of the mass manipula-

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self, Crassus and Cicero were deeply suspicious of the sort of plebiscitary politics that might enhance the power of one powerful speaker for a time but that would ultimately eliminate the republican institutions of controversy in which the practice of persuasion could be sustained.”

228 Sulzer (1771), Beredsamkeit.
tion that brings a republic or democracy to its end.\footnote{229 Kant’s antipathy towards orators included Cicero (Bacin 2015: 330).}

It should be noted that always we find that when oratory \textit{(Beredsamkeit)} was most blooming, the state was in decline; for oratory works only when the large crowd decides, and one knows that through the masses everything can be accomplished. One therefore undertakes to deceive people through trickery and sophistry, and there we have proof that the true driving forces in the state have ceased to work, when people let themselves be carried away by being catered to their taste. (Student’s lecture notes, 1781-82; Kant 1997: 989; my transl.\textsuperscript{xxvi})

Standard responses to the Kantian critique are: that any art and technique may be abused; that the aim of rhetorical persuasion is not coercion, nor pandering to the public, but negotiating consensus,\footnote{230 Garsten (2009: 7).} and that by studying the techniques of persuasion, one may also learn how to see through them. Hugh Blair, for instance, tries to forestall the critics of rhetoric with a rather feeble appeal to “reason and good sense”:

Indeed, when the arts of speech and writing are mentioned, I am sensible that prejudices against them are apt to rise in the minds of many. A sort of art is immediately thought of, that is ostentatious and deceitful; the minute and trifling study of words alone; the pomp of expression; the studied fallacies of rhetoric; ornament substituted in the room of use. […] I am far from denying, that rhetoric and criticism have sometimes been so managed as to tend to the corruption, rather than to the employement, of good taste and true eloquence. But sure it is equally possible to apply the principles of reason and good sense to this art, as to any other that is cultivated among men. (Blair 1839: 2.)

It seems unlikely, however, that studying classical rhetoric has ever been an important career preparation for demagogues. Anyhow, the persuasive power gained by studying metaphor must dwindle compared to that exercised nowadays by algorithms in the distribution of information; and in political oratory, even sub-average linguistic competence can be an asset, rather than a handicap, as recent U.S. politics has shown. A host of factors other than speech fluency may stir audiences at a subrational level; effective are above all signs of a particular social identity, and the stimulation of feelings that enhance that sense of identity, mostly by animosity towards other groups. This may ‘pandering’, rather than persuasion according to the Ciceronian ideal; but the pandering orator may push his audience further in a certain direction than it would otherwise ever have gone. That too is persuasion. The Kantian abhorrence of oratory is a reasonable fear that reason will be buried beneath instinct by those who are superior mainly in their lust for power.

The potentially pernicious effects of oratorial persuasion therefore lie less in its codified technique, than in the very ideal of persuasive leadership itself. Historically, it has found expression in an ‘oratorial stance’, typically described in terms of “dignity,
gravity and warmth”, “ingenious modesty”, “manly firmness”, “charm and dignity”, or “dignity”, “firmness” and “majesty” (dignitas, robustus, majestas). Cut in stone and cast in bronze, it can be seen in the countless dictator figures in orator’s pose (adlocutio), from the Roman emperors through Lenin and Mao to Kim Il Sung. No ideal can survive such consistent involuntary caricature and voluntary abuse.

More interesting than the appeal to good sense is Blair’s argument that the first step in combating manipulation and abusive persuasion, is to study it: a rhetorica contra rhetoricam of a different kind.

The art of oratory proposes nothing more than to follow out that track which nature has first pointed out. And the more exactly that this track is pursued, the more that eloquence is properly studied, the more shall we be guarded against the abuse which bad men make of it, and enabled the better to distinguish between true eloquence and the tricks of sophistry. (Blair 1839: 316.)

It would indeed be of the greatest benefit to societies worldwide to have a form of rhetorical education which teaches children how to avoid ‘bad men’, or which are the means of persuasion, and how not to fall for them. But since Blair made his sensible observation, two-an-a-half centuries have passed without visible progress in rhetoric’s critical-educational mission. On the contrary – since her recent resuscitation the once-and-future queen of the arts has shown herself to be so obsessed with being ‘the fairest of them all’, that she might remind us of her evil counterpart in that other fairy-tale.

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231 Sulzer (1771, Rede)
232 Fordyce (1753: 53)
233 Pomey and Jouvancy (1712: 91). This manual (Candidatus rhetoricae), which dates back to the seventeenth century, has been reprinted until late in the nineteenth century. Cf. France (1972: 13).
\textit{charmes de l’harmonie poëtique: tels sont les poëmes didactiques et historiques.} Mais ces fictions en prose & qui est dans leur genre. Il y a de même des matières vraies, qui paroissent revêtues & parées de tous les teux 1747: 45-6.)

pour l’usage, l’agrément prenne le caractere de la nécessité même : tout doit y paroître pour le besoin.” (Batteux 1977b: 49.)

mesuré: & la Prose ou l’Éloquence, la Nature elle-même exprimée par le discours libre.” (Batteux 1747: 48-9.)

tifieroient mal d’un mauvais ouvrage, par la vérité du modéle qu’elles auroient suivi; parce que ce n’est pas le vrai qu’on leur demande, mais le beau […].” (Batteux 1747: 46.)

“L’orateur doit dire le vrai d’une manière qui le fasse croire, avec la force et la simplicité qui persuadent. Le Poète doit dire le vraisemblable d’une manière qui le rende agréable, avec toute la grace & toute l’énergie qui charmant & qui étonnent.” – “L’Orateur ni l’Historien n’ont rien à créer, il ne leur faut de génie que pour trouver les faces réelles qui sont dans leur objet: ils n’ont rien à y ajouter, rien à en retrancher: à peine osent-ils quelquefois transposer: tandis que le Poète se forge à lui-même ses modéles, sans s’embarasser de la réalité.” (Batteux 1747: 48-9.)
ces histoires en vers, ne sont ni pure Prose ni Poésie pure: C’est un mélange des deux natures, auquel la définition ne doit point avoir égard: ce sont des caprices faits pour être hors de la règle, et dont l’exception est absolument sans conséquence pour les principes.” (Batteux, 1747: 50-1)

xiii “Das Mittel eine Rede sinnlich zu machen, bestehet in der Wahl solcher Ausdrücke, die eine Menge von Merkmalen auf einmal in das Gedächtniß zurück bringen, um uns das Bezeichnete lebhafter empfinden zu lassen, als das Zeichen. Hierdurch wird unsere Erkenntniß anschauend. Die Gegenstände werden unsern Sinnen, wie unmittelbar vorgestellt, und die untern Seelenkräfte werden getäuscht, indem sie öfters der Zeichen vorgesessen, und der Sache selbst ansichtig zu werden glauben. Aus dieser allgemeinen Maxime muß der Werth der poetischen Bilder, Gleichnisse und Beschreibungen, und so gar der einzelnen poetischen Worte beurtheilet werden.” (Mendelssohn, 1761: 89.)

xiv “Man kann solches auch mit den erdichteten Geschichten, die man Romainen zu nennen pflage, erläutern. Wenn dergleichen Erziehung mit solchem Verstande eingerichtet ist, daß nichts widersprechendes darinnen anzutreffen; so kan ich nicht anders sagen, als es sey möglich, daß dergleichen geschiehet. [...] Und solchergestalt habe ich eine jede dergleichen Geschichte nicht anders anzusehen als eine Erziehung von etwas, so in einer anderen Welt sich zutragen kan.” (Wolff 1720: 307)

xv “Wenn wir uns nicht auf blosses Ansehen, blosse Willkühr, und trügliche Empfindung stützen und verlassen sollen, so müssen die Vorschriften und Erklärungen der Kritik aus der Natur der menschlichen seele hergeleitet, und auf den innern sinn zurückgeführt werden! Diese psychologischen Untersuchungen führen zwar nicht unmittelbar zur praktischen Anwendung und Bildung des Geschmackes, aber sie dienen zur festern wissenschaftlichen Begründung der Kritik des Geschmackes, zur sichern Beurtheilung der Werke der Kunst, und zur Verbesserung der schönen Erkenntniss.” (Schott, 1789: xviii)


xviii “Er behandelt die Leidenschaften wie Kartenbilder die man durch einander mischen, ausspielen, wieder mischen und wieder ausspielen kann, ohne daß sie sich im geringsten verändern. Es ist keine Spur von der zarten chemischen Verwandtschaft, wodurch sie sich anziehen und abstoßen, vereinigen, neutralisiren, sich wieder scheidern und herstellen. Freilich gewinnet er auf seinem Weg Situationen, die auf jedem andern unmöglich wären. Uns würde überhaupt diese Manier unerträglich seyn; allein ich habe gedacht ob man sie nicht zu subalternen Compositionen, Opern, Ritter- und Zauberstücken mit Glück brauchen könnte und sollte.” (Goethe, 1990: 761.)

xix “Da nun das rührende und pathetische die allergrößte Schönheit der sinnlichen Erkenntnis und der schönen Bezeichnung derselben ist so muss die Ästhetik auch zeigen wie das selbe erhalten werden soll und folglich muss sie notwendig auf eine gewisse Art und Weise von den Gemütsbewegungen handeln. [...] Diese Wissenschaft trägt alles dasjenige vor was ein Redner ein dichter oder irgendein anderer schöner Geist in Absicht auf die Gemütsbewegungen in den schönen Werken seiner Kunst zu beachten hat. Diesen Teil der Lehre von den Gemütsbewegungen hat man bisher in der Redekunst und Dichtkunst auf einen Teil derselben abgehandelt und die Erfahrung lehrt dass die Ausführung desselben in verschiedener Absicht noch sehr mangelhaft sind.” (Meier, 1759: 12-3.)

xx “Wo wir noch, sagt Garve, original seyn können, ist in den feinern Beobachtungen inner Eigenschaften und Einrichtungen des menschlichen Geistes, der Denkungsart, der Sitten. – So sind einige neuere originell geworden, indem sie irgend eine neue Klasse der Empfindungen wahrgenommen, verborgene Unterschiede und Schattierungen sonst ähnlicher Veränderungen der Seele entdeckt, die Begriffe, die in einer zusammengesetzten Vorstellung oder einer Begierde verborgen liegen, richtiger erforscht haben. [...] Unsre Dichter sind schon eine Art Metaphysiker, und müssen es für uns seyn. Sie zergliedern die Empfindung, die die Alten ganz einfach
durch ein Wort ausgedrückt hätten, in die Summe der einzelnen Bewegungen, aus denen sie sich erklären läßt.” (Zschokke 1793: 135.)


xxii “Aus den vereinigten Berichten mehrerer sorgfältiger Beobachter des menschlichen Herzens könnte eine Erfahrungseelenlehre entstehen, welche an praktischen Nutzen alles das weit übertreffen würde, was unsre Vorfahren in diesem Fache geleistet haben.” – “Das Nachbeten und Abschreiben in den Werken des Geistes wird aufhören, und der Dichter und Romanenschreiber wird sich genötigt sehn, erst vorher Erfahrungseelenlehre zu studiren, ehe er sich an eigene Ausarbeitungen wagt.” (Moritz 1782, after Kosenina 2016: 33, 35.)


xxiv “Es giebt gar keine unrhetorische »Natürlichkeit« der Sprache, an die man appelliren könnte: die Sprache selbst ist das Resultat von lauter rhetorischen Künsten. Die Kraft, welche Aristoteles Rhetorik nennt, an jedem Dinge das heraus zu finden und geltend zu machen, was wirkt und Eindruck macht, ist zugleich das Wesen der Sprache: diese bezieht sich ebensowenig wie die Rhetorik, auf das Wahre, auf das Wesen der Dinge, sie will nicht belehren, sondern eine subjektive Erregung und Annahme auf Andere übertragen. […] Das ist der erste Gesichtspunkt: die Sprache ist Rhetorik, denn sie will nur eine δόξα, keine ἐπιστήμη übertragen.” (Nietzsche 1912: 149.)

xxv “Der musikalische Vortrag kann mit dem Vortrage eines Redners verglichen werden. Ein Redner und ein Musiks haben sowohl in Ansehung der Ausarbeitung der vorzutragenden Sachen, als des Vortrages selbst, einerley Absicht zum Grunde, nämlich: sich der Herzen zu bemastern, die Leidenschaften zu erregen oder zu stillen, und die Zuhorer bald in diesen, bald in jenen Affect zu versetzen. Es ist vor beyde ein Vortheil, wenn einer von den Pflichten des andern einige Erkenntniß hat.” (Quantz 1752: 100.)

xxvi “Es ist merkwürdig, daß wir zu allen Zeiten finden, daß, wenn die Beredsamkeit am meisten blühete, der Staat im Verfall war; denn die Beredsamkeit gilt nur dann, wenn der große Haufe decidirt, und man weiß, daß man durch das Volk alles ausrichten kann; da legt man es darauf an, Leute durch Blendwerke und sophistische Kunst zu hintergehen, und daß ist dann der Beweß, daß die ächten Triebfedern im Staate zu wirken aufgehört haben, wenn Menschen schon anfangen, sich durch die Unterhaltung ihres Geschmacks hinreißen zu lassen.” (Student’s lecture notes, 1781-82; Kant 1997: 989.)
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