

The Stylistics of Rhetoric and the Form- Content Dichotomy: A Philosophical Approach

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Abstract

Rhetorical transaction depends on the triade of speaker/writer, message, and listener/reader, the value of each deciding whether the message is content-oriented, form-inclined, or truthfully objective. When the form and content of a message are interdependent, the encoder-- speaker / writer and decoder -- listener/ reader of that message should be impersonal to the point of instrumentality.

As the encoder and decoder of rhetorical situations have all along been humans, the form-content dichotomy suffered as it will always do. Plato, Aristotle, Christian Clergy, Francis Bacon, and George Campbell give more weight to content; the sophists, Cicero, the Elizabethans (excepting the epistemologists), the Neoclassicists, and Blair favor form. Quintilian preaches the marriage of form and content, but his peroration remains in the sphere of well-wishing, for it did not receive attentive ears. In the department of the Humanities, form and content have never and won't ever, as I think, attain an interdependent status.

Since the inception of rhetoric, form and content were conceptualized as heterogeneous siblings, not as Siamese twins, as the majority of modern stylisticians and linguists would like to think of them nowadays. The rift in the dichotomy issued from the antiquarian approach that pragmatically focused on the mechanics of the verbal means of communication between orator and audience independent of the substance of the message. The orator was there in the courts of law and debate circles to win, and to do so, he had been trained so laboriously solely to acquire an arsenal of rhetorical weaponry manifested blatantly in the niceties of style and ornamentations. Later on the orator matriculated as a writer but the name of the game remained the same--form. Confessedly, there had been attempts to weld form and content into one coin on the rhetoric's journey to the modern era, but the actual yet theoretical welding did not give fruition till the fourth quarter of the nineteenth-century, with the advent of modern linguistics, when Ferdinand de Saussure introduced his "mutual implication" term, establishing rather scientifically the interdependent nature of the form-content dichotomy.

The present paper is a discursive survey of the dichotomy from the Greek to almost the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth-century. A study of the dichotomy in the light of modern linguistic theory would be beyond the scope of this paper, due to space limitations, and therefore needs a space of its own on another occasion, I hope.

It is not surprising to find that the root of the rend in the dichotomy is manifested in the etymology of the word **form** that came to English from the Latin **forma**, which, as lexicographers observe, had replaced two Greek morphemes, **morphē** and **eidōs**, the first applied primarily to visible forms, the second to conceptual forms, i.e. Saussure's signifier and signified, or in modern literary terms roughly form and content, respectively¹. What is truly surprising though is to find the Greeks aware of the two constituents of the dichotomy despite the presence among them of the influential sophists who wittingly immolate content on the altar of form, while the Romans knowingly disregard content, for their **forma** mutilates substance to augment the visible construction of the literary work. However, the Romans' merging both components, form and content, to mean only apparent form was not fortuitous and could cast some light on the Greeks' understanding of the dichotomy. From the sophists to Socrates through Plato concluding with Aristotle, the Greeks' concept of the dichotomy is confused so much so that they use visible and conceptual forms interchangeably, as we succinctly note in their using of the term "logos", which means both sense as signification and essence.

The sophists are the first to separate sound of words and rhythm (i.e. form) from the significant content in the realm of poetry. Tenaciously and pervasively, they concern themselves with form, for content to them does not correspond to telling the truth. What counts for them is the appearance and not essence, because they are convinced (or convinced themselves) that things and people appear as presented by a powerful speaker, regardless of how these people and things looked in reality. That powerful speaker is the traditional classical and late Hellenistic orator who could convince his audience of what he wanted them to believe and not what they themselves wanted to believe.

To assert his affiliation as a sophist and to attain his goal of persuading, the orator should be a rhetor, wellversed in the mechanics of persuasion, mainly style, including figures of speech, rhythm and sound of words, and dramatic presence of the orator, etc. If ever, thought came later. Even the most moderate of all sophists, Gorgias, thinks of content as a subservient to form, for he "appreciated a fine style more than the order of thought and arrangement of arguments, **giving full and perhaps somewhat exaggerated attention to music of language, the rhythm of words and sentences, the stylistic construction of the speech as imagery, simile, and antithesis ...**" (my emphasis) (Ijsseling, 1976:27) Though Gorgias tries his best not to deviate from the truth, embodiment of form and content, those who come after him do. Isocrates' main purpose in the school of orating, where he taught writing, is to teach and graduate pithy speakers who could bring men to feelings of love or hatred, sympathy or disgust, happiness or sadness simultaneously. **Except for Gorgias and Protagoras, in fact, all other sophists would wholeheartedly subscribe to Isocrates' curricula, for, like him, they think of content as a by-product of rhetoric, thus subordinate to form.** George A. Kennedy notes that rhetoric at the hands of the sophists has become vulnerable to criticism. "Because of its newness, it tended to overdo experiments in argument and style. Not only did it seem vulgar to tasteless, it could seem to treat the truth with indifference and to make the worse seem the better cause." (Kennedy, 1980:41) Kennedy's observation reverberates a lengthy comment on the same topic by Charles Sears Baldwin.

For sophistic is the historic demonstration of what oratory becomes when it is removed from urgency of subject matter.... Seeking some inspiration for public occasions, it revives over and over again a dead past. Thus becoming conventionalized in method, it turns from cogency of movement to the cultivation of style. Cogency presupposes message. It is intellectual ordering for persuasion, the means towards making men believe and act, Style, no longer controlled by such urgencies of subject ends towards decoration and virtuosity Sophistic practically reduces rhetoric to style. The old lore of investigation (*inventio*), paralyzed by the compression of its drunk nerve, has little scope beyond ingenuity. (Baldwin, 1976:7)

That the sophists are "oratorical acrobats," (qtd. in Baldwin, 1976:27)⁽²⁾ insouciant to subject matter is somehow an established fact among the students of rhetoric, old and new. There is no doubt about Isocrates' and Aelias Aristides' garrulity, excessive wordiness, and even intentional verbiage in their orations. Gorgias openly admits that the art of persuasion involves deceiving "the emotional and mental state of listener, through artificially stimulating sensory reactions through words." (qtd. in Kennedy, 1980:31). One could presume that the sophists were coerced to adopt the attitude

they had championed -- that is utilizing rhetoric as a tool fortifying the effectiveness of the speaker, not the effectiveness of the message. Of the three types of rhetoric existent in early antiquity (deliberative, forensic, and occasional), only the last was open to them, since the first two were monopolized by government gentry. But we are not here to pass moral judgments. Our concern is with the sophists **de facto**, not **sui juri**; and **de facto**, the sophists dominated the intellectual scene in their time and left their stamp on generations to come beginning with Socrates and Plato, passing by the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to culminate in twentieth-century literature.

In Plato's **Apology**, Socrates is more of a sophist than we can tell at the surface. To begin with, he presents himself as a clever speaker, toiling to preach the truth, as he himself asseverates; yet, he remains the same old, clever grandiloquent, who, like all sophists, is interested in the spoken word, disinterested in the written word, and fond of paradox. "... he taught orally, was interested in words and showed a fondness for paradox" like all sophists (Kennedy, 1980:41). In the second speech of the first half of the **Phaedrus**, Socrates likens the written word to a painting that will not be able to present its worth, no matter how capturing it might be. If criticized, that painting--written word--will not be able to defend itself. The fact that the painting cannot speak, notes socrates, separates us from the good and the beautiful. The implication here, of course, is that the spoken word is the incarnation of these manifestations-- the good and the beautiful, and the fact of its being spoken gives value to its content. Consider the following quotation.

....You know, phaedrus, that's the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever. And once a thing is put in writing, the composition whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn't know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself. (Plato, 1961:521).

The following quotation is also worth considering.

... Then anyone who leaves behind him a written manual, and likewise anyone who takes it over from him, on the supposition that such writing will provide something reliable and permanent, must be exceedingly simple-minded; he must really be ignorant of Ammon's utterance, if he imagines that written words can do anything more than remind one who knows that which the writing is concerned with. (Plato, 1961:521).

And When Phaedrus asks Socrates how he **thinks of speech**, the latter answers,

...Amazingly fine indeed, my friend. I was thrilled by it. And it was you, Phaedrus, that make me feel as I did. I watched your apparent delight in the words as you read. And as I'm sure that you understand such matters better than I do, I took my cue from you, and therefore joined in the ecstasy of my right worshipful companion. (Plato, 1961:482)

Then socrates adds.

...You must forgive me, dear friend; I'm a lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas men in the town do. Yet you seem to have discovered a recipe for getting me out. A hungry animal can be driven by dangling a carrot or a bit of green stuff in front of it; similarly if you proffer me volumes of speeches I don't doubt you can cart me all round Attica, and anywhere else you please.... (Plato, 1961:479)

Nevertheless, does "spoken" in the context of speech mean only modulation? This is something I doubt, for as we have stated earlier, Socrates believes in the sound, rhythm, and power of the word. Further, in the **Phaedrus**, he makes persuasion a resultant of the power of an "ethical" speaker who is able to prove that everything is similar to everything else or refute another speaker who attempts to do so. He admires the Palamedes of Elea for having "an art of speaking, such that he can make the same thing appear to his audience like and unlike, or one and many, or again at rest and in motion." (Plato, 1961:507) Is this an ethical speaker after all? Would such ethics tally with Socrates' pursuance of the concept of truth? If the answer is "No," and it is likely to be so, Socrates' main concern and preoccupation is with the effectiveness of the speech, as he told Phaedrus, and not the value of the message.

The indicators of Socrates' preference of form are strewn through the **Apology**,

the **Gorgias**, and the **Phaedrus**. Though he refutes rhetoric as technic in his dialogue with Polus in the **Gorgias**, he relies on sophistic tactics to defend himself in the **Apology**. His concentration in his defence is not on the subject matter, his accusation, but on himself as a man of acquired wisdom and perspicuity as well as on the hearer, the jury from whom he begs the question firstly by stating that he is trying to persuade everyone of them he is the best and wisest man possible, and secondly by telling everyone of the jury not to care for anything other than himself. His focus on the hearer is carried further in the **Phaedrus**, when he re-emphasizes the power of the spoken word on the soul of the listeners, especially when that word is presented by a knowledgeable speaker, and who is more knowledgeable than Socrates himself? So, form has to come first; content follows.

In the very same three dialogues above, namely the **Apology**, the **Gorgias**, and the **Phaedrus**, Plato attacks the sophists on the ground of moral values and insists that the function of rhetoric should not be for pleasure in a forthright empirical sense, but should be for the pursuit of the **just** and **true**. He rejected rhetoric as a form of flattery, a pseudo-art of appearances rather than a vehicle for conveying truth. But the question that presents itself is how to get to both abstracts, the **just** and the **true**? Plato suggests philosophy and science as means to that end. Yet, is everyone capable of philosophical and scientific analysis? Charles Sears Baldwin expresses his reservations and voices doubt about Plato's ability to teach the truth when he writes that the latter "falls short of discerning the importance of making truth available and effective for the mass of men incapable of scientific analysis...." (Baldwin, 1976:2).

If the truth existed in its ideal form somewhere as Plato states in the tenth book of the **Republic**, the only person to have access to it is the philosopher who is armed with the inner word, which is the antonym of the physical word of the poet and the orator. To prove that the philosopher has access to the inner word, Plato has to distinguish between "the sensible and intelligible order. The former is the world of appearance ... while the latter is the world of ...essence. (Ijsseling, 1976:14). In other words, Plato distinguishes between form (appearance) and content (essence)-- (the **Phaedrus**, pp. 272de, 273 abcde). Moreover, if we refuse to read Socrates ironically in the **Phaedrus**, we might be surprised to find that Plato advocates getting to the truth even for the purpose of deceiving (p. 236a), for he, like the sophists before him, is concerned with the probable, the ethereal content of his Forms, that is to sanction something that does not actually exist.

Though we can unabashedly say that Aristotle is the first scholar and philosopher to note the binary nature of the dichotomy, we still find in that seeming fusion streaks of the sophistic garb. Aristotle never thinks of content in universal terms. Rather, he seems always to think of content as subject to situations. When he talks of the enthymeme,³ we find that his views are not different from those of the sophists', too. He concerns himself with "probabilities in the sphere of human affairs, "and not with "universal principles" drawn to a particular science.(Hunt, 1925:250) Furthermore, Aristotle does not confine himself to the premises of the enthymeme. i.e. the content of his message; instead, he highlights the role of **ethos** and **pathos** in arguments. He devotes almost all Book II (Chapters two through seventeen) of the **Rhetoric** to projecting the lis-

tener as the major factor in the persuasion equation. He classifies the three kinds of rhetoric (forensic, deliberative, epideictic) on the basis of three kinds of audience, and when he refers to subject matter, he discusses what would be useful for an orator's understanding of ethos (e.g. I.9. 1366a25-27). "To begin with," he pointed out, all men seek happiness. Speakers must, if they mean to be persuasive, propose those things which either create or enhance the happiness of their listeners. (Golden, Berquist and Coleman, 1976:33-34). Despite the fact Aristotle's inclination to assume the basic rationality of man led him to stress logical proof, he came to believe that in a typical rhetorical situation involving a general audience emotional appeals are perhaps the most influential single element in persuasion.

This leads us to wonder whether Aristotle cared to tell the truth forwardly, honestly, and scientifically. His *logos*, equivalent to message, depends on the enthymeme; and as we have established earlier, enthymeme draws on probabilities to come up with a conclusion. Why probabilities, one would ask. The more likely answer is that enthymeme, a reduced syllogism, gives the speaker an elbow room in which to manipulate his audience. This could answer Aristotle's emphasis on the *pathos*, mainly intended to move the souls of the audience to emotion. If we read chapters four through fourteen of Book II of the **Rhetoric**, we become dubious as to whether Aristotle cared for the content of the speaker's message at all. In chapter nine particularly, he says, echoing Isocrates, of course, that it is not necessary that a speaker know enough about his subject. "If you do not have enough to say about your subject himself, compare him to others, as Isocrates used to do..." (I.9.1368a 19-21). Indeed, when one reads chapters ten through fifteen of Book I of the **Rhetoric**, he "is reminded of the sophist's claim in Plato's **Gorgias** that if a student did not know enough about a subject, Gorgias would teach him. (Kennedy, 1980:73).

Since speaker and listener are fixed parameters in Aristotle's rhetoric, content is always the variable. In other words, Aristotle is unable to produce his own content, since he caters for specific listeners by means of trained speakers. When he talks of subject matter, he entertains "...what seems probable to men of given type." (Hunt, 1925:58) Those "men of a given type" should also be entertained by men of a given type, too, men who are masters of the techniques mapped out in Book III of the **Rhetoric**, and who could enhance the listeners' happiness, health, wealth, virtues, and the like.

In sum, I would say the Greeks, from the sophists to Aristotle, think in terms of cut and dried situations, representing various types of human activities and revolving around the character of a strong speaker in the presence of welcoming listeners. The sophists emphasize the speaker in that situation, not the message, and give little thought to listeners. Socrates comes to de-emphasize the role of the speaker and stress the validity of the message, but ends up emphasizing the roles of both speaker and listener. Plato glorifies forms comprehended only by philosophers; and Aristotle tries to break loose the trend of preoccupation with situations with his dialectics and scientific proofs. Unfortunately, his "invention," though, remains at the mercy of the bespoken situation, especially when he admits that speech should be delivered to one type of men entertained by one or another type of speakers.

With the death of Aristotle in 322 and the dawn of the Hellenistic Age, a new era of rhetoric commences, freshly refurbishing sophistic techniques and dubbing Platonic philosophy. The present period is more reminiscent of figures such as Gorgias and Isocrates than of Aristotle and Plato. As a result, there resurfaced a revival of interest in the orator and the power of the ornamental, euphonous word; the witty, conceited rhetorical figure; and the artificial, polished style. Theophrastus of Eresus at Lesbos (Aristotle's student and successor as head of the peripatetic school) and Demetrius of Phalerum (Theophrastus' student) amplify on Aristotle's technical side of the **Rhetoric**, especially Book III that expounds on the qualities needed in good prose style. "These qualities were somewhat rearranged by Theophrastus in his treatise **On Style** and eventually became a standard list of four virtues of style: correctness, clarity, ornamentation and propriety." (Kennedy, 1980:79) Also Hermagoras of Temnos produce in this period "the earliest source we know of the full treatment of the five parts of technical rhetoric." (Kennedy, 1980:88) Demetrius' treatise **On Style** "shows how remarks of Aristotle were developed into a theory of several distinct kinds of 'characters' of style." (Kennedy, 1980:87) All that of course boils down to one thing--form pushes its way to the forefront while content recedes to disappear behind the scene of the Hellenistic Age. George A. Kennedy abstracts the situation very forcefully in the following quotation, "Theophrastus' work on style and delivery, the study of figures and periods by writers like Demetrius and Hermagoras' contribution, including stasis theory, largely complete technical rhetoric." (Kennedy, 1980:89)

Theophrastus, Demetrius, and Hermagoras, directly or indirectly, pave the way for Cicero's work **On the Orator**, which is an extension to the sophistic strand of rhetoric, dealing mainly with style and composition. It is intended to help the student of oratory find the **format** for his speech-- invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. As such, the work entertains the rhetor's perennial question of how to win the judge's and jury's decision in a court of law. Cicero's answer to the question is through the speaker's following and executing a second, six-part **format**, namely, introduction, digression, partition, confirmation, refutation, and conclusion. In both formats, Cicero's concern is with the actual devices and not the substance of speech, the form and not content.

Cicero's two formats, therefore, are functionally the same as Aristotle's enthymeme. Since the enthymeme looks like logical reasoning, its receiver does not safeguard against the substantive values of the premises and he consequently takes the conclusion for granted. That is to say, the audience is manipulated by the form of the enthymeme to accept a distorted content.

To be more specific, Cicero's exordium, digression, and partition could be equated with the enthymeme's major premise, confirmation and refutation with the minor premise, and conclusion with conclusion. The enthymeme misleads by presenting probabilities as universal facts. Cicero's introduction, digression, and partition deceive by playing on the listeners' emotional side, firstly by making them disposed to the speaker, and secondly by digressing for a self-serving purpose, i.e. for winning their

confidence. After the listeners become confounding, the speaker confirms to refute hypothetical issues, ones which he himself has hypothesized. The conclusion will then be logistic resultant rather than a product of logical reasoning based on universally accepted facts. The conclusion in both enthymeme and Cicero's formats is a matter of witty manoeuvring with form that would consequently imaciate content. That undoubtedly explains Cicero's insistence on the "how" and not the "what" of his speeches.

The "how" of these speeches makes of him an actor whose main concern is to move the listener; and the listener could not be moved without emotionally overcharged words: "the listener will never be set on fire unless there is fire in the words that reach him" (qtd. in Grube, 1965:187). G. M. A. Grube comments on Cicero's words writing that "we can readily see that the delivery of one of his great, passionate orations was for him as exhausting an emotional experience as the performace of a great actor." (Grube, 1965:187) Ideas did not loom high on his agenda, especially in his formative years. Gordon Williams says in **Change and Decline** that "Since oratory [in the early Empire] was no longer concerned to persuade, the aim was to move and the 'moving' was to be of the odly stationary type that issued in no action, but only the illusion of action by way of emotional participation in an imaginary scene (Williams, 1978: 267) Williams has reached such generalization within the context study of Cicero's overemphasizing the role of the audience in the equation of oratory and persuasion.

Rather than with ideas, Cicero's main concern was his students. He wanted to graduate masters in the law courts and "In the law courts nobody cares a rap for the truth of these matters [what is good or just conduct] but only about what is plausible. And that is the same as what is probable, and is what must occupy the attention of the would-be master of the art of speech. Even actual facts ought sometimes not be stated, even if they don't tally with probability; they should be replaced by what is probable, whether in prosecution or defense; whatever you say, you simply must pursue this probability they talk of, and can say good-bye to the truth forever. Stick to that all through your speech, and you are equipped with the art complete (Hackforth, 1952:518).

Thus, we can decidedly say that subject-matter is immaterial in titillating the mind in Roman declamations. Content was only considered when it mainly provided a charge of emotion between the speaker and audience.

Quintilian, who thought of Cicero as his inspiration, protests against the latter's exclusive attention to the form at the expense of the content. In his preface to Book VIII of the **Institutione**, Quintilian says that "We should be careful about style but concerned with ideas." (qtd. in Grube, 1965:294) He goes further to say that it is subject matter that should determine the form of expression and not vice versa, for speaker should not seek out-of-the way form and then make it fit the words. He notes that too much embellishment will emasculate the very same idea that the words attempt to convey. Ornamentation is moderation is what Quintilian favors, "we must have embellishment, but art must remain conceited: too lavish a display of flowers and fountains is no indica-

tion of good farming, neither is too lavish ornamentation of any indication of good style (Grube, 1965: 295) nonetheless in this period, "The declamations continued, and so did stylistic vices which [Quintilian] condemned, notably archaism and an exaggerated care in the choice of words. His immediate influence upon his pupils and contemporaries was no doubt considerable, but the revival to which he looked forward did not materialize and his influence did not last (Grube, 1965:284).

Besides, however, we should not forget that Quintilian's **Education of the Orator** is primarily a book on technical rhetoric, mainly concerned with imposing subtleties and finesse. Consequently, the sources of material that he seeks to establish are subject to ordering by those rules and that in itself places reliance on themes which, by their nature, contain the capacity to move and excite, or else to tease and titillate the mind. In spite of Quintilian's serious and honest efforts to emphasize meaning in texts, there had always been a tendency to view style as a set of qualities laid on to clichés of thought worked and set out by invention and arrangement and not as a component integrated to the whole of speech. Quintilian's problem, provided we call it as such, is that he is overprotective of his prospective orator. He wants to minutely provide that future orator with all the formal prerequisites he deemed necessary so much so that the latter is rendered incapacitated by the onerous weight of the mentor's generosity. In other words, Quintilian omits from his book "the material one without which the finished rhetorician is but a tinkling cymbals, how to think as an orator. No one knew better than Quintilian that this comes from zest in life, not from rules of art." (Crutwell, 1898:407) As a result of that, there remained "a gross disproportion between the energy of utterance and the weight of the ideas it is required to bear." (Williams, 1978:269).

The form-content dichotomy after Quintilian undergoes a kind of proselytization, acquiring a Christian identity whose job is to labor hard to immunize God's enunciation of the truth against Greek and Roman rhetoric's adornment, argumentation, and flattery. The early Christian orator, unlike his pagan counterpart, did not need to persuade, for more likely he was addressing himself to listeners who had already accepted the authority of the **message** through God's grace. Saint Augustine, the most representative of this period, notes that "The school of God does not recognize the laws of the encomium, "nor does it deal in "sophistic vanity, (qtd. in Murphy, 1974:51) It is not language but the spirit that is the house of the truth, according to Augustine. Yet, by rejecting any glorification of rhetoric and any conception of truth as a product of language as the result of speech delivered by man, "Augustine clearly betrays a tendency to detach truth from expression and to understand the former as purely spiritual and divine matter, thereby separating meaning from its source. (Ijsseling, 1976:45)

As a result of Augustine's influence and the overall loyalty to the Scriptures, the early Christian orator/writer discards almost all niceties of style and consciously binds himself to homelitics by seeking to discover the available means of present content persuasively. As content in the Gospel is meant to be understood by the soul, as Augustine writes, the word is not meant to be understood literally and logically. Rather it should have a higher level of meaning which exegists should explicate for the neo-

phytes. "Truth itself is incommunicable. Only by illumination one can really attain insight or realize the truth of something. One does not learn from another but from an 'inner teacher' from whom one receives Christ, who utters a word that is not external, material nor audible and legible, but rather an inner and spiritual word which must be understood by the mind and heart. No other word is really important, for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life. (Ijsseling, 1976:44)

However, not all Christian orators/writers concur with Augustine, for some approved enthusiastically stylistic ornamentations and sophistic techniques. Gregory Thaumaturgus is the first to teach Christianity in epideictic speech with the circumlocutory and inflammatory tones of classical rhetoric as well as with the sophistic elucidated sentence structure. In his only surviving speech, "There are echoes of Homer, Euripides, Demosthenes, and Plato and a quotation from the Delphic oracle. Although the point of view is certainly Christian, Christianity is treated as a philosophy and there is no mention of Christ. It is very much the kind of speech that a student leaving the school of a sophist might give as a tribute to his teacher if the latter were a Christian and if the audience were made up of individuals educated in the conventions of sophistic rhetoric." (Kennedy, 1980: 140 - 41). Nevertheless, it is Lactantius who, notes George A. Kennedy, "took upon himself the mission of setting forth the teachings of Christianity in a style which would win the respect of the most discriminating reader and with arguments based on evidence in Greek and Latin writers, not on that in the **Bible**." (Kennedy, 1980:148).

So, generally speaking, the case as regards form and content, even within a Christian context, is not as clear cut as Augustine presumes. His saying "....the Spirit gives life," doesn't often work, for Christian orators/writers as Thaumaturgus and Lactantius want very much to stick to "the letter," to express their thoughts correctly and rhetorically. It is true they give priority to the Scriptures when they are given a choice between the divine power of thought and speech practising, thus giving a second ranking to words, i.e. form. Deep down in their hearts though, they were unable to shake off the influence of the mighty sophists. Still technical rhetoric is alive and well and finds public recognition, and a hearty one, too, even among Christian orators and writers and more than that by the sixteenth-century rhetors.

The sixteenth-century idolizes figures such as Quintilian, Cicero, Aristotle and books such as the ubiquitous **Rhetorica ad Herennium**. "Throughout the sixteenth-century the study of rhetoric in English Universities was based on rhetorical works of Cicero. It was also suggested that the student know Quintilian, and derive a theoretical or philosophical understanding of the subject from Aristotle." (Sonnino, 1968:47) This, of course, is another way of saying that form is back in full swing in the Renaissance, despite the epistemologists' efforts to keep body and soul, form and content together.

The Elizabethans re-enforce the Medieval rhetoricians' tendency to regard poetry as an art of words and expressions. They concentrate heavily on the figures of rhetoric, subject these figures to rules, and further teach these rules without too much worrying about subject matter. Cicero's elocution, the figures and styles of the rhetoricians, and

Aristotle's diction become the single subject of treatises in this period. The Renaissance humanists are enamored of both the language and literature of antiquity so much so that they spare no effort to recover all knowledge pertinent to them. Their purpose is to reprocess that knowledge and produce it anew as the basis of the twin ideals of wisdom and eloquence and the core of their curricula. And the more the humanists learned about the classics, the more they discovered that rhetoric was the discipline which has created forms, disposed the contents, and ornamented the pages which they admired and sought to imitate.

But our generalizing that Renaissance humanists are intoxicated with stylistic adornments and oblivious to subject matter tantamounts to telling half the truth, because, as we have indicated earlier, the epistemologists have other notions as regards the form-content dichotomy. They coalesce to challenge the classical way of deductive thinking and invite experimentations with another method, one based on the scientifically inductive process. Of all the epistemologists, Francis Bacon and John Descartes are the most influential; each in his own way has a pithy impact on rhetoric in general and the dichotomy in particular, Bacon positively and Descartes negatively. For that reason, I am going to confine myself to Bacon only.

Bacon's attitude toward form and content could be noted in his celebrated statement, "the duty and office of Rhetoric is to apply Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will. (Dick, 1955:307) Unlike the classicists, he asseverates content and prefers it to form. Like them, though, he had always been conscious of the constituents of a beautiful style. That is why he is veritably named "the greatest poet of science." He wants to make sure that speakers/writers understood the content of a word fully before they decided to choose it. It is the scientist that speaks here, of course. The poet in him wants that word to be just right-- beautiful. This notion is a precursor of Saussure's signifier and signified as well as twentieth-century semantists who would agree with his observation of "the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding." (Dick, 1955:470) Simultaneously, he attacks those who are over enthusiastic in their dealing with concepts, that is to say, subject matter independent of its form. He sets the scientific truth as a criterion to check on the content of systems for an empirically pragmatic validity. As a consequence of that, as Hugh C. Dick says, Bacon is "content to break with the Elizabethan tradition because of his conviction that scientific ideas may best be expressed in a clear, unadorned style." (Dick, 1955: xvii). Unadorned his style it is true; yet it is one of the most beautifully written, gracefully moving, and geometrically symmetrical styles in the history of the English language. Consciously or unconsciously, Bacon is aware of the power of form as an asset to be used in the service of content.

Notwithstanding, Bacon's over-enthusiasm puts a special strain on his scientific approach. On one hand, he refutes the inductive method that moves from particular instances to general premises and then to judgement and conclusion. These particular instances, according to Bacon, come as a result of response to messages stored in the mind via the senses. These messages could be blurred or inaccurate. Therefore, con-

cludes Bacon, it is wrong to accept the argument that "the sense of man is the measure of things." (Dick, 1955: xvii).

On the other hand, he adopts the same inductive method "to be the form of demonstration which upholds the sense, and closes with nature, and comes to the brink of operation, if it does not actually deal with it." (Dick, 1955:442). The question here is, of course, how does his inductive method "uphold the sense" while the same method, when used by others, does not. The answer to the question would indirectly reveal that though Bacon is in favor of the unitary nature of the form-content dichotomy, he nevertheless favors content to form. His preference to content could also be detected in his handling of syllogism as a means for establishing principles. "The syllogism consists of propositions; propositions of words; and words are the tokens and signs of notions. Now if the very notions of the mindbe improperly and overhastily abstracted from facts, vague, not sufficiently definite, faulty in short in many ways, the whole edifice tumbles." (Dick, 1955: 441) His admitting that syllogism consists of propositions and words tantamounts to recognizing the function of "invention" and "disposition," i.e. content in a speech or argument. When he rejects syllogism in principle, he is in fact objecting to the form of the argument part and parcel and not its content. This could probably speak to the fact that he was ready to break with the Elizabethan tradition, especially its emphasis on stylistic decoration and, taking in good part the "plain style" that could express scientific ideas in a clear, unadorned style.

The dawning of science in the Renaissance has to have an impact on all branches of knowledge later on, including rhetoric. In the light of John Locke's and British empiricists' new logic, the teaching of rhetoric asserts the value of classical rhetoric in Greece and opts to part company with the Greek's philosophical assumptions about rhetoric. The neoclassicists, in particular Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, and John Dryden, write emphatically that the English language has to be "patterned after Aristotle's **Poetics**, Horace's **Ars Poetica**, and **Longinus' On the Sublime** (Golden, Berquist and Coleman, 1976:55). These writers "came to believe that if the English language hoped to live as a viable instrument of expression, it must be patterned after the eternal precepts set forth in [the works quoted above], in which they considered as "the desiderata of effective literary composition." (Golden, Berquist and Coleman, 1976:55) The neoclassicists worked very hard to establish a sound basis for taste.(qtd. in Kennedy, 1980:226) and "They found this in the principles of classical critics, fully developed and extended in all their implications, and illustrated by the models of classical works of art and literature. The object of all art was the imitation of nature, (Kennedy, 1980:226). Their fascination with the classicists obsessed them with rules so much so that they had not enough time left for subject matter per se. It goes without saying that their output is honorific, **sui generi**, sometimes, but their "besetting flaw, "as Kennedy observes, "is the persistent tendency of rules to overshadow invention [content] (Kennedy, 1980:226).

During the same fifty years of neoclassicism, the period that housed Swift, Pope, Addison and Dryden, there appears a resurgence of Francis Bacon's modern rhetoric/ logic. The most prominent figures of the new rhetoric/ logic movement are George

Campbell and Hugh Blair, both of whom could be described as fathers of modern rhetoric. Amazingly though, they still are neoclassicists in the sense they did not intend to do away with classical rhetoric, but to make it more understandable by going beyond it. In fact we can go a little bit further to say that George Campbell especially is the first man ever, in my opinion, to come so close to welding the two components of our dichotomy despite the fact that he is a celebrated disciple of Quintilian and Cicero.

The core and crux of Campbell's rhetorical theory nests in his concept of truth, the logical truth. Here is my favorite remark, "Logical truth consisteth in the conformity of our conceptions to their archetypes in the nature of things. This conformity is perceived by the mind, either immediately on a bare attention to the ideas under review, or mediately by a comparison of these with other recited ideas." (qtd. in Howell, 1971:585) Campbell's "conformity of conceptions to their archetypes" means that words are signs of things and "their meaning is determined by having recourse to the things they signify" (p. 595). He goes further to say that "If the meaning which a statement assigns to objects corresponds to the meaning which the objects independently have, then the statement may safely be said to make sense" (p.592). We know that the same precept could be taken as the starting point in modern linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure, again) and modern criticism, heralded by I.A. Richards, especially his views on **ideas**, **agents**, and **referents**.

Campbell's assertion of the conformity of "conceptions" and "archetypes," "signs" and "objects" emanates from his theory of moral reasoning, a theory which makes his overall rhetorical theory efficacious. The marriage of conceptions to archetypes, signs to objects and vice versa results in meaning, but meaning won't be adequate if archetypes and objects were not concretely warranted truths. Such palpable truthfulness necessitates trust between the sender and receiver in a communicative act, provided the sender is an honest and trustworthy person, who practises virtue before he preaches it.

Therefore, we maintain that moral reasoning is the cornerstone of Campbell's rhetorical theory. Unlike Bacon and Locke, he steers away from scientific reasoning on the ground it deals with abstract truths and rejects contradictions and multiple degrees of certainty. This is the biggest irony of all. It turns out that moral reasoning is not only Campbell's strong point; it is also his weak one. Campbell divides moral reasoning into four species--experience, analogy, testimony, and calculation of chances (pp. 123-29). The four species tell us, without even a previous knowledge that Campbell is a clergyman, and as such, he won't be able to defend his theory of meaning, welding conceptions and archetypes, all down the line. That is why his theory did not endure. Here also we understand why he brushed off scientific reasoning as a means of persuasion. Scientific reasoning does not always agree with religious revelations, miracles, and things taken on faith, and won't consider seriously Campbell's constituents of moral reasoning as elements of persuasion, all being below the level of probability.

Campbell, a presbyterian minister, raises the credibility of experience, analogy, testimony, and calculation of chances above the level of probability on the merit of faith only. But these are not absolute species. Would Campbell accept the experience,

analogy, testimony and calculation of chances of Man or the Christian man? Well, this is not a theological treatise. But we are sure that Bacon, Descartes, and Locke, among others, will not accept Campbell's averment for one cannot take things on faith when he is after truth, the logical truth, and not only the theological truth. Campbell's theory of rhetoric succeeds in expostulating the right methodology for merging conception and archetypes, form and content in a unitary, two-faced plane; the methodology, however, goes astray in application, for the theological and scientific truths can hardly be said to speak to the same question.

Hugh Blair seems to have fallen in the same traphole, for he on one hand, allies true rhetoric with sound logic: "True rhetoric and sound logic are very nearly allied. The study of arranging and expressing our thoughts with propriety, **teaches** to think, as well as to speak, accurately (qtd. in Howell, 1971:650). On the other hand, he declines to accept close connection between rhetoric and the moral and intellectual nature of man: 'to Blair, the conception of eloquence with truth and falsehood was valid without being involved in the moral and intellectual nature of man.'" (Howell, 1971:655) Such discrepancy would, of course, bring the sophists to the fore, especially their motto of the end justifies the means. I am not trying to label Blair as a Sophist--be it far from it--for he, more often than not, resorts to reason and logic, as mentioned above, to execute his composition; in his first lecture, addressing writers, "Blair emphasized that the study of composition was in fact the study of reason itself." (Howell, 1971:649-50). The question that presents itself nonetheless is why did not Blair emphasize the morality of the speaker/writer and righteousness of the purpose that he is after in his definition of eloquence, which he defines as "the Art of speaking in such a manner as to attain the end for which we speak, " for instance? (Blair, 1965, II:2) It might be that part of the answer lies in Blair's conception that **truth** and **goodness** are inherent in the substance of words. Or that Blair concurred with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom he had consulted in his formative years, that man is innately and idiosyncratically good when he is born. Or "Perhaps he felt that it was unnecessary, or that it was risky and hazardous, to do so," as Wilbur Samuel Howell notes (Howell, 1971: 655).

Whatever the arguement, Blair remains a classicist rhetorician despite a thin skin of appeal to science and logic in his argumentation. Such characteristic of longing for the golden past is noteable in the ten lectures on eloquence. Blair is of the opinion that modern eloquence is inferior to ancient eloquence, and that the names of "Demosthenes and Cicero, stand, at this day, unrivalled in fame; and it would be held presumptuous and absurd, to pretend to place any modern whatever on the same, or even on a nearly equal, rank" (II,38). The reason that moderns have come to trail behind is their over-reliance on reason and accuracy, their abrogation of elevating imagination and warming passions, and their abating appeals to equity and human feelings, as Blair postulates (II,pp. 226-27, 243, 244-45, 31-32). Cicero himself could not have said it any better, and Cicero was a prophet of form, not content.

Realizing that he has gone back too far in forgetting content in an age that had lent itself freely to reason, Blair warns modern apprentices in legal oratory to "beware of considering even to judicial Orations of Cicero or Demosthenes, as exact models of the

manner of speaking which is adapted to the present state of the Bar" (II, 76). Never mind self-contradiction. Blair, in actuality, remains traditional to the bones in spite of his pronouncing the topical system of classical rhetoric incapable of producing anything but trivial discourse (II, 181-82), and in spite of his advising the young speaker that improvement in speaking would come from the developing of moral qualities, the acquisition of deep and wide knowledge and the study of great rhetoricians and critics (II, 228, 233, 234, 235, 239, 242). He still analyzes style along the lines of classical tropes and figures. It is true that he is selective concerning these tropes and figures, quantitatively speaking; yet, his focus all in all is primarily on the form rather than the substance of his speech. His lecture, "Means of Improving in Eloquence," attests unfailingly to his keen interest in Gorgias, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian--without adhering to the last's code of ethics as regards the speaker and the subject matter. If my thesis about form winning over content in classical rhetoric is valid by now, Blair, proven a classicist, leans towards form in the form-content dichotomy. Deep down in his heat, nonetheless, Blair wanted to see the approach to form modernized.

Unexpectedly, the nineteenth-century attempts to do away with the "newness" and innovation of Campbell's and Blair's theories. The most brusque spokesman against Campbell in particular is Richard Whately who seemed to say that rhetoric started and ended with Aristotle and all that modernization attributed to the so-called **founders of the new school was old wives' tales. Being Aristotelian zealot, Whately** affirms the power of syllogism, the syllogistic examination of accepted truths, and the deductive method that would produce these truths. Unlike Aristotle, however, Whately says that propositions could not be invented but have to be in existence in the form of "general maxims" or particular testimony ... (Whately, 1963:39-40) These propositions, Whately adds, "should be consistent with the actual state of the case" (Whately, 1963:39-40).

If we ponder over both quotations above, we catch Whately interestingly contradicting himself. It should be noted that we are not interested in the contradiction as such, but in the light it sheds on our thesis of the interaction between form and content in the nineteenth-century literature. For a proposition to be consistent with the "actual state of the case," i.e. truth, it has to be established inductively and not deductively. Therefore ... Whately [makes] it impossible for logic [a stem of rhetoric] even to establish truth in what whately himself called the strict logical sense of the term. (Howell, 1971: 703) Thus, we are back to witnessing truths handled as probabilities subjected to syllogistic examination and this is what we have been all along afraid of--the utilization of logic to present falsehood as truth, that is to say, crooked content conveyed through logically sound form. Notwithstanding, we have to be thankful that whately drew our attention to the fact that form and content won't be one even except when content assumed the status of a "Law."

Right after whately's era, the elocutionists of the nineteenth-century divorce themselves from any obligation to content and commit themselves to the mechanical matters of eloquence such as gesture, voice, costumes, etc. The come-back of the elocutionists make history adversely by affecting the study of stylistics in particular and rhe-

toric in general. Both rhetorical stylistics and stylistics of rhetoric as of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century have become institution-alized and rhetoric per se, having failed to be a theory of poetical literature, resigns its position to move behind the scenes of the literary stage in the twentieth-century.

In sum, what I have tried to establish is to shed some light on the classical notion that rhetorical transaction depends on the triade of speaker/writer, message, and listener/reader, the value of each deciding whether the message is content-oriented, form-inclined, or truthfully objective. When the form and content of a message are interdependent, the encoder--speaker/writer and decoder--listener/reader of that message should be impersonal to the point of instrumentality.

As the encoder and decoder of rhetorical situations have all along been humans, the form-content dichotomy suffered as it will always do. Plato, Aristotle, Christian clergy, Francis Bacon, and George Campbell give more weight to content; the sophists, Cicero, the Elizabethans (excepting the epistemologists), the Neoclassicists, and Blair favor form. Quintilian preaches the marriage of form and content, but his peroration remains in the sphere of well-wishing, for it did not receive attentive ears. In the department of the Humanities, form and content have never and won't ever, as I think, attain an interdependent status.

Notes

1. See entries **mer-bh** and **weid** in the appendix of **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language** (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc. and Houghton Mifflin company, 1973; and **form** in **The Oxford English Dictionary** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) -- microprint.
2. It is worth noting that the quote is borrowed from M. Guignet, **St. Gregoire de Naziane, Orateur et e'pistolier** (Paris, 1922), p. 46.
3. Enthymeme is so much like rhetorical syllogism that it could easily be taken for one. The difference, however, is a level of importance. The premises of the enthymeme as noted in the text above, are probabilities; those of syllogism are universal facts. The difference serves our cause that Aristotle's view of content is different from ours. His, to say the least, is not the aesthetic content, but a pragmatic one, self-serving means and could be used to deceive and not to tell facts. Consider the following enthymeme which hides its malice behind seemingly sound premises:
 All Americans like hamburger and French Fries. (first premise).
 Dick is an American. (second Premise)
 Therefore, Dick likes hamburger and French fries. (conclusion).

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