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The *Rhetoric to Alexander*: How to Win our Case by Playing with Contraries

Riassunto: L'opposizione dei contrari è sempre stata considerata uno strumento stilistico e argomentativo particolarmente efficace per raggiungere la persuasione. Nella *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* l'autore spiega dettagliatamente come sfruttare i contrari nell'uso dei *loci communes*, nell'elaborazione delle *pisteis* e nell'impiego delle figure. Il mio scopo è qui quello di richiamare l'attenzione su tutte queste situazioni e, per capire meglio quanto i precetti dell'autore si fondino sul procedimento logico che permette ai contrari di ottenere un effetto persuasivo, mi servirò di un confronto con quanto Aristotele dice a questo proposito nella *Rhetorica* e nei *Topica*.

Keywords: contraries, antithesis, logic, style

Immediately after mentioning the γένη and the εἴδη[1] of public speeches the anonymous author[2] of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* starts its teaching by giving his addressee

[1]The authenticity of the distinction of public speeches into three γένη (δημηγορικόν, ἐπιδεικτικόν, δικανικόν) and seven εἴδη (προτρεπτικόν, ἀποτρεπτικόν, ἐγκωμιαστικόν, ψεκτικόν, κατηγορικόν, ἀπολογητικόν, ἐξεταστικόν) is one of the most debated questions concerning the relationship between the *Rhetoric to Alexander* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: for a discussion of different hypotheses on this matter see, e.g., Manfred Fuhrmann, *Das systematische Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 11f.; David Mirhady, "Aristotle, the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* and the *tria genera causarum*," in: W. W. Fortenbaugh and D. C. Mirhady, eds., *Peripatetic Rhetoric after Aristotle*, RUSCH VI (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 54–65; Pierre Chiron, Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, Texte établi et traduit par P. Chiron (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), LXXXIXf.

[2]In his Teubner edition Fuhrmann (*Anaximenis Ars Rhetorica, quae vulgo fertur Aristotelis ad Alexandrum*, edidit M. Fuhrmann (Lipsiae: B.G. Teubner, 1966)) accepts the attribution to Anaximenes; in the French edition of Chiron (Pseudo-Aristote,

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advice about the use of the common topics that allow exhortation and dissuasion. It will be possible to exhort somebody to do something, he says, if we prove that this thing is *just*, *lawful*, *expedient*, *honourable*, *pleasant*, and *easily practicable*. In the case of something difficult, we must say that it is *feasible* and doing it is *a necessity*. To dissuade somebody from doing something, conversely, we should use contrary arguments, i.e., we must prove that this thing is *not just*, *not lawful*, *not expedient*, *not honourable*, *not pleasant*, and *not practicable*; if this is not possible we must say that it *will take a great deal of effort* and that it is *not necessary* (*Rh. Al.* 1421b 23–31). The author then explains the nature of these possible predicates and shows how to exploit them to build arguments according to given criteria. Let me consider a few examples from analogy and contrariety because they show impressive similarities with Aristotle's rational considerations of these phenomena.

The first case regards justice. A possible argument from analogy —we read in the text—is: "*As it is just to do good in return to those who do us good, so it is just not to do harm to those who do us no evil*."[3] When built from opposites, the same example runs: "*As it is just to punish those who do us harm, so it is proper to do good in return to those who do us good*" (*Rh. Al.* 1422a 31–38). The author does not give a reason for the logical process that makes the two arguments persuasive, but I cannot refrain from mentioning the fact that very similar examples illustrate Aristotle's discussion of the use of contraries in the *Topics*. Aristotle considered the role of contraries already when he was defining the nature of the dialectical premises for a deductive reasoning. Premises, he says, are dialectical when they are either received opinions[4] or

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Rhétorique à Alexandre), on the contrary, this work is published under the name of "Pseudo-Aristote."

[3]English quotations from the *Rhetoric to Alexander* are from H. Rackham's translation in the Loeb Classical Library, *Aristotle, Vol. XVI* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1937).

[4]"Received opinions" is the translation for ἔνδοξα. They are, as Aristotle explains right at the beginning of the *Topics* (100b 22f.), those opinions "which commend themselves to all or to the majority or to the wise—that is, to all of the wise or to the majority or to the most famous and distinguished of them" (trans. E. S. Forster in the Loeb Classical Library, *Aristotle, Vol. II* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1960)); cf. *Top.* 104a 8f.; 105a 35f.; S. Raphael, "Rhetoric, Dialectic and Syllogistic Argument: Aristotle's Position in *Rhetoric* I-II," *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 153–67 (p. 155); Glenn W. Most, "The Uses of *Endoxa*: Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Rhetoric*," in D. J. Furley and A. Nehamas, eds., *Aristotle's Rhetoric. Philosophical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 167–90; K. Pritzl, "Opinions as Appearances: *Endoxa* in Aristotle," *Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1994): 41–50; F. Piazza, *Il*

what is similar to received opinions[5] or what is contradicting the contrary of received opinions (*Top.* 104a 8f.). As to the last case, he explains it by means of the following example: "*if it is a received opinion that 'one ought to do good to one's friends', it will also be a received opinion that 'one ought not to do them harm'*"[6] or, conversely, "*if we ought to do good to our friends, we ought not to do good to our enemies*" (*Top.* 104a 22f.). Then, after shaping a comparison stating a contrary about a contrary ("*if we ought to do good to our friends, we ought also to do harm to our enemies*"), Aristotle makes a very important remark, i.e. he raises doubts about the contrariety of the two utterances "*doing good to friends*" and "*doing harm to enemies*" (*Top.* 104b 29f.).

That they are not contrary is indeed what he proves when, a few pages later, he takes into account the different ways of combining contraries (*Top.* 112b 27ff.). It is actually possible, we read, to combine either each of the contrary verbs with each of the contrary objects, or both contrary verbs with the same object or just one verb with the two contrary objects. In the first case, however, we do not form a contrariety because, when we say "*to do good to friends and to do harm to enemies*" we mention two actions that are equally "object of choice and belong to the same character" and when we say "*to do harm to friends and to do good to enemies*" we again mention two actions that are equally "object of avoidance and belong to the same character" (*Top.* 113a 1f.). It is actually only when one of the two actions is "object of choice" and the other "object of avoidance" that we form a contrariety, as when we combine contrary verbs with the same object, e.g., if we say "*to do good to friends and to do harm to friends*" or "*to do good to enemies and to do harm to enemies*", and when we combine the same verb with two contrary objects, e.g., "*to do good to friends and to do good to enemies*" or "*to do harm to friends and to do harm to enemies*."

If we now look back at the examples given by the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* it is not difficult to recognize that the example from contraries is shaped according to the first way of combination

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corpo della persuasione. L'entimema nella retorica greca (Palermo: Novecento, 2000), 132f. Dialectic shares the use of endoxal premises with rhetoric: cf. the definition of εἰκός in Arist. *An. Pr.* 70a 4f.

[5]For example: "if it is a received opinion that there is a single art of grammar, it might seem to be a received opinion that there is only one art of flute-playing" (*Top.* 104a 18f.); cf. also 105b 4f.

[6]Cf. how Aristotle explains this case: "Now that we *ought to harm our friends* is contrary to the received opinion [sc. "we ought to do good to our friends"], and this stated in the contradictory form is that we *ought not to harm our friends*" (*Top.* 104a 24f.).

of contraries mentioned by Aristotle, i.e. when a contrary is stated of a contrary in a comparison. Indeed, "*to punish those who do us harm*" and "*to do good in return to those who do us good*" are received opinions that do not form a contrariety, because both actions are "object of choice": they are actually both "just," which is exactly what the author wants to maintain. What the author calls "argument from opposites," therefore, differs from the "argument from analogy" only because there the two statements mention two actions that again are both "object of choice," but in such a relation that the second member of the analogy "*it is just not to do harm to those who do us no evil*" consists, as we have seen explained by Aristotle, of a received opinion that results from contradicting the contrary of what has been stated in the first member, i.e. "*it is just to do good in return to those who do us good*." In the *Rhetoric to Alexander* there are no examples for the case of an argument based on what is "not just," but it is obvious that the author would have built it from analogous actions or from opposites combined in such a way that the two actions would both have been "object of avoidance."

This is indeed evident in the case of legality. One of the two examples from opposites offered by the author is again built by joining together two statements that once more are not contrary to each other, in so far as both focus on lawful actions as "object of choice": "*If the laws enjoin that those who direct the affairs of the community honourably and justly are to be honoured, it is clear that they deem those who destroy public property deserving of punishment*" (*Rh. Al.* 1422b 16–19). The other example, conversely, aims to prove that two actions are both unlawful, i.e. both "object of avoidance": "*If the law prohibits the distribution of public property, it is clear that the lawgiver judged all persons who take a share in it to be guilty of an offence*" (*Rh. Al.* 1422b 14–16). In this case, however, there is a very important detail that deserves to be stressed: the opposites on which this example is based form a correlative opposition, i.e. they are reciprocal in their relation as is the case in the *topos* ἐκ τῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα considered by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* (1397a 23f.) and exemplified by the comment of Diomedon about taxes: "*If it is not shameful for you to sell them, neither is it for me to buy*."[7]

[7]The mutual relationship of two terms or concepts is frequently taken into account by Aristotle as, e.g., already in *Rhet.* 1392a 8f. referring to possibility: "If it is possible for the opposite of something to exist or to have happened, the opposite would also seem to be possible; for example, if it is possible for a human being to be healthy, it is possible also to be ill; for the potentiality of opposites is the same, in so far as they are opposites" (trans. George A. Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric. A Theory*

Also when referring to expediency the author uses arguments from opposites to illustrate the two points of view. In the first case the expediency of two actions is proved by the fact that both, again, are "object of choice": "*If it is profitable to honour virtuous citizens, it would be expedient to punish vicious ones*" (*Rh. Al.* 1422b 38–40). Conversely, the use of opposites in the second example is different: "*If you think it inexpedient for us to go to war with Thebes single-handed, it would be expedient for us to make an alliance with Sparta before going to war with Thebes*" (*Rh. Al.* 1422b 40–1423a 2). Here the author wants to prove the inexpediency of a certain behaviour (*going to war with Thebes single-handed*) by means of the statement that its contrary (*making an alliance with Sparta before going to war with Thebes*) would be expedient: the first action, "object of avoidance," is actually contrary to the second, "object of choice," in the pattern of a direct sequence of "a contrary following upon a contrary," as Aristotle explains in the *Topics* (113b 27f.) and even more clearly illustrates in the *Rhetoric* when he deals with the *topos* ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων, the first of the common topics for demonstrative enthymemes (*Rhet.* 1397a 7f.): "*for one should look to see if the opposite [predicate] is true of the opposite [subject], refuting the argument if it is not, confirming if it is*." It is the combination of contraries that he illustrates by saying, e.g., that "*to be temperate is a good thing, for to lack self-control is harmful*."[8]

It is indeed on this kind of contraries that most rhetorical strategies are founded. According to the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* also παραδείγματα can be created ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων (1429 b 36f.).[9]

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of Civic Discourse (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)); cf. *Top.* 114a 13f. and Edward M. Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, 3 vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1877), II.179f.; 186f.; 241f.; William M. A. Grimaldi, *Aristotle,* Rhetoric *II. A Commentary* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988), 236; 295; Christoph Rapp, *Aristoteles. Rhetorik*, übersetzt und erläutert von Ch. Rapp, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), II.752f. Cicero dealt with this kind of opposites in *Inv.* 1.47 and *Top.* 49.

[8]Cf. *Top.* 113b 27f.; 119a 32f.; Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, pp. 238f.; Grimaldi, *Aristotle,* Rhetoric *II*, p. 293; Rapp, *Aristoteles. Rhetorik*, II.751.

[9]According to the author, παραδείγματα are "actions that have occurred previously and are similar to, or the opposite of, those which we are now discussing. They should be employed on occasions when your statement of the case is unconvincing and you desire to illustrate it, if it cannot be proved by the argument from probability (εἰκός)" (*Rh. Al.* 1429a 21f.). As Pierre Chiron notes, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis* dans la *Rhétorique à Alexandre* (Ps.-Aristote, *Rh. Al.* chap. 7–14)," *Rhetorica* 16 (1998): 349–91 (p. 357), there is between εἰκότα and παραδείγματα "une sorte de relation de complémentarité." On their relationship and their use see my analysis in Lucia Calboli Montefusco, "Argumentative Devices in the Rhetorica ad Alexandrum," in D. Mirhady and David-Corey Brennan, eds., *Influences on Peripatetic Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 105–21 (p. 109f.).

When we want to use them to lead our listeners to share our purpose we do not exploit the frequency or the non-frequency of an action, as normally happens when we use as παραδείγματα actions that are reasonably expected to happen (κατὰ λόγον) or are against reasonable expectation (παρὰ λόγον).[10] What conveys persuasion, in this case, is the fact that what we want to maintain is proved to be the opposite of a mistake:[11] "*I mean, for instance*—the author says—, *if you produce a case of people overreaching their allies and their friendship consequently being dissolved, and say 'But for our part we shall keep their alliance for a long time if we deal with them fairly and on terms of partnership' and again, if you produce an instance of other people who went to war without preparation and who were consequently defeated, and then say 'We should have a better hope of victory provided we are prepared for war'*" (*Rh. Al*. 1429b 38–1430a 6). It is evident that here the "object of choice," i.e. what we assert to be profitable, is contrary to the "object of avoidance," i.e. the mistake mentioned in the παράδειγμα.

The author never mentions the logical reasoning underlying the use of this kind of contraries, but certainly the same reasoned argument is one of the two sources from which, according to him, we can also create ἐνθυμήματα ("considerations"): ἐνθυμήματα, he says, are "facts that run counter to the speech or action in question, and also those that run counter to anything else" (*Rh. Al.* 1430a 23f.).[12] Indeed, if the first kind of contraries mentioned in this definition does not share the logical reasoning implicit in the use of the *topos* ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων, the second does. In the first case the ἐνθύμημα exploits contraries that work in a very particular way because they are inconsistencies that affect the ethos of the person and make him unworthy of credit. We will obtain a good supply of these ἐνθυμήματα, we are told by the author, "by pursuing the method described under

[10]Consistently with this distinction actions reasonably expected to happen lead to persuasion, whereas those that are against reasonable expectation lead to incredulity (*Rh. Al.* 1429a 29f.). Only by focusing on their frequency can the orator manage to use them in his own favour or against his adversary.

[11]See Bennett J. Price, Paradeigma *and* Exemplum *in Ancient Rhetorical Theory* (Diss. Berkeley: 1975), 22f.; 35.

[12]Despite the use of the same term, the ἐνθύμημα described by the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* is not supposed to be a deductive reasoning as in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. It does, however, share with the Aristotelian enthymeme brevity and the opposition of contraries: see Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, p. 363; Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, cited in n. 1 above, p. 145; Calboli Montefusco, "Argumentative Devices in the Rhetorica ad Alexandrum," cited in n. 9 above, p. 118.

the investigatory species of oratory, and by considering whether the speech contradicts itself in any way" (1430a 24f.). It is indeed when he was dealing with the εἶδος ἐξεταστικόν (*Rh. Al.* 1427b 12f.) that the author made a list of these possible inconsistencies in someone's conduct: "The investigator —he said—must try to find some point in which either the speech that he is investigating is self-contradictory or the actions or the intentions of the person under investigation run counter to another" (*Rh. Al.* 1427b 14–16).[13] Because of their objective nature[14] these inconsistencies cannot be denied and affect the credibility of the adversary working unfavourably when we use them to create ἐνθυμήματα against him. It is actually the same kind of inconsistencies upon which also τεκμήρια ("tokens")[15] are founded and that, once highlighted, weaken what the adversary says by leading the hearers to infer inductively that all that he has said or done is unsound (*Rh. Al.* 1430a 14f.).

If this kind of contraries works one way, i.e. they can only be used against our opponent, we can use reasoned argument based on the *topos* ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων either against the opponents or to support our case. According to the situation, by means of ἐνθυμήματα, it is indeed possible to maintain that the actions in question either "run counter to the principles of justice, law, expediency, honour, feasibility, facility or probability, or to the character of the speaker or the usual course of events" or, conversely, that they are the opposite of those that are unjust, unlawful, inexpedient, etc. (*Rh. Al.* 1430a 26f.). Again, in other words, we have to do with the argumentative role of an "object of choice" as opposed to an "object of avoidance," and we can share Grimaldi's conclusion that "If we were to seek an exact parallel to this in Aristotle we find it in the enthymeme which he derives from the general topic of opposites (B 23, 97a 7ff.)."[16] Ἐνθυμήματα founded on this topic are actually very useful

[13]See in this regard Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, p. 362, and the notes *ad loc.* in Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, cited in n. 1 above.

[14]See Edward M. Cope, *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric* (London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1867), 425.

[15]Τεκμήρια are "previous facts running counter to the fact asserted in the speech, and points in which the speech contradicts itself" (*Rh. Al.* 1430a 14f.). On the peculiarity of this definition and its difference from Aristotle's understanding of the τεκμήριον see Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, pp. 360f.; "Observations sur le lexique de la *Rhétorique à Alexandre*," *Ktema* 24 (1999): 313–40 (p. 327); Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, cited in n. 1 above, pp. 143f.

[16]William M. A. Grimaldi, *Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1972), 78.

when used together with maxims,[17] e.g., says the author, to "meet interruptions summarily … pointing out that those who clamour are running counter to justice or law or public interest or morality" (*Rh. Al.* 1433a 24f.). It is indeed by highlighting these 'déviances' from agreed standards (as Pierre Chiron calls them)[18] that "we shall remove ill-feeling that we encounter by anticipating the criticism of our audience and the arguments of those who are going to speak on the other side (*Rh. Al.* 1432b 10f.). Let me quote at least one of the several examples given by the author: "*Now surely it is unreasonable that when the lawgiver enjoined that every litigant should be allowed two speeches, and when you of the jury have sworn to try the case according to the law, you yet refuse to listen even to a single speech*" (*Rh. Al.* 1432b 36f.). Here the actual behaviour of the jury (refusing to listen even to a single speech) is proved to be unlawful, and therefore "object of avoidance," because it is opposite to what the jury should do according to the law, i.e. to a behaviour "object of choice."

Before leaving this short overview of the use of contraries in argumentation I would like to call attention to the last πίστις taken into account by the author, the ἔλεγχοι ("refutations"). Their persuasive power again lies in the use of contraries, but in a very particular way. Usable to support our point of view or to undermine that of the adversary, the ἔλεγχος is first defined as "something that cannot be otherwise than as we say it is" (*Rh. Al*. 1431a 6f.). Then, after illustrating how ἔλεγχοι are drawn from necessities or impossibilities, the author sums up saying that these are the sources from where "We shall form (ποιησόμεθα) our refutations" (*Rh. Al*. 1431a 19f.). Necessities and impossibilities, moreover, are divided into two classes: what is necessary or impossible by nature and what is necessary as stated by us or impossible as stated by our adversaries. Between these two classes, however, there is not, as we would expect, a relationship from the universal to the particular. What, on the contrary, is worth noting is the logical power of the relationship between necessities

[17]Γνῶμαι and ἐνθυμήματα very often appear coupled together in use: cf. the lists of passages offered by Jürgen Sprute, *Die Enthymemtheorie der aristotelischen Rhetorik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1982), 143, and Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, pp. 363f. The only difference between them highlighted by the author is that "whereas considerations (ἐνθυμήματα) can only be constructed from contrarieties, maxims (γνῶμαι) can be exhibited both in connexion with contraries and simply by themselves" (*Rh. Al.* 1431a 35f.); on their relationship see Calboli Montefusco, "Argumentative Devices in the Rhetorica ad Alexandrum," cited in n. 9 above, pp. 117f.

[18]Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, pp. 362; 365.

and impossibilities; they are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin: what is necessary can actually be conceived as the contrary of what is impossible. Even if the author does not mention this important detail here, it is evident that the strength of this πίστις consists in this particular use of contraries. They work persuasively even if only one of them is stated. Indeed, when reading the examples quoted by the author, we see that *the natural necessity for living men to require food* cannot be refuted only because it implies *the natural impossibility for living men to live without food* and, again, *if it is by nature impossible that "A little boy stole a sum of money larger than he could carry and went off with it,"* this implies that *necessarily only a person strong enough is able to carry this sum of money*. It is because of that that the author can say that any ἔλεγχος "teaches the judges the truth" (*Rh. Al.* 1431b 4). As Pierre Chiron notes, this is the only πίστις which is not taken into account by the author when he is giving advice for refutation.[19]

Indeed, also when the instance appears necessary or impossible because it is so alleged by us or by our adversary, we can say that the ἔλεγχος is still irrefutable, if the necessity of what we maintain is confirmed by the impossibility of its contrary and, vice versa, if the impossibility of what the adversary says is confirmed by the necessity of the contrary of what we maintain.[20] In this regard the two examples quoted by the author again show this logical process: a thing necessary because so stated by us would be, e.g., saying that "*Men being scourged confess exactly what the people scourging them tell them to*." Here we have to do with evidence given under torture and with the physical pain of tortured men: how to lend weight to this πίστις or how to discredit it is actually a common topic dealt with in all rhetorical handbooks,[21] and the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* also takes this question into account (1432a 12f.) within his discussion

[19]Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, p. 371; Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, cited in n. 1 above, p. 149.

[20]For a different opinion see Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, pp. 372f.

[21]Since Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1376b 31f.) confessions under torture belong to the group of the so-called "atechnic" or "non-artistic" proofs; see Grimaldi, *Aristotle,* Rhetoric *II*, cited in n. 7 above, pp. 338f. Their use was shared by both parties, one of them stressing their credibility, the other stressing the fact that tortured men lie. Because of this possible *disputatio in utramque partem* Cicero, in *Inv*. 2.50, counts them among the *loci communes* based on the *amplificatio* of a *res dubia*; see L. Calboli Montefusco, "La force probatoire des πίστεις ἄτεχνοι: d'Aristote aux Rhéteurs Latins de la République et de l'Empire," in G. Dahan and I. Rosier-Catach, eds., *La Rhétorique d'Aristote, Traditions et Commentaires de l'Antiquité au XVII^e Siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), 13–35 (p. 32).

of the πίστεις that are "supplementary to what the persons say and do."[22] In this case, however, the truth of our statement is not related to the truth or the falsehood of the confessions of the scourged men: what we say "cannot be otherwise than as we say it is" only because its necessity is proved by the fact that it would be impossible for scourged men to stop their suffering, if they do not confess what the people scourging them want to know. As to a thing impossible because so stated by our adversary, the author quotes as example *the case of a contract that the opponent claims to have been made by us at a certain date at Athens, "whereas we are able to prove that during the period indicated we were away in some other city"*: here what "teaches the judges the truth", i.e. what makes our ἔλεγχος irrefutable, is indeed the fact that the impossibility of what the adversary maintains is proved by the necessity of our presence in this place to make the contract. It is probably not by chance that more or less the same example was later quoted by Cicero as a case of *argumentatio necessaria*.[23]

At this point it would be tempting to make a comparison with the Aristotelian ἐνθύμημα ἐλεγκτικόν, defined as "a bringing together of opposites in brief form" and praised because when contraries "are set side by side they are clearer to the hearer" (*Rhet.* 1400b 30f.; cf. 1418b 2f.). We would conclude, however, that it does not share much with the ἔλεγχος dealt with by the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander.* In the ἐνθύμημα ἐλεγκτικόν contraries, "set side by side," affect the quality of something and support the reasoning according to the pattern of the τόπος ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων. The contraries working in the ἔλεγχος of the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, necessity and impossibility, are, conversely, concepts that do not require to be set "side by side" because they themselves exclude one another. They always, in turn, tell the truth, whereas the contraries upon which the Aristotelian ἐνθύμημα ἐλεγκτικόν is based could both be not true.

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[22] As is well known, the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* distinguishes two kinds of πίστεις, those which are drawn ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, and those which are ἐπίθετοι τοῖς λεγομένοις καὶ τοῖς πραττομένοις. David Mirhady and Pierre Chiron have focused on their characteristics in two complementary studies: Mirhady, "Non-technical *Pisteis* in Aristotle and Anaximenes," *American Journal of Philology* 112 (1991): 5–28 (pp. 5f.), takes into account problems related to the second group, Chiron, "À propos d'une série de *pisteis*," cited in n. 9 above, pp. 349f., to the first. Despite some similarities, their relationship with Aristotle's distinction between πίστεις ἔντεχνοι and πίστεις ἄτεχνοι is not clear: see Calboli Montefusco, "La force probatoire des πίστεις ἄτεχνοι," cited in n. 21 above, pp. 13f.

[23] It is the example of the *simplex conclusio* (Cic. *Inv.* 1.45): *si vos me istuc eo tempore fecisse dicitis, ego autem eo ipso tempore trans mare fui, relinquitur, ut id, quod dicitis, non modo non fecerim, sed ne potuerim quidam facere*; cf. *Inv.* 1.63.

A detail, moreover, is quite interesting: Aristotle links the argumentative power of the ἐνθύμημα ἐλεγκτικόν with the pleasure offered by the λέξις ἀντικειμένη, i.e. that kind of λέξις, which, based on *cola*, is contrasted because "in each colon opposite lies with opposite or the same is yoked with [its][24] opposites" (*Rhet*. 1409b 36–1410a 1).[25] In a few words, therefore, Aristotle again mentions the three possible contrarieties that he had already pointed out in the *Topics* and, after providing a good number of examples, he concludes: "All these examples do what has been said. Such a *lexis* is pleasing because opposites are most knowable when put beside each other and because they are like a syllogism, for refutation [*elenkos*] is a bringing together of contraries" (*Rhet.* 1410a 1–23). Consistent with his frequent statements that men enjoy learning,[26] Aristotle actually prefers to focus on the cognitive function of contraries rather than stressing their stylistic effect. Nevertheless he takes into account *antithesis* within a wider context, i.e. together with *parisosis* and *paromoiosis*, as different ways to join together *cola* when the style is periodical. It is, we could say, a first draft of what will be the doctrine of the so-called Gorgianic figures.[27] Also the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* takes into account, as last remarks about style, the same three ways to combine sentences (*Rh. Al.* 1435b 25f.). As far as contraries are concerned (ἀντίθετον), however, his approach is more practical than philosophical: contrarieties are taken into account according to their relationship to language,

[24]Though using Kennedy's translation, I have put this word in square brackets, because otherwise the meaning of the passage gets lost: "the same is yoked with opposites" alludes to the possibility mentioned in the *Topics* and referred to above that just one verb is combined with two contrary objects or the same object is combined with two contrary verbs.

[25]Dealing with the λέξις of a speech Aristotle says (*Rhet.* 1409a 25f.) that it is "necessarily either *strung-on* (εἰρομένη) … or *turned down* (κατεστραμμένη). When κατεστραμμένη the λέξις is based on periods and it is pleasant because opposed to what is unlimited (*Rhet.* 1409b 1f.). When the period is divided into *cola* they can be juxtaposed or opposed; in this second case the λέξις is ἀντικειμένη.

[26]According to Aristotle not only do men naturally want to learn (*Metaph*. 980a 22), but also easily (*Rhet.* 1410b 10f.; *Probl*. 916b 29f.) and quickly (μάθησις ταχεῖα, *Rhet.* 1410b 21): the pleasure, therefore, is proportional to the rapidity of the knowledge offered by the speech.

[27]Cf. Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 4 I 135.19f.; *Thuc.* 2 I 424.12f. Usener-Radermacher; Gualtiero Calboli, *Cornifici Rhetorica ad Herennium.* Introduzione, Testo critico e Commento a cura di G. Calboli (Bologna: Pàtron, 1993²), 336f.; 535; Marie-Pierre Noël, "Gorgias et l'invention des GORGIEIA SCHEMATA," *Revue des Études Grecques* 112 (1999): 193–211.

to meaning, or to both at once.[28] In the first case only terms are opposite, as, e.g., "*rich and prosperous*" / "*poor and needy*"; in the second case actions, such as "*I nursed him when he was ill, but he has caused me a very great deal of harm*." Only in the third case, however, when the opposition concerns terms and meaning at once, does the ἀντίθετον imply a logical reasoning, being built on the *topos* ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων. This happens, e.g., if we say: "*It is not fair for my opponent to have my money and be a reach man while I from parting with my substance am a mere beggar*" (*Rh. Al.* 1435b 29–31). Probably because he was conscious of that the author himself considered it the best (κάλλιστον).

A last, very particular use of this kind of contraries is the case of irony (εἰρωνεία). Together with anticipation (προκατάληψις), postulates (αἰτήματα), and recapitulation (παλιλλογία), irony is considered by the author as an expedient useful in any kind of speech.[29] Its worth consists in the fact that it allows one to say something while giving the impression of not saying it or calling something by a name opposite to its own.[30] When working by means of contraries, however, irony forces the audience to a double logical reasoning; to maintain, e.g., that some people, who are pretending to have done benefits to the allies, did them, on the contrary, a very great deal of harm, while we, considered by them as bad men, gave them assistance, we can say, using opposite names: "*It appears that whereas these honourable gentlemen have done our allies a great deal of harm, we base creatures have caused them many benefits*" (*Rh. Al*. 1434a 27f.). Supposedly built according to the pattern of "a contrary following upon a contrary," this example actually requires first a mental effort to decode the message by means of the inversion of the first couple of contraries. Indeed, only after

[28]Later rhetorical handbooks often take into account the ἀντίθετον consistently with this distinction: cf., e.g., *Rhet. Her.* 4.21; 4.58; Quint. 9.3.81f.; Rutil. 19.19f. Halm; Alex. *RhG* III 36.26f. Spengel; Tib. *RhG* III 78.20f. Spengel. For more witnesses on the use of this figure and bibliographical references cf. Calboli, *Cornifici Rhetorica ad Herennium*, pp. 318f.; Josef Martin, *Antike Rhetorik. Technik und Methode* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1974), 293f.; Chiron, Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, cited in n. 1 above, p. 169.

[29]Cf. *Rh. Al*. 1432b 7. For textual difficulties in this passage see Chiron, Pseudo-Aristote, *Rhétorique à Alexandre*, cited in n. 1 above, pp. 154f.

[30]*Rh. Al.* 1434a 17f. Accordingly irony has been sometimes considered as a figure of thought, sometimes as a figure of speech. On the different kinds and uses of irony, see Martin, *Antike Rhetorik.*, cited in n. 28 above, pp. 263f.; Pierre Chiron, "L'ironie entre philosophie et rhétorique," in L. Calboli Montefusco, ed., *Papers on Rhetoric VII* (Roma: Herder, 2006), 49–66; Ilaria Torzi, Cum ratione mutatio. *Procedimenti stilistici e grammatica semantica* (Roma: Herder, 2007), 50f.

coupling "gentlemen" with a good action and "base creatures" with a bad one will the *topos* ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων be able to work persuasively.

Looking back now, we could wonder why the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, who seems to be so well acquainted with the persuasive power of contraries, never explains how they convey persuasion. Probably, however, this only reflects the pragmatism prevailing in his handbook, which, as has been said, teaches that "the important thing is to win the case, at whatever cost and by whatever means."[31]

[31] Antoine C. Braet, "On the Origin of Normative Argumentation Theory: The Paradoxical Case of the *Rhetoric to Alexander*," *Argumentation* 10 (1996): 347–59 (p. 348).