Articoli/1

Philosophy as Eloquence

Donald Phillip Verene

Articolo sottoposto a *peer-review.* Ricevuto il 10/11/2014 Accettato il 24/11/2014

Abstract: Modern philosophy beginning with Descartes, Locke, and Kant has separated itself from eloquence by placing *ars critica* over *ars topica*. The result is the reduction of philosophy to the problem of knowledge that takes the form of argument and counter-argument. The connection of philosophical thought and speech to the tropes of metaphor and irony is overlooked and lost and hence the power of language that philosophy enjoyed among the ancients is lost. We may turn to two modern figures to aid us in recovering a sense of eloquence in philosophy — Vico and Hegel. Otherwise, we are faced with the monotone and boredom of the current attachment to philosophy conceived and taught as the exercise of «critical thinking».

***

For you know well, my dear Crito, that to express oneself badly
is not only faulty as far as the language goes,
but does some harm to the soul

(Socrates, *Phaedo*)

All of modern philosophy can be accounted for in the line from the first preface of Kant's first *Critique*: «Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit [*Unser Zeitalter ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik, der sich alles unterwerfen muss*]»[1]. Looking backward from it is Descartes' dismissal of rhetoric and the other humanities from the method of right reasoning of his *Discours*, and looking forward from it are Derrida's doctrines of criticism in his *Grammatologie*.

Looking to the present we face the phenomenon of «critical thinking», the new and ever-widening thesis of educational theory, namely, that the general purpose of university instruction is to teach how to think critically. It has roots in American Pragmatism and ties to the political ideals of contemporary

[1] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by N.K. Smith, London 1958, p. 9; *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Hamburg 1956, p. 7.

Liberalism. We may ask: Is there a way out of this Neo-Kantian world that would reduce the love of wisdom to the problem of knowledge?

Whenever philosophy, in its history, reaches an *impasse*, it is because it has forgotten part of itself. It has attempted to reduce the pursuit of wisdom to the attainment of some form of knowledge that holds all that lies outside it to be error, and, once declared as error, this outside is forgotten. If we are to recover from the dominance of critique we must bring back to life what has been left behind. Philosophy advances by the power of memory, not by going forward toward novelty. We should remember that of which the poet Giuseppe Ungaretti reminds us: «Tutto, tutto, tutto è memoria».

We can look to that figure who lived out of his own time, the new scientist of history and professor of Latin eloquence, Giambattista Vico, who said, in what was to become his last public address on the academies and the relation between philosophy and eloquence:

> I hold the opinion that if eloquence does not regain the luster of the Latins and Greeks in our time, when our sciences have made progress equal to and perhaps even greater than theirs, it will be because the sciences are taught completely stripped of every badge of eloquence[2].

Is it possible for philosophy to recover its sense of eloquence, the connection with eloquence it enjoyed in its origins? Vico, following Cicero, saw Socrates as the most eloquent of philosophers: «The Academy established by Socrates was a place where he, with elegance, copiousness, and ornament, reasoned about all parts of human and divine knowing»[3]. Cicero, summing up ancient philosophy, said: «Wisdom is the knowledge of things divine and human and acquaintance with the cause of each of them»[4]. In the *Scienza nuova*, Vico, referring to Varro, says: «True wisdom should teach the knowledge of divine things in order to conduct human things to the highest good»[5]. Wisdom, then, is a knowledge of the whole, one part of which is human and the other, divine. As Vico says in his oration on human education, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, «the whole is really the flower of wisdom [*sapientiae flos esset*]»[6]. And, as he says at the end of his continuation of his autobiography, in his teaching he always aimed at «*la sapienza che parla*», a Ciceronian ideal shared by the great Humanists of the

[2] G.B. Vico, *The Academies and the Relation between Philosophy and Eloquence*, translated by D.P. Verene, in G.B. Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, translated by E. Gianturco, Ithaca 1990, p. 87; *Le Accademie e i rapporti tra la filosofia e l'eloquenza*, in Id., *Opere*, 2 voll., edited by A. Battistini, Milano 1990, vol. I, p. 406.
[3] Ivi, p. 86, p. 405.
[4] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 4.26.57; see also *De officiis*, 2.2.5. All citations to Latin and Greek works herein are to the Loeb Classical Library editions of Harvard University Press.
[5] G.B. Vico, *The New Science*, translated by T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch, Ithaca 1984, p. 110; *Principi di scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni* (1744), in Id., *Opere*, cit., vol. I, p. 561.
[6] G.B. Vico, *Study Methods*, cit., p. 77; *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, in Id., *Opere*, cit., vol. I, p. 208.

Renaissance, for, Vico says, he «never discussed matters pertaining to eloquence apart from wisdom»[7].

To recover the relation between philosophy and eloquence we may turn to Ernesto Grassi's thesis of «rhetoric as philosophy», which is derived from the Renaissance Humanist tradition and includes Vico's insistence on the priority of *ars topica*[8]. What the drive to the doctrine of critical thinking has forgotten is that *ars critica* cannot be separated from *ars topica*. *Ars critica*, taken in itself, is a self-repeating process that can bring nothing into being. It can do no more than look at what is given and critically reflect on it. It offers no power to reach the origin of what it finds around it as given. Criticism knows nothing of Vico's maxim, that «Doctrines must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat»[9]. In fact, criticism regards the pursuit of the truth of something as directed to the comprehension of its original as the «genetic fallacy». Yet as Grassi's thesis holds, it is a scandal to logic that logic cannot provide an account of its own beginning points. Logic applies its principles, but as to their foundations, it cannot tell us from whence and where[10].

Ars topica, taken in its broadest sense, is the subject of rhetoric, for rhetoric teaches us how to speak and from where — the places of memory from which we can draw forth oration. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant states:

> Force and elegance of speech (which together constitute rhetoric) belong to fine art; but oratory (*ars oratoria*), being the art of playing for one's own purpose upon the weaknesses of men (let this purpose be ever so good in intention or even in fact) merits no *respect* whatever [*ist gar keiner Achtung würdig*][11].

Given the prominence of the idea of respect in Kant's ethics, no stronger a condemnation is possible. Why is Kant's attitude so strident? Locke, another founding figure of modern philosophy, in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, concludes his discussion of the «Abuse of Words» by stating:

> if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats[12].

He emphasizes that in all discourses that intend to inform and instruct all elements of oratory are to be avoided. The true philosopher, then, is to strive for

[7] G.B. Vico, *Autobiography*, translated by M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin, Ithaca 1990, p. 199; *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo*, in Id., *Opere*, cit., vol. I, p. 84.
[8] E. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*, translated by J.M. Krois and A. Azodi, Carbondale and Edwardsville 1980.
[9] G.B. Vico, *New Science*, cit., p. 92; *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 537.
[10] E. Grassi, *Rhetoric*, cit., chapter 2.
[11] I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, translated by J.C. Meredith, Oxford 1964, p. 193; *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Hamburg 1974, p. 185.
[12] J. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols., edited by A.C. Fraser, Oxford 1894, vol. II, p. 146.

a way of speaking that will leave behind all the aspects of language that rhetoric studies.

Descartes states in *Discourse on the Method of rightly conducting one's reason and seeking the truth in the sciences*:

> Those with the strongest reasoning and the most skill at ordering their thoughts so as to make them clear and intelligible are always the most persuasive, even if they speak only low Breton and have never learned rhetoric[13].

Truth can be spoken even in *bas Breton*. This statement of Descartes is likely the source of the claim that Descartes held that: «to know Latin is to know no more than Cicero's servant», which is to be found very early in Cartesian literature, but not in Descartes' published works[14]. Latin is the language most closely associated with rhetoric and oratory and supplying the terminology for law and jurisprudence. It is the source for the term "eloquence" (*eloquentia*) and its definition. Quintilian says:

> The verb *eloqui* means the production and communication to the audience of all that the speaker has conceived in his mind, and without this power all the preliminary accomplishments of oratory are as useless as a sword that is kept permanently concealed within its sheath[15].

Cicero says: «Eloquence is nothing else but wisdom delivering copious utterance»[16]. Vico echoes this view in his question: «What is eloquence, in effect, but wisdom, ornately and copiously delivered in words appropriate to the common opinion of mankind?»[17] Eloquence is putting the whole into words; it is not simply the formation of elegant and ornate phrases. Eloquence does require *copia*, in that it joins together many aspects of its subject.

Eloquence can be joined to the sublime and, in fact, is a means to attain it. As Longinus says: «a well-timed flash of sublimity shatters everything like a bolt of lightning and reveals the full power of the speaker in a single stroke»[18]. Demosthenes was famous for his copiousness, coupled with his mighty enthymeme; having taken his hearers into a great digression, he could call them back with its single stroke. Longinus says:

---

[13] R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of rightly conducting one's reason and seeking the truth in the sciences*, in vol. I of the *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, Cambridge 1994, p. 114; *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la verité dans les sciences*, vol. VI of *Oeuvres de Descartes*, edited by C. Adam and P. Tannery, Paris 1996, p. 7.

[14] F. Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, 3d ed., 2 vols., Paris 1868, vol. II, p. 537, does not find this statement in Descartes but says it is similar to reports by Sorbière, *Relations, lettres, et discours de M. de Sorbière sur diverses matières curieuses*, Paris 1660 and A. Baillet, *La vie de Monsieur Descartes*, 2 vols., Paris 1691.

[15] Quintilian, *Institutiones Oratoriae*, 8., pr. 15-16.

[16] Cicero, *De partitione oratoria*, 23.79.

[17] G.B. Vico, *Study Methods*, cit., p. 78; *De nostri*, cit., p. 210.

[18] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 1.4.

Since with all things there are associated certain elements, inherent in their substance, it follows of necessity that we shall find one factor of sublimity in a consistently happy choice of these constituent elements, and in the power of combining them together as it were into an organic whole[19].

A flash of sublimity that provides an epiphany for the reader or hearer must be set within a speech of the whole. The aim of true philosophy is to conceive of and to deliver the complete speech, the account of all that there is. It is to put the world into a microcosm of words with which the mind can course through all that there is, not in fact but in principle. The complete speech is a miniature of all of experience, and therein lies its fascination. The miniature in thought is inherently attractive to the mind's eye as a physical miniature is pleasing to the bodily eye. The attraction to Plato's *Republic*, and why it — perhaps along with Hegel's *Phenomenology* — is one of the greatest works of philosophy, is because it creates a complete «city in speech». Hegel's *Phenomenology* creates a complete «science of the experience of consciousness» in speech. Both of these works are indispensible to the pursuit of philosophical self-knowledge because of their eloquence and the sublime moments the reader encounters within them. A third example may be Vico's *Scienza nuova*, which stands to philosophy much as Dante's *Divina commedia* stands to poetry. Both leave nothing out, and both are sublime in their extension and in the intension of their moments of insight.

The agenda for the modern philosophy of criticism is set by the *Port-Royal Logic* of Arnauld and Nicole, *L'Art de penser* (1662). Its conception of method puts aside the art of topics in favor of the art of criticism, although it never directly attacks the art of topics. It distinguishes two kinds of methods of thinking: analysis and synthesis. Method is generally described as «the art of arranging well a succession of various thoughts, or for discerning the truth when we are ignorant of it, or for proving it to others when we already know it»[20]. Two types of method are then distinguished:

one for discovering the truth, which is called *analysis*, or *method of resolution*, and that also can be called *method of invention*; and the other for making it understandable to others when it has been found, that is called *synthesis*, or *method of composition* and can also be called *method of doctrine*[21].

In effect, what is here asserted is that there is: (1) a method for establishing the truth that is non-rhetorical; it is a method of analytical or critical thinking. And there is (2) a method for communicating such truth that is rhetorical; it is a method of synthesizing the truth that has been critically established into a doctrine that is generally understandable. Left out is how we are to find the starting points from which to engage in the critical and proper arrangement

[19] *Ivi*, 10.1.
[20] A. Arnauld and P. Nicole, *La Logique ou l'art de penser: contenant autre les règles communes, plusieurs observations nouvelles, propres à former le jugement*, critical edition by P. Clair and F. Girbal, Paris 1965, p. 299. My translation.
[21] Ivi, pp. 299-300. My translation.

of our thoughts and investigations. The principles of the arrangement of our ideas are the subject of deductive logic. The principles of the communication of our ideas are the subject of rhetoric, understood as the art of persuasion. This twofold sense of method is the combination of *ars critica* with *ars oratoria*. *Ars topica* plays no role in this conception.

In Aristotle, there are two ways to regard the syllogism[22]. One is to regard it as an instrument of demonstration, and is the subject of Aristotle's *Analytics*. The other is to regard the syllogism as a means for the generation of ideas, and is the subject of the *Topics*. Both are parts of the *Organon*. In the first of these, the middle term functions solely as the means through which the minor and major terms are connected to produce the conclusion. The middle term is present only in the premises, and disappears in the conclusion. In the second sense of the syllogism, the middle term is all-important because it is the commonplace or *topos* out of which the other two terms of the syllogism are drawn forth.

The *ars topica* is identified with *inventio* as the first principle of composition. Vico says: «*topics* is the art of finding the *medium* i.e., the middle term: in the conventional language of Scholasticism, *medium* indicates what the Latins call *argumentum*»[23]. The *ars critica* concerns how an argument already in existence can be tested for validity. The *ars topica* concerns how an argument can come into existence. Arguments can become the subject of the logician's principles, or analytics, only when they already exist. The means to bring an argument into existence is the subject of the rhetorician's principles, or topics. The *ars topica* presumes that arguments exist for a purpose; they are formulated to accomplish some end, and it seeks the principles by which such formulation occurs. The *ars critica* can offer us no understanding of the beginning points of arguments; it comes to arguments only once they are there for us.

The *ars topica* requires that the speaker who wishes to assert a connection between two terms must find a third term to act as a middle term, a meaning that is held in common between the speaker's intention and the audience, that is, a commonplace. This commonplace can often take the form of a maxim or be advanced within an enthymeme. Once in possession of the middle term, the speaker can «draw forth» the connection between the terms of the conclusion, bringing the understanding and agreement of the listeners along with the conclusion. If the middle term does not express a ground of meaning sufficiently common between speaker and listeners, a further ground must be sought. This process can proceed regressively, even to the point, at least in principle, of the expression of an archetype, implied in what Vico calls the common mental language (*la lingua mentale comune*) or mental dictionary (*dizionario mentale*) of humanity[24]. The speaker's original syllogism would then need to come forward from this ultimate commonplace by a sorites, to assert the specific conclusion originally wished. Lane Cooper, in commenting on this process, states:

[22] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.1-2 and 2.20-23; *Prior Analytics*, 2.27; *Topics*, 1.1.
[23] G.B. Vico, *Study Methods*, cit., p. 15; *De nostri*, cit., p. 107.
[24] G.B. Vico, *New Science*, cit., pp. 64, 67, 106, and 190; *Scienza nuova*, cit., pp. 499, 503, 354 and 669.

The sound rhetorician does draw one thing *from* another. Thus we come to the preposition *ek* (or *ex*), which is characteristic of Aristotle's thought, but often is hard or impossible to translate directly. The speaker is supposed to have resources, *from which* he draws his arguments and illustrations[25].

We produce middle terms from what Vico calls *il senso comune*, or our communal sense[26]. *Ars critica* necessarily presupposes *ars topica*. They are related to each other in the manner of the relation of rhetoric and dialectic as expressed in Aristotle's first sentence of the *Rhetoric*: «Rhetoric is a counterpart of Dialectic», that is, rhetoric is not a copy of dialectic but makes a pair with it, corresponding to it as strophe to antistrophe. As Aristotle adds: «both have to do with matters that are in a manner within the cognizance of all men and not confined to any special science»[27].

Why is rhetoric or eloquence the subject of attack by the founders of modern philosophy? Is it rooted in the general quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, such that the moderns intend their sciences to be taught stripped of every badge of eloquence? The answer is: Yes.

The conception of modern critical philosophy is to reduce the pursuit of truth to the problem of knowledge and to do so by replacing *ingenium* with method and *meditatio* with reflection. *Ingenium* is the basis of metaphor — a power philosophy shares with poetry and rhetoric. *Ingenium*, cultivated by the ancients and the Renaissance Humanists, is the ability to perceive similarity in dissimilar, the power of invention or finding. It is the power to produce metaphor. As Aristotle says: «The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius»[28]. Metaphor is the key to *ars topica*, for it always makes a starting point. It brings into being a connection that has not been thought. It asserts a commonplace.

There are two senses of metaphor — one is epistemological and the other is metaphysical or ontological. A metaphor, in the sense of using the name of one thing for another, is a condensed analogy. The meanings of two things already known are combined or likened to each other, providing us with a new sense of them. The meaning of one thing is «carried over» into another. A metaphor in the sense that can be expressed as «originating metaphor» or «radical metaphor» brings something into being that was not before. A double is presented as a single thing. We apprehend a «twone» as opposed to the likening of two things, each of which already has separate meaning and being.

The elements of an originating or ontological metaphor, once it is uttered, can be separated into an analogy, but it does not initially strike us as such. The ontological metaphor is primordial. Thus when Homer speaks of «the rosy-fingered dawn» we encounter a «twone» that, when we gain distance from its immediacy, we can separate into an analogy between the spreading of fingers in

[25] L. Cooper, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, New York 1960, p. xxiii.
[26] G.B. Vico, *New Science*, cit., p. 63; *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 498.
[27] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1354a 1-4.
[28] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459a 5-7.

a hand and the spreading of rays of light. «Mother Earth» is a «twone», neither mother nor earth, but is *alma mater* herself, a double of herself. We can later liken the two terms as two forms of nourishment. «Jupiter Tonans» is a double being that is one. With distance we can sort out Jupiter as a divine being joined to a physical occurrence. As Grassi points out:

> The metaphor lies at the root of our knowledge in which rhetoric and philosophy attain their original unity. Therefore we cannot speak of rhetoric *and* philosophy, but every original philosophy is rhetoric and every true and not exterior rhetoric is philosophy.

Metaphor is the accomplishment of rhetorical speech. It gives us access to the world. It is only from this access that philosophy can begin its reasoning. As Grassi concludes: «Philosophy itself becomes possible only on the basis of metaphors, on the basis of ingenuity [*ingenium*] which supplies the foundation of every rational, derivative process»[29].

To the trope of metaphor the philosopher appends the device of the question. Socrates is the inventor of the question. The metaphor made into an analogy generates the question of its meaning. The result is the Socratic *elenchos* that moves between analogies and questions, between «likely story» and *logos* or argument. Both the metaphor and the question depend upon and originate from *ingenium*. Method, in contrast, is never ingenious. The discovery of a method itself is a product of *ingenium*. But once formulated, method simply requires training in application of the method. The strength of the method is proportionate to the degree of insight or intuition required for its application to materials. If the method is truly efficient, little is needed beyond close training and experience in its use. Nothing new can come from method. Only what the method is capable of is possible. Whatever newness it may seem to have is due to the lack of foresight regarding its implications or applications. All that lies outside the method is irrelevant. Method is *huis clos*. We will know what the method will allow us to know. It solves the problem of knowledge.

Meditation, or contemplation that is associated by the ancients with *theōria* and the ethics of the good life, has no place in the dedication to reflection and understanding that dominate modern critical thinking. *Theōria* — from which the word *theater* is derived — is the act of looking upon something so as to comprehend it. Such meditation or contemplation is an end in itself, without any further purpose. Meditation is connected to speculation (*specio*, to behold, see into). Speculation, as Hegel shows in his doctrine of the *spekulativer Satz*, is opposite to reflection[30]. Speculation is associated with dialectical thinking that leads to noetic thinking — a type of thinking that leads the mind to a direct and rational seeing of the True as the whole.

[29] E. Grassi, *Rhetoric*, cit., p. 34. On metaphor, see also E. Grassi, *La metafora inaudita*, edited by M. Marassi, Palermo 1990, chapter 1.
[30] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of Id., *Werke*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, pp. 60-61.

Reflection can never pass beyond the understanding (*Verstand*), that is a classifying mentality that achieves only an external joining of subject and predicate. In the «speculative sentence», mind moves from subject to its meaning in the predicate and then back to the subject, now altered in its meaning by its contact with the predicate, and so forth, in a dialectic of internal relations between subject and predicate. In this way, the mind enters further and further into the truth of its object, apprehending it as an idea within its own reality. This dialectic is based on the power of *ingenium* to perceive connections between opposites, and is a form of *ars topica* because it is a continual drawing forth of meanings. These meanings or stages of the dialectical movement remain as *topoi* or commonplaces in memory, from which thought can always begin, and begin again. Reflection walks around its object, and, like refracted light, it is a kind of mental optics that comes back from the surface of the object into itself, never able to access the object as a thing-in-itself[31].

Dialectical thinking can be interrupted at any point in its movement, to be formed as an argument. Critical thinking is always argument *sui generis*, without ground in the larger process of dialectic. Philosophical criticism is always about argument and counter-argument, either deductive or inductive. These arguments always presuppose a narrative in which they occur, but the narrative, whether implicit or explicit, appears inessential. Descartes' arguments in the *Discourse* are set in terms of the narrative or pseudo-narrative of himself as a thinking «I». And the same is true for his other works, including the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in which he intends to redefine the nature of meditation as a noetic activity, as found among the ancients to be a process of argumentation based on logical certainty.

Only two modern philosophers instantiate the ideal of «wisdom speaking», or eloquence, as defined by Cicero and Quintilian: Vico and Hegel[32]. Both pursue wisdom in terms of the whole realized in a complete speech of the whole. Hegel expresses the ideal of wisdom speaking in his famous statement: «*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*» — «The True is the Whole». If the True is the whole, it must be spoken as a whole. The True is not a form of knowledge; it is all of knowledge, brought together as a complete composition. Hegel's oration is not a series of arguments but a series of questions and answers, each one leading to the next. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* begins in an unstated question: Of what can we be certain? (Descartes' question). Its answer is that we can be certain of immediate sensation — *sinnliche Gewissheit*. This answer contains within it its own self-question, that leads consciousness to produce its answer of *Wahrnehmung*, and so

[31] For the interrelationship between the philosophical doctrine of reflection and the science of optics, see D.P. Verene, *Philosophy and the Return to Self-Knowledge*, New Haven 1997, chapter 1.

[32] E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 4, *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, edited by J.M. Krois and D.P. Verene, translated by J.M. Krois, New Haven 1996, p. 193, endorses the Hegelian maxim that «the True is the Whole». For an account of the role of Hegel's *Phenomenology* in Cassirer's conception of symbolic forms, see D.P. Verene, *The Origins of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer*, Evanston 2011, chapter 3.

on, each answer providing a new *topos* from which a question draws forth a new speech, until we reach *absolutes Wissen*, which declares this dialectic of question and answer to be a science of *Erinnerung* or «recollection», a conversation the self has with itself[33].

In the *Science of Logic*, the same process is repeated, beginning with the movement between *Sein* and *Nichts*, but this time not in terms of phenomena apprehended but of thoughts thought. Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Logic* are two halves of a circle, joined as yin and yang. In fact, Hegel says his «system of science» is a circle of circles (*ein Kreis von Kreisen*), so that each member of the circular whole returns to its own beginning and is the beginning of the next member. Hegel says, at the end of the *Science of Logic*, that each science in his system of science is joined to the others like links in a chain (*Kette*): «each of which has a *before* and *after* or, more precisely stated, *has* only the before and in its own conclusion shows its after»[34]. The complete speech is always a circle constructed of circles.

Vico's complete speech of the *Scienza nuova* is modeled on forensic oratory. As he was a professor of Latin eloquence, it is a form with which Vico was quite familiar. In a general sense, all philosophy is forensic speech, for it defends and pleads a case to its readers or listeners. The treating of a case in court, by definition, must aim at eloquence in the sense of a complete speech on the matter at issue. Such a treatment of a case will have assurance of success only if it is wisdom speaking. Above all, what is said must, ideally, be both true and plausible. But, as Quintilian advises:

> No one should think there is anything reprehensible in my suggestion that a Narrative which is wholly in our favor should be plausible, when it is in fact true. There are many true things that are not very credible, and false things are frequently plausible. We must therefore make just as much effort to make the judge believe the true things we say as to make him believe what we invent. These virtues which I have just mentioned belong of course to other parts of the speech too[35].

Vico's *Scienza nuova* can be seen as a written oration; it is an expansion of Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, as Vico explains in his autobiography[36]. The divisions of Vico's work follow those of forensic oration, as he presents them in his own *Institutiones Oratoriae*, the textbook from which he taught throughout his career. These correspondences are: invention (chronological table), disposition (elements, principles, method), exordium (on wisdom), narration (poetic wisdom), digression (the true Homer), proposition («course of the nations» paragraph), division (series of threes), confirmation

[33] See D.P. Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Albany 1985, chapter 9. See also J.H. Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter: Traces of Rhetoric in Hegel's Philosophy of Bildung*, Ithaca 1988.
[34] G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* II, vol. VI of Id., *Werke*, Frankfurt am Main 1969, pp. 571-72. My translation.
[35] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 4.2.34-39.
[36] G.B. Vico, *Autobiography*, cit., pp. 156-57; *Vita*, cit., p. 46.

and amplification (proofs at the end of Book 4), confutation (recourse of the nations), and peroration (conclusion to the work)[37]. Vico has presented a whole case, from beginning to end. The crucial part is the narration, as it is in any case.

In Vico's work the narration corresponds to Book 2, «Poetic Wisdom», the largest and most original part of the *Scienza nuova*, which is followed by his discovery of the true Homer. Vico's treatment of poetic wisdom, based on his theory of *universali fantastici*, that he calls the master key to his science, is what convinces us of its truth. In accordance with Quintilian's advice, Vico makes plausible both the truth he has discovered concerning the origin of the gentile nations and the etymologies he often seems to invent to verify his account. There are no other more eloquent speeches in the history of philosophy than those of Hegel and Vico. In them, philosophy approaches the Platonic Sun.

In all the great speeches that comprise the history of philosophy, whether or not as complete as those of Hegel or Vico, the arguments they contain are secondary to the images that guide them. In most of the great philosophical books, their authors simply begin by making assertions and distinctions. They develop an intellectual narrative that, from time to time, resorts to presentations of proofs or arguments. These arguments are imbedded in a kind of literary work that we call philosophy. R.G. Collingwood, in his discussion of philosophy as literature, holds that philosophy is prose containing essential moments of poetry[38]. He is correct. Yet the poetry that is present in philosophical prose is rarely noticed.

In our age of criticism and reflective analysis, philosophy is taught in terms of arguments. Papers are given without end at philosophical meetings, analyzing, criticizing, and correcting some argument or other extracted from classical or contemporary works of philosophy. Students are taught in class after class to seek out the arguments in philosophical works. There is pathos in this process of pinning down arguments in such works. It is Hegel's «bad infinity» — «*schlechte Unendlichkeit*», because beyond every argument there lies a counter-argument, a continual *Jenseits*. Once an argument is advanced, it is not beyond human wit to discover a counter-argument, and so on, without end. It offers us a kind of *geistige Tierreich*, an intellectual menagerie, with the author of each argument barking its wares, to which we are asked to subscribe. Like Lucian's *Sale of Philosophers*, we enter an indefinitely incomplete world of piecemeal thinking.

In making this point, however, I do not wish to be a misologist. I heed Socrates' warning, in his speech in the *Phaedo*, against being a hater of argument. But argument as an element of philosophy must be put in perspective. It is not in itself all of what philosophical thinking is about. Socrates' own manner of philosophizing is to establish a dialectic between the *elenchos* and the likely story, each supplementing the other. The French philosopher, Michèle Le Doeuff, says:

[37] I have given a full exposition of the *Scienza nuova* in terms of these forensic principles in a forthcoming work, *Genesis and Structure of Vico's New Science: A Philosophical Commentary and Companion to the Text*.
[38] R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Philosophical Method,* Oxford 1933, p. 214.

Whether one looks for a characterization of philosophical discourse to Plato to Hegel or to Bréhier, one always meets with reference to the rational, the concept, the argued, the logical, the abstract. Even when a certain coyness leads some authorities to pretend that they do not know what philosophy is, no agnosticism remains about what philosophy is not. Philosophy is not a story, not a pictorial description, not a work of pure literature. Philosophical discourse is inscribed and declares its status as philosophy through a break with myth, fable, the poetic, the domain of the image.

The surest way to dismiss a philosophy is to declare it to be poetry. Le Doeuff continues:

> If, however, one goes looking for this philosophy [that described above] in the texts which are meant to embody it, the least that can be said is that it is not to be found there in a pure state. We shall *also* find statues that breathe the scent of roses, comedies, tragedies, architects, foundations, dwellings, doors and windows, sand, navigators, various musical instruments, islands, clocks, horses, donkeys and even a lion, representatives of every craft and trade, scenes of sea and storm, forests and trees: in short, a whole pictorial world sufficient to decorate even the dryest 'History of Philosophy'[39].

Our true entrance into any philosophy is through its metaphors, and it is through its metaphorical images that it is impressed on our memories. We keep philosophy in mind through its key images — through Heraclitus's river, Plato's cave, Aristotle's sea battle, Augustine's pear tree, Anselm's fool, Occam's razor, Buridan's ass, Machiavelli's prince, Bacon's idols, Descartes' *poêle*, Spinoza's bondage, Leibniz's windowless monads, Pascal's wager, Locke's candle, Berkeley's tar water, Hume's fork, Kant's fogbanks of illusion, Mill's canons, Hegel's master-servant, Marx's fetish, Smith's hidden hand, Russell's logical atom, Wittgenstein's family resemblance, Husserl's bracketing, Cassirer's *Linienzug*, Heidegger's *Holzweg*, Quine's bound variable — there is no end to the lists for the history of philosophy, or for individual philosophies that could be constructed[40]. The history of philosophy, in terms of the image and master images emphasized by major philosophers, is yet to be written. Stephen Pepper's theory of «root metaphors» — that philosophies can be organized in terms of certain metaphors that inform their origination of world views — has never been pursued. The role of the metaphor in comprehending philosophy is inescapable. Even the term Pepper coined is a metaphor[41].

Eloquence always requires the metaphor, for the metaphor is the key to the whole and to its formulation in words. Hegel understood this key from the first projections he made of his philosophy, in what is called *The Earliest System-program of German Idealism*. Against those whom he names as «*unsere Buchstabenphilosophen*», Hegel proposes «a new mythology, but this mythology must be in the service of ideas, it must be a mythology of *Reason* [*Mythologie der*

[39] M. Le Doeuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary*, translated by C. Gordon, Stanford 1989, p. 1.
[40] See D.P. Verene, *Speculative Philosophy*, Lanham 2009, chapter 3.
[41] S.C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence*, Berkeley 1961, chapter 5.

Vernunft]»[42]. Indeed, in writing the *Phenomenology*, Hegel maintained a stylistic dialectic between *Bild* and *Begriff*. It is Hegel's images that take us back into his text, that allow us to recall it. In the final chapter, on «Absolute knowing», he describes the whole of the *Phenomenology* as a «*Galerie von Bildern*», a gallery of images or pictures. These pictures are made to contain rational meanings, through Hegel's *List der Vernunft*, his «cunning of reason», that runs throughout his whole work[43].

Vico understands well the role of the image in the formulation and comprehension of his new science. The definitive edition of the *Scienza nuova* is introduced by its *dipintura* and a discussion of each of its objects depicted as presenting the new science as a whole, prior to the text itself. As Vico says, in the first sentence of the work:

> As *Cebes the Theban* made of *Morals*, we here present for view a Tablet of Civil things, which may serve the *Reader* to conceive [*concepire*] the *Idea of this Work* before reading it, and to bring it back most easily to memory [*memoria*] with such aid as the imagination [*fantasia*] may provide, after having read it[44].

Vico and Hegel know well the meaning of the observation we find in Bacon: «The Art of Memory is built upon two intentions; Prenotion and Emblem». Bacon says:

> By Prenotion I mean a kind of cutting off of infinity of search. For when a man desires to recall anything into his memory, if he have no prenotion or perception of that he seeks, he seeks and strives and beats about hither and thither as if in infinite space.

He defines emblem as that which «reduces intellectual conceptions to sensible images; for an object of sense always strikes the memory more forcibly and is more easily impressed upon it than an object of intellect». An emblem is a concept put in sensible form. Prenotion and emblem are the devices for the «Art of Retaining or Keeping Knowledge»[45].

Finally, something may be said of the other great trope that informs the eloquence of the speech of the whole. Vico says that irony does not arrive in human thought until thought becomes philosophical. «Irony certainly could not have begun until the period of reflection, because it is fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of truth»[46]. A myth is always a true story, a *vera narratio*. It is a perception put into words, a fable — a metaphor being a fable in brief. Like a perception, it is what it is, something true in itself. Fables are not based on judgment, distinguishing between truth and error. Irony, since Socrates, has been a part of philosophical speech. It guides thought to

[42] G.W.F. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, vol. I of Id., *Werke*, Frankfurt am Main 1971, pp. 234-236.
[43] D.P. Verene, *Hegel's Recollection*, cit., chapter 9.
[44] G.B. Vico, *New Science*, cit., p. 3, my translation; *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 415.
[45] F. Bacon, vol. IV of *Works*, edited by J. Spedding, R.L. Ellis, and D.D. Heath, New York 1965, pp. 436-437.
[46] G.B. Vico, *New Science*, cit., p. 131; *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 591.

insights that cannot be reached by argument. An irony grasped will establish and record a point more easily and firmly than any argument concerning it. To approach great works of philosophy apart from irony is to miss the insights they contain and to retreat into the monotone of argument and criticism.

Irony, like metaphor, depends upon *ingenium* to connect what is dissimilar. Irony occurs when what is affirmed is the opposite of what is meant. To claim something literally flattens out meaning. Irony causes us to see something from its other side — a trope that embodies Hegel's labor of the negative (*Arbeit des Negativen*). When opposites are juxtaposed we see more than when they each are stated separately and compared logically.

Further, what is said ironically naturally impresses itself on our memory. Plato's claim, in the *Republic*, that the best state will never exist until philosophers become kings in their countries or kings take up the study of philosophy is likely ironic, and it is unforgettable, once read. Bertolt Brecht said, of Hegel: «He had the stuff of one of the greatest humorists among philosophers; Socrates is the only other one who had a similar method. […] I have never met anyone without a sense of humor who has understood Hegel's dialectic»[47].

In *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, his work on the philosophical meanings in the Latin language, Vico offers us a new source for Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. Vico places his refutation of Descartes' *cogito* as a first principle of metaphysic in a scene from Plautus's *Amphitryo*. In Plautus's comedy, while Amphitryon, the commander-in-chief of the Theban army, is away at war, he is cuckolded by Jupiter, who has assumed Amphitryon's guise. As the guise is so perfect, the wife of Amphitryon (Alcmena), who is wholly innocent, presumes Jupiter to be her husband. In this comedy of errors, Mercury assumes the guise of Amphitryon's slave, Sosia. Following the prologue, Sosia, now returned, with his master, from war, discovers his double, and begins to doubt his own existence. Mercury, still in his guise as Sosia, tells Sosia that he is mistaken about his own identity, and that, in fact, he, Mercury, is Sosia, saying: «Oh, you can have the name when I don't want it; *I'm* Sosia and you're nameless. Now get out!».

Sosia then looks in the mirror and develops his "Cartesian" proof, which concludes: «But, when I think, indeed I am certain of this, that I am and have always been [*Sed cum cogito, equidem certo sum ac semper fui*]»[48]. Vico finds Descartes' great truth uttered in this burlesque, and concludes that Descartes' first principle is «not some rare and exquisite truth which requires the meditation of a great philosopher to invent»[49]. I have yet to find this «source» for Descartes' great truth discussed in the Cartesian critical literature. Vico, in one ironic comparison, has effortlessly impressed upon the memory a new status for Descartes' *cogito*.

[47] B. Brecht, *Flüchtlingsgespräche*, Berlin and Frankfurt am Main 1961, pp. 108-111. My translation. Brecht's work was written in Finland in 1941 and published posthumously.
[48] Plautus, *Amphitryo*, 441-447.
[49] G.B. Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, translated by J. Taylor, New Haven 2010 (Latin and English opposed texts), pp. 32-33.

In conclusion, one can think of nothing more intellectually boring than critique, critical thinking, and the bad infinity of argument and counter-argument. It robs philosophy of a language of the passions of its theater of memory, containing its storehouse of topics and the dialectical pursuit of self-knowledge — the conversation the self can have with itself that is the basis of what the ancients called civil wisdom.

Once philosophy is stripped of eloquence, it has little to say about the human condition and devotes itself to method, from analytical to hermeneutical, and to the problem of knowledge, not self-knowledge. Tongue-tied, philosophical speech becomes the monotone of logical assertion and understanding, a kind of grimness of mind that has nothing daring to say. The confinement of philosophy to the transcendental, with a fear of error that comes with thinking beyond experience, is based on a timidity of soul. We are left in the land of the truth of the pure understanding:

> This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth — enchanting name! — surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion[50].

We have heard this before:

> one who spends too much time travelling eventually becomes a stranger in his own country; and one who is too curious about the practices of past ages usually remains quite ignorant about those of the present. Moreover, fables make us imagine many events as possible when they are not.

These imaginations are the products of humanistic speech, for «those who regulate their conduct by examples drawn from these works are liable to fall into the excesses of knights-errant in our tales of chivalry, and conceive plans beyond their powers»[51]. We are told to stay at home with the understanding and the logical certainties of method, avoiding the adventures of ideas. Our mind's eye must be checked, lest it raise its vision upward toward the *eidē* or glimpse the *dilettoso monte* of the Absolute. We are told to keep a critical eye downward, for the eye is the organ in the body in which the soul concentrates itself. The eye is the instrument of the soul. We are encouraged to keep our sight on the present and the progress of the future and as much as possible free of the influence of memory. This is the teaching of the modern problem of knowledge and its constant companion: critical thinking and speaking.

[50] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, cit., p. 257; *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, cit., p. 287.
[51] R. Descartes, *Discourse*, cit., p. 114; *Discours*, cit., p. 7.