

“The general secret of rendering signs effective:” on the Aristotelian roots of Peirce’s conception of rhetoric as a dynamis, téchne and semeiotic form of the summum bonum

“O segredo geral de tornar os signos efetivos:” sobre as raízes aristotélicas do conceito de retórica de Peirce como dynamis, téchne e forma semiótica do summum bonum

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Abstract: In this and a following twin-article we aim at articulating Peirce’s comprehensive architectonic view of the *phenomenon* of rhetoric by putting its account in “Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing” (MS 774, 1904) in perspective with its treatment in the much neglected classification of the practical sciences (MS 1343, 1903). In the present article, we first reconstruct the main conceptual axis of “Ideas, Stray or Stolen”, which is erected by the terms ‘universal art of rhetoric’, ‘ordinary rhetoric’ and ‘speculative rhetoric’. As this axis guides us towards the classification of special rhetorical studies Peirce proposes in the final section of “Ideas, Stray or Stolen”, the careful reconstruction of this axis constitutes a hermeneutic duty, the neglect of which would hinder a proper understanding of *what* Peirce is classifying at the end of his most mature account of Speculative Rhetoric (Section I). Next, we proceed to expose the Aristotelian roots of Peirce’s conception of the universal *art* of rhetoric (Section II) and analyze the intrinsic relation rhetorical semeiosis has to the *summum bonum* as one of its historically evolving semeiotic forms (Section III). If this interpretation of Peirce’s conception of rhetoric is adequate, however, we should expect him to somewhere give us an account of the capacity of rhetoric to evolve—and thus grow—in the first place. It will be the task of the following second paper to show that and how Peirce’s conception of rhetoric as a practical science (τέχνη) and instinctive faculty (δύναμις) rooted in the “graphic instinct” (MS 1343) accounts for its capacity for growth.

Keywords: Aristotle. Communication. Entelechy. Ordinary Rhetoric. Speculative Rhetoric. Summum Bonum. Universal Art of Rhetoric.

Resumo: Neste e no próximo artigo, buscamos articular a visão compreensiva arquitetônica de Peirce a respeito do fenômeno da retórica relacionando sua abordagem em *Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing* (MS 774, 1904) com seu tratamento na classificação muito negligenciado das ciências práticas (MS 1343, 1903). Neste artigo, primeiro, reconstruímos o principal eixo conceitual de *Ideas, Stray or Stolen*, que é erguido pelos termos

‘arte universal da retórica’, ‘retórica ordinária’, e ‘retórica especulativa’. Na medida em que este eixo nos guia para a classificação dos estudos especiais da retórica que Peirce propõe na seção final de Ideas, Stray or Stolen, a cuidadosa reconstrução deste eixo constitui um dever hermenêutico, a negligência do qual impediria uma compreensão adequada do que Peirce está classificando no fim de sua abordagem mais madura da Retórica Especulativa (Seção I). Em seguida, procedemos à exposição das raízes aristotélicas da concepção de Peirce da arte universal da retórica (Seção II) e analisamos a relação intrínseca que a semiose retórica tem com o summum bonum como uma de suas formas evolutivas históricas (Seção III). Se esta interpretação da concepção de retórica do Peirce é adequado, no entanto, devemos esperar que ele nos dê em algum lugar uma descrição da capacidade de evolução da retórica – e portanto, de crescer – antes de tudo. Será a tarefa de um segundo artigo subsequente mostrar que e de que maneira a concepção de Peirce da a retórica como ciência prática (τέχνη) e faculdade instintiva (δύναμις) enraizado no “instinto gráfico” (MS 1343) responde pela sua capacidade para o crescimento.

Palavras-chave: Aristóteles. Comunicação. Entelêquia. Retórica ordinária. Semiose. Retórica especulativa. Summum Bonum. Arte universal de retórica.

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“All men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others.”

Aristotle, Rhetorica

1 Introduction

In the past two decades, some of the most fruitful approaches to Peirce’s semeiotic trivium have been engaging in a rhetorical turn.¹ Efforts to reconstruct Peirce’s semeiotic from the stance of its third branch, however, confront expositors with a puzzling philological situation: With the exception of *Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing* (1904, subsequently referred to as *ISSSW*), Peirce drops the designation “speculative rhetoric” in 1902,² when he begins to conceive of and refer to the third branch of semeiotic exclusively as a discipline he names

1 Cf. LISZKA, 1996, Ch. 4; SANTAELLA-BRAGA, 1999; LISZKA, 2000; BERGMAN, 2000; COLAPIETRO, 2007; BERGMAN, 2009; LISZKA, 2010; COLAPIETRO, 2013, p. 715-718, and 722-724; GAVA, 2014, p. 33-67; PAPE, 2015, p. 143-173.

2 Bergman and Gava (2018) identify the Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic of 1903 as the text in which “rhetoric appears to have been definitely replaced by methodeutic” (p. 217); but, as a matter of fact, this replacement is already fully accomplished in the many versions of the Carnegie Application (MS L 75, cf. NEM 4:13-73) that Peirce writes in the summer of 1902 and reveals the stages through which his conception of a third branch of logic conceived as Methodeutic passed within few weeks.

“methodeutic.”³ Recently, because of this hermeneutic puzzle, scholars have aimed to clarify the relation between Speculative Rhetoric and Methodeutic and,⁴ moreover, have begun to focus on the role and general conception of method and rhetoric in Peirce.⁵

In this context, the present and a complementary second paper aim at articulating Peirce’s comprehensive architectonic view of the *phenomenon of rhetoric* by putting the account given in *ISSSW* in perspective with the treatment of rhetoric in his much neglected classification of the practical sciences (MS 1343, 1903). The reconstruction of Peirce’s conception of rhetoric as a practical science *and* faculty rooted in the specicultural graphic instinct is not only of far-reaching importance for comprehending Peirce’s systematic outlook on the nature and significance of the total phenomenon of rhetoric, but also facilitates the disambiguation of different aspects of rhetorical activity. Peirce makes careful note of these aspects, yet they are often conflated when tackling the demanding task of an *exégèse au fond of ISSSW*. The present paper, however, does not offer such an exegesis, but rather focuses on the fundamental differentiations and relations delineated by Peirce through the use of the terms *universal art of rhetoric*, *ordinary rhetoric* and *speculative rhetoric*. These terms constitute the main conceptual axis of *ISSSW* and *lead* to the taxonomy of rhetorical studies proposed at the end. In order to be led there, however, the conceptual axis needs to be studied carefully.

Our argumentation will unfold as follows: (2) Engaging with symptomatic inconsistencies in the accounts offered by erudite and influential expositors of *ISSSW*, we will start to bring into view the contours of its main conceptual axis. In the next section (II), we will offer an account of the Aristotelian roots of Peirce’s conception of a universal art of rendering signs effective and (III) bring to the fore its intrinsic relation to the *summum bonum*. Our interpretation eventually proposes that the terms “universal art of rhetoric,” “ordinary rhetoric” and “speculative rhetoric” reflect the categoriological structure of the rhetorical as having a necessary relation to (i) an instinctive faculty or potentiality constituting both its specific faculty (*δύναμις*) and determining its state of perfect actualization (*ἐντελέχεια*), to (ii) a material historical actualization (*ἐνέργεια*) in habits and practices, and to (iii) formal semeiotic laws discovered in the Normative Sciences.

3 Bergman and Gava (2018, p. 218), thus aptly speak of “[...] the puzzle of the apparent fading of rhetoric from Peirce’s logic”; cf., however, Peirce’s usage of the term in MS 4 (c. 1904) = NEM 4:291; as another exception, moreover cf. CP 8.342 (1908), where Peirce, referring back to *On A New List of Categories* (EP 1:8) seems to clearly confirm “formal rhetoric” as the third branch of semeiotic.

4 Cf. SANTAELLA-BRAGA, 1999; LISZKA, 2000; GAVA, 2014, p. 33-67; BERGMAN, 2015; BERGMAN and GAVA, 2018; BERGMAN, 2018; GAVA, 2018; LISZKA, 2018; JAPPY, 2018.

5 For the concept of method, cf. LISZKA, 2010; and BERGMAN, 2018; for the concept of rhetoric, cf. COLAPIETRO, 2013; and PETIT, 2018.

2 Some thought-provoking inaccuracies: reconstructing the main conceptual axis of *ISSSW*

Scholars agree on the importance of *ISSSW* for understanding Peirce’s mature conception of Speculative Rhetoric and, quite possibly, its relation to *Methodeutic*.⁶ The rather short text grew out of Peirce’s review, published in *The Nation* on July 28, 1904, of T. Clifford Allbutt’s *Notes on the Composition of Scientific Papers* (CN 3:179-181). Though it seems that, structurally, *ISSSW* is composed of two major argumentative movements, it is important to keep in mind that these movements were designed to function as the introduction to a second paper devoted to the rhetoric of science;⁷ “Plan of an Essay on the Rhetoric of Scientific Communication in two parts of ten of these MS pages each. Part I. General. Part II. Special” (MS 777:02) is how one of three drafts is entitled.⁸

In a first argumentative movement (§§ 1-2), Peirce *ascends* from the journalistic thematic hook of contemporary debates on the rhetoric of scientific writing to an abstract vision of a science he designates as “*speculative rhetoric*,” which is said to deal with “[...] the essential conditions under which a sign may determine an interpretant sign of itself [...] or may, as a sign, bring about a physical result” (EP 2:326; cf. MS 514:46, 1909). In the second movement (§§ 4-6)—mediated by the first with the ingenious *mise en abyme* of the third paragraph, in which the applicability of normative principles of speculative rhetoric is illustrated by communicating both in accordance *with* and *about* the maxims derived from these very principles, thus having the rhetorical form of the communication exemplify its contents—Peirce

6 Although the term “*methodeutic*” is absent from *Ideas, Stray or Stolen* (MS 774) and also from its three drafts (MS 775-777), expositors, such as Santaella-Braga (1999, p. 391f.), and Colapietro (2007, p. 47f.); have interpreted the text as giving relevant clues for understanding how Peirce conceived of the relation of Speculative Rhetoric to *Methodeutic*. Krois (1981, p. 17-20), and Gava (2014, p. 58-62), and (2018, p. 224-229), have provided noteworthy exegetical observations speaking against such an interpretation.

7 According to the rather detailed outline given in MS 777, the second part was planned to deal with “the rhetorical principles” of Mathematics, Philosophy, General Physics, Classificatory Physics, Descriptive Sciences and Psychology, whereas the first part was planned to be devoted to (i) communicating “[t]he Intention of the piece”, to (ii) delineate that Rhetoric is founded on the Normative Sciences and (iii) show how “its general principles form a chief branch of logic”, in order to (iv) finally move to the divisions of rhetoric: “In addition [to its foundations in the Normative Sciences and Logic, A.T.] rhetoric has its special divisions for different media of communication, different for different families of languages & even for languages closely allied. There is in each a rhetoric of words, of sentences, of paragraphs, of sections [...], of separate works & of Collections of works of Short Publication and Long Publication” (MS 777:04).

8 As the title of the final version of the text—“*Ideas, stray or stolen, about scientific writing, No. 1.*” (MS 774:2)—keeps the reference to a second part (by referring to itself as the first), it is legitimate to assume that the final version has accordingly been written as one of two projected essays on the rhetoric of scientific communication. Whether the second paper has been written, or rather, has been lost, is unknown; cf. Colapietro (2007, p. 26).

descends from the heights of speculative rhetoric to the consideration of the *effects*⁹ the application of its principles *would have* on the habits governing ordinary rhetoric in general and its “maxims” and “rules” in particular (cf. EP 2:327ff). The endpoint of this descent is the sketch of a taxonomy of special rhetorical studies according to three modes which seem to reflect both the essential conditions of any semeiosis in general and of communicative acts in particular, namely that: (a) *some subject matter of a determinate kind* (“the special nature of the ideas to be conveyed”) is (b) *communicated through something* (“the special medium of communication”) (c) *to an interpretative medium determined by the nature of the telos of communication* (“the special nature of the class of signs into which the interpretation is to take place”).¹⁰

- 9 Peirce clarifies this central nodus of the paper concerning the nature of the relation of Speculative Rhetoric to ordinary rhetoric in the following passages: (i) The scientific status of Speculative Rhetoric “afford[s] [...] guidance in forming opinions about ordinary rhetoric” and “give[s] a notion of what the general character of its influence upon ordinary rhetoric is likely to be” (EP 2:327, *emphasis added*); (ii) “[...] the sort of help that one who wishes to learn to write well can promise himself from the study of speculative rhetoric” will consist in “[...] clearer notions of the lineage and relationship of the different maxims of rhetoric”, thus it will consist in clearer concepts allowing for “[...] juster judgments of the several extents and limitations of those maxims” (EP 2:328, *emphasis added*); (iii) “The general trend of the modifications that would be introduced into ordinary rhetoric by regarding it as a structure reared upon the foundation of the abstract study aforesaid would be determined in great part by the circumstance that the immediate basis of this ordinary rhetoric would be conceived to be merely [...] as one group of a large number of groups of special studies” (EP 2:329, *emphasis added*); (iv) “One effect of basing rhetoric upon the abstract science would be to take down the pretensions of many of the rhetorical rules and to limit their application” (EP 2:329, *emphasis added*); (v) another “[...] effect of basing rhetoric upon the abstract science” would consist in its emphasis on “[...] the necessity of the studies of Greek and Latin” (EP 2:329); (vi) An “[...] inevitable result of basing rhetoric upon the abstract science that looks on human thought as a special kind of sign would be to bring into high relief the principle that in order to address the human mind effectively, one ought, in theory, to erect one’s art upon the immediate base of a profound study of human physiology and psychology” (EP 2:329f.). In all of these passages, Peirce is generally speaking about the consequences of basing ordinary rhetoric on Speculative Rhetoric. Some of these consequences—(iii), (v), and (vi)—are architectonic, concerning the internal articulation, scientific foundations and skills required for a semeiotic rhetoric. Besides such architectonic consequences, we can furthermore distinguish conceptual consequences—cf. (ii) and (iv)—concerning the nature and scope of rhetorical rules of expression that will affect concrete rhetorical choices and thus have practical consequences materializing in rhetorical habits and practices. Finally, on the most abstract level, we can see Peirce claiming that the nature of the consequences of erecting a system of semeiotic rhetoric special studies on Speculative Rhetoric is not instrumental, i.e. not adding or modifying “devices for conveying ideas” (EP 2:328), but rather formal, concerning our capacity to envision the potential lawfulness of rhetorical practices.
- 10 EP 2:329; our interpretation in substance agrees with Lyne (1980, p. 164ff) and Krois (1981, p. 20) insofar as both see that the “[...] three modes of specialization [...] correspond to the three functions of the sign” resp. that the “[...] classification of these special studies [is derived] from the triadic nature of semeiosis”; both are nonetheless inaccurate inasmuch as Peirce conceives of the matter, medium and purpose of communicative acts as a

Now, in regards to the argumentative structure and movement of thought outlined above, expositors of the text arrive at quite different interpretations of (i) the status and (ii) the argumentative role assigned to the concept of a universal art of rhetoric, (iii) the status of speculative rhetoric, and (iv) how this aforementioned rhetorical “study [...] of the *purely* scientific kind” (EP 2:328) is different from and related to the universal *art*. As a result, there is remarkable controversy concerning (v) the question of what exactly is the subject matter of the division at the end of the text: Is it a division of speculative rhetoric, delineating the articulation of the third branch of semeiotic?¹¹ Or rather, as other interpreters suggest, a classification of “different ordinary rhetorics” (GAVA, 2018, p. 223.) resp. of “special studies” overarched by a theory of assertion analyzing the pragmatic norms of sign-use in communicative action? (KROIS, 1981, p. 20).

Concerning (i), it is helpful to adduce a quotation from M. Bergman, who introduces us to the puzzling fact that Peirce—although he replaces Speculative Rhetoric with Methodeutic in virtually all systematic accounts of his logic after the spring of 1902—nonetheless puts the former center stage in ISSSW of 1904:

In this context, Peirce defines the third branch of semeiotic as “the science of the essential conditions under which a sign may determine an interpreting sign of itself and of whatever it signifies, or may, as a sign, bring about a physical result” [...]. However, not all rhetorical questions are necessarily pursued in philosophy. According to Peirce, there is, as a *matter of fact*, a universal *art* of rhetoric, which is “the general secret of rendering signs effective” [...]. From this art, which arguably is based on *rhetorica utens* that consists of commonplace means and methods of communication and persuasion, one may abstract the *science* of rhetoric, which should investigate the principles of everything that the art covers or could cover. (BERGMAN, 2009, p. 63, *first emphasis mine*).

The first thing to be immediately noted is that, according to Peirce, there is *not* “as a matter of fact, a universal art of rhetoric.” In fact, the opposite is true, as Peirce explicitly qualifies the universal art as an *ens in posse*: “Let us cut short such objections by acknowledging at once, as an *ens in posse*, a universal art of rhetoric, which shall be the general secret of rendering signs effective” (EP 2:326). Consequently, a few lines later, Peirce will say that

[w]hether there can be such a universal *art* or not, there ought, at any rate to be (and indeed there is, if students do not wonderfully deceive themselves) a science to which should be referable the fundamental principles of everything like rhetoric, – a *speculative rhetoric* [...] (EP 2:326).

specification of the sign-relation, thus operating on a level of generality which is situated below the one on which principles of speculative rhetoric concerning the necessary conditions of the interpretant-determination in any form of semiosis are to be expected.

11 Cf. SANTAELLA-BRAGA, 1999, p. 391; LISZKA, 2000, p. 446; COLAPIETRO, 2007, p. 47-48.

For Peirce, the existence of Speculative Rhetoric is (obviously) a fact, while the existence of a universal art of rhetoric is a mere possibility: it does *not* exist, it may *never* exist, and is thus by no means “a matter of fact,” as Bergman claims. Rather, it seems to be something utopian.

Now, if we ask ourselves what motivates such a curious literal misreading, we obtain a clear and rational answer: The interpreter conceives of Speculative Rhetoric or “the science of rhetoric” as something that is abstractively derived from the art (conceived as a practical science), which, in turn, is construed as being derived by reflection on *rhetorica utens*. As it cannot be doubted that, factually, there is a *rhetorica utens*—consisting of Bergman’s “commonplace means and methods of communication and persuasion”—and as Peirce asserts the existence of the “science of rhetoric”—i.e., of Speculative Rhetoric—then there must also be that which is derived from the first and grounds the third: the universal art of rhetoric, which Bergman takes to be a practical science. Of course, this abstractive order makes perfect sense, but, alas, it is not in accordance with the text.¹² As we will see, it is important to insist, *cum* Bergman, on reconstructing some intelligible order among the terms constituting the main conceptual axis of *ISSSW*. The term *rhetorica utens*, however, is not used by Peirce, as Bergman knows perfectly well (Cf. BERGMAN, 2009, p. 176). Hence the question arises which term might correspond to it in the terminology of *ISSSW*.

Thus, we are urged to move on from the seemingly simple question (i) concerning the status of the universal art—it is an “*ens in posse*”, Peirce says—to that (ii) concerning the *role* this concept plays in Peirce’s overall understanding of rhetoric. We will soon enough be led back to this point, but in order to realize that it constitutes the ultimate interpretative *nodus* of *ISSSW* let us first move on to consider (iii) the status of speculative rhetoric, and (iv) its difference from and relation to the universal art.

Concerning (iii), it is eye-opening to adduce a quotation from Colapietro, in which he introduces the reader to *ISSSW* by referring to it as “[...] invaluable for alerting us to both Peirce’s critical attention to scientific rhetoric and, more generally, his commitment to a discipline yet to be established (“speculative rhetoric” as an *ens in posse*) (COLAPIETRO, 2007, p. 26).

Now, as we have seen a moment ago, Speculative Rhetoric is not an “*ens in posse*”; at least not for the Peirce who writes *ISSSW*. As Peirce’s wording is quite explicit when it comes to indicating the status of Speculative Rhetoric, the question arises: what, after all, motivates this ‘countertextual’ reading? As we can understand from another passage of Colapietro’s ground-breaking paper, this reading is the expression of a general lack of distinction in his account of how the universal art of rhetoric is related to Speculative Rhetoric.¹³ Just note how, in the following quotation—closely

12 If there is an abstractive order to which Peirce could agree, however, it would rather look as follows: (i) non-universal arts of rhetoric qua *dynamis* of rendering signs effective = *rhetorica utens*, (ii) ordinary rhetoric = *rhetorica docens*, (iii) speculative rhetoric in its completed reality = universal art of rhetoric qua *entelechy* of the historical development of rhetorical practice through the application of speculative rhetoric to special practical rhetorical sciences informing the communicative practices of an unlimited community.

13 This lack is also noted by Gava (2018, p. 226) who observes that “Colapietro tends to identify speculative rhetoric and the universal art of rhetoric.”

tracking the ascent of the first part of *ISSSW* (i.e. §§ 1-2) Colapietro slides from talk of an “art” to talk of a “discipline,” and from talk of a “science” back to talk of an “art,” while supposedly referring to one and the same object of discourse:

Such an **art** will disclose “the general secret of rendering signs effective.” If there is any doubt about the scope of its concern, Peirce dispels it by indicating what he intends to be encompassed by the term sign in this context: “[...] whatever [...] causes something else, its interpretant [sic]; Peirce writes ‘interpreting sign’, A.T.] sign [...] to be determined to a corresponding relation to the same idea, existing thing, or law [...]” Peirce is not emphatically claiming that **such a discipline** is anywhere to be found among the achievements, efforts, or even aspirations of human beings. He is, *first*, simply asserting that “there ought [...] to be [...] a science to which should be referable the fundamental principles of everything like rhetoric,—a *speculative rhetoric*, **the science** of the essential conditions under which a sign may determine an interpretant [...]” But *second*, he does suppose “indeed there is” **such a rhetoric**, “if students do not wonderfully deceive themselves.” I take this to mean that, though only in a largely inchoate and unconscious form, such a **universal art** exists. Its realization as such, however, requires a disciplinary self-consciousness and self-cultivation (i.e. a community of individuals, who in a conscious and deliberate manner cultivate an ever expansive, deepening interest in this field of inquiry). (COLAPIETRO, 2007, p. 30 f., *bold added*).

This passage is both deeply true (especially towards the end) and, at the same time perplexingly inaccurate (in terms of misrepresenting what the interpreted author literally says). The main problem, however, is that there is no attempt to clarify (iv) the difference of and relation between the universal art of rhetoric and Speculative Rhetoric. Note that with the wording “such a discipline,” the conflation becomes programmatic, establishing a complete inversion of what Peirce actually says. Peirce does not only say that “there ought, at any rate” to be a Speculative Rhetoric. But he also, most importantly, says that “indeed there is” a Speculative Rhetoric (EP 2:326). Moreover, Peirce does not “suppose ‘indeed there is’ such a rhetoric” in respect to the universal art, but clearly in respect to Speculative Rhetoric. And indeed, against the very wording of what Peirce most explicitly states, Colapietro, at the end of this remarkable passage, ends up interpreting the text as intending to say that “[...] though only in a largely inchoate and unconscious form, such a universal art exists.”

But Peirce says it does not. It does *not* exist. It may never *exist*. It seems, so far, ‘merely’ conceptually possible, ‘just’ an idea which,¹⁴ although it seems to have nothing but its Scotian *non-repugnatio ad esse* to put on the table, nonetheless presents itself—“at once”, with a force and inevitability particular to that which is not yet but “shall be” (EP 2:326)—as something to be *acknowledged* in the

14 Cf. CP 5.453 where Peirce speaks of the “[...] abominable falsehood in the word MERELY, implying that symbols are unreal”

normativity of its conceivability when we reflect on the *nature* and *essence* of our rhetorical practices in order to arrive at a maximal generalization. This is how Peirce introduces—or rather: moves to—the notion of a universal art of rhetoric:

Evidently, our conception of rhetoric has to be generalized; and while we are about it, why not remove the restriction of rhetoric to speech? What is the principal virtue ascribed to algebraical notation, if it be not the rhetorical virtue of perspicuity? Has not many a picture, many a sculpture, the very same fault which in a poem we analyze as being “too rhetorical”? Let us cut short such objections by acknowledging at once, as an *ens in posse*, a universal art of rhetoric, which shall be the general secret of rendering signs effective [...] (EP 2:326).¹⁵

What Peirce is saying here, is the following: although there is no rhetoric of algebra, no rhetoric of painting, and no rhetoric of sculpture (in the sense of a normative discourse about a certain expressive practice), we immediately understand that there *could* be such a discourse. The reason why we understand that there could be such a discourse consists in our inferring that *in the practice* of the algebraist, *in the practice* of the painter, *in the practice* of the sculptor—which are all practices that aim at “rendering signs effective,” i.e. of bringing about certain interpretative effects—certain rules seem to be followed, inasmuch as we experience the lack of conformity to these supposed rules as an artwork’s “being ‘too rhetorical’” or as an algebraic expression’s lack of perspicuity. The mode of being of these rules, however, is not that of rules abstracted from the reflection on practices (as the maxims of ordinary rhetoric are), but rather that of skills incarnated in habits and traditions. Now—what exactly is the universal art of rhetoric? Is it a practical science ranging over all concrete practices of bringing about interpretive effects and thus delivering to us universal maxims applicable to all possible kinds of expressive practices? In this case, it would be a generalized ordinary rhetoric. A knowing for the sake of doing. Or is it a utopian incarnated skill, providing “magical sway over other men” (EP 2:326). In this case it would be a perfect *rhetorica utens*. A doing for the sake of doing, i.e. a praxis, not a poesis. To refer to this art as a “general secret,” however, seems to point to a dialectical relation between both options.

We are thus left with three options for understanding the meaning of the term “universal art of rhetoric” when we face the extant questions concerning (ii) the role this universal art plays within the text (and within Peirce’s overall understanding of rhetoric) and (iv) its relation to Speculative Rhetoric. As Peirce refers to the universal art only once in *ISSSW*, and as he does not thematize its relation to Speculative Rhetoric, this is no easy task.

Gava¹⁶ is the first expositor of *ISSSW* to see the need to put terminological questions on top of our interpretative agenda. Although his reading primarily

15 Cf. MS 777:02 (1904): “It has been proposed to generalize the term rhetoric so as to make it the name of the art of making signs effective, since there are said to be principles of rhetoric that would be substantially applicable to any sign. As such its foundations would be laid in the science of the general laws of signs, or semeiotics.”

16 Cf. GAVA, 2014, p. 60, and 2018, p. 233.

intends to contribute to the debate on the object and internal articulation of the third branch of Peirce's semeiotic, a substantial part of his argumentation is devoted to the elucidation of the terms we have been referring to as 'the main conceptual axis' and which Gava, with good reason, deems "of central importance in the economy of Peirce's text" (GAVA, 2018, p. 225). For Gava, the clarification of the meaning of the terms 'universal art of rhetoric,' 'ordinary rhetoric' and 'speculative rhetoric' becomes particularly important in the context of our question (*v*) concerning the *subiectum divisionis* of the taxonomy concluding *ISSSW*. Interpreters reading this passage as indicative of Peirce's understanding of the way in which Speculative Rhetoric and Methodeutic are related tend to interpret the classification as an articulation of the subdivisions of Speculative Rhetoric, which thus—under the heading "rhetoric of science" (EP 2:329)—would seem to contain methodeutic as a branch.¹⁷ And indeed, Peirce's subdivision of the rhetoric of science is clearly carried out in accordance with his mature classification of the sciences.¹⁸ It does, therefore, seem to constitute a sound hypothesis "to use *methodeutic* as the name for one or more of the branches (or sub-branches of such rhetoric)", as Colapietro proposes (COLAPIETRO, 2007, p. 47). As Gava points out, however, this would reduce methodeutic, and the use of signs made in it, to a discipline not primarily concerned with scientific inquiry, but rather with the communication of its results (GAVA, 2018, p. 224). As a consequence of this, Gava cannot accept Colapietro's justification, although he agrees with conceiving of Methodeutic as a subdivision of Speculative Rhetoric.¹⁹

Now, in order to support the claim that the taxonomy concluding *ISSSW* does not actually thematize how Speculative Rhetoric and Methodeutic are related, Gava offers an account stressing the importance of "the two sentences that introduce the classification", thence interpreting the taxonomy as (a) "not a classification of the subclasses of the universal art of rhetoric"(GAVA, 2018, p. 228) and, furthermore,

17 This reading is endorsed e.g. by LISZKA, 2000, p. 446; BERGMAN, 2000, p. 246; COLAPIETRO, 2007, p. 47-48n.

18 Compare EP 2:329 with *An Outline Classification of the Sciences* (EP 2:258-262, 1903). Note that the reference to the classification of sciences as the ratio divisionis of the third subbranch ("rhetoric of science") of the first branch of the taxonomy, which we obtain by a division "[...] according to the special nature of the ideas to be conveyed" (EP 2:329), indicates that the underlying ratio of the first mode of specialization in accordance with the "matter" (ibid.) of the ideas to be conveyed, corresponds to what Peirce often refers to as a division of "Ways of Life" (MS 604 [n.d.]; cf. e.g. MS 407:1 [1893]; MS 14:6 [1895]; MS 477:1 [1903]; MS 1334:16 ff. [1905]), i.e. to archetypal modes of practical identity devoted to "fine art," "practical persuasion" or "science" as their determinate horizon of experience and human interaction, which, as such, is rooted in different notions of the mode of being of the esthetic ideal—the summum bonum—in the light of and for the sake of which everything else becomes meaningful (cf. CP 2.116): whether it is "feeling", i.e. pleasure, "resolve", i.e. action, or "knowledge", i.e. contemplation. Peirce's conception of three categoriologically differing ways of life is, of course, referring back to the Aristotelian three βίαι or 'designs of life' that the Stagirite interprets as apprehensions of εὐδαιμονία and the μέγιστον ἄγαθον embodied in the praxis of those devoting their life primarily to pleasure, politics or theorizing (EN, 1095 b14 – 1096 a5).

19 Cf. GAVA (2014), p. 223, and (2018) p. 230-232.

(b) as “neither a classification of speculative rhetoric,” (c) “nor of ordinary rhetoric”, but rather as (d): [...] a classification of the various ways in which we can specify the principles and rules of speculative rhetoric for different contexts of sign use and thus obtain different ordinary rhetorics (GAVA, 2018, p. 229, *emphasis added*).

Gava thus contends that the taxonomy does not provide a division of (a) the subclasses of the universal art of rhetoric, (b) the subclasses of Speculative Rhetoric, (c) the subclasses of ordinary rhetoric, but rather: (d). The somewhat convoluted statement of what exactly (d) consists in and how it is different from (c), is partially due to the double nature of Peirce’s taxonomy, which contains both an explicit classification of the parameters of special rhetorical studies and an implicit classification of the parameters of communicative semeiosis. We thus are confronted with a parametrical classification of discourses (i.e. of aspects of practical rhetorical sciences or ‘ordinary rhetorics’ as Gava calls them in spite of Peirce’s consistent usage of the term ‘ordinary rhetoric’ as an individual term) which, as such, necessarily reflects a primordial classification of the parameters of a particular kind of semeiosis, namely of *communicative* semeiosis.

Moreover, in contradistinction to a division of subclasses in the sense of (a), (b) and (c), there are two methodological elements of additional complexity involved in (d).

Firstly, and in reference to its general logical form, Gava rightly seems to correctly assume that Peirce’s taxonomy is not a dihairetic classification into exclusive classes of objects, but rather a stratification into composable conceptual aspects or parameters.²⁰ In this sense each concrete occurrence of communicative semeiosis is not regarded as an object that has its determinate position within a completed classificatory hierarchy of classes either including or excluding each other, but rather as an event that necessarily manifests a determinate structure (the sign-relation) that is studied by Speculative Grammar as a subdiscipline of normative semeiotic logic. Insofar as every communicative use of signs must—as such—necessarily instantiate the formal structure of the sign-relation, the concepts reflecting the necessary relates of this relation (sign, object, interpretant) ought to be considered as necessary aspects *specifiable* for each performance of communicative semeiosis. Thus in each communicative use of signs there is necessarily a *matter of communication* (specifying the object in the sign-relation as the communicative purpose), there is necessarily a determinate *medium of communication* (specifying the material sign within the sign-relation as the communicative medium), and an *interpretative system of signs* (specifying the interpretant in the sign-relation as the communicative effect). This specification, however, obviously implies a restriction of the domain of entities that can function as relates, inasmuch as not every possible interpretant, object or sign can function as the interpretant, object or sign of a communicative act aiming at understanding. Thus, the performance of communicative semeiosis, for example, requires interpretants that are not the result of “automatic” reproduction, but of “the reproduction of signs in intended ways” (EP 2:238), as Peirce explicitly remarks in *ISSSW*.

20 Cf. Bellucci (2017, p. 183) who identifies this mode of producing a parametric or aspectual taxonomy of signs as a reform Peirce does not effectuate before the Minute Logic (summer 1901 to spring 1902).

Secondly, and in reference to the operational structure of the classification, Gava, therefore, seems to assume that it does not—as a dichotomy would—contain two operations and a result, namely the (potentially recursive) operations “producing dichotomous classes by adding *differentiae specifica*” and “connecting the totality of obtained divisions in a series of disjuncts,” in order to obtain a disjunctive proposition as the logical result of the operations. Rather, Gava must assume that Peirce’s taxonomy involves three operations and two results. These operations, as indicated above are: *categoriological aspection*, *restrictive specification of the relates of the sign relation in communicative semeiosis* and, moreover, *categoriologically guided combination of specified relates*;²¹ with the two results being, firstly, the idea of the constitutive elements of all possible kinds of communicative sign-use, the corresponding conceptual aspects of which then, secondly, yield Gava’s aspects of “different ordinary rhetorics,” inasmuch as the categoriological combination of specified relates of communicative semeiosis provides us with a matrix of possible “contexts”—we think the term “kind” would be preferable here—of communicative semeiosis to each one of which would eventually correspond a special rhetoric study or “ordinary rhetoric.”

Thus, whereas the first logical element of additional complexity in Peirce’s taxonomy excludes (a), (b) and (c) inasmuch as these would be mere dihairetic divisions, the second operational element tells us how to properly construct (c’), in order to obtain (d).

Independently of the question how to properly flesh out the general logical form and procedural structure of the taxonomy envisaged by Peirce,²² and independently of how the introduction of the term “context of sign use,” so crucial to Gava’s account,²³ ought to be rendered clearer so as to make explicit its dormant implications

21 Cf. Bellucci (2018, p. 264-278), for a detailed account of Peirce’s methodology of a parametric classification of signs in *Nomenclature and Divisions of Triadic Relations* (EP 2:289-299, 1903).

22 GAVA (2018) does not pay sufficient attention to rendering transparent Peirce’s distinction between a mediate and an immediate base of ordinary rhetoric, but it is clear that when Peirce is speaking of “[...] one group of a large number of groups of special studies [as the] immediate basis of this ordinary logic” (EP 2: 329), he is taking ordinary rhetoric to be a discipline the remodeling of which would essentially be determined by the combination of (at least) a triple—“one group,” as Peirce writes,—of special studies, each one of which specifies one of three elementary semeiotic aspects of processes of communication. Thus a remodeled ordinary rhetoric, “[...] as a structure reared upon the foundation of the abstract science” (EP 2:329), while it is mediately based on principles of Speculative Grammar and Speculative Rhetoric, will also of necessity be immediately based on special studies that differentiate possible kinds of (i) communicative subject matters, (ii) mediatic sign-classes and (iii) interpreting sign-classes qua communicative effects.

23 As the third paragraph of *ISSSW* illustrates, a context of sign use for Peirce is defined by its reference to a determinate cultural space and time, imparting the rhythmicity of the daily life it harbours to embodied communicants who, under more or less definite circumstances, interact by using a specific historical medium of communication: “[...] the average reader, [...] reading the journal during his journey up town” and not having “[...] leisure for anything more than such ideas, serious or light, as might be struck out in conversation between two clever, but probably tired and hungry, companions” (EP

in the horizon of a pragmatic account of meaning, there are two thought-provoking inaccuracies in Gava's account of the terms constituting the main conceptual axis that affect his interpretation on a far more fundamental level. These inaccuracies concern, firstly, Gava's understanding of Peirce's conception of ordinary rhetoric and, secondly, his understanding of the status and role of the universal art of rhetoric. The consequence of these inaccuracies, so it seems to us, are a restrictive reading of *ISSSW* (focused on the taxonomy) and a reductive understanding (excluding metaphysical considerations) of the nature and scope of the philosophical questions articulated by Peirce's text. This last point is particularly important with a view on the overarching question concerning the relation of Speculative Rhetoric to Methodetic and, even more generally, the internal articulation of the third branch of Normative Semeiotic. Concerning the first point, we need to understand whence, how, and with a view on what *ISSSW* leads us to the taxonomy of special rhetorical studies in order to understand what it has to tell us about Peirce's conception of Speculative Rhetoric and the third branch of semeiotic generally. Thus, as the *whole* text leads to the taxonomy by articulating its main conceptual axis and *thus* contextualizing the use of signs the taxonomy makes, we must now return to our patient reconstruction of the main conceptual axis.²⁴

Concerning the term "ordinary rhetoric," Gava correctly contends that it "[...] should be distinguished from both speculative rhetoric and the universal art of rhetoric" (GAVA, 2018, p. 227). It should be distinguished from Speculative Rhetoric because the central theme of the piece is the effect Speculative Rhetoric would have

2:327). There are good reasons to think that in a full account of *ISSSW* and of Peirce's theory of communication, the concept of a 'context of sign use' would rather refer to concrete circumstantial factors determining the performance of a communicative act but not to a stratificatory classification of kinds of communicative semeiosis, emphasizing the essentiality of the matter, medium and effect of communicative semeiosis. Independently of questions of terminology, the real problem here is how to account for the emergence of types of communicative acts in tokens of communicative acts that are not actualizations of the type they give rise to.

24 *ISSSW* engages in a threefold task. The first task is its contribution to establishing a systematic conception of a rhetoric of scientific communication, which doubtless derives its initial stimulus from reviewing Allbutt's Notes on the Composition of Scientific Papers: "Had he dropped all pretension to being himself very scientific or to having anything to say specially germane to the communication of scientific discoveries, and had he acknowledged that his book differed from a common text-book on style chiefly in not covering the ground systematically, we might have thought it a nice little thing in its way" (CN 3:181, *emphasis added*). Whereas this first task leads to an amplification of Peirce's semeiotic and its third branch, the second task is motivated by the problem of clarifying the way how the normative sciences are related to the practical sciences and, thus, human practice in general, i.e., to the task of elucidating the precise nature of the reference of philosophical conceptions and theories to practice. In this sense, *ISSSW* is a case study for the problem of "[...] the relation of the theory of logic to conceivable applications" (CP 2.7, 1902). This task thus results in a demonstration of the fruitfulness of the principles of normative semeiotic in general and Speculative Rhetoric in particular. The third task of the text, finally, consists in its contribution to Objective Logic and its attempt to conceive of the evolution of rhetoric as the historical evolution of the semeiotic form of the *summum bonum*.

on ordinary rhetoric, which, of course, implies that these are taken to be different entities. Moreover, ordinary rhetoric should be differentiated from the universal art of rhetoric because the latter is referred to as the “[...] general secret of rendering signs effective [...]” (EP 2:326), while the former, thus Gava claims, cannot be general inasmuch as “[...] we cannot have one single ordinary rhetoric, but we have different ordinary rhetorics that specify rhetorical principles for particular classes of signs” (GAVA, 2018, p. 227). The term “ordinary rhetoric” for Gava, therefore, refers to any disciplinary specialization of a semeiotically grounded rhetoric.

It is true that the term “ordinary rhetoric” refers to a specialized form of rhetoric, namely, as we will argue, to a particular historical manifestation and tradition of a practical science of rhetoric. It is, however, *not* true that “we cannot have one single ordinary rhetoric,” as Gava claims, thus contending that the term is used as a general term. There are, however, two strong reasons that demonstrate that Peirce uses the term as an individual term

The first reason is that Peirce always uses “ordinary rhetoric” as a term for a definite and well known tradition of rhetoric in the singular; Speculative Rhetoric, Peirce writes, will “[...] afford no little guidance in forming opinions about ordinary rhetoric [and will thus] give a notion of what the general character of its influence upon ordinary rhetoric is likely to be” (EP 2:327). Why should Peirce *mean* different kinds of ordinary rhetorics, but speak of “ordinary rhetoric” in the singular? Why should he, at the beginning of the taxonomy, speak of “*this* ordinary rhetoric” (my emphasis) and refer to it as “*a* structure” (my emphasis), if he does not want to point our attention to a circumscribed manifestation of rhetoric?

The general trend of the modifications that would be introduced into *ordinary rhetoric* by regarding it as a *structure* reared upon the foundation of the abstract study aforesaid would be determined in great part by the circumstance that the *immediate basis* of *this ordinary rhetoric* would be conceived to be merely one of a large number of special studies, or rather as one group of a large number of groups of special studies (EP 2:329, *emphasis added*).

What Peirce is discussing here is the *immediate* basis of ordinary rhetoric. This does, of course, imply that there is also a mediate basis, namely “the abstract study aforesaid”, i.e., Speculative Rhetoric and Normative Semeiotic as a whole. Now, concerning this immediate basis, he is *anticipating* that—given the fact that each of the three modes of specialization of communicative action derived from the sign-relation represents *only one of three* categoriologically necessary aspects of *any* communicative practice (which, as such, will necessarily have a specifiable matter, a specifiable medium and a specifiable semeiotic effect), it will necessarily be the case that ordinary rhetoric is not based on “merely one of a large number of special studies” (e.g., the special study of the rhetoric of speech and language), but rather based on “one group of a large number of groups of special studies,” i.e., on *at least a triple* of special rhetorical studies. None of this, however, justifies the claim that the sentence introducing the taxonomy necessitates us to understand that “[...] we cannot have a single ordinary rhetoric, but we must have various ordinary rhetorics

according to the specific kind of discourse and signs to which they should be applied”(GAVA, 2018, p. 229). The reason why Gava here forces the text seems very much due to the fact that he needs a conception that allows for the specification of special rhetorical studies, but does not see that the concept Peirce uses for this task is the concept “universal art of rhetoric” (*infra*, sec. II).

The truth of the matter is that what Peirce refers to as “ordinary rhetoric” is not *specified* into a variety of special studies reflecting semeiotic aspects of rhetorical action; it is rather—*en passant*—*dissolved* into it and, in doing so, giving us the freedom to semeiotically muse on the analysis, critique and reconfiguration of our rhetorical practices by providing us with the conceptual parameters this ambition requires. Now, if this is what Gava means by (*d*), we are not in substantial disagreement; the disagreement would be purely verbal and one could thus accept the talk of “ordinary rhetorics” in the plural. One *could*. But as we will see, speaking of ordinary rhetoric in the plural conceals a layer of significance of the term, which is crucial for both its philologically adequate reconstruction and for our understanding of Peirce’s reasons to use it in the singular only. Moreover, conceiving of “ordinary rhetoric” as the concept that functions as the mediating term which allows us to apply and thus specify the formal principles of Speculative Grammar and Speculative Rhetoric to the concrete life of communicative practices has the effect of necessarily misleading us in our recognition of the fundamental systematic role the concept “universal art of rhetoric” plays on the main conceptual axis of *ISSSW*.

The second reason that should make us understand that Peirce uses the term “ordinary rhetoric” as an individual term consists of its use to denote that particular historical manifestation of rhetoric, which is calculated to be gravely affected and radically transformed by being remodeled on the basis of Speculative Rhetoric. This narrow-minded, old-fashioned *rhetorica transformanda*, so incapable of self-reflection, is informing the rhetoric we are using. Peirce comes back to this at the end of the paper:

One ought to know just what the processes are whereby an idea can be conveyed to a human mind and become embedded in its habits; and according to this doctrine, all the rules of ordinary rhetoric ought to be hinged upon such considerations [...] (EP 2:330).

In closing the first general part of his article, Peirce thus completes the circle of his inquiry and eventually descends again to the theme of the *exordium*, where, in the very first argumentative step, he had classified recent discussions published in scientific journals concerning “the best vocabulary” and “the best type of title for scientific papers” as “questions of rhetoric” concerning the “rules” to be applied for the sake of finding the proper “style of scientific communication” (EP 2:325). In his (third level) *meta-discourse*, Peirce is referring to a (second level) discourse on the (first level) style of scientific textual communication. According to this discourse (second level), there is “little or no room in scientific writings for any other rule of rhetoric than that of expressing oneself in the simplest and directest manner,” so that “to talk of the style of scientific communication” is “somewhat like talking of the moral character of a fish” (EP 2:325). Ordinary rhetoric, hence, is that rhetoric to

the genealogy of which is hinted in the *exordium*. This discourse is, in the second argumentative step, criticized for its incapacity to reflect on its genealogy and the strictures the nature of its provincial habits impose. Note that it is a genealogy rooted in a limited community in which the views of “persons of literary culture” and of those “trained to the scientific life” (EP 2:325) constitute subcommunities within a general mode of cultural life with its constitutive mediatic practices. This general mode of cultural life—both in theory and in concrete practices—conceives of rhetoric as primarily a matter of textual communication that still finds its normative resources and paradigms mainly in “rules of Greek and Latin rhetoric” (EP 2:329), the misuse and rigid application of which, according to Peirce, creates “Procrustean barbarities” (EP 2:330). Now, that which creates these barbarities: *this* is ordinary rhetoric. It is a term that denotes a unique historical entity.

As the general understanding of rhetoric—qua “grace, dexterity, or tact in the handling of language” (EP 2:329)—represents something almost second nature to us and thus, at first sight, offers no distinctive features, Peirce calls it “ordinary rhetoric.” This rhetoric, however, is not primarily a practice, but a *discourse on* the rules of textual communication. Its status, hence, is that of a practical science. Thus, this ordinary rhetoric may aptly be referred to as a *rbetorica docens* and moreover constitutes the *rbetorica transformanda* of the text.

To claim “that there is not a unique ordinary rhetoric” (GAVA, 2018, p. 233) so that, consequently, “[...] there will be different ordinary rhetorics specifying [...] general principles for particular contexts of sign use” (GAVA, 2018, p. 228), therefore, for a number of reasons, does not represent an accurate interpretation of Peirce’s conception of ordinary rhetoric in *ISSSW*. In fact, this interpretation is not only impossible to reconcile with *any* single occurrence of the term in the text, but also unintentionally counteracts the prominence of its agapastic spirit. To conceive of the term “ordinary rhetoric” as a general term, referring to any form of semeiotically specified rhetorical study—from the rhetoric of mass-mediatic political oratory to the “language of flowers” (MS 1343:69)—means to deprive *ISSSW* of its *materia circa quam* and anchorage in historical reality; a historical reality which Peirce, at least in part, explicitly conceives of as the product of agapastic processes of sign-action determined by an “immediate attraction of the idea itself” (EP 1:363). As these processes are neither purely chaotic (*tychastic evolution*) nor strictly determined (*anancastic evolution*), but rather *dramatically* transforming both the mental and the physical world in accordance with the laws of the evolution of purposes (*agapastic evolution*), these processes constitute the subject matter of an Objective Logic,²⁵ which constitutes the last subdivision of the third branch of Normative Semeiotic and, thus, is designed to act as the transition from the stance of Normative Science to that of Metaphysics.²⁶ Note that theoretical concerns belonging to the domain of Objective Logic—“the logic of ideas in their physical agency” (NEM 4:31, 1902)—are prominent in *ISSSW*:

25 Cf. CP 2.111-118; NEM 4:30f.

26 This character and architectonic function of Objective Logic as a science acting as the transition both from Normative Science to Metaphysics and from Speculative Rhetoric to Ontology is particularly transparent both in the *Minute Logic* (CP 2.111-118, 1902) and the *Carnegie Application* (NEM 4:30-35, 1902).

Now, by whatever machinery it may be accomplished, certain it is that somehow and in some true and proper sense general ideas do produce stupendous physical effects. [...] It is necessary to insist upon the point for the reason that ideas cannot be communicated at all except through their physical effects. Our photographs, telephones, and wireless telegraphs, as well as the sum total of all the work that steam engines have ever done, are, in sober common sense and literal truth, the outcome of the general ideas that are expressed in the first book of the *Novum Organon*. (EP 2:326 f.; cf. MS 514:46 for a parallel passage from 1909).

It would represent a willful act of suppression of the implications of a speaker's deliberately calculated words²⁷ if we were not to realize that the author of "Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing" (*emphasis added*) is here inviting his readers to diagram and complement their own analogy.²⁸ Accordingly, we are meant to understand the relation of (BB) Peirce's Speculative Rhetoric to (BA) Aristotle's *Rhetorica* to be of the same kind of relation as that of (AB) Bacon's *Novum Organon* to (AA) Aristotle's *Organon*. We are, henceforth, invited to wonder which (CB) effects of a Peircean revolution of the third branch of logic will, in an indefinite future, have corresponded to (CA) the effects Bacon's revolution of Aristotle's critical logic have already had on the mental and physical evolution of the historical world we inhabit. Thus, we are obliged not to neglect the historical consciousness and perspectivity the text embodies and reflects, but rather to interpret the term "ordinary rhetoric" as denoting *that tradition of rhetorica docens which has historically informed our understanding of the rules of public communication and, therefore, can only be transformed by returning to its roots.*

3 The Aristotelian roots of the universal art of rendering signs effective: definition and moments of rhetoric considered as a δύνάμις

Concerning the term "universal art of rhetoric," we may at once note that Gava conceives of Speculative Rhetoric, ordinary rhetoric and the universal art as "three different disciplines" (GAVA, 2018, p. 225, *emphasis added*), thus assuming that the latter—"the general secret of rendering signs effective" (EP 2:326)—is a *science*. As we have already repeatedly seen, and as Gava confirms,²⁹ it is important to note that Peirce clearly distinguishes between the universal art and Speculative Rhetoric. Moreover, it is certainly correct that both "have to do with the 'effectiveness' of signs—that is, with their capacity to give rise to processes of interpretation and other kinds of effects" (GAVA, 2018, p. 226). And it is true that both are "general in character" (GAVA, 2018, p. 227). Finally, it is not wrong to say that one has to do with "secrets" and the other with "conditions" (GAVA, 2018, p. 226), although Gava does not really tell us what to make of the thought-provoking oxymoron "general secret".

27 Answering the question 'Can you tell me what time it is?' with 'Yes' is an example of such willful suppression of a speaker's meaning.

28 "An idea, so far as it has any relation to life, is a possible purpose" (MS 1343:12, 1903).

29 Cf. especially GAVA, 2014, p. 60, and 2018, p. 226.

However, it is certainly not true that the universal art and Speculative Rhetoric are both “disciplines”; and it is also not accurate to say that their “[...] distinction can be made clearer by introducing Peirce’s division between theoretical and practical sciences” (GAVA, 2018, p. 229). The universal art of rhetoric is neither a practical science—“the theory of the arts, [which] is that science which is selected, arranged, and further investigated in details as a guide to the practice of an art” (NEM 4:191, 1904, emphases added)—nor an heurctic theoretical science, the purpose of which is nothing but the attainment of knowledge and, consequently, referred to as “speculative”, as the latter term is “here intended to signify that the study [is] of the purely scientific kind,” as Peirce clarifies the meaning of one of his three axial concepts; not without, however, immediately adding that Speculative Rhetoric is “not a practical science, still less an art” (EP 2:328, emphasis added). But this, obviously, implies that a practical science is one thing and an art another thing. Theoretical sciences and practical sciences can be correctly referred to as “disciplines” because both are discourses on and studies of something. But an art is something quite different, as Peirce clearly indicates not only in ISSSW (by putting the very term “art” in italics in §2 and differentiating it from both practical and theoretical sciences in the passage just quoted), but also in “Of the Practical Sciences.” In this manuscript, written one year before ISSSW, Peirce explicitly refers to rhetoric and writes:

So, intermediate between purely theoretical logico-psychological studies of the laws of the expression of thought, on the one hand, and the skill of the trained literary genius on the other, everybody recognizes a science of rhetoric, which is so far distinct from an art that the most profound rhetoricians are far from being, as a class, extraordinarily successful writers, but which is undoubtedly of great assistance to the art. Rhetoric like every practical science is usually and with perfect propriety of speech termed an Art. But in the present discussion the term Practical Science is employed to mark the distinction between an *inquiry how a thing may best be done and those best ways of doing it themselves as they exist in the concrete in the practice of the doer.* (MS 1343:67f).

A practical science is “an inquiry how a thing may best be done.” In this sense, Aristotle’s *Rhetorica* is a practical science, depending on other sciences such as psychology, dialectic (in the broad sense of “logic”), ethics and politics (Rhet., 1356a 22-35). But an *art*, rooted in the actualization of the *δύναμις* *περί* *ἕκαστον* *τοῦ θεωρησῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν*, i.e., in the *dynamis* “of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Rhet., 1355b 26-27), is not a discipline or a study, but a concrete individual skill and practice; it constitutes a best way of doing something as it “exists in the concrete practice of the doer”, or rather: as the incarnation of a habit in the rhetorical action of an individual whose “general *secret*” (EP 2:328, *emphasis added*)—applicable in every case and thus general, but *secretus* from whatever is communicable as a *μάθημα*, or item of learning—consists of *how* she does it, although it is, of course, by no means concealed from sight *what* she does, when she is “rendering signs effective”:

As a general rule, there can be no practical science of a naïve, unconscious mode of utterance; for as soon as it becomes the object of practical study as to how it may best be performed, it ceases to be naïve. Such a thing is only possible in case the mode of expression is so connected with the personality that no matter how much its author reflects upon it, he never can look upon it in a purely objective way, but looking *through* it, so to speak, can never see it as another would see it. (MS 1343:71).

In this passage, Peirce articulates the idea that speech and, I think we can safely add, modes of communicative expression in general are intimately connected to the individuality of those expressing themselves. Individual experience and sensitivity, personal talent and skill, etc., ultimately root the production of communicative signs in the individual organisms who produce them. Furthermore, these individuals may even decide to cultivate their own unique talents, so as to engender “the skill of the trained literary genius” (MS 1343:67).

As Heidegger points out in his 1924 Lectures on the *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie*, the Stagirite, in his famous initial definition of rhetoric, does not introduce rhetoric as a *τέχνη*, but rather as a capacity, faculty or skill, namely: as a δύναμις [...] τοῦ θεωρῆσαι, i.e., as a *capacity to see* (HEIDEGGER, 2002, p. 117). Furthermore, the object of this capacity to see is defined as τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν, literally: ‘the potentially believe-producing’, which Heidegger circumlocutes as “that, which speaks in favour of something” (*was für eine Sache spricht*) (HEIDEGGER, 2002, p. 118), and can thus function as a means of producing belief and persuasion (πίστις) (HEIDEGGER, 2002, p. 114-119). Rhetoric, in its most ‘originalian’ (cf. CP 2.89 ff.) sense—understood as *a capacity to see that which (for someone else) speaks for something*—and in its being the embodiment of a gaze at things from the point of view of someone else, is *in itself* the mediation of two opposed tendencies. It reaches out to others and, thus, aims towards an intelligibility grounded in generality, while at the same time, it is radically individual, living in the flesh of the speaker.

Now, to be precise, concrete rhetorical practice as a speaker’s mode of being in the world with others is, on the one hand, related to *generality* for two fundamental reasons and, thus, in two different respects. Firstly, it is *constitutive* of generality as that which we have in common³⁰ insofar as it is revealing (and itself an actualization of) the nature of language as the fundamental mode and constitutive medium of human togetherness in a shared world.³¹ Secondly, it has generality qua indefinite applicability insofar as it is relevant *περὶ ἕκαστον*, i.e., “for each thing” and in every possible context, as Aristotle writes, initially emphasizing an unlimited universality of rhetoric (cf. *Rhet.* 1355b8) that is, however, later retracted.³²

Concrete rhetorical practice as a speaker’s mode of being in the world with others is, on the other hand, related to individuality and insofar *secretive* for two basic

30 Cf. ARENDT, 1957, Ch. 7, p. 50-58, entitled “The Public Realm: The Common,” in which Arendt analyzes the coeval origin of a shared world and public space in communicative action.

31 Peirce’s later reflections on the concept of a “common ground” (cf. MS 611-615, 1908) will further pursue this train of thought.

32 Cf. *Rhet.*, 1357 a36-1359 a26; cf. also 1357 a1-8 and 1355 b26-35.

reasons. Firstly, concerning its momentum of being a form of an active receptivity, it is rooted in an individual’s experience and located within an intricate network of possible associations that function as the substrate of the *acumen*³³ required to see “that which speaks in favour of something.” Note that Aristotle defines *acumen* ( γγίνοια) proto-abductively as “a talent for hitting upon the middle term in an imperceptible time” (An. Post., I.34, 89b10). Secondly, concerning its momentum of being not only a mode of seeing, but also a mode of making or ποίησις, it requires a know-how of bringing about semeiotic effects that necessarily also imply the *mise en sc ne* of the speaking self inasmuch as that determinate means of persuasion, which Aristotle calls  θος, i.e., “attitude”, is “the most effective means of persuasion he [the speaker] possesses”.³⁴ Of course, nowhere does Aristotle thematize the semeiotics of  θος, but it is clear that, especially in oratory, the use of the body and its parts as indexical signs aims to represent the *authenticity* of the speaker’s attitude towards her own emotions, volitions and thoughts, i.e., the attitude she displays towards herself *by being moved by and taking control of herself* and which, *therefore*, is of ethical valency.³⁵ The way the speaker, by indexically referring to herself, represents herself as something that speaks for something and thus brings herself into view as the πιθανόν for others, is, therefore, rooted in the personality of the speaker. And because the speaker cannot possibly impart this on anyone else, it is by nature a *secret, or: that which cannot be shared* and thus, as such, divides. Note that we are taking the reality of this very secret for granted whenever we say things such as, “I think it is better if you speak with him.”

As Aristotle qualifies the δ ναμις of seeing the  νδεχόμενον πιθανόν as being universally relevant περι  καστον (i.e., “for each thing”), we obtain the conception of rhetoric as a δ ναμις περι  καστον το  θεωρησαι τ   νδεχόμενον πιθανόν (i.e., as a *capacity of seeing in any given case what possibly speaks for something*). It is the particular nature of rhetoric regarded in its firstness as a δ ναμις (i.e., as a speaker’s originalian capacity of being in the world with others) that it is both general *and* individual in the complex sense outlined above. Now, as “that which speaks for something” can be nothing but a sign and as the universality of rhetoric, for Aristotle, is ultimately rooted in the possibility of its irreducible rhetorical gaze on each and every thing,³⁶ we thus reach the idea of a universal semeiotic art of rhetoric.

33 Cf. CP 4.612 and 4.615 (1908) where we probably see Peirce conceiving of a common root of mathematical and rhetorical proof in the concept of acumen or  γγίνοια, which he topically characterizes as “[...] that penetrating glance at a problem that directs the mathematician to take his stand at the point from which it may be most advantageously viewed.” The expression seems to indicate that Peirce is well aware of the importance of the visual and iconic component in Aristotle’s conception of rhetoric.

34 Rhet., 1356 a12-14. In this sense, Plato’s Protagoras (cf. esp. 314e3-316a2) might be seen as one of the earliest critical reflections on the rhetorical necessity of the mise en scene of the speaker and an illustration of the personal cult and pomp ensuing from this necessity under favorable cultural and historical circumstances.

35 Petit (2018, p. 95f.) arrives at a similar understanding of the role of indexical signs in oratory.

36 Cf. Rhet., 1355b26-35 (*emphases added*): “Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art. Every other art can instruct or persuade about its own particular subject-

4 The universal art of rhetoric as the *δύναμις* and *ἐντελέχεια* of the semeiotic form of the *summum bonum*

As we have seen, the idea of rhetoric as a practice rooted in a determinate *δύναμις* embraces two constitutive momenta. It has the momentum of being an active receptivity for signs, i.e., of perceiving that which, for someone else, speaks for something. And it has the momentum of being a form of *ποίησις*, i.e., of making the relation of something's speaking in favour of something *effective* by signifying this sign-relation to someone else. For both Aristotle and Peirce, this idea—of a fundamental semeiotic practice that *engenders the cooperative pursuit of purposes* by bringing into view that which *ought* to be (the expedient, the just, the admirable and the true),³⁷ thus establishing a common world of words, deeds and ideas that is expressive of our rational nature—is highly attractive.³⁸

It is, therefore, by no means correct that “the classification of rhetoric studies in ‘Ideas’ is not a classification of the subclasses of the universal art of rhetoric” (as Gava contends with a trifling reference to the occurrence of the term “ordinary rhetoric” in the sentence preceding the classification).³⁹ Or rather, to express ourselves as precisely as this delicate point demands: The classification of parameters of special rhetorical studies it explicitly represents is necessarily based on a primordial classification of the parameters of the universal art of rhetoric qua skill of rendering signs effective. And this means that the classification of special rhetorical studies is based on a classification of the semeiotic parameters according to which something's speaking for something else for someone can be made efficient.

Concerning our claim that it is necessary to understand from where the main conceptual axis leads us to the taxonomy and whereto it further directs us from there, we can now say: It is from an understanding of the *δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρήσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν* as the *capacity of seeing, in any given case, that which for someone else possibly speaks for something* as the semeiotic form of the *summum bonum*, and it is with a view on transforming the general secret of rhetoric into a common good capable in the long run of animating our communicative practices that the taxonomy is performed. The universal art of rhetoric thus constitutes the *origin* and *perfection*, the originalian *δύναμις* and transuational *ἐντελέχεια* of rhetoric.⁴⁰ Much in the same way in which Aristotle divides the field of oratory by

matter; for instance, medicine about what is healthy and unhealthy, geometry about the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic about numbers, and the same is true of the other arts and sciences. But rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects.”

37 Cf. Rhet., 1355a20-25 and 1359a25.

38 Cf. Rhet., 1355a20-25.

39 GAVA, 2018, p. 228f.

40 Peirce does not use the term ‘enatelchy’ in “Ideas, Stray or Stolen.” He does, however, use it in other manuscripts written in 1904. The most insightful texts for comprehending Peirce's adaptation of the Aristotelian term are doubtless the “Καινὰ στοιχεῖα” (EP 2:300-324) and the “Sketch of Dichotomic Mathematics” (MS 4; cf. NEM 4:285-300), which shares many themes and the use of Euclidian methodological concepts with the former

grounding the improvement and specifiability of the habits of the practitioners in a theory of fundamental rhetorical purposes and their corresponding practices as temporal modes of human togetherness—“urging us to accept or reject proposals for action” in *political* oratory with its reference to the future; “accusing others or defending themselves” in *judicial* oratory with its reference to the past; “giving praise or blame” in *ceremonial* oratory with its reference to the present (Rhet., 1358a35-1359b20),—Peirce conceives of his taxonomy as a means of articulating refined rhetorical maxims that contribute to the cultivation of the habits animating the universal art through practical rhetoric sciences in all forms of public communication (cf. EP 2:328 ff.) and “in the concrete in the practice of the doer” (MS 1343:68).

Gava’s important achievement of focusing on the main conceptual axis of *ISSW* thus goes hand in hand with an analytically inaccurate and metaphilosophically obstructive reconstruction of it. If, however, we look ahead on our path, the universal art of rhetoric *qua* δύναμις *περὶ* ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρηῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν or “general secret of rendering signs effective” must, as the *ens in posse* it is, necessarily be capable of development and growth into public rhetorical sciences and the practices these would inform. As Colapietro clear sightedly assumes, it must have

text and might be regarded as one of Peirce’s most sustained efforts to clarify the riddle of semeiotic causation. According to the “Sketch of Dichotomic Mathematics”—in which Peirce does also use the term ‘speculative rhetoric’ (NEM 4:291) to refer to that science which, *inter alia*, studies the causation of “practical, even physical facts” by every proposition (NEM 4:291)—the term ‘entelechy’ denotes the third of the three Peircean categories, here referred to as “Form, Matter, Entelechy” (NEM 4:295). As such, it is “that which brings things together” and “is prominent in such ideas as Plan, Cause, and Law”, which all “involve connection which cannot be reduced to mere dualistic relations” (NEM 4:296). The term ‘entelechy’ thus refers to a specific mode of connection, which is neither a connection of Matter and Form, i.e. the “determination of Matter by Form”, nor the “the blind reaction of Matter with Matter”, but rather “the action of a sign in bringing its interpreter into relation with its object”, which Peirce here refers to as “signification, meaning the action of a sign” (NEM 4:297). In a sense, thus, “the very entelechy of reality is of the nature of a sign” and Signs thus are entelechies (cf. NEM 4:299: “Signs, or Entelechies”), inasmuch as “the sign [is] the Entelechy, or perfectionment, of reality” (NEM 4:300). The entelechy, therefore, is “[...] [t]he true and perfect reality, the very thing [...] as it might be truly represented [...] were thought carried to its last perfection” (NEM 4:300). As an entelechy, however, “a sign has its being in the power to bring about a determination of a Matter to a Form, [and] not in an act of bringing it about” (ibid.) It is, thus: an *ens in posse*. Peirce explicitly refers to Aristotle, who “held that Matter and Form were the only elements of experience”, but nonetheless “[...] had an obscure conception of what he calls entelechy” and which Peirce conceives of as a recognition of that ubiquitous element of experience to which he refers to as ‘thirdness’ in other contexts after 1900 and as “habit-taking” (CP 1.351, CP 1.409 et passim) in his evolutionary metaphysics of the late 1880s and early 1890s. As a synthesizing law combining form and matter, the entelechy of rhetoric would thus be the growth of the original dynamis of the universal art of rendering signs effective as the historical process of the actualization of a perfect reality. As its form is provided by Speculative Rhetoric and its matter by ordinary rhetoric, the becoming public of the general secret of the universal art is ultimately rooted in the growing generality of the conception of the summum bonum underlying it. Conversely, we can conceive of rhetoric and its historical evolution as the semeiotic form of the summum bonum.

such a nature that, although it exists only “in a largely inchoate and unconscious form,” it is nonetheless capable of further realization through “disciplinary self-consciousness and self-cultivation” (COLAPIETRO, 2007, p. 30f.). If all of this is true, however, one should expect that Peirce somewhere in his mature writings gives an account of the possibility of a developmental unfolding of rhetoric and, moreover, elucidates its nature as a semeiotic form of the *summum bonum*. It will be the task of a second paper, subsequently published in this journal, to demonstrate that and how Peirce’s classification of the practical sciences (MS 1343, 1903) contains such an account and elucidation.

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