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Kant and the Problem of “True Eloquence”

Abstract: This article argues that Kant’s attack on the *ars oratoria* in §53 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is directed against eighteenth-century school rhetoric, in particular against the “art of speech” (*Redekunst*) of Johann Christoph Gottsched. It is pointed out that Kant suggests a revision of Gottsched’s conception of “true eloquence,” which was the predominant rhetorical ideal at the time. On this basis, and in response to recent discussions on “Kantian rhetoric,” Kant’s own ideal of speech is addressed. It emerges that he favors a culture of speech embedded in moral cultivation, which excludes any disciplinary form of rhetoric.

Keywords: Kant, rhetoric, eloquence, Gottsched, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

I. INTRODUCTION: KANT AND THE CHALLENGE OF RHETORIC

The relationship between philosophy and rhetoric is traditionally tense, but it should not be mistaken for merely antagonistic. Philosophy cannot simply refrain from making use of persuasive speech; it can be reduced neither to deductive logic nor to mere fact-stating. This is particularly true in practical deliberation: since antiquity, eloquence has had its place in the realm of “human affairs,” where certainty is not available. Thus, from the beginnings of their discipline, philosophers had to look for responses to the challenge of rhetoric and tried to tame the power of eloquence

by adjusting it to their own principles. Socrates's ambition for "true rhetoric" (*alethine rhetorike*) can serve as a classical example.¹

How did Kant, the modern champion of practical reason, respond to this challenge? In fact, his case is highly intricate. At first sight he is clearly opposed to any preoccupation with rhetoric. Notorious in this regard is §53 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* where Kant accuses the art of persuasion of deceiving "by means of beautiful illusion" and deploying "the machines of persuasion" (5:327).² Kant apparently defames the art of speech as "artful trickery" (5:327) and as a "deceitful art" (5:328 fn.). Thus, it is hardly surprising that most commentators take it for granted that Kant felt nothing but contempt for rhetoric.³ Yet it has been pointed out that, on closer inspection, things are more complicated than that. The attack on rhetoric in §53 is not directed at "eloquence" (*Beredsamkeit*) as such, but "in so far as it is understood as the art of persuasion" (5:327; emphasis added). This leaves room for an alternative notion of eloquence. In a footnote in the same paragraph, Kant is most explicit on what this alternative notion could be. At the same time, it is the only occasion Kant uses the German word "*Rhetorik*" in his third *Critique*:

Eloquence and well-spokenness (together, rhetoric) belong to beautiful art; but the art of the orator (*ars oratoria*), as the art of using the weakness of people for one's own purposes (however well-intentioned or even really good these may be) is not worthy of any *respect* at all. [. . .] He who has at his command, along with clear insight into the facts, language in all its richness and purity, and who, along with a fruitful imagination capable of presenting his ideas, feels a lively sympathy for the true good, is the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, the speaker without art but full of vigor, as *Cicero* would have him, though he did not himself always remain true to this ideal. (5:328n)

¹Plato, *Gorgias* 517a.

²References to Kant use the volume and page number of the Academy Edition, indicated in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by P. Guyer and A.W. Wood. Translations have occasionally been corrected. Translations from all other eighteenth-century sources are the author's.

³R. J. Dostal, "Kant and Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 13 (1980): 223–244 (pp. 225–236); J. Bender/D. E. Wellbery, "Rhetoricity: On the Modernist Return of Rhetoric," in J. Bender and D. E. Wellbery, ed., *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 3–39 (p. 18f.); T. Bezzola, *Die Rhetorik bei Kant, Fichte und Hegel. Ein Beitrag zur Philosophiegeschichte der Rhetorik* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2012); Br. Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 84–112; D.P. Abbott, "Kant, Thoreau, and the Morality of Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40 (2007): 274–292.

Obviously, two senses of rhetoric are in play in this passage.⁴ In the first sentence, Kant distinguishes “rhetoric” (*Rhetorik*) sharply from “the art of the orator” (*Rednerkunst*). His disrespect does not affect what he himself calls “rhetoric,” namely “eloquence” (*Beredtheit*) combined with excellence of speech or, more literally, “well-spokenness” (*Wohlredenheit*). It is the “art of the orator” alone that he denies respect. This art is contemptible since it makes use of human weaknesses in order to manipulate; it is an art “of deceiving by means of beautiful illusion” (5:327). What Kant himself calls “rhetoric” (*Rhetorik*), however, is classified as a “beautiful art” (*schöne Kunst*).⁵

What rhetorical ideal is in play here? In the second sentence cited above, Kant gives a short explanation by referring to the notion of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, usually translated as “good man, speaking well.” In Roman rhetoric, this phrase expresses the ideal of a speaker whose rhetorical excellence is essentially based on morality. But Kant seems to allude to an alternative interpretation of this ideal, when he renders it as “speaker without art, but full of vigor” (*Redner ohne Kunst, aber voll Nachdruck*). What does he have in mind? When Kant explains that the speaker needs “insight into facts,” “command of language,” “imagination” and “lively sympathy for the true good,” he clearly points to an alternative kind of speech practice that is distinguished from the art of persuasion. Should we therefore believe that there is something like a “Kantian rhetoric”?

Recently, it has been claimed that this is indeed the case. Most comprehensively, Scott R. Stroud argued that there is a “nonmanipulative rhetoric of reason that can be extracted from Kant,” a rhetoric that can best be “labeled as *educative rhetoric*, since it serves as rhetorical means to non-coercively move others toward more beneficial, moralized, and virtuous states.”⁶ In this view, Kant, just like Socrates, entertains his own idea of “true rhetoric.” Even though he does not spell it out, there is a conception implied in Kant’s work of how speech can be persuasive and yet “nonmanipulative.” In order to understand the

⁴See Sc. Stroud, “Kant, Rhetoric, and the Challenges of Freedom.” *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 18 (2015): 181–194 (p. 187).

⁵For the literal translation of ‘*schöne Kunst*’ as ‘beautiful art’ see the translator’s notice in I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, transl. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 304n.

⁶Sc. Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014), 235. Stroud’s fine study cannot be done justice within the scope of this article, which mainly focusses on an issue absent from Stroud. For some comments see L. Leeten, “Scott R. Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*” (Book Review), *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 24 (2016), 263–266.

vital role of this particular kind of eloquence in Kantian moral cultivation, Kant's rhetorical ideal should be made explicit.

In the following, this view will be critically examined. I will argue that although the notion of a Kantian rhetoric is a striking idea, one has to be more cautious than Stroud. It is certainly right that Kant responds to the challenge of rhetoric and that he entertains his own ideal of eloquence. However, Kant shows a deep and bitter contempt for the "art of speech" that has to be accounted for. It is misguided to say that Kant simply "overemphasized" the dark side of rhetoric.⁷ In fact, it is not just the evil-minded art of rhetorical manipulation that he despises but rather *any* art of speech. A reconstruction of "Kant's rhetoric" can only be appropriate if it does justice to this fundamental contempt.

In order to sort things out, I will in the following section try to reconstruct what the term "art of speech" signified at the time the third *Critique* was being written. This will emerge when Kant's stance on rhetoric is reconnected to eighteenth-century school rhetoric, which went under the heading of "art of speech" (*Redekunst*). Kant's dismissive statements in §53 of the third *Critique* will be much more intelligible when one is aware of what system of rhetoric was usually taught in his times. Disciplinary rhetoric was almost exclusively represented by one person: Johann Christoph Gottsched. Even though he has received no attention in the discussion on Kant's views on eloquence so far, Gottsched was the leading figure of rhetoric in Kant's world, and his work *Comprehensive Art of Speech* (*Ausführliche Redekunst*) dominated rhetorical education in the eighteenth century (section II). Since this doctrine suggests a way that reason can rightfully make use of efficacious speech, Gottsched stood not least for a particular response to the challenge of rhetoric. Central to this response is the distinction between two kinds of eloquence Gottsched calls "true eloquence" (*wahre Beredsamkeit*) and "false eloquence" (*falsche Beredsamkeit*). This solution was familiar to those who went through the institutions of higher education, so that Kant was without any doubt well aware of it. A closer look will help to explain why he dismisses not just the manipulative art of persuasion but the "art of speech" in general (section III).

In the remaining sections, Kant's own ideal of speech is redressed. First it will be shown that Gottschedian rhetoric is precisely the conception of rhetoric Kant repudiates. More specifically, his remarks in the first footnote to §53 of the third *Critique* seem to be directed against the version of "true eloquence" proposed by the art of speech Kant

⁷Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 6 above, p. 16.

knew from contemporary textbooks. Here, the main point of dissent is Kant's conviction that any *doctrine* of rhetoric will inevitably lead to a "mechanical" use of speech, which in his view is generally despicable. For Kant, true eloquence could never result from a system but only, as I will argue, from a *culture* of speech (section IV). This obviously poses a problem for any systematic reconstruction of "Kantian rhetoric," as it is in danger of missing the very point of Kant's ideal of speech. There is a reason why Kant does not give us more than a few hints. However, based on the remarks in §53, in particular the passage from the footnote cited above, his notion of an ideal speaker can at least be outlined. For this purpose, the formula *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, which is explained as "speaker without art but full of vigor," will serve as a guideline: according to Kant, speech has to be "without art" (*ohne Kunst*), i.e., it must never *utilize* rhetorical skills for specific purposes, no matter if they are evil or moral. Rather, in the perfect speaker, rhetorical and ethical virtue will form a *unity* (section V). The question then remains how speech, purified of rhetorical "means" and reduced to a virtuous person's natural way of speaking, can ever be forceful. If speech is "without art," how can it gain "vigor" (*Nachdruck*)? To answer this question the larger project of the third *Critique* to bridge the "gulf" between nature and freedom has to be recalled. It is one of the central thoughts of Kant's aesthetics that the ideas of practical reason have to be endowed with reality, and that beauty is key to this. This has to be kept in mind when Kant classifies "rhetoric" (*Rhetorik*) as a "beautiful art": ideally, it is a practice of speech that makes morality attractive by virtue of its form (section VI). Summing up, it can be said that in Kant's view rhetorical force is legitimate only if it does not result from rhetorical studies. Speech is allowed to be persuasive exclusively by virtue of the speaker's morality: an efficacy that can never be guaranteed (section VII).

II. GOTTSCHED'S "ART OF SPEECH": RHETORIC IN KANT'S TIMES

From today's perspective, eighteenth-century rhetoric tends to vanish behind aesthetics. At that time rhetoric was being transformed into the new discipline, most prominently in Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* from 1750. In retrospect, this decline of rhetoric cannot be overlooked. However, from the viewpoint of the eighteenth century itself, the discipline of rhetoric was still alive. In particular, it was an inherent part of the curricula. Since the late seventeenth century, rhetoric had been established as a part of the school system in the German speaking world, and universities followed this development in the first half of

the eighteenth century.⁸ That rhetoric began to decline in the middle of the century does not change the fact that the discipline was taught until at least 1788.⁹

Thus, rhetoric was a mandatory part of Kant's university studies. The institutions confronted him with a certain solution to its challenge. What was this solution? To answer this question we have to turn to the leading figure of curricular rhetoric at the time: Johann Christoph Gottsched. This figure has so far been neglected in the discourse about Kant's relation to rhetoric; scholars who tackle the question never mention his name.¹⁰ Therefore, some general words on Gottsched's influence seem necessary.

Gottsched, raised in Königsberg, was a prototypical proponent of the early German rationalist Enlightenment. Since 1734, he was a full professor at the University of Leipzig and a leading figure of this elite institution. As an editor of journals, a writer and playwright, a translator, a scholar of poetics, literary theory and rhetoric, Gottsched was a famous man and omnipresent in public intellectual life.¹¹ He was engaged in the popularization of science: his *Erste Gründe der gesamten Weltweisheit* was a widely used textbook in schools and universities, with five editions between 1733 and 1748.¹²

Rhetoric can be considered essential to Gottsched's endeavors.¹³ With his "German Society" (*Deutsche Gesellschaft*) in Leipzig he created institutional structures for the spreading of his rhetorical ideas and language reforms. This was noticeable in Kant's hometown as well: at the instigation of Gottsched, Christian C. Flottwell founded a subsidiary of

⁸W. Barner, *Barockrhetorik. Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen Grundlagen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970), 241–447.

⁹H. Bosse, "Dichter kann man nicht bilden. Zur Geschichte der Schulrhetorik nach 1770." *Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik* 10 (1978), 80–125.

¹⁰Garsten (*Saving Persuasion*, cited in n. 3 above, pp. 93–104) and Stroud (*Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 6 above, pp. 16–27) take eighteenth-century 'popular philosophy' (*Popularphilosophie*) as Kant's major opponent and overlook the significance of school rhetoric in this matter. In fact, neither of them mentions that rhetoric was still a school subject and that university students took classes in rhetoric.

¹¹B. Grosse, *Gottscheds Redeschule. Studien zur Geschichte der deutschen Beredsamkeit in der Zeit der Aufklärung* (Greifswald PhD dissertation, 1932); W. Rieck, *Johann Christoph Gottsched. Eine kritische Würdigung seines Werkes* (Berlin: Akademie, 1972), 9–69; E. Achermann, ed., *Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766). Philosophie, Poetik und Wissenschaft* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

¹²W. Schatzberg, "Gottsched as a Popularizer of Science." *MLN* 83 (1968): 752–770 (p. 758f.). Kant owned a copy himself, as well as three books with prefaces by Gottsched: Helvetius, von Muschenbroek, Terrasson. See A. Warda, *Immanuel Kants Bücher* (Berlin: Breslau, 1922), 35, 49 and 55.

¹³K. S. Roth, "Wissenschaftsrhetorik. Johann Christoph Gottscheds *Ausführliche Redekunst* (1759) als Lehre vom Wissenstransfer", *Historiographia Linguistica* 31 (2004), 329–344.

the “German Society” in Königsberg in 1741, when Kant was an undergraduate.¹⁴ Thus Flottwell, a strict Gottschedian, received a professorship of rhetoric at the university of Königsberg, the second at this institution, which had only nine full professorships altogether.¹⁵

Furthermore, Gottsched published textbooks that made his version of rhetoric the official curricular doctrine.¹⁶ His *Preliminary Studies of Eloquence (Vorübungen der Beredsamkeit)* from 1754 was a handbook for grammar schools at a time when these institutions began to use German instead of Latin textbooks. Later, Gottsched provided a textbook to be used at universities: the *Academic Art of Speech (Akademische Redekunst)* from 1759. Both works were based on his *opus magnum*, the *Comprehensive Art of Speech (Ausführliche Redekunst)*, which had five editions between 1736 and 1759.¹⁷ This work can be regarded as establishing the official rhetorical doctrine of the time, and it is certainly justified to call it the most influential handbook of German eighteenth-century rhetoric.¹⁸

Even if scholars did not use the books of Gottsched himself in their classes, they were still in the sphere of his influence, for they had to fall back on textbooks written by Gottschedians. Two scholars, Lindheimer and Dommerich, had used the *Ausführliche Redekunst* as a template for their textbooks even before Gottsched published one of his own.¹⁹ Baumeister’s textbook *Fundamentals of the Art of Speech (Anfangsgründe der Redekunst)* is a slavish imitation of Gottsched and pays respect to him right from the beginning.²⁰ Likewise, Braun pays tribute to “the famous professor Gottsched” in the preface of his

¹⁴G. Krause, *Gottsched und Flottwell, die Begründer der Königlichen Deutschen Gesellschaft zu Königsberg in Preußen* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1893); Grosser, *Gottscheds Redeschule*, 152; Rieck, *Johann Christoph Gottsched*, 91–93.

¹⁵Fr. Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: von Veit, 1919) vol. I, 550–552.

¹⁶Gunter E. Grimm writes in “Von der ‘politischen’ Oratorie zur ‘philosophischen’ Redekunst. Wandlungen der deutschen Rhetorik in der Frühaufklärung.” *Rhetorik* 3 (1983), 65–96 (p. 94): “Through his textbooks, written for grammar schools and universities, Gottsched himself took care for the spreading of his rhetorical reforms.”

¹⁷Roth, “Wissenschaftsrhetorik,” 331.

¹⁸D. Till, “Rhetoric in Western Europe: Germany,” in W. Donsbach, ed., *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, vol. X (Malden/London: Blackwell, 2008), 4371–4373.

¹⁹Grosser, *Gottscheds Redeschule*, cited in n. 11 above, p. 23; see J. Chr. Dommerich, *Anweisung zur wahren Beredsamkeit, zum Gebrauche seiner Vorlesungen herausgegeben* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1747).

²⁰Fr. Chr. Baumeister, *Anfangsgründe der Redekunst in kurzen Sätzen. Zum Gebrauch der oratorischen Vorlesungen* (Leipzig/Görlitz: Richter, 1751), 1f.

Guide to German Art of Speech (Anleitung zur deutschen Redekunst).²¹ In this connection, it is important to note that lecturers in eighteenth-century Germany were *obliged* to use such textbooks. This probably explains why Gärtner, one of the pupils of Gottsched, kept using the *Comprehensive Art of Speech (Ausführliche Redekunst)* in his lectures even after he declared himself to have departed from his master.²²

All this clearly indicates that Gottsched has to be regarded as the major representative of German curricular rhetoric in the eighteenth century, which goes under the heading of *Redekunst*, "art of speech". In the course of time, to be sure, the famous man was more and more regarded as the prototype for an old-fashioned poetics of rules. The decline of rhetorical art had a strong effect on Gottsched's esteem. Nevertheless, his rhetoric was still taught. That it was outdated when Kant wrote his third *Critique* did not make it less perceptible in academia. It must only have made the term "art of speech" (*Redekunst*) sound increasingly dubious.

On these grounds, Gottsched's rhetoric can be regarded as a natural background for any reflection on eloquence during this period. When Kant uses the word "*Rednerkunst*" in §53, he positively invokes Gottsched's school. But what answer did the Gottschedians offer to the challenge of rhetoric? It is a well-tried method of philosophy to domesticate the power of speech by binding it to reasons and truth. In this view, speech is a medium that has to be secondary to the content it conveys. Whereas philosophy is responsible for discovering the truth, rhetoric is responsible for transmitting the truth. Gottsched's rationalist approach to eloquence can be regarded as a variation of this solution. He treats the topic under the heading of "true eloquence."

III. GOTTSCHED'S "TRUE ELOQUENCE"

When Gottsched separated true from false eloquence, he made use of terms that were already circulating. Hallbauer in particular had provided a doctrine of rhetoric centered around truth and "true eloquence."²³ But Gottsched's rhetorical treatise from 1736 fixed the standards for decades. What was the conception of the *Comprehensive Art of Speech (Ausführliche Redekunst)*?

²¹H. Braun, *Anleitung zur deutschen Redekunst* (München: Ott, 1765), 4.

²²Grosser, *Gottscheds Redeschule*, cited in n. 11 above, pp. 56 and 152f.

²³Fr. A. Hallbauer, *Anweisung zur Verbesserten Teutschen Oratorie* (Jena: Hartung, 1725).

Gottsched claims that reasons can only be sustainably persuasive when derived from “good sources” (*gute Quellen*), i.e., from sources that correspond to the “doctrine of reason” (*Vernunftlehre*) and withstand logical critique.²⁴ The kind of eloquence that is persuasive in this way Gottsched calls “true eloquence” (*wahre Beredsamkeit*). In contrast, any persuasive speech that is produced by effective linguistic techniques is called “false eloquence” (*falsche Beredsamkeit*): “The one eloquence that makes use of the former kind of reasons (*Beweisgründe*), according with reason and truth (*Vernunft und Wahrheit*), we want to term true; but the other, which makes use of illusory reasons (*Scheingründe*) that in fact do not prove anything, we want to term false eloquence.”²⁵

Thus Gottsched’s “reasonable guide to true eloquence”²⁶ proceeds by separating valid reasons sharply from expression, style and linguistic presentation. False eloquence is false because it makes artful speech intrude into reasoning and thus blurs the distinction between logic and rhetoric. This will become especially obvious where “well-spokenness” (*Wohlredenheit*) takes the lead: style can never be a valid reason since it concerns the mere form of representation. As long as it stands alone, well-spokenness will be, as Gottsched writes, “without spirit (*Geist*) and force (*Kraft*), without truth (*Wahrheit*) and vigor (*Nachdruck*).”²⁷ As soon as figures or tropes become the basis of argumentation eloquence is doomed to be false.²⁸

Of course, this conception depends on a strict separation of cognition, the rational activity, from the transmission of thoughts, the rhetorical activity. But how can true eloquence be secured where content and style cannot be kept distinct so easily? Obviously, not every fraudulent talk can be unmasked by its use of rhetorical figures, and not every use of rhetorical figures justifies the accusation of false eloquence. The question of “true rhetoric” is so persistent because it is no option to eliminate eloquence and transform speech into formal reasoning. True and false eloquence have to be kept distinct *within* the practice of lively, rich, elegant and maybe even beautiful speech. For Gottsched, this problem becomes particularly pressing when he places speech in a process of enlightenment where the “wise man” (*Weltweise*) speaks to the “ordinary kind of listeners” (*gemeine Art der Zuhörer*) and people of “average understanding.”²⁹ How can the expert be

²⁴J. Chr. Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1736), 37.

²⁵Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 37f.

²⁶Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 31.

²⁷Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 36.

²⁸Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 73–79 or 107.

²⁹Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 40–41.

prevented from misusing his rhetorical skills? To this end, Gottsched falls back on two strategies that have often been resorted to in the history of rhetoric: speech has to be *natural*, and the speaker has to be *morally good*.

That speech ought to be natural had already been demanded by Socrates; and it has time and again been defined as a requirement in philosophical rhetoric. How can this requirement be met? First, the speaker should stick to everyday language instead of impressing by figures and tropes. He should avoid, as Gottsched writes, "technical terms" (*Kunstwörter*) and "speak the ordinary language (*gemeine Sprache*) that everyone understands".³⁰ Speech should never be euphuistic but rather simple and sober. Second, natural speech is based on knowledge. The speaker has to be well acquainted with the subject matters at hand. This is why, ideally, he is a man of broad education. Natural speech flows from factual content, and the capacity to speak naturally flows from the domain-specific expertise of the speaker. This has already been emphasized by Cicero,³¹ and Gottsched is entirely in line with this tradition: to speak naturally a speaker has to "follow his subject matter" (*Materie*) and to keep in his mind "no other picture than the thing itself."³²

However, the assumption that natural speech originates from knowledge poses a new problem: such knowledge will inevitably include insights concerning the efficacy of speech in regard to human sentiments, i.e., *psychological* insights. Gottsched explicitly assumes that the excellent speaker must be well aware of the "excitements of the mind" (*Gemütseregungen*) of his addressees.³³ Thus the question of how a manipulative stance on speech can be avoided becomes only more pressing: the very resource that was supposed to secure "true eloquence" invites the misuse of the power of speech for purposes of manipulation.

Hence, there is another requirement: the speaker has to be distinguished by *moral integrity*. Only then will he make good use of his knowledge. The true orator has to have, as Gottsched repeatedly writes, "good intentions" (*gute Absichten*).³⁴ This second requirement is crucial since it not only affects the style of the linguistic performance, the question whether it is artificial or natural, but rather its persuasive

³⁰Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 41.

³¹Cicero, *De oratore* 2.56.

³²Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 328 and 330.

³³Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 162–192.

³⁴Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 51–53; J. Chr. Gottsched, *Akademische Redekunst, zum Gebrauche der Vorlesungen auf hohen Schulen als ein bequemes Handbuch eingerichtet und mit den schönsten Zeugnissen der Alten erläutert* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1759), 28f.

function, the question to what end speech is used. Eloquence, however natural it may be, will be secured from being misused only where this additional ethical requirement is satisfied, too.

Gottsched summarizes his rhetorical ideal using the classical formula "good man, skillful in speech," known from Quintilian's *Institutio*. Gottsched cites: "sit ergo nobis Orator, quem instituimus, is, qui a M. Cicerone finitur, *vir bonus*, dicendi peritus."³⁵ Quintilian, of course, had attributed the *vir bonus*-formula to Cato the Elder, in accord with rhetorical tradition.³⁶ In the section in Quintilian that Gottsched refers the reader to (*Inst. or.* XI, 1), Cicero is mentioned but the passage is missing. Obviously, Gottsched was thinking of a passage in book XII: "sit ergo nobis orator, quem instituimus et qui a M. Catone finitur, 'vir bonus dicendi peritus' [. . .]"; which Russells translates as: "so let the orator whom we are setting up be, as Cato defines him, 'a good man skilled in speaking.'"³⁷ So Gottsched inadvertently turns Quintilian's classical reference to Cato into a reference to Cicero.

Nevertheless, the formula expresses Gottsched's idea of true eloquence. The orator has to meet two requirements: he has to be powerful in speech (*dicendi peritus*), and he has to be morally good (*vir bonus*). The persuasive speaker has to be rhetorically and ethically excellent.³⁸ However, it appears that these virtues remain independent from one another. "True eloquence," as Gottsched has it, results from a combination of knowledge and formal know-how with morality, the latter keeping the speaker from misusing his capacity and thus securing the "good use" of speech. In the remainder of this article, I will attempt to show that the ideal of speech implied in Kant's remarks in §53 of the third *Critique* can be read as a response to and, more specifically, a critical revision of precisely this notion of eloquence.

IV. CULTURE, NOT ART: KANT'S REJECTION OF GOTTSCHEDIAN "TRUE ELOQUENCE"

The previous sections have shown why contemporary readers were likely to take Kant's denunciation of the "art of speech" as

³⁵Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 51.

³⁶See e.g., Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.193 or Seneca, *Controversiae*, 8–10.

³⁷Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 12.1.1.

³⁸It is no surprise that epigones like Baumeister (*Anfangsgründe der Redekunst in kurzen Sätzen*) or Braun (*Anleitung zur deutschen Redekunst*) adopt Gottsched's distinction virtually unaltered. In H. G. Schellhaffer the distinction reappears with minor deviations; see *Sätze der Redekunst* (Hamburg: Piscator, 1760), 9.

directed against Gottsched. The *Redekunst* is explicitly an *ars oratoria*, and Gottsched is the chief representative of this art until the 1780s. In the light of some further evidence, one may even argue that Kant was actually thinking of Gottsched when he wrote §53 of the third *Critique*.

First, Gottsched intends to secure his "true eloquence" by providing a technique of speech with "good intentions" (*gute Absichten*). Kant, by contrast, regards artful speech as contemptible, even if the particular intentions (*Absichten*) may, as he writes, be "well intentioned or even really good" (5:328n). Given the prominent role of the term "intention" in Gottsched, this remark signifies that Kant might well be responding to Gottsched in this passage. At least, he dismisses the very solution to the challenge of rhetoric that Gottsched had suggested.³⁹

The suspicion is confirmed when Kant, two sentences later, goes on to explain his own idea of speech: when he describes the *vir bonus dicendi peritus* as "the speaker without art but full of vigor, as Cicero would have him" (5:328 fn.), he too misattributes the Catonian phrase to Cicero. Kant makes the same mistake Gottsched made in his *Ausführliche Redekunst*.⁴⁰ This supports the claim that there is a direct link. Therefore, it seems likely that Kant's version of the *vir bonus* is intended to revise Gottsched's version of this ideal; and in any case Kant condemns precisely the idea of "true eloquence" that Gottsched defends.

But for a clarification of his own idea it is vitally important to understand *why* he could not accept the notion of "true eloquence" that school rhetoric favored. After all, Gottsched did not defend a manipulative "art of persuasion" but suggested binding speech to reason, truth and morality. How could Kant be so bitter about this endeavor?

To settle this question, it is crucial to pay attention to the general form any school rhetoric would have taken. The "art of speech" (*Redekunst*) is, as Gottsched explicitly says, a *doctrine* of persuasive speech, while "eloquence" (*Beredsamkeit*), when contrasted with the "art of speech," refers to a linguistic *practice*.⁴¹ This terminology was very common in Kant's times; for example, Sulzer still defined the "art of speech" (*Redekunst*) as a "theory of eloquence" (*Theorie der Beredsamkeit*)

³⁹That Kant does not argue against a *malicious* but rather a *well-intentioned* art of persuasion is also noticeable where he writes that it is not "*necessary* also to bring up the machinery of persuasion" (5:327, emphasis added).

⁴⁰If Kant studied Gottsched's academic textbook, he would have read the very same wrong citation (*Akademische Redekunst*, cited in n. 34 above, p. 45).

⁴¹Gottsched, *Ausführliche Redekunst*, 33; Gottsched, *Akademische Redekunst*, 25.

and eloquence, in turn, as the capacity “to express one’s ideas in speech,”⁴²—that is to say, as a practice of speech. Gottsched’s “art” (*Kunst*) is intended to refine the given practice of speech by subjecting it to a system of rules. Like the Greek term *techné* or the Latin *ars*, it refers to a theory-based practice.

For Kant, this implies that the “art of speech” is, by definition, a *mechanical art*, i.e., an art that “merely performs the actions requisite to make it [its object] actual” (5:305). It is a skill operating according to hypothetical imperatives, conditional rules or prescriptions that tell us how to achieve specific goals. Hence, this art cannot belong to beautiful art. Since it connects speech to particular purposes, it cannot exemplify a “purposiveness without purpose.” A piece of discourse that is formed according to the rules of an art can never be purposeful by virtue of its form alone. If speech proceeds according to a doctrine of speech, it inevitably misses the requirements of the beautiful.

But this is not all. The objects of the “art of speech” are *judgments*. What the orator in this case aims at “making actual” are certain attitudes in his addressees. This is why the art of speech must not only fall short of beauty but in fact be ugly and, more precisely, morally contemptible. From the viewpoint of a doctrine of eloquence, speech is a means suitable for changing other people’s minds. This is what Kant must be thinking of when he accuses this particular type of rhetoric of applying the “machinery of persuasion” (5:305).⁴³ While there is nothing wrong with technique in general, the “art of speech” is despicable since it takes an instrumental stance on the social practice of communication. Thus, it essentially supports an instrumental attitude to other persons and therefore tends to undermine their autonomy. The devastating judgments on the *ars oratoria* in the third *Critique* have to be read in this light: when Kant condemns eloquence “in so far as it is understood as the art of persuasion” (5:327), his rejection is indeed radical, since from his point of view, such artificial eloquence is unholy by definition.

This explains why Gottsched’s *Redekunst* is indeed a paradigmatic case of the art of speech that Kant rejects. Gottsched sees no problem in taking a strategic or “mechanical” stance on communication where

⁴²J. G. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste in einzeln, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstwörter aufeinanderfolgenden, Artikeln abgehandelt*, vol. 4, (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1794), 41.

⁴³Kant is probably echoing the expression *mechane peithous* here that Socrates uses in Plato’s *Gorgias* (459bf). For alternative explanations see Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, cited in n. 3 above, 88.

"ordinary listeners" have to be enlightened. For him, the artful use of linguistic means only has to be controlled by "good intentions." But in Kant's view, such an art is deficient in its basic constitution. The fundamental flaw that language is regarded as a means cannot be cured by constraining its use. Even if provided with ethical restrictions or "good intentions," Gottsched's eloquence necessarily remains a "mechanical art," i.e., a method or technique. This cannot be adjusted by subsequently injecting a dose of morality. In this way, morality only draws the limit for a rhetorical method that might be evil in itself.

But, if this is right, what options does Kant have? As long as language is taken as a device providing the speaker with certain means that can be applied to attain certain ends eloquence is irreversibly instrumental. This reveals how difficult the task is that Kant faces. It seems that *all* speech will be purposive to some measure, since speakers will be at least minimally aware of the instrumental use of eloquence. It would be curious if Kant demanded the speaker to drop back on naivety and become unconscious of linguistic efficacy. "An art for being naïve is," so he himself puts it, "a contradiction" (5:335). Hence, the pivotal question is how a "non-instrumental use" of speech is possible. To make sense of this notion is apparently the main problem for any account of "Kantian eloquence,"⁴⁴ and one might be inclined to think that such a paradoxical notion cannot be spelt out.

To pave the way for an answer, we should begin with the general type of speech practice Kant must have in mind. As seen above, there is a sharp distinction in the period's terminology between "eloquence" (*Beredsamkeit*) as a *practice* of speech and the "art of speech" (*Redekunst*) as a doctrine or "theory of eloquence" (*Theorie der Beredsamkeit*). This distinction is clearly presupposed by Kant in the footnote in §53, which is not only indicated by the word "*Rednerkunst*" itself but also by the fact that the contrasting word is "*Beredtheit*" instead of "*Beredsamkeit*": while the latter can still have the sound of the technical term referring to the discipline of rhetoric, the former unambiguously refers to practical eloquence. This distinction is also in play when Kant condemns eloquence, "in so far as it is understood as the art of persuasion." He could equally well have said that eloquence deserves no respect, in so far as it takes the form of a system of prescriptions or of an explicit *techné*. Therefore, it is clear that Kant's notion of eloquence, whatever it is, would have to be a practice that is *not* based on any doctrine.

⁴⁴Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 6 above, 54.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, there is a distinction imposing itself at this point: Kant introduces it after having declared that there cannot be “any science (*Wissenschaft*) of the beautiful” (5:355). Since taste cannot be determined by rules, the practice of beautiful art is based on examples and paradigms; it is shaped not through a “method” (*Lehrart*) but by virtue of a “manner” (*Manier*). A practice shaped this way can also be termed a *culture*. The “propaedeutic for all beautiful art,” Kant writes, “seems to lie not in precepts, but in the culture of the mental powers (*Gemütskräfte*)” (5:355). In Kant, the beauty of art, as opposed to the beauty of nature, has to be accomplished by a process of cultivation. This cultivation is at the same time the only possible propaedeutic of beautiful eloquence, i.e., of “rhetoric” (*Rhetorik*) in Kant’s sense. If rhetoric must not be a mechanical art, a method of eloquence, then it can only be a beautiful art, as Kant explicitly says, and this implies that it is generated by the “culture of mental powers.”

In other words, Kantian “true rhetoric” has to be a *culture of speech*. It is eloquence built on a cultivation of the “powers of the mind,” as opposed to eloquence built on a system of speech. The latter leads to applying a method according to certain purposes and is thus incurably “mechanical.” Here, the speaker learns to regard language as a means that can be used according to ends and conditional rules. But for Kant, the only respectable way of refining one’s natural capacity of speaking is the cultivation of the mind itself.⁴⁵ In this perspective, any practical training in eloquence detached from this cultivation has to be regarded with contempt. For Kant, it would be the same kind of contempt as emerges in the claim that lying is the “greatest violation of a human being’s duty to himself regarded merely as a moral being” (6:429).

How did Kant conceive of this culture of speech? The field he mentions in the *Critique of Judgment* is humanistic education (*humaniora*), which is supposed to stimulate the “sociability that is appropriate to humankind” (5:355). Other fragments of a culture of speech can be found in the *Anthropology*, where Kant describes his idea of communal dining.⁴⁶ However, to understand how significant practices like these are in Kant, his remarks on eloquence have to be examined more closely. In particular, the role of morality has to be

⁴⁵This is also reflected by the expression “speaking arts” (*redende Künste*), which Kant introduces in §51 (5:321): while the ‘art of speech’ turns speech into an object and is therefore essentially ‘mechanical,’ a ‘speaking art’ is a *practice* of speech that can, at least potentially, be beautiful. Unfortunately, Guyer and Matthews translate ‘*redende Künste*’ as ‘art of speech.’

⁴⁶7:278–282; see G. L. Ercolini, “Ethics Improper: The Embodied Ethics of Kant’s Anthropology.” *Review of Communication* 12 (2012), 313–330 (pp. 321–325).

clarified. Cato's *vir bonus*-formula refers to a rhetorical ideal that is essentially ethical, and for this reason, Quintilian adopts it. As the "science of speaking well" (*bene dicendi scientia*), rhetoric has to comprehend "all virtues of speech" (*orationis omnes virtutes*) and therefore also the "orator's morals" (*mores oratoris*), which means that "only the good man can speak well."⁴⁷ As will turn out in the remaining sections, Kant stands very close to this idea.

V. "WITHOUT ART": THE UNITY OF RHETORICAL AND ETHICAL VIRTUE

According to Kant, the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, the "speaker without art but full of vigor," will have "clear insight into the facts," "command" of "language in all its richness and purity," "fruitful imagination" and "lively sympathy for the true good." This description entails a revision of Gottsched's rhetorical ideal. In the "art of speech," the perfect speaker is rhetorically and ethically excellent, but there is no intrinsic connection between these two qualities. The orator has to be powerful in speech *and also* morally good, so that he will not misuse his rhetorical capacity. This conception of "true eloquence" defends a formal know-how simply *limited* by morality. For Kant this is no option. In his view, it is impossible to transform a "mechanical" technique of speech into respectable eloquence by providing it with good intentions. In the case of the *ars oratoria*, morality will always be too late.

This signifies what the main challenge for Kant will be: he has to ensure that eloquence and morality do not fall apart. His *vir bonus* cannot be a "good man" as far as morality is concerned and at the same time "artful" as far as speech is concerned. Rather, ethical virtue and rhetorical virtue must be *of one piece*. Given Kant's idea of cultivation, this is not surprising. In Kant, human beings are in need of being educated; they have the duty "to cultivate, civilize and moralize themselves through art and sciences" (7:324). This is why Kant's idea of *Bildung*, the German equivalent to the Latin *cultura*, points to the conception of moral self-cultivation, which Kant develops in his doctrine of virtue. Cultivation includes moralization. The moral judgment has to be strengthened, so that human beings become capable of living as free persons in a kingdom of ends. A Kantian "culture of speech" would have to be an inherent part of this moral culture.

⁴⁷Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 2.15.33f.; cf. 12.1.1-3.

This is underscored by the way Kant explains the *vir bonus* formula in §53: the ideal speaker has to have “sympathy for the true good” (*Herzensanteil am wahren Guten*). The word *Herzensanteil*, not commonly used in German, literally expresses a sympathy that is felt in the “heart” (*Herz*) – a word Kant regularly uses when it comes to questions of “virtue” (*Tugend*) in a narrow sense (5:178n; 5:273; 6:441). In other words, “virtue” has to be taken as habituated, embodied morality here. The speaker needs to have a certain affection, a real sympathy, since it does not suffice to speak in accordance with formal principles. Kant’s *vir bonus* is informed by morality. His eloquence implies the capacity to set the right ends because it is the result of moral cultivation; this is why it does not have to be specifically *connected* to “good intentions.” In Kant’s view, it is a mistake to separate rhetorical capacities and morality in the first place. Excellence in speech can never be a formal skill; any formal idea of such excellence even subverts the morality needed to “speak well.” Hence, Kant must obviously be convinced that the “culture of the mental powers” is *all* it takes for true rhetoric. When the *vir bonus* is speaking, this has “in itself sufficient influence on human minds, without it being necessary also to bring up the machinery of persuasion” (5:327).

Of course, this requires that cultivation implies broad education or *Bildung*. In his explanation of the *vir bonus* formula, Kant mentions that the speaker needs “insight into facts” (*Sachen*), i.e., a certain knowledge. But it is important to see that Kant is not talking about formal skills at this point. In the context of eloquence, the German word *Sache* does not refer to brute facts but more regularly to matters of *concern*, e.g., in court. The *vir bonus* is supposed to have insight into practical affairs. Kant is referring to the same topic when, in a parallel explanation in §53, he speaks of the “distinct concept (*deutlicher Begriff*) of these sorts of human affairs” (5:327), i.e., the affairs debated in parliament and courtrooms. This indicates that Kant’s speaker is required to have a rich understanding of human practice. Of course he needs “domain-specific knowledge,” as Stroud argues⁴⁸ and as Gottsched recommended, too,⁴⁹ but more importantly he needs *intellectual culture*. The “good man” is not only informed about certain states of affairs but he is a broadly educated, experienced personality.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Stroud, “Kant, Rhetoric, and the Challenges of Freedom,” cited in n. 4 above, 188f.

⁴⁹Gottsched, *Akademische Redekunst*, 39–45.

⁵⁰That Kant’s *vir bonus* needs to have ‘distinct concepts’ of practical affairs can be explained by reference to the regulative concepts that guide human practice. It is worth noting that conceptual clarification is one of the general aims of the self-critique of reason.

Another element mentioned above can be explained along the same lines. The requirement to have language "at his command" (*in seiner Gewalt*) is at first sight difficult to reconcile with a non-mechanical picture of speech. But the speaker who has a language at his full command will in fact *not* relate to language as to an external system of speech. Quite on the contrary, mastery of a language is provided where a speaker has adopted a linguistic practice as his own, so that it is *natural* for him to speak this language.

Kant remarks at one point that art always involves something compulsory and requires a "mechanism," since its spirit would otherwise have no body and "evaporate." In this vein, "correctness and richness of diction" are prerequisites for poetry (5:304). In other words, beautiful art has a mechanical basis, only this basis has become invisible. "In a product of beautiful art," Kant writes, "one must be aware that it is art, and not nature; yet the purposiveness in its form must still seem to be as free from all compulsion (*Zwang*) by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature" (5:306). This description holds for eloquence as well, insofar as it is, at least potentially, beautiful. Language needs a mechanical basis. But whoever has a language at his command "in all its richness and purity" is not just able to "make use" of a linguistic system. To master a language in this way, normally the mother tongue, means to have incorporated a linguistic practice into one's understanding and worldview. It means to have made this practice one's *second nature*. Such proficiency enables the speaker to express herself, without having to think of rules, as learners of this language would have to. The rule-like aspect of language is suppressed and the meanings of particular linguistic forms can be grasped. A proficient speaker can understand and perform meaningful "speech acts"; the constraint by conventions is not sensed anymore. In this case, rules do not have a guiding but only a *limiting* function: the speaker can speak freely and "*without offense* against the rules of euphony in speech or of propriety in expression, for ideas of reason" (5:327, emphasis added).⁵¹ This is why the speaker cannot relate to

This connection is also indicated by a passage from the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique* where Kant explains how difficult it was to present his thinking in a comprehensible way. In this regard, he remarks that he will leave all further work to others who "have the happy combination of thorough insight (*Gründlichkeit der Einsicht*) with a talent for lucid exposition" (B xlili). This clue to Kant's speaker's ideal precedes the explanations under discussion here by more than ten years. And here, the word *Einsicht* refers to the particular kind of "insight" the self-critique of reason provides.

⁵¹Looked at in this way, linguistic capacity is essentially built on *reflective judgment*, which is basically the capacity to proceed "without rules." The power of judgment does not have its "own legislation" but still a "proper principle of its own," namely the principle of "seeking laws" (5:177). This is how free action in a sensible

these rules in an instrumental fashion. Language is no external means but has become part of who the speaker *is*.

These elements together constitute Kant's account of *natural speech*. Insight and linguistic proficiency contribute to the constitution of the speaker's identity, and thus they cannot conflict with what Kant, in his discussion of lying, calls the "natural purposiveness of the speaker's capacity to communicate his thoughts" (6:429). In this perspective, speaking naturally means expressing oneself in a way that the personality of the speaker is revealed in the form of speech. And given that the speaker is *virtuous*, his way of speaking will naturally be *expressive of virtue*.

Still, this cannot be the end of the story. The speaker, particularly the speaker in parliament or in court, cannot be satisfied with speaking in a morally cultured fashion. His speech must also have persuasive force. Rhetorical excellence is normally taken as a kind of efficacy. This is why Kant's *vir bonus* is not simply supposed to be a speaker "without art" but also "full of vigor" (*Nachdruck*). How does Kantian eloquence gain "vigor"? This question is crucial for how Kant deals with the challenge of rhetoric.

VI. "FULL OF VIGOR": THE EFFICACY OF THE KANTIAN ORATOR

The question how speech can gain vigor seems to be closely connected to the basic question of the third *Critique*. How is it possible to bridge the "incalculable gulf" (5:175f.) between nature and freedom? What has to be explained is how the ideas of reason can be endowed with reality and motivate human action; and this could be described as the problem of how the ideas of practical reason can gain vigor. In fact, in Kant's practical philosophy, the term "vigor" (*Nachdruck*) refers to the motivational force of reason.⁵² This reflects how aesthetics

world is possible. In speech, just like in arts, the mechanical provides the basis for what is purposive in itself.

⁵²Kant does not use the term *Nachdruck* very often, but where he does, it is clearly linked to rhetorical force. In his precritical period, he uses the word to describe a reasoning that does not proceed according to geometrical rules but still has enough force to persuade a reasonable person (2:159). In the first *Critique*, the word refers to the expressive power of language (B 650) and to the plausibility a proof gains when speculation is connected to intuition (B 665). Later, the word appears in the context of laws or principles that have to be enforced: in this vein, Kant combines it with "efficacy" (*Wirkung*) when he explains how practical laws gain "efficacy and vigor" (B 617; see 4:389 and 5:25 for similar uses).

in the eighteenth century inherits the tasks that used to be the business of rhetoric – a process that is noticeable in Kant too.⁵³

Hence, the way Kant's speech gains vigor must be closely akin to the way the ideas of reason gain motivational force, i.e., it must rest on aesthetic grounds. This emerges in the fact that Kant himself regards "rhetoric" (*Rhetorik*), which combines "practical eloquence" (*Beredtheit*) and "well-spokenness" (*Wohlredenheit*), as a "beautiful art" (*schöne Kunst*). Beauty is the "symbol of the morally good" (*Symbol des Sittlichguten*) in the third *Critique* (5:353). This is essential to how Kant endows the ideas of morality with reality, which makes them become attractive for finite human beings. Given that "Kant interprets aesthetic experience within a framework dominated by the primacy of practical reason,"⁵⁴ one may conclude that speech supports morality by way of such experience. Thus, the symbolic function of beauty is essential to how speech gains vigor in Kant: the rhetorical force of morally cultured speech must lie in its beauty, *moral beauty* thus being the only rhetorical force Kant allows. For this reason, Kant's orator must be one who not only argues in favor of ideas of practical reason – like a political orator who defends, e.g., the idea of freedom – but one who renders these ideas effective, by virtue of a way of speaking that is perceived as beautiful. This Kantian version of "true eloquence" requires a way of speaking that not only rests on "insight" into what is good and right but becomes itself a symbol of the morally good. Such speech, one has to assume, "would shine like a jewel for itself," just as Kant says about the good will in his *Groundworks* (4:394).

But it is crucial to see that this connection between aesthetics and ethics is without any guarantee. The connection between the good and the beautiful, the right and the vigorous, is utterly fragile in Kant. Any *symbolic* rendering is indirect; it is established when the *power of judgment* connects "the object of a sensible intuition" to the "rule of reflection on that intuition to an entirely different object" (5:352) that is *not* given, i.e., an idea.⁵⁵ This does not simply mean that the symbol

⁵³P. L. Oesterreich, "Das Verhältnis von ästhetischer Theorie und Rhetorik in Kants *Kritik der Urteilskraft*," *Kant-Studien* 83 (1992), 324–335.

⁵⁴P. Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on aesthetics and morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 115.

⁵⁵In the connection to pure concepts, Kant presupposes a specific type of rendering he takes from classical rhetoric: the *hypotyposis*. For helpful discussions, see R. Gasché, *The Idea of Form: Rethinking Kant's Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 202–218, or Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 6 above, 30f. The figure can already be found in Baumgarten who understands the *hypotyposis* as a sensuous representation of an abstractum (*Aesthetica*, § 733). Kant explains the term by reference to Cicero's *De oratore* (3.53.202) when he defines

corresponds to its object in a more circuitous way. The difference is one of function: moral ideas are exhibited by sensuous forms that will activate the “procedure of the power of judgment” operative in moral reason. Here, aesthetic intuition accords with “the form of the reflection, not the content” (5:351). In this vein, a white lily can be a symbol of innocence (5:302): when we perceive the lily as a purposeful form, i.e., as beautiful, our state of mind resembles the one we are in when making moral judgments related to innocence. The symbolic function is not one of correspondence at all, it is grounded on analogy. Symbolic presentation provides intuitions that the reflective mind can regard *as if* they were objects of moral reason. What such presenting shares with moral reason is the form of a judgment. What cannot be represented thus becomes a part of human experience.

As mentioned above, Kant’s *vir bonus* is required to have a “fruitful imagination capable of presenting his ideas.” Since imagination as such (*Einbildungskraft*) is defined as the “faculty of presentation (*Darstellung*)” (5:232), it is no surprise that speakers need to have this quality. *Inventio* has always been an essential part of rhetoric, and this tradition is carried on in the eighteenth century under the heading of “imagination,” Gottsched again being an example.⁵⁶ So the interesting question at this point is what it means that Kant’s speaker has to be able to present *ideas*. As seen above, Kant demands that his speaker have a “distinct” understanding of practical concepts. But how can this have a bearing on the force of discourse, when practical or regulative ideas, which guide human practice, can never be given in experience?

In Kant’s view, imagination is behind what is commonly called “spirit” – *Geist*, in the sense of the French *esprit* – namely the

it as *sub aspectum subjecto* (5:351). In this mode of presentation, something is ‘cast under the view’ and presented in a visual fashion. But for the presentation of moral ideas a particular kind of *hypotyposis* is needed that Kant calls “symbolic.” While *schematic hypotyposis* is concerned with the concepts of the understanding, as is the topic of the doctrine of schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B 176-B 187), *symbolic hypotyposis* is concerned with making concepts of reason sensible: to this end, an intuition (*Anschauung*) is “put under” (*untergelegt*) “a concept which only reason can think, and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate” (5:351). Thus, *symbolic hypotyposis* can be regarded as an indirect presentation of concepts (5:352). As such it provides a solution to the problem of how sensuous renderings of moral ideas are possible, i.e., how these ideas can be made sense of and endowed with motivational force. As Gasché emphasizes, the word ‘example’ does not capture the very specific meaning of *hypotyposis* in Kant: it “applies exclusively to the presentation of pure concepts of understanding and reason through a priori intuitions. It is this very limited, but also extremely essential type of presentation, one without which our pure concepts would remain *lifeless* [. . .].” (Gasché, *The Idea of Form*, 210).

⁵⁶Gottsched, *Akademische Redekunst*, 47f.

"animating principle in the mind" (5:313). Thus, it can provide speech with sensuous representations that will enliven speech. In connection to linguistic renderings, this has a very concrete meaning: a "fruitful imagination" is capable of "lively presentation in examples" (5:327). Thus, it is *examples* that are supposed to make speech forceful.⁵⁷ Still, the simple *use* of examples, as recommended by any school rhetoric,⁵⁸ will not be suitable. Being a "productive cognitive faculty" that is "very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature" (5:314), imagination should do something different than merely point to instances of a universal, which would turn examples into means. The speaker has to demonstrate what it could mean for practical ideas to have sensuous reality; i.e., he or she has to *make these ideas meaningful*. In such speech, examples do not relate to what they signify as means relate to ends. Instead, a presentation of this particular kind deserves to be called a moral practice in its own right. In a sense, such speech does not *give* examples of morality; it *is* itself such an example. It is an instance of virtuous speech, which requires the *speaker* to be virtuous. The "fruitful imagination" Kant's speaker is supposed to have has to be embedded in a sense for moral ideas, in a capacity for reflective judgments and in a cultured "moral feeling" (5:356). Ideal speech, as Kant has it, does not simply accord to moral principles; it is *expressive* of moral ideas. It gives a sample of the actual practice of morality and is exemplary of what morality can concretely mean.

VII. CONCLUSION: KANT'S MINIMAL RHETORIC

If this account is right, the kind of rhetorical efficacy Kant has in mind must be utterly subtle. In his view, speech ideally has to exemplify particular judgmental forms that will make moral beauty perceivable; and in this way only is the speaker allowed to endow practical ideas with vigor. Is it justified, then, to say that Kant's work shows the outline of a "rhetoric"?

⁵⁷In this connection, Stroud says that the "heart of Kant's educative rhetoric" lies in "the directed use [. . .] of linguistic devices to show the real possibility and desirability of instantiating the moral disposition" (*Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*, cited in n. 6 above, 125). Examples seem to be central to Kant's account indeed. But for the reasons stated above, I do not believe that Kant would have been comfortable with Stroud's instrumental descriptions.

⁵⁸Gottsched, *Akademische Redekunst*, cited in n. 34 above, 145-148.

Those who would like to continue using this word might emphasize that, in its history, rhetoric has in fact often been regarded as an ethical culture of speech. It is not even uncommon that the idea of *ars* or *techne* is rejected within classical rhetoric itself: Cicero, for example, emphasizes that a rhetorical system (*ars*) can never suffice to achieve practical eloquence.⁵⁹ Mere prescriptions (*praecepta*) will not lead to the kind of universal education that true rhetoric aims at. Perfection in speech does not derive from a certain technique but from a way of living (*vita*) and from the morals (*mores*) of the speaker.⁶⁰ Just like Kant, Cicero recommends a rhetorical practice “without art.” By vehemently *rejecting* the rationalist rhetoric of his times, Kant might in fact *defend* a particular version of classical rhetoric that centers around the idea of a culture of speech. And when in the footnote to §53 he mentions that Cicero did not “always remain true to this ideal,” he might be alluding to the fact that Cicero was nevertheless often concerned with questions of *ars*.

Yet, Kant’s opposition to the “art of speech” is obviously more radical than Cicero’s. Every attempt to reconstruct a clear-cut “rhetoric” from Kant has to keep in mind that Kant would never have wanted his aesthetic idea of speech to be retransformed into a rhetorical system. Not only is there no eloquence apart from virtue in Kant, which is why a bad man, even if his actions accord with the categorical imperative, cannot provide symbols of morality. There is also substantial reason to believe that Kant was convinced that speaking according to the rules of an “art of speech” is bad under *any* circumstances. The speaker has to be guided by a cultured moral sense alone, i.e. he has to be a *vir bonus*, so that his speech becomes expressive of morality; and he *cannot* be a *vir bonus* when he refines his natural capacity for speaking by studying textbooks of rhetoric.

Strictly speaking, the vigor deriving from personified ideas of reason is the only kind of rhetorical efficacy Kant allows. But unlike any way of speaking with a calculated efficacy, the persuasive force of this minimal rhetoric cannot be guaranteed in any way. Just as we can only hope that the beautiful and the good are one, it is never certain that the good man’s speech will be efficacious. This particular kind of vigor can only be *hoped* for.

⁵⁹Cicero, *De oratore* 1.107–109 or 145f.

⁶⁰Cicero, *De oratore* 1.68f.