Chapter IV

Port-Royal: Logic vs. Rhetoric (II)

Il nous reste à expliquer la dernière partie de la logique, qui regarde la méthode, laquelle est sans doute l'une des plus utiles et des plus importantes" (Logique, p. 377). This introduces an impressive and novel section of the Logique. The three earlier parts are based on the traditional list of mental operations: conception, judgment, and reasoning. The last part adds, in effect, a fourth kind of mental activity, by means of which thoughts are arranged into a convincing sequence. We note the familiar de-emphasis on the syllogistic phase of thought and learn at last what will supersede it as the Port-Royalists define a new way of combining thoughts.

"Il sert de peu pour bien démontrer, de savoir les règles des syllogismes, qui est à quoi on manque très peu souvent; mais que le tout est de bien arranger ses pensées, en se servant de celles qui sont claires et évidentes, pour pénétrer dans ce qui paraissait plus caché" (Logique, p. 377). The work as a whole has a cumulative structure, each section depending for its materials on the one that precedes it. One consequence is that any treatment, such as would be found in most books of logic, that stops with the syllogism omits the most important step of all.

The general place of method in the treatise is unmistak-
ably clear: it is the last in a series of means to the end of truth or, more exactly, to true knowledge (the French word is science, as opposed to the vaguer term connaissance). In order to grasp the exact place that Arnauld and Nicole assign to method in their scheme, let us analyze this term science, for the function of method is here (and everywhere, I assume) intimately linked to the nature of the truth to be found. The characteristic thing about this argument is its focus on assent, and on the degrees and motivations of assent. (The essentially simple and undifferentiated adhesion which might satisfy the rhetorician is hardly sufficient here.) In considering a statement or “maxime,”

1. one knows its truth because it is self-evident; we are persuaded of it if it is without need of further reasoning; it is the kind of knowledge that the logicians call intelligence (in English I should be inclined to call it intuition); or

2. we feel the need for some other motive of assent; and this category of “maxime” may be subdivided according to the nature of the supporting element that is required:

   a. if it is grounded on authority, the type of assent is known as foi; or

   b. if it is grounded on a reason or reasons, one will find oneself

      (1) in a state of imperfect conviction, which is opinion; or

      (2) in a state of perfect conviction, which may be

         a. only apparent, in which case the name for the state is erreur; or

         b. real, and that is science.

Method is, therefore, the procedure which combines judg-
ments in such a way as to produce knowledge in the sense just shown; and in so doing it must discover and then use self-evident principles—(intelligence in the special sense mentioned above); or again, and more simply, method is the path one follows in going from the clear and evident to the hidden and the unassented-to.

In practice it is useful to distinguish two methods, one for discovering the truth, the other for proving it to others when we have discovered it.

For the Port-Royalists, there is obviously no necessity for a doctrine or method of expression. In addressing someone with the aim of winning his assent, one uses essentially the same method as one used in establishing the truth in the first place. The synthetic and analytic procedures are, in fact, merely different movements along the same line; and in either case, the power of proof comes from linearity of thought, from strict observance of the order in which principles and consequences occur. In analysis, one searches for the antecedent or antecedents upon which a given affirmation depends for its cogency. In synthesis one reverses the direction: both antecedents and consequents being known, one simply displays their interrelationship to the person to be taught. There is no rhetorical adjustment of the truth to him; he grasps the truth in the same way as the scientist or specialist does.

We may, therefore, take as the basis of the rest of our
discussion the synthetic method, which is "... la plus impor­
tante en ce que c'est celle dont on se sert pour expliquer
toutes les sciences" (Logique, p. 402). Descartes' four rules
are quoted in connection with analysis, but the authors of
the Logique believe that they are "... générales pour toutes
sortes de méthodes et non particulières pour la seule analyse"
(Logique, p. 401). Like Descartes, however, they find in
geometry the model for method.

Il y a encore beaucoup de choses à observer pour rendre cette
méthode parfaite et entièrement propre à la fin qu'elle se doit
proposer, qui est de nous donner une connaissance claire et
distincte de la vérité. Mais parce que les préceptes généraux sont
plus difficiles à comprendre quand ils sont séparés de toute
matière, nous considérons la méthode que suivent les géomètres,
comme étant celle qu'on a toujours jugée la plus propre pour
persuader la vérité, et en convaincre entièrement l'esprit.
[Logique, pp. 402-3.]

It is easy to state the three characteristics or conditions that
must be fulfilled in the method: (1) there must be no am-
biguity in terms; (2) reasoning must begin from clear and
evident principles; and (3) one must demonstrate every con-
clusion that is advanced. At once the controversial relationship
with rhetoric emerges.¹

Ne laisser aucun des termes un peu obscur ou équivoque sans
le définir. . . .

N'employer dans les définitions que des termes parfaitement
connus ou déjà expliqués. . . .

N'abuser jamais de l'équivoque des termes en manquant d'y
substituer mentalement les définitions qui les restreignent et
qui les expliquent. [Logique, p. 404.]

Again and again Arnauld and Nicole insist on clarity, ex-
plicitness, and univocity of terms, the last of these being
truly the *sine qua non* of their method. But one has only to read casually in Book I of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, e.g., in chaps. 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, where the notions of happiness, good, utility, vice, virtue, and wrongdoing are introduced in the way proper to the orator, in order to see the unavoidable ambiguity of the terms which will serve as basic predicates in rhetorical reasoning. Notice his remarks on happiness: "We may define happiness as prosperity combined with virtue; or as independence of life; or as the secure enjoyment of the maximum of pleasure; or as a good condition of property and body, together with the power of guarding one's property and body and making use of them. That happiness is one or more of these things, pretty well everyone agrees." Whoever tries to eliminate this ambiguity simply confuses rhetoric with science, according to Aristotle's view. To make such an attempt means that one has failed to see that the starting points of arguments must be either special and peculiar to one category of things—like the principles of a particular science—or that, in certain situations (as in rhetoric), they must be common, that is, so conceived that they can be made to fit many or all sorts of things.

Cicero understands very well the need for flexible, multivalent starting points. More than once in *De Oratore* he has Antonius emphasize the tendency of the well-trained and experienced orator to return, no matter how varied the circumstances, to a small number of headings as he puts his case together and argues it. There is a curious passage in the dialogue where we learn of three aspects which may be isolated in a matter under debate, aspects recognizable in the answers given to these three questions: was the deed done?, what was done?, and of what sort or quality was it? The second of these requires an act of definition. As an example, Antonius refers to a case in which everything turned on the sense of the word *maiestas*. Neither advocate sought to define
precisely the term at issue, as they might have done if they
had followed the advice of some teachers.

Quod mihi quidem perquam puerile videri solet. Alia est enim,
cum inter doctos homines de eis ipsis rebus versantur in
artibus disputatur, verborum definitio, ut quom quaeeritur quid
sit ars, quid sit lex, quid sit civitas. In quibus hoc praecipit
ratio et doctrina, ut vis eius rei quam definias sic exprimatur ut
neque absit quicquam neque supersit. [De oratore II. xxv. 108.]

("This advice seems to me very puerile, for the definition of
words is quite a different thing when a dispute arises among
specialists about matters treated in the sciences, as when one
inquires, what is an art, what is a law, what is a state? In these
circumstances reason and method direct that the nature of the
thing which you define should be expressed in such a manner
that there will be nothing lacking or superfluous.")

Instead, both speakers used all the resources of rhetorical am­
plification on the content of the phrase maiestatem minuere.
Risking a formal definition might have given to the opponent
the chance to add something damaging, or to subtract or
modify something; and the initiative would thus pass to other
hands. In any case, there is a scholastic air about such an
exercise, something almost childish. Finally, and worst of all,
it is ineffective; it does not really make an impression on the
mind of the judge; it escapes him before he grasps it. And
so the contrast goes: on the one side, that of logic, insistence
on exactness and singleness of meaning; on the other, a desire
to use in argument the possibilities of analogy, of flexibility
in application, even of imprecision.

As for principles, the Port-Royalists want to begin with
axioms, with individual acts of judgment in which subject
and predicate are seen to be joined inescapably. They offer
at one point a list of eleven such principles. "Clear and in­
dubitable" (Logique, p. 424), these truths may serve as the
basis ("fondement") for knowing the most hidden things. Here are three of them: "Tout ce qui est enfermé dans l'idée claire et distincte d'une chose, en peut être affirmé avec vérité." "... Le néant ne peut être cause d'aucune chose." "... Il est de la nature d'un esprit fini de ne pouvoir comprendre l'infini." (Logique, pp. 425, 427.) But the rhetorician or orator—as, for example, in the theory of Aristotle—looks neither at things nor within himself in order to discover his principles. He looks rather to his audience and to the opinions it holds, to its fund of common knowledge. Most of the first book of the Rhetoric consists, in fact, of summaries of such knowledge, as I have indicated above. In Book II, the treatment of maxims as the premises or conclusions of enthymemes reveals the same tendency in Aristotle's advice—to look for the commonly accepted opinions: "The maxim, as has been already said, is a general statement, and people love to hear stated in general terms what they already believe in some particular connexion. ... The orator has therefore to guess the subjects on which his hearers hold views already, and what these views are, and then must express, as general truths, these same views on these same subjects."4

From univocal definitions and self-evident premises, the discussion in the Logique moves to demonstration itself. As the act of combining the known with the unknown in such a way that the latter follows from the former, its characteristic qualities are order and completeness. In a first set of rules for demonstrations, we read: "Prouver toutes les propositions un peu obscures en n'employant à leur preuve que les définitions qui auront précédé, ou les axiomes qui auront été accordés, ou les propositions qui auront déjà été démontrées, ou la construction de la chose même dont il s'agira, lorsqu'il y aura quelque opération à faire" (Logique, p. 404). This
advice or precept, which regards mainly the rigor of the demonstration, is later supplemented in another enumeration by two other “règles pour la méthode,” which stress further the need for sequence and add the requirement of exhaustiveness.

Traiter les choses autant qu’il se peut dans leur ordre naturel, en commençant par les plus générales et les plus simples, et expliquant tout ce qui appartient à la nature du genre, avant de passer aux espèces particulières.

Diviser autant qu’il se peut chaque genre en toutes ses espèces, chaque tout en toutes ses parties, et chaque difficulté en tous ses cas. [Logique, p. 443.]

The ideal is to define everything and to prove everything (unless what one starts with is certain in itself). Arnauld and Nicole know quite well that they are describing an ideal performance, one that can be only approximated in fact: the repeated phrase autant qu’il se peut has an operative value, not merely a decorative one. But because one must always reckon with the limits of the human mind and with the often elusive characteristics of things does not weaken the ideal for them. Its attractive power remains intact.

It is not difficult to find the points of contact between this theory of demonstration and rhetorical theory. They come together at the point where rhetorical arrangement, the operation following on invention, is investigated. Nor is it hard to understand the antagonism between these two approaches to the subject of combining arguments into convincing or persuasive units. Rigor and natural order in the one is set off against a looser organization in the other, against a tentative plan that may vary decidedly with the circumstances and according to the judgment of the orator. It is the notion of a chain of propositions versus the notion of a sum or total. A speech has, of course, a “natural” order, from exordium to narratio to confirmatio to refutatio to peroratio; it moves from introduction to statement of the act and issues to presenta-
tion of proofs and refutations to conclusion. But this order, though logical and usual, may be changed by rearranging the parts or even by suppressing one or more of them. From my reading of Quintilian I conclude that the only fixed position in the scheme is that of the peroration. This takes us quite far from the insistence on gradual progression from genus to species or from whole to part that Arnauld and Nicole felt to be necessary. Moreover, both exordium and peroration are extraneous from the point of view of logic, since they lie outside of the effort to demonstrate; from the point of view of rhetoric, they are entirely pertinent as the places in which the speaker exerts himself to gain the attention, good will, and docility (in the strict sense of the word) of the judge and, at the end, to restate his case quickly and impressively.

In the narration one should aim at clarity, brevity, and probability (and incidentally, this third term indicates that one will settle for something less than deductive certainty); one should avoid, Quintilian continues, contradictions and inconsistencies; but he adds that if anyone needs this bit of advice he might as well give up the study of the rhetorician's art. In other words, he takes as obvious the central topic of the Port-Royalists and goes on from there. As a very real possibility, one may consider inserting a digression at the end of the narration—something not completely detached, of course, but a brilliant amplification of some theme that has been touched upon, or something like a second exordium to make sure that one has the ear and sympathy of the audience (De institutione oratoria IV. iii). Digressions may be placed to advantage in other parts of the text or speech.

Under the heading of proofs, one notes that signs and symbols prove as surely as arguments and groups of arguments do; and to these we must add the whole category of "atechnical" means of persuasion, such as documents, wit-
nesses, and the like. Again, Quintilian realizes as well as anyone that argumentation requires principles, things taken for granted at the outset. Here he lists the ones that are certain:

Pro certis autem habemus primum quae sensibus percipiuntur, ut quae videmus, audimus, qualia sunt signa; deinde ea, ad quae communi opinione consensus est, deos esse, praestandam pieta­tem parentibus; praeterea, quae legibus cauta sunt, quae persuasione etiam si non omnium hominum, ejus tamen civitatis aut gentis, in qua res agitur, in mores recepta sunt, ut pleraque in jure non legibus, sed moribus constant; si quid inter utramque partem convenit, si quid probatum est, denique cuicumque adversarius non contradicit. [De institutione oratoria V. x. 12–13.]

(“But we take as certain, in the first place, things perceived by the senses, for instance, things that we see or hear, such as signs; secondly, those things on which there is general agree­ment, such as the existence of the gods and the duty of honoring one’s parents; thirdly, things that are established by laws or that have been received as customary, if not by all men at least by the nation or state where the case is being pleaded—for many rights depend not on law but on custom; and finally, those things that both parties accept or that have been proved or that the adversary does not contradict.”)

He concerns himself much less with what is self-evident than with what is indisputable or, rather, undisputed in fact. If an argument is accepted without further proof, that suffices; it may then play the role of an initial principle in the act of demonstrating.

The division of proofs into strong and weak, to which Quintilian refers (in Bk. V, chap. xii), is singularly out of harmony with the logical spirit, as is the discussion that follows from the distinction. One may, for example, give an appearance of strength to weak arguments by grouping them in a single development. Or, again, suppose that the speaker faces choices such as these: should the strongest arguments be put at the end of the proof?, or part of the strong ones at the
end, as Homer does, with the weak in between? Quintilian limits himself to this *dictum*: follow the order required by the particular case, but avoid a descending progression from strong to weak arguments.

On all of the foregoing points—the loose definition of proof, the pragmatic nature of its principles, the division and ordering of arguments—the attitude and theory of the rhotorical run counter to those of the logicians of Port-Royal.

In Chapter III and in the preceding pages, I have reviewed and analyzed the particular comments made by the authors of the *Logique* on the subject of rhetoric. By means of parallel citations and developments from the best known ancient treatises, I have defined, in passing, the issue and some of its implications. In the case of method—understood in the narrow sense given the term by the Port-Royalists, even though they do not work out explicitly the consequences of this notion for rhetoric—I have attempted to do so because they seem to me inevitable. I should like to draw together into a final and systematic statement my view of this conflict between logic and rhetoric and then to sketch the broad context into which the controversy fits. In 1662, we are obviously at a critical point in the history and application of two disciplines or intellectual styles. We have the good fortune to have on both sides the basic documents containing the fully elaborated positions. They are not contemporary, it is true; there had not yet appeared with unmistakable authority the expected French Quintilian. But the Latin one was very much alive, both in the collèges and outside of them; Patru was active; Bary had published, in 1659, his *Rhétorique française*; in 1664 (the date, incidentally, of the second edition of the *Logique*, with its strongly polemic “Second discours”), Rapin was to launch his series of comparisons and reflections with a volume on
Homer and Virgil. We see thus the emergence into intellectual consciousness of a contrast between methods that exclude each other when stated in their pure forms; though at the hands of lesser thinkers and critics, they undergo varying degrees of compromise and confusion.

A word about terminology is necessary at this point. Until now in this chapter, I have used "method" as referring to a part of logic, the crowning part in the constitution of a science, since it regulates the task of joining terms and affirmations into demonstrations, and I have made it analogous to arrangement in my comparison of the Port-Royalists with Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. But in what follows, I should like to use the word in a broader sense, so that the logic of Port-Royal, with its four operations, is one method, and rhetoric, with its five stages (to adopt the analysis of Cicero and Quintilian), is another and, in this instance, an opposed method.

1. Let us assume, then, that both methods are designed to cause someone to assent to a truth. Logic focusses on one part of the person addressed, the intellectual part. So does rhetoric—is it not concerned with teaching and proving?—but it aims at a more comprehensive agreement, one involving imagination, feeling, will.

2. The truth that is accepted in each case differs: that which one reaches by logic is in fact known from the outset, at least virtually, in the definitions and premises; that which results from the processes of rhetoric is not known until the debate is over and a verdict rendered. And if one looks at the truths, not genetically, but in themselves, that of logic is, in the typical and decisive case, a judgment that cannot be doubted; that of rhetoric is an opinion molded by and adapted to particular circumstances; it has, therefore, no lasting hold on the mind of the judge (or listener or reader).
3. In both cases we are concerned with sequences: in logic, with sequences of thoughts based on principles that are simple, unambiguous, and objective; in rhetoric, with sequences of actions both mental and verbal based on starting points that may be clear or ambiguous, objective or not, provided they are effective.

4. The initial drives of the two methods—toward simplicity, on the one hand, and toward effectiveness, on the other—are applied to characteristically different materials: in logic, to ideas which have not only unvarying identities as terms in reasoning but also unvarying references to aspects of things ("Tout ce qui est enfermé dans l'idée claire et distincte d'une chose en peut être affirmé"); in rhetoric, to the audience and its baggage of notions, maxims, dispositions, and feelings, which may or may not be in conformity with things. In such a situation, the logician tends to see careless verbalizing in the works of his opponent; while the orator criticizes the logician for irrelevant and unattractive technicality.

5. The techniques by which the aspirations of the two methods are satisfied in the solution of problems differ markedly, although each one treats at least partially everything that the other treats. Each method analyzes inquiry or activity in its own way: in logic, the phases are conception, judgment, reasoning, method; in rhetoric, they are invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, and delivery. These enumerations, however blank they may seem, suggest an essential point. Logic is a series of mental acts in the course of which truth is discovered and established, with provision being made for communicating the truth to other minds once it is known and after error-causing influences such as prejudice or self-interest have been eliminated. Rhetoric is a set of procedures guiding a personal transaction between speakers and hearers in the course of which a position is advanced, justified, and
made appealing, with provision being made for the use of demonstrative proof as one of several kinds of persuasive devices.

6. The end results of applying the two methods are exactly opposed. As here understood, logic leads (if it is carried far enough) to the formation of a unified science that replaces other attempts to state what is known, attempts usually marked by vagueness and irregularity. On the other hand, rhetoric, because of the freedom it allows in invention and expression and because of its respect for what is particular in cases and circumstances, tends to produce many differing opinions, all credible to some degree; its justifications and decisions are never exclusive in any final sense.

7. Consequently, each method has its special attitude toward dialogue and controversy. The logician aims to eliminate controversy, since it is a sign of inadequate knowledge; and he distrusts unresolved dialogue, since the truth is one—or, at least, he hopes to make it so. The rhetorician thrives on controversy; and in moments of leisure—one thinks at once of Cicero—he takes pleasure in dialogue.

Through these documents one catches sight of an inevitable and far-reaching rivalry between two conceptions of the truth and between two ways of finding and supporting the truth. Because of the universality of the notions involved, the possible repercussions—in morality, in science, in history, in literature—are infinite. In fact, both rhetoric and logic, as we see them here and in antiquity, tend deliberately to expand their claims. Each starts with a relatively limited area or province, and then a kind of imperialism begins. In the Gorgias and Phaedrus of Plato, for example, rhetoric is hemmed in by the standards of justice and dialectic. Aristotle's view does not require the eventual transformation of rhetoric into
dialectic upon which Plato insists; he finds a place for it as a method of dealing with problems, usually practical ones, where scientific solutions are not possible and where more than one opinion may be justified. It is not to be confused with logic or poetics or politics, though it has some of the characteristics of those disciplines and even borrows from them. However, in the theories of the professional Greek rhetoricians and, later, in those of Cicero and Quintilian, rhetoric asserts its claims to universality as a method. And not without plausibility: the Socratic or Platonic objection is answered, Cicero thinks, by the fact that, when truly understood, rhetoric does not simply train speakers in the technique of expression; it presupposes a joining of eloquence to wisdom. Thanks to wisdom, rhetoric can claim universal relevance; thanks to eloquence, it has a special dignity as the science that makes wisdom effective, that actually introduces true or probable insights into the fabric of human affairs.

The expansionism of logic is no less marked. It pervades the Cartesianism that inspires the fourth part (in particular) of the Logique: the model of knowledge and hence of method may be seen in geometry, the one place where there are agreed-upon truths and conclusive demonstrations. What the Port-Royalists wish to do is to extend, by suitable generalization, the way of geometry to all scientific inquiries and, beyond that, to judgment and reasoning as factors in everyday life. We cannot doubt that Arnauld and Nicole recognized this conflict of attitudes, aims, and procedures between rhetoric and logic—not perhaps in terms so purely opposed as the ones I have used above, but the fact is that, as they felt and conceived the issue, it could be resolved only by the substitution of logic for rhetoric and not by tolerance or compromise.

There is a curious resemblance and difference to be noted here. It has to do with the discipline of grammar. According
to Quintilian, the art of rhetoric builds on a foundation laid down by the art of grammar. In the course of his early training, the future orator must learn his language and how to express himself correctly in it. Exercises in literary analysis and appreciation are important parts of this conception of grammar. The work of the professor of rhetoric assumes that of the professor of grammar, the two disciplines being conceived so as to fit together in a sequential order. Now, in 1660, Lancelot and Arnauld published their *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*. This was two years before the appearance of the *Logique*, but the doctrine of the later work harmonizes perfectly with that of the earlier one. In the grammar, for example, the parts of speech are analyzed and defined by reference to mental acts which are, as we find out later in the logic, none other than conception and judgment. In other words, the grammar of Port-Royal leads to *logic* and not to *rhetoric* as in the ancient plan. Arnauld and Nicole see no necessity for adding an art of expression, the effect of which is simply to encourage false and hyperbolic thoughts and forced figures. "Or l'on trouvera peut-être autant de choses utiles dans cette logique pour connaître et pour éviter ces défauts que dans les livres qui en traitent expressément" (*Logique*, p. 28).

It would be wrong, incidentally, to give the impression that rhetoric is the only art or discipline criticized in the important "Second discours" (or, for that matter, in the body of the treatise itself). There are substantial paragraphs on ethics, metaphysics, and physics. The authors claim that they have elucidated the general principles of each of these sciences in such a way as to eliminate errors and prejudices and to prepare the way for accurate judgment in these fields. They make a very ambitious statement to the effect that although their readers will not find in the *Logique* all that it is necessary for them to know in relation to these subjects,
they will find there almost all that they need to remember. Even so, the position of rhetoric is especially precarious. After all, the Port-Royalists do acknowledge that we cannot give up entirely the books that treat technically the subject matters of morals, physics, and metaphysics. As for rhetoric, the only art really required is a discipline that restrains natural tendencies of thought and expression; and logic suffices for that.

The aim of replacing rhetoric becomes particularly plausible when the Port-Royalists propose logic as a way of teaching. It is not exclusively a tool for scientists. "La logique est l’art de bien conduire sa raison dans la connaissance des choses, tant pour s’en instruire soi-même, que pour en instruire les autres" (Logique, p. 39). In rhetoric, one starts characteristiclly with what we now think of as an “inter-personal” situation and with the things which must be done by the speaker or thinker as he addresses another party. In the logic of the Port-Royalists, one starts with the individual thinker and his effort to know things, but one eventually rejoins one’s fellow man—without a change of method—since logic can solve the problems of communication and persuasion, too.

Something even more insidious, in a sense, is that the Port-Royalists have taken care not to make their new discipline repellent because of subtlety and complexity. They explain in the last pages of the “Premier discours” why they have omitted a number of items from the usual list of topics in logical treatises. The really useful things are included, such as the division of terms and ideas, certain reflections on propositions, and the rules for the use of figurative language. Some more abstruse and less useful topics, such as the conversion of propositions and the demonstration of syllogistic figures, are nevertheless discussed; they may be skipped by the reader, but, if covered, they exercise the mind, making it habitually
more attentive. On the other hand, a great number of traditional questions having to do with subjects like the "universal a parte rei," "beings of reason," "second intentions" have disappeared without a trace. The authors had as their original intention to compose something simple enough and short enough to be read and learned quickly.

La naissance de ce petit ouvrage est due entièrement au hasard, et plutôt à une espèce de divertissement qu'à un dessein sérieux. Une personne de condition entretenant un jeune seigneur, qui dans un âge peu avancé faisait paraître beaucoup de solidité et de pénétration d'esprit, lui dit qu'étant jeune il avait trouvé un homme qui l'avait rendu en quinze jours capable de répondre d'une partie de la logique. Ce discours donna occasion à une autre personne qui était présente, et qui n'avait pas grande estime de cette science, de répondre en riant que si Monsieur... en voulait prendre la peine, on s'engagerait bien de lui apprendre en quatre ou cinq jours tout ce qu'il y avait d'utile dans la logique.8

The plan decided upon was to make for the young gentleman (the Duc de Chevreuse) an abstract from the common logics that would be more concise and more exact than the original works. The job turned out to be more demanding than it had seemed at first. New reflections presented themselves, and instead of an abstract a new logic was the result. Nevertheless, the undertaking succeeded, for the young man, without a tutor and by using four tables, each of which was the business of one day, learned what he needed to know. And at the end of the first discourse, the authors assert that all others who are "somewhat advanced" will be able to read and learn this logic in seven or eight days!

The accident that explains the genesis of this remarkable book points to the secret of its enormous success. The Port-Royalists are, as usual, playing to win in the competition for the interest of all intelligent readers, speakers, and writers of the century. According to them, their logic will do what rhet-
oric failed to do as regards thinking and do with stricter conscience what rhetoric was supposed to do as regards communication. Moreover, and this is one of the greatest achievements of Arnauld and Nicole, their “art de penser” can be read by and speaks directly to an unspecialized audience that has become very sensitive to pedantry. In this virtue of accessibility, there lies, perhaps, a certain revenge. This improvement, this victory that the authors imagined—could it be pure? Were they not offering to the public a rhetorical version of logic? Is logic logic when it has been designed and composed so as to be learned easily by a “jeune seigneur” who is pressed for time? If, as Zeno is alleged to have said, logic is the clenched fist and rhetoric the extended hand, which is this?

I should like to suggest in conclusion a way of looking at the whole picture of critical thinking and theorizing in the decades from 1635 to 1685, with which I have been mainly concerned in the preceding chapters. On the first level of an imaginary scale, one may put the great majority of audiences and readers: these are people who have little or no theoretical interest in the rules and disciplines that underlie poetry, eloquence, and other forms of expression, and for whom criticism is informal judgment according to taste. At one remove from these, we may locate the occasional and basically unsystematic critics. Their production is large; they write observations, reflections, discourses, and dialogues. Through the resulting assortment of judgments, maxims, and often ill-digested learning, one catches repeated glimpses of an aspiration toward lucidity in the treatment of literature according to rhetorical criteria. But this lucidity is achieved only on a third level, the level where we meet the authors of treatises: Bary, Le Gras, Rapin (to mention the most im-
Important figures), and, of course, their Greek and Latin authorities. It is here that problems of invention and style emerge into the open and that one finds a serious effort to state within the framework of a discipline the implications of the principles (such as nature and art) brought to bear on them.

But on this third level and in the midst of this discussion, unquestionably dominated by rhetoric, there suddenly erupts a competing discipline, logic. Its origins are certainly Cartesian; but it owes its effectiveness to the masterful vulgarisation of the Port-Royalists. In their treatise and in those of the rhetoricians, as in clear mirrors, we can see reflected one of the deepest tensions of French thought in the seventeenth century, and, more specifically, one of the decisive periods in the evolution of French literature—the early 1660's. These works allow us to grasp in intellectual terms (and subject, alas, to the limitations of such terms) something essential in French classicism. I mean that, seen abstractly, it proceeds from a balance of rhetorical and logical attitudes. In it the possibilities of emptiness and servility that go with a search for elegance, accessibility, and bienséance are balanced by efforts to reach and state a truth that is more than relative and to guard that truth against any drive on the part of expression to become an end in itself.

To complete the picture, I should be inclined to add a fourth level, on which all reference to authors ancient or modern would be dropped in favor of anonymous (though not unspecified) points of view. The achievements of the great authorities could then be understood as deriving, by ways known to intellectual creativity, from insights and ideals that belong, in part, of course, to Aristotle and Cicero and Port-Royal but have also an independent reality that stands outside of time. Individual thinkers in concrete historical situations (to borrow an expression from Sartre) commit them-
selves to these attitudes with more or less clairvoyance and elaborate them as best they can, without ever realizing completely and definitively the possibilities of logic or of rhetoric, as the case may be. One sign of the extratemporality of these ideals lies precisely in that they recur from time to time as sources of theory and creation. I have just referred to Sartre; his example and that of Camus are instructive. There is plenty of justification, I think, for saying that in an essay like "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?", Sartre defines, in effect, literature as rhetorical activity that starts from the commonplaces of Marxism, and also that Camus, to judge from his Discours de Suède, adopts the notion of a literary art that ideally affects innumerable readers, bringing them together not, of course, with the Sartrian aims of removing feelings of innocence and irresponsibility in the class struggle but with the aim of helping them to sense the dignity and pathos of human brotherhood.

When, therefore, the seventeenth-century theorists of prose began to see their problems with sufficient clarity and to raise formally questions concerning truth and expression, they were working a vein that had produced before (they had, in fact, chosen it for that reason). It was productive again for them, although they had not foreseen the contest with logic. As later centuries were to discover, the vein had still further uses and was subject to other surprises.¹⁰

¹. In their treatment of method the Port-Royalists do not themselves take up the discipline of rhetoric apropos of these conditions. But I have thought it useful to develop the contradictions here also. The disagreements already seen (in Chapter III) concerning the characters and motives of speakers, the commonplaces, the use of figurative style, and the exciting of passions are thus completed with regard to two important phases of rhetoric, invention and arrangement. By this extrapolation I hope to underline further the radical nature of the conflict between logic and rhetoric.

3. See *ibid.*, 1358a 21-22. 1334.


5. See *De institutione oratoria* IV. ii. 4, 24.

6. *Ibid.*, IV. i. 5; *ibid.*, VI. i. 1-2, 7 et seq.


8. Page 1 of the "Avis."

9. On the subject of eloquence I have in mind authors and works like: Le P. Charles de Saint-Paul, *Tableau de l'éloquence française* (1657); R. Bary, *Actions publiques sur la rhétorique française* (1658); N. de Hauteville, *L'Art de bien discourir* (1665); G. Guéret, *Entretiens sur l'éloquence de la chaire et du barreau* (1666); Le Sieur de Richesource, *La Rhétorique du Barreau* (1668) and his *L'Eloquence de la chaire* (1673); D'Aubignac, *Discours académique sur l'éloquence* (1668); J. Carol de Sainte-Garde, *Récitons académiques sur les poètes* (1676); and two anonymous pieces in *Divers traités d'histoire, de morale et d'éloquence* (1672) entitled "L'Orateur" (apparently by Guéret) and "Si l'empire de l'Eloquence est plus grand que celui de l'Amour." Here is the cautious conclusion of the last-mentioned item: "Concluons donc, que l'Eloquence est toute puissante, et que l'Amour est toujours victorieux avec elle; ne divisons point leur autorité, et reconnaissons qu'ils se prêtent mutuellement leur assistance: si l'on dit que l'Amour rend éloquent, ajoutons que l'Eloquence rend amoureux, de leurs empirs n'en faisons qu'un seul, et si nous admirons l'Eloquence, craignons l'Amour" (p. 129).

10. In saying "centuries," I am thinking of the eighteenth as well as the twentieth. I hope to analyze in another series of studies the ways in which the *philosophes* reinterpreted rhetoric and applied it to their problems of communication.