Week 6 Post

In Book I Aristotle writes that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic. There are differences between the two. For example, people that use the dialectic tend to test and attempt to uphold an argument, while those who use rhetoric are likely to do so as a means to defend themselves and/or attack. Aristotle focuses on the similarities, and so when he labels rhetoric the counterpart to dialectic he is preparing to describe the ways in which the two are similar. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is an offshoot of dialectic and character.

His view of rhetoric as art and technique, or method, which is used in the text, explains his attention to defining the types of rhetoric. In chapter 3, he describes the three types of rhetoric, which are deliberative, judicial, and epidectic. The three types of rhetoric are relative to time. Deliberative speakers are future, while the judicial, “speaker in court” (48), is the past, and the epidectic exists in the present. Each type of rhetoric used depends upon their audience, which also differs from Plato’s view of the audience. If I remember it correctly, Plato essentially views the audience as a group of non-experts, which means that you can persuade them of anything.

Aristotle’s work differs from Plato’s. Aristotle has a more favorable view of rhetoric. He views rhetoric as art and a technique. He approaches knowledge not as something that you need to obtain, and strive toward, but as something that should be useful. On pg. 35, he addresses this when he writes “even if we were to have the most exact knowledge, it would not be very easy for us in speaking to use it to persuade.” This quote helps to prove the usefulness of rhetoric, and continues to support his view that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic. Simply put, seeking knowledge is not enough. Aristotle acknowledges that rhetoric is used to persuade, but unlike Plato he does not view that as something that makes rhetoric inherently bad. It is important that we understand that everything is persuasive.

1. Based on what we’ve read through week 6, do you agree that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic, or do you see them as vastly different?
2. How do you understand the idea that the three types of rhetoric have time associated with their uses? (I’m mostly interested in this because I’m not sure I’m understanding this in the way that I need to.)