Rhetoric is closely linked with our faculty of providing arguments. Arguments can be used in subject areas whose number appears to be unlimited. This common assumption that the art can be used for talking about almost any subject presented to us or that it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects is taken up by Aristotle at the beginning of the Rhetoric. Since rhetoric understood in this sense is not bound up with any particular subject area which we may debate for specific reasons or ends, we should not expect it to adopt a specific structure on account of these reasons or ends. Instead, it appears to be structurally determined by an end which is intrinsically connected with the act of speaking to an audience: to enable the speaker to discover and to present the oratorical means of coming as near the success of persuading/convincing (πίστις in two of its many senses) as the circumstances of each particular case allow whatever this case may be. Apart from value-oriented rules concerning the use of the art such as that one must not make people believe what is bad or wrong, rhetoric in itself appears to be an amoral, formal method of verbal persuasion which, due to its unlimited applicability, does not necessarily involve any

4. Cf. Rhet. 1355b10-14; see also Top. 101b7-10.
special varieties which depend on particular subject areas, purposes, circumstances, or institutions extraneous to the act of speaking to an audience as such. Varieties of rhetoric intrinsically connected with the act of speaking may nonetheless be identified depending on a taxonomy of speech acts, such as the rhetoric of questions, answers, of making statements, of orders, refutations, promises and so on. The number of possible varieties of rhetoric will, in this case, coincide with the number of possible speech acts.6

Rhetoric, understood as a value-free and formal method of verbal persuasion, does not even seem to presuppose that functions of speaking which one may reasonably regard as necessarily or mostly related to theoretical or practical reasoning have a particular role to play for determining the structure or content of the rhetorical method over and above the securing of πίστις. If one can reasonably assume that it is a basic function of practical discourse to disclose by argument what ought to be done or to be avoided or what is conducive to a good life and what disrupts it, then it seems that there is no special reason why this function should affect the structure or content of a general method of verbal persuasion in any particular way—since this might restrict or focus the range of its applicability. Conversely, it does not appear obvious that rhetoric may justifiably play a crucial part in forming convictions concerning things or actions which ought to be done or ought to be avoided or which contribute to a good life, including convictions concerning things which can be called good, useful, noble, just, or equitable or their opposites. Therefore, an outline of features of a life well lived as part of the exposition of the rhetorical method itself, discussions of any other end related to it or of ends or focal concerns which are

6. Such a taxonomy appears to be implied by a remark of an ancient anonymous critic of the tripartite division of the varieties of rhetoric (deliberative, epideictic, forensic). It is taken up by Quintilian, *Instit. Ill*, 4ff.: "... in quo genere versari videbimur, cum querimur, consolamur, mitigamus, concitamus, terremus, confirmamus, praecipimus, obscure dicta interpretamur, narramus, deprecamur, gratias agimus, gratulamur, obiurgamus, maledicimus, describimus, mandamus, remuntiamus, optamus, opinamur, plurima alia?" The anonymous critic seems to be faced with similar problems which J.L. Austin had to face in *How to Do Things with Words* when he tried to classify speech acts. See Austin 1955, pp. 147-163.