



The Problems of Prolepsis

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In Brief

- Synonyms: anticipation, apantesis, ante occupatio, praeceptio, procatalepsis, prolepsis, prokatalepsis, propounder, anthypophora, ampliatio, occupatio, praemonitio, ampliatio
- Rather obscure
- Multiple meanings
- No syntactic apparatus (in non-grammatical use)

Prolepsis

- Three primary uses of the term
- Each teach us something about the challenges such rhetorical figures pose to the Rhetorical Figure Ontology project
- Prolepsis is interesting because it is not well-defined, unlike the schemes that Harris and Di Marco have discussed
- Expanding the ontology to be inclusive of all figures will require exploring these complex figures

Rhetorical Problems

- Current status of this project falls on the rhetorical side, attempting to understand ontological problems of the concept (prolepsis/πρόληψις)
- Prolepsis isn't a figure at all, but a “rhetorical move” or wider-level discourse strategy (Harris, 2013, p. 572)
- But, according to Fahnestock, an important attribute of rhetorical figures is that they epitomize argument; prolepsis does this
- And, rhetorical moves in Harris' account do not deviate from expected intention (and this would seem sensible in most definitions of rhetorical moves), but prolepsis operates by a deviation from conventional notions of time and timing in language (Harris, 2013, p. 572)
- So prolepsis seems still to have some case for its figurative status

1, Prolepsis

- Prolepsis as syntactic dislocation—deviation notable if an inclusion criteria for figures
- Subject of dependent clause is anticipated and made object of verb in main clause in Greek grammar; e.g.,
Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. (Matthew 6.28)
- Bede, in 8th century *De Schematibus et Tropis (Latin)*, treats prolepsis as a scheme; e.g.,
His foundation is in the holy mountains.
The Lord loveth the gates of Zion.
- A tight coupling between syntax and semantics, but this is only one form of prolepsis

2, Prolepsis (most common usage)

- Prolepsis as synonym for procatalepsis (or, prolepsis occupatio)
- Anticipation and refutation of arguments, using the following moves:
 1. State position
 2. Raise an objection
 3. Refute objection (adapted from Leff & Goodwin, 2000, p. 61).
- Differs from a rebuttal because of its temporal effect, anticipating—a coming before
- Also, importantly, not simply anticipating, but also to “seize and take possession of ... the opponent’s objection” (Bullinger, p.914)

2, Prolepsis Example

1. This is some important matter to discuss.
2. “Perhaps some of you are astonished that, young as I am, I attempt thus to speak in public on important matters”
3. “Let no one oppose me through resentment, because I am going to offer you advice on subjects about which certain other people hesitate to speak openly before you” (ad Alexandrum, 18.1432b.11-21)

2, Prolepsis in Refutatio

- In classical arrangement of an oration six parts structure a speech: introduction, statement of fact, division, proof, refutation, and conclusion
- Prolepsis operates as a figure of refutation and thus is likely to appear in the part of an oration concerning refutation (refutatio)
- Prolepsis is not the only figure that commonly appears in the refutation; other figures include litotes, apophasis, erotema, etc. (see, Silva Rhetoricae, figures of refutation)
- But contemporary arrangement, of course, differs

3, Prolepsis

- Prolepsis as adjournment (prolepsis ampliatio)
- E.g.,
So the two brothers and their murder'd man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream
Gurgles through straiten'd banks (Keats, Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil)
- E.g.,
"You 're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touch'd to the quick, he said: "I'm kill'd, Sire!" And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead. (Browning, Incident of the French Camp)
- Extreme variation in length (distribution of prolepsis across a text)
- Semantic deviation (e.g., a dead man cannot speak of his death)

Arrangement and figures

- Arrangement might be considered in terms of “genre”
- In rhetorical studies, genre describes a typified text that is used to respond to a recurrent rhetorical situation (Miller, 1984)
- Genres are not simply a literary form, but include day-to-day and professional text types. E.g., tax forms, cover letters or resumes, scientific research articles, and so on.
- In these genres we might find a source to begin studying more fuzzy figures, as in arrangement, perhaps in certain genres and parts of speech the figures appear more commonly

Arrangement as an alternative approach

- Chiastic suite of rhetorical figures works from a bottom-up approach
- Perhaps less structured figures would benefit from a genre approach, not at the word or sentence level, but at the relational level (source type, location in source, etc.)
- Challenge to translate into computational ontology remains; how to tag, structure, etc.
- Benefits of multi-pronged approach allow for a wider range of figures or figure-like devices (depending on our inclusion/exclusion criteria)

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