

Philosophy Insights

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An Introduction to Rhetorical Terms

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*...the means by
which we tell and
receive the stories
that explain the
world.*

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Preface: An Introduction to Rhetorical Terms

This is a book with a practical purpose. It aims to give students a handy reference to the background knowledge of rhetorical terms demanded of them by critical and theoretical texts in the humanities. A common vocabulary is used today for cultural criticism and theory and for related sub-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary discourses (in philosophy, literary criticism, and indeed all the humanities). The western world's twenty first century 'renaissance' scholar needs to be fluent in the vocabulary which carries her across these disciplines. An important part of this vocabulary is in the rhetorical terms we read and write, reason and refute by. These are the means by which we tell and receive the stories that explain the world. They are the means by which we imagine our own and others' ideas. To read and equally to write theory today one needs to be able to negotiate a way among these *tropic* motions; one needs to master the terms with which motions in meaning are described. Amorphous and difficult as this kind of learning is, it is of vital and personal importance. Through it one learns *how* one means what one means. It is through that kind of understanding one gets to decide *what* to mean.