Kenneth Burke

b. 1897

Much of Kenneth Burke's voluminous work over more than fifty years has been an attempt to redefine and expand the scope of rhetorical analysis and to apply it to all forms of language use. His chief contributions have been in developing rhetorical literary criticism and in analyzing the ways in which language systems philosophical, political, literary, religious — describe and influence human motives. His early works, Counter-Statement (1931) and The Philosophy of Literary Form (1941), develop the theory that literature is a form of symbolic action. In A Grammar of Motives (1945), Burke presents the dramatistic point of view, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) as a method of analyzing ways of talking about motives. In A Rhetoric of Motives (1950), he defines rhetoric as the use of language to form attitudes and influence action. In later work, such as The Rhetoric of Religion (1961), he presents elements of a proposed "symbolic" of motives, in which he examines the psychological effects produced by systems of rhetorical motivation.

Burke was born in Pittsburgh in 1897, attended Ohio State and Columbia Universities very briefly, and joined the Bohemian group of writers in Greenwich Village that included Hart Crane, E. e. cummings, Allen Tate, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and his childhood friend Malcolm Cowley. In the twenties, Burke worked for the avant-garde magazine The Dial as music critic, book reviewer, and editor while publishing poetry, short stories, essays, and reviews in a number of journals. During the Great Depression, he became attached to but did not join the Communist party, delivering papers at the Writers' Congresses of 1935, 1937, and 1939. He taught briefly at the New School for Social Research in the thirties and in the thirties to sixty (from 1943 until 1961), at Bennington College and has been visiting professor at a great many colleges. In his long career, Burke has been studied and lionized by scholars in many fields. As one writer, Gregory S. Jay, put it recently, "He has lived to see his work repeatedly celebrated, forgotten, and revived as each new generation and movement in criticism belatedly stumbles upon the traces of Burke in territories it thought were undiscovered."

In Counter-Statement, Burke announced that "efficitive literature could be nothing else but rhetoric." In so saying, he opposed the aesthetic view of literature as poetic and contemplative, divorced from the world of action. Burke's critical theory — which anticipates elements of reader-response criticism, American formalism, and deconstruction — is that literary forms are best understood by their effects on readers and that the study of rhetoric, much maligned by literary critics of the day, is precisely what is needed to understand the effects not only of literature but of all forms of discourse as well. The last section of Counter-Statement, the "Lexicon Rhetoricae," is an annotated list of literary-rhetorical terms intended as tools for

Note

The word songe itself well illustrates some of the more troublesome shifts of meaning. An improved Rhetoric has among its aims an improved control over these. Here perhaps a list of some of the senses of usage may help us in avoiding misunderstanding.

1. The most inclusive sense is the "entire range of the powers which the word can exert as an instrument of communication in all situations and in co-operation with any other words." (In this sense "Usage, and usage alone, undoubtedly controls language.")

2. Some specific power which, in a limited range of situations and with a limited type of verbal context the word normally exerts. (This is often called a use or sense and is what the Dictionary attempts to record in its definitions, by giving other words, phrases, and sentences with the same specific power.)

3. An instance of 2, at a certain place in Shakespeare, which may be appealed to show that the word can have that power.

4. A supposed "proper" meaning that the word must be kept to (has in its own right, etc.). This notion is derived from 1, 2, and 3 by oversimplification and a misconception of the working of language which, typically, takes the meaning of a sentence to be something built up from separate meanings of its words — instead of recognizing that it is the other way about and that the meanings of words are derived from the meanings of sentences in which they occur. This misconception assimilates the process by which words have their meanings determined with that by which they have their spelling determined and is the origin of a large part of misinterpretation.

applying Burke's method. In rehabilitating rhetoric for use in literary criticism, Burke classifies literature as a kind of persuasive discourse, and though he tinkers with definitions that continue to distinguish "art" and "use" (that is, poetic and rhetoric), he comes to the conclusion that rhetorical analysis is appropriately applied to every kind of writing and speaking and may even be applied directly to the study of human relations.

Burke was vigorously attacked by both literary critics and rhetoricians for muddling literature and nonliterature, poetic and rhetoric, language and life. He responded by propounding the theory that literature is a form of symbolic action, with purposes and effects in the field of human relations. In The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, Burke argues that poetry is a subset of rhetoric. Literature and art, he says, have a hortatory or forensic function, especially in a capitalistic society, in which they often serve as propaganda.

In A Grammar of Motives (excerpted here), Burke presents the dramatistic system, which unifies rhetoric and poetic in a single analytical framework. In this system, statements about motives can be studied and compared by examining the ways in which they treat the dramatic elements of human relations: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Burke asserts that this part of terms is intended as a way of analyzing not actual human behavior but only descriptions of behavior. His concern is "primarily with the analysis of language rather than with the analysis of reality." The terms of the part are not "forms of experience" but "forms of talk about experience." Nonetheless, he often applies the dramatistic method as a form of sociological analysis and, in later works, such as Language as Symbolic Action (1966, excerpted here), treats experience and language as completely intertwined. The bulk of A Grammar of Motives is taken up with analyses of common terms that are typically used to attribute motives, analyses of philosophical systems that describe motives, and a long study of the meanings of dialectic.

Burke's own method is dialectical, although deconstructive may be a better term today for characterizing his practice of revealing contrary meanings in supposedly positive terms and his emphasis on the way language "defts" reality. For Burke, every epistemology has a key term, a "God-term," that names the foundational ground of human action, as the name God does for religious epistemologies. These terms and the language systems that surround them are the resources for rhetorical action.

In A Rhetoric of Motives (excerpted here), Burke looks at the ways in which these resources are used to create "identification" with a group and its world view. "Identification" means to suggest more powerfully than persuasion the workings of rhetorical discourse in everyday language. Burke examines the ways in which the terms used to create identification work to include the members of a group in a common ideology, while at the same time they exclude alternate terms, other groups, and competing ideologies. (His general observations on the nature of inclusion and exclusion are included in our excerpt.) He then reviews the definitions of rhetoric given or implied by a number of philosophers, including Jeremy Bentham's critique of metaphoric deception, Blaise Pascal's analysis of Jesuit casuistry, and Karl Marx's demystification of Hegelian idealism.

The whole enterprise of making a grammar, a rhetoric, and a symbolic of motives is a way of analyzing systems of knowledge — primarily philosophy and poetry but also science, psychology, and popular culture — from the point of view of rhetoric. Burke's rhetoric, bound up in communities, communal ideas, social relations, religion, magic, and psychological effects, in verbal and nonverbal communication, seems to encompass almost everything. Although it is often frustrating to read Burke, his theories are undeniably powerful and his analyses full of remarkable insights. Needless to say, the selections reprinted here provide only a hint of what Burke has to offer.

Selected Bibliography

Our texts of A Grammar of Motives (New York, 1945) and A Rhetoric of Motives (New York, 1950) are the 1969 editions by the University of California Press. The excerpt from Language as Symbolic Action (1966) comes from the first edition, also published by the University of California Press.


William H. Rueckert provides an extensive bibliography of Burke's work and an excellent annotated bibliography of works about Burke in Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations and ed. (Belmont, 1982). Rueckert's Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke, 1924-1956 (Minneapolis, 1969) also contains valuable bibliographic notes.

Among the books that have been written about Burke, several combine biography and a general review of his works: George Knos, Critical Moments: Kenneth Burke's Categories and Critiques (Seattle, 1957); Hugh Duncan, Communication and Social Order (New York, 1965); Meza Brown, Kenneth Burke (Minneapolis, 1969); and Armin Frank, Kenneth Burke (New York, 1969).


Burke recently engaged in a three-way debate in the journal Critical Inquiry: Wayne Booth, "Kenneth Burke's Way of Knowing," and Burke, "In Response to Booth: Dunci
From A Grammar of Motives

INTRODUCTION: THE FIVE KEY TERMS OFDRAMATISM

What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it? An answer to that question is the subject of this book. The book is concerned with the basic forms of thought which, in accordance with the nature of the world as all men necessarily experience it, are exemplified in the attributing of motives. These forms of thought can be embodied profoundly or trivially, truthfully or falsely. They are equally present in systematically elaborated metaphysical structures, in legal judgments, in poetry and fiction, in political and scientific works, in news and in bits of gossip offered at random.

We shall use five terms as generating principles of our investigation. They are: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred), also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (agency), and the purpose. Men may violently disagree about the purposes behind a given act, or about the character of the person who did it, or how he did it, or in what kind of situation he acted; or they may even insist upon totally different words to name the act itself. But be that as it may, any complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and into considerable complexity, and yet can be discovered beneath its elaborations.

We want to inquire into the purely internal relationships which the five terms bear to one another, considering their possibilities of transformation, their range of permutations and combinations — and then to see how these various resources figure in actual statements about human motives. Strictly speaking, we mean by a Grammar of motives a concern with the terms alone, without reference to the ways in which their potentialities have been or can be utilized in actual statements about motives. Speaking broadly we could designate as "philosophies" any statements in which these grammatical resources are specifically utilized in our unsystematic statements about motives could be considered as fragments of a philosophy.

One could think of the Grammatical resources as principles, and of the various philosophies as casuistry which apply these principles to temporal situations. For instance, we may examine the term Scene simply as a blanketed term for the concept of background or setting in general, a name which acts or agents are placed. In our usage, this concern would be "grammatical." And we move into matters of "philosophy" when we note that one thinker uses "God" as his term for the ultimate ground or source. Another uses "nature," a third uses "environment," or "history," or "means of production," etc. And whereas a statement about the grammatical principles of motivation might lay claim to a universal validity, or completeness of the choice of any one philosophic idiom embodying these principles is much more open to question. Even before we know what act is to be discussed, we can say with confidence that a rounded discussion of its moti- vations will extend to some kind of background. But since each philosophic idiom will characterize this background differently, there will remain the question as to which characteriza- tion is "right" or "more nearly right.

It is even likely that, whereas one philosophic idiom offers the best calculus for one case, another case answers best to a totally different calculus. However, we should not think of "cases" in too restricted a sense. Although, from the standpoint of a given philosophic idiom, the internal relationships prevailing among our five terms, any given philosophy is to be considered as a casuistry, even a cultural situation extending over centuries is a "case," and would probably require a much different philosophic idiom than not so to "cases" of motives than would be required in the case of other cultural situations.

In our original plans for this project, we had no notion of writing a "Grammar" at all. We began with a theory of content, applied it to treatise on human relations. Feeling that competitive ambition is a drastically overdeveloped motive in the modern world, we thought this motive might be transcended if men devoted themselves not so much to "appreciating" it as to "humanizing". Accordingly, we began our work on the foibles and antics of what we tended to think of as "the Human Barnyard."

We sought to formulate the basic strategies which people employ, in endless variations, and consciously or unconsciously, for the extending or cajoling of one another. Since all these devices had a "you and me" quality about them, being understood to some person or to some advantage, we classed them under the heading of a Rhetoric. There were other notes, concerned with modes of expression and appeal in the fine arts, and with purely psychological or psycho- analytic methods, these we classed under the heading of Symbolic.

We had made still further observations, which we at first strove uneasily to class under one or the other of these heads, but which we were eventually able to distinguish as the making of a Grammar. For we found in the course of writing that our project needed a grounding in formal considerations logically prior to both the rhetorical and the psychological. And as we proceeded with this introduction, we kept in mind the extending its claims until it had spun itself from an intended few hundred words into nearly 200,000, of which the present book is revision and abridgment.
ointments on parliamentary and diplomatic devices, editorial bias, sales methods, and incidents of social sparring. However, the three fields overlap considerably. And we shall note, in passing, how the Rhetoric and the Symbolic hovers about the edges of our central theme, the Grammar.

A perfectionist might seek to evolve terms free of ambiguity and inconsistency (as with the terministic ideals of symbolic logic and logical positivism). But we have a different purpose in view, one that probably retains traces of its "comic" origin. We take it granted that, insofar as men cannot themselves create the universe, there must remain something essentially enigmatic about the problem of motives, and that this underlying enigma cannot dissipate itself in invariable ambiguities and inconsistencies among the terms for motives. Accordingly, what we want is not terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise.

Occasionally, you will encounter a writer who seems to get great exaltation out of proving, with an air of much reluctance, that some philosophical term or other has been used to cover a variety of unsavory squelches and convicts to abolish this idol. As a general rule, when a term is singled out for such harsh treatment, if you look closer you will find that it happens to be associated with some cultural or political trend from whose orbit it could not dissociate itself; hence there is a certain notable ambiguity in this very charge of ambiguity, since he presumably feels purged and strengthened by bringing to bear upon this particular term a kind of attack that could, with such means, be brought to bear upon any other term (or "title") in philosophy, including of course the alternative term, or "title", that the writer would swear by. Since no two things or acts or situations are exactly alike, you cannot demand the same term to both of them without thereby introducing a certain ambiguity, an ambiguity as great as the difference between the two subjects that are given the identical title. And all the more may you expect to find ambiguity in terms so "trival" as to become the marks of a philosophic school, or even several philosophic schools. Hence, instead of considering it our task to "dispose of" any ambiguity by merely disclosing the fact that it is an ambiguity, we rather consider it our task to study and clarify the resources of ambiguity. For in the course of this work, we shall deal with many kinds of transformation — and it is in the areas of ambiguity that transformations take place, in fact, without such areas, transformation would be impossible. Distinctions, we might say, arise out of a great central moltenness, where all is merged. They have been thrown from a liquid center to its surface, where they have congealed. Let one of these crusted distinctions return to its source, and in this alchemic center it may be remade, again becoming molten liquid, and may enter into new combinations, wherein it may be remade again through a different such process in distinction. So that A may become non-A. But not merely by a leap from one state to the other. Rather, we must take A back into the ground of its existence, the logical substance that is its causal ancestor, and on to a point where it is consubstantial with non-A; then we may return, this time emerging with non-A instead.

And so with our five terms: certain formal interrelationships prevail among these terms, by virtue of which the term for a corner of thought is a corner, a ground or substance. Their participation in a common ground makes for transformability. At every point where the field covered by any one of these terms overlaps the field covered by any other, there is an alchemical opportunity, whereby we can put one philosophy or doctrine of motivation into the alembic, make the appropriate passes, and take out another. From the central moltenness, where all the elements are fused into one togetherness, there are thrown forth, in separate crusts, such distinctions as those between freedom and necessity, activity and passiveness, cooperation and competition, cause and effect and reciprocally.

Our term, "Agent," for instance, is a general heading that might in, a given case, require further subdivision, as an agent might have his act modified (hence partly motivated) by friends (co-agents) or enemies. Again, and "Agent" one could place any personal properties that are assigned a motivational value, such as "ideas," "the will," "fear," "malice," "rational," "creative imagination." A portrait painter may treat the body as a property of the agent (an expression of personality), whereas materialistic medicine would treat it as "scenic," a purely "objective material," and from another point of view it could be classed as a character (by which one gets reports of the world at large. Machines are obviously instruments (that is, Agencies); yet in their vast accumulation they constitute the industrial scene, with its own peculiar set of motivational properties. War may be treated as an Agency, insofar as it is a means to an end; as a collective Act, divisible into many individual acts; as a Purpose, in schemes proclaiming a cult of war. For the man induced into the "scene," war is a "acted freedom." A situation that motivates the nature of his training; and in mythologies war is an Agent, perhaps better a superagent, in the figure of the war god. We may think of voting as an act, and of the voter as an agent; yet voters and votes both are hardly other than a politician's medium or agency; or from another point of view, they are a part of his scene. And insofar as a vote is cast without adequate knowledge of its consequences, one might even say the vote should be classed as an activity at all; one might rather call it passive, or perhaps sheer motion (what the behaviorists would call a Response to a Stimulus).

Or imagine that one were to manipulate the terms for various motives, in such a case as this: The "hero" agent (with the help of a friend (coagent) outsits the villain (counter-agent) by using a file (agency) that enables him to break his bonds (act) in order to escape (purpose), and it, in turn, has been confined to his scene). In selecting a casuistry here, we might locate the motive in the agent, as were we to credit his escape to some trait integral to his personality, such as "the spirit of freedom." Or we might locate the motivational force of the scene, since nothing is surer to awaken throughs of escape in a man than a condition of imprisonment. Or we might note the essential part played by the moral system that places the hero to escape (and, with such thoughts as our point of departure, we might conclude that the motivations of this act should be reduced to social origins.

Or if one were given to the brand of speculative enterprise exemplified by certain Christian heretics (for instance, those who worshiped Judas as a saint, on the grounds that his betrayal of Christ, in leading to the Crucifixion, so brought about the opportunity for mankind's redemption) one might hypothesize a rational origin of the act in the counteragent. For the hero would not have been prodded to escape if there had been no villain to imprison him. Inasmuch as the escape could be called a "good" act, we might hypothesize a reduction to the counteragent a compensatory transformation whereby a bitter fountain may give forth sweet waters. In his Anti-Diüring Engels gives us a secular variant which no one could reasonably call outlandish or excessive.

It was slavery that first made possible the division of labor between one industry on a considerable scale, and along with this, the flower of the ancient world. Hellenism. Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire. But without Hellenism and the Roman Empire as a basis, also no modern Europe.

We should not forget that our whole economic, political, and intellectual development has as its presupposition a state of things in which slavery was as necessary as it was universally recognized. In this we are entitled to say. Without the slavery of antiquity, no modern socialism.

Pragmatists would probably have referred the motivation back to a source in agency. They would have noted that our hero escaped by using an instrument, the file by which he severed his bonds; in this line of thought, they would have observed that the hand holding the file was also an instrument; and by the same token the brain that guided the hand would be an instrument, and so likewise the educational system that taught the methods and shaped the values involved in the incident.

True, if you reduce the terms to any one of them, you will find them branching out again; for no one of them is enough. Thus, Mead called his pragmatism a philosophy of the act and through Dewey stresses the value of "intelligence" as an instrument (agency, embodied in "scientific method"), the other key terms in his casuistry, "experience" and "nature," would be the equivalents of act and scene respectively. We must
add, however, that Dewey is given to stressing the overlap of these two terms, rather than the respects in which they are distinct, as he proposes to “replace the traditional separation of nature and experience with the idea of continuity.” (The quotation is from Intelligence and the Modern World.)

As we shall see later, it is by reason of the pliancy among our terms that philosophic systems can pull one way and another. The margins of overlap provide opportunities whereby a thinker can go without a leap from any one of the terms to any of its fellows. (We have also likened the terms to the fingers, which in their extremities are distinct from one another, but merge in the palm of the hand. Thence we would go from one finger to another without a leap, you need but trace the tendon down into the palm of the hand, and then trace a new course along another tendon.) Hence, no great dialectical enterprise is necessary if you would merge the terms, reducing them even to as few as one; and then, treating this as the “essential” term, the “causal ancestor” of the lot, you can proceed in the reverse direction across the margins of overlap, “deducing” the other terms from it as its logical descendants.

This is the method, explicitly and in the grand style, of metaphysics which brings its doctrines to a head in some overall title, a word for being in general, or action in general, or motion in general, or knowledge in general, or experience in general, etc., with all its other terms distributed about this titular term in positions leading up to it and away from it. There is also an implicit kind of metaphysics, that often goes by the name of No Metaphysics, and aims at reduction not to an overall title but to some presumably underlying atomic constituent. Its vulgar variant is to be found in techniques of “unmasking,” which will make the progress and emancipation by applying materialistic terms to immaterial substances (the pattern here being, “X is nothing but Y,” where X designates a higher value and Y a lower one, the higher value being therefore assimilated to the lower one). The titular word for our own method is “dramatising,” since it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action. The method is synoptic, not only in the historical sense. A purely historical survey would require no less than a universal history of human culture, for every judgment, exhortation, or admonition, every view of natural or supernatural reality, every intention or expectation involves assumptions about motive, or cause. Our work must be synoptic in a different sense: in the sense that it offers a system of placement, and should enable us, by the systematic manipulation of the terms, to “generate,” or “anticipate” the various classes of motivational theory. And a treatment in these terms, we hope to show, reduces the subject synoptically while still permitting us to appreciate its structural morphology. (Italics of Ibsen’s realistic period.)

It is not our purpose to import dialectical and metaphysical issues necessarily figure in the subject of motivation. Our speculations, as we interpret them, should show that the subject of motivation is a philosophic one, not ultimately to be solved in terms of empirical science.

CONTAINER AND THING CONTAINED

The Scene–Act Ratio

Using “scene” in the sense of setting, or background, and “act” in the sense of action, one could say that “the scene contains the act.” And using “agents” in the sense of the characters, one could say that “the scene contains the agents.”

It is a principle of drama that the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene. No one in a grotesque work will commit an overt crime, but the scene’s author’s device for materializing, or objectifying, a purely spiritual process, such that the plot has to do with pollution and purification on a moral level, which has its scene in the literal scene of the stage.

Act II. Still in Dr. Stockmann’s sitting room. Dr. Stockmann has learned that the Baths, the vessels of purification, are themselves polluted, and that prominent business and professional men of the town express this fact for financial reasons. This opposition is epitomized in the figure of Peter Stockmann, the Doctor’s brother. The intimate, familial quality of the setting thus has its counterpart in the quality of the action, which involves the struggle of two social principles, the conservative and the progressive, as objectified and personalized in the struggle of the two brothers.

Act III takes place in the editorial office of the People’s Messenger, a local newspaper in which Dr. Stockmann publishes his evidence that the water supply was contaminated. The action takes on a more forensic reference, in keeping with the nature of the place. In this Act we have the perversity of the drama, as Dr. Stockmann’s expectations are reversed. For he learns that the personal and financial influence of his enemies prevents the publication of the article. This turn of the plot has its scene in the illustration showing Peter Stockmann’s hat and stick, properties that symbolize his identity as mayor. In false hope of victory, Dr. Stockmann has taken them up, and struttled about busiesquing his brother. But when Dr. Stockmann learns that the editor, in response to the pressure of the conservatives, will not publish the article, it is Peter Stockmann’s turn to exult. This reversal of the action is materialized (made scenic) thus:

Peter Stockmann: My hat and stick, if you please. (Dr. Stockmann takes off the hat and lays it on the table with the stick. Peter Stockmann takes them up.) Your authority as mayor has come to an untimely end.

In the next Act Dr. Stockmann does contrive to lay his case before a public tribunal of a sort: a gathering of fellow townspeople, assembled in “a big old-fashioned room,” in the house of a friend. His appeal is unsuccessful, his neighbors vote the facade of the scheme estat’s device for materializing, or objectifying, a purely spiritual process, such that the plot has to do with pollution and purification on a moral level, which has its scene in the literal scene of the stage.

Act V. The stage directions tell us that the hero’s clothes are torn, and the room is in disorder, with broken windows. You may consider these details either as properties of the scene or as a reflection of the hero’s condition after his recent struggle with the forces of reaction. The scene is laid in Dr. Stockmann’s study, a setting so symbolic of the direction taken by the plot that the play ends with Dr. Stockmann announc-
ing his plan to enroll twelve young disciples and with them to found a school in which he will work for the education of society.

The whole plot is that of an internality di-
rected outwards. We progress by stages from a scene (reported) wherein the plan of social pu-
fication with Hamlet is carried out in the scene in his study where the hero announces in the exaltation of a dramatic finale: "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone." The
pronouncement is modified by the situation in which he is placed as Dr. Stockmann speaks. He is surrounded by a loyal and admiring family circle, and his educational plan calls not for com-
plete independence, but for cooperation. He is not setting himself up as the strongest man in the world, but making himself in the same direction. And, with the exception of his brother Peter, we may consider his family circle as as-
pects of his own identity, being under the sign of "loneliness" since it began so and retains the quality of its ancestry.

The end of the third play in O'Neill's trilogy, Mourning Becomes Electra, presents a contrast-
ing instance of the scene-act ratio.

LAVINIA (turns to him sharply) You go now and close the shutters and nail them tight.

SETH: Ay, Lavinia.

LAVINIA: Add tell Hannah to throw out all the flowers.

SETH: Ay, Lavinia. (He goes past her up the steps and
into the house. She ascends to the portico—and then turns and stands for a while, stiff and square-
shouldered, staring into the sunlit with frozen
eyes. Seth leaves out the window at the right of the
door and pulls the shutters closed with a de-
cisive bang. As if this were a word of command.
Lavinia pivots sharply on her heel and marches
wastefully into the house, closing the door behind her.)

CURTAIN

We end here on the motif of the shut-in per-
sonality, quite literally objectified. And the clos-
ing, novelistic stage directions are beautifully
suited to our purpose; for note how, once the
shutters have been closed, thereby placing before
our eyes the scenic replica of Lavinia's mental
state, this scene in turn becomes the motivation
details of the setting, but one could deduce the
quality of the action from the quality of the set-
ing. An extreme illustration would be an Ex-
pressionist drama, having for its scenic reflex
such abstract properties as lines askew, grotesque lighting, and odd objectives.

We have, of course, chosen examples partic-
ularly suited to reveal the distinction between act
and scene as well as their interdependence. The
matter is obscured when we are dealing with
scene in the sense of the relationships prevailing
among the various dramatis personae. For the
characters, by being in interaction, could be
considered as scene conditions or "environment," of one another; and any act could be treated as part of a context (which modifies, hence, to a degree, the act) the subsequent acts. The principles of
dramatic consistency would lead one to expect
such cases of overlap among the terms; but while
being aware of them we should firmly fix in our
minds such cases as afford a clear differentiation.
Our terms leaning themselves to both merger
and division, we are here trying to divide two of them while recognizing their possibilities of merger.

The Scene-Agent Ratio

The scene-agent ratio, where the synecdochic
relation is between person and place, is partly
exemplified in this citation from Carlyle's Heroes
and Hero-Worship:

These Arabs Mohammed was born among are cer-
tainly a notable people. Their country itself is not-
able; the habitat for such a race. Savage incubus, cold
and odoriferous, alternating with beautiful strips of verdure; where-
ever else is there, is greenness, beauty; odorifer-
ous balsam-shrubs, date-trees, frankincense-trees.
Consider, too, in the heat of their shadeless oases of sand, mopy, silent, like a sand-sea, dividing habitable place
from habitable place. You are all alone there, left
alone with the universe; by day a fierce sun blazing
down on it with intolerable radiance; by night the
great deep heaven with its stars. Such a country is
fit for a swift-handed, deep-hearted race of men.

The correlation between the quality of the

country and the quality of its inhabitants is here
presented in quite secular terms. There is a son-
net by Wordsworth that is a perfect instance of
the scene-agent ratio treated theoretically:

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquility;
The needless flapping of the sky
For the Sea; Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Dear Child! Dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear not touched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou lovest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

By selecting a religious image in which to
convey the purely naturalistic sense of hush, the
octave infuses the natural scene with hints of a
wider circumference, supernormal in scope. The
sestet turns from scene to agent; indeed, the oce-
tave is all scene, the sestet all agent. But by the
logic of the scene-agent ratio, if the scene is
supernatural in quality, the agent contained by
this scene will partake of the same supernatural
quality. And so, spiritually being the kind of age
that is at one with this kind of scene, the child is
divine." The contents of a divine container will synecdochically share in its divinity.

Swift's satire on philosophers and mathema-
ticians, the Laputans in the third book of Gulliv-
er's Travels, offers a good instance of the way
in which the scene-agent ratio can be used for
the depiction of character. To suggest that the
Laputans are, or may be, English or French air,"
is a brave transform the air into a
is these figures in itself. The
character. The
structure of the scene-agent ratio in typical
nineteenth-century fiction is strongly
given to the study of motives by the dialectic
pairing of people and things (man and nature,
agent and scene). The ratio figures characteris-
tically in the idealist's concern with the Einstieg
zwischen innerer und außerweltlicher Welt. The paintings

"Harmony between the inner life and the external world." [Ed.]

[5]
of the pointillist Seurat carry the sense of consistence between scene and agent to such lengths that his human figures seem on the point of dissolving into their background. However, we here move beyond strictly scene-agent matters into the area better covered by our term, agency, since the extreme impression of consistence between scene and agent is here conveyed by stressing the distinctive terms of the method, or medium (that is, agency), which serves as an element common to both scene and agent.

The logic of the scene-agent ratio has often served as an embarrassment to the naturalistic novelist. He may choose to "indict" some scene (such as bad working conditions under capitalistic conditions) by giving "brutalizing" effect upon the people who are indigenous to this scene. But the scene-agent ratio, if strictly observed here, would require that the "brutalizing" situation contain "brutalized" characters as its dialectical counterpart. And thereby, in his humanitarian zeal to save mankind, the novelist portrays characters which, in being as brutal as their scene, are not worth saving. We could phrase this dilemma in another way: our novelist points out those very conditions of scene as the motive-force behind his characters; and this restricting of the scene calls in turn for a corresponding restriction upon personality, or role.

**Further Instances of These Ratios**

The principles of consistence binding scene, act, and agent also lead to reverse applications. That is, the exact ratio of either calls for acts in keeping with scenes or scenes in keeping with acts — and similarly with the scene-agent ratio. When Lavinia instructs Seth to nail fast the shutters and throw out the flowers, by her command (an act) she brings about that scene of consistence which is the motive-force behind her characters; and this restricting of the scene calls in turn for a corresponding restriction upon personality, or role.

In behaviorist metaphysics (behaviorists would call it No Metaphysics) you radically truncate the possibilities of drama by eliminating action, reducing action to sheer motion. The close of the O'Neill play follows this same development from action to motion, a kind of inverted transcendence. Because of this change, Lavinia's last moments must be relegated to stage directions alone. She does not act, she is automatically moved. The trilogy did not end a moment too soon; for its close represented not only the end of Lavinia, but the end of the motivating principle of drama itself. The playwright had here obviously come to the end of a line. In his next plays he would have to "turn back." For he could not "go on" any longer in the "scientific" form. (He might have transcended drama scientifically, for instance, by a collating of sociological observations designed to classify different types of motorist and to correlate them with different types of response to traffic signals.)

We noted how, in Ibsen's drama, the hero's state of mind after his conflict with the townspeople was objectified in such scenic properties as his new abandoned bed scene, or general disorder of his study. It is obvious that one might have carried this consistence further in either direction (for instance, spreading it more environmentally, as we seek to enlist nature as an aspect of the scene, or more personally, as were we to enlist facial expressions and postures of the body, which of course the actor does, in interpreting his role, regardless of the playwright's intentions). If you took the heroine's state of mind as point of departure here, you could say that the whole scene becomes a mere aspect of the role, or person ("agent") — or that the physical body of the agent is itself but "scene" to be listed among the person's "properties," as with a dwelling that a man had ordered built in strict accordance with his own private specifications, or as theologians see in "body" the dwelling place of "soul." We observe the vagrancy from Swift's account of his Laputan, when, to suggest that in their thinking they could be transcendental, or introverted, or extremely biased, but never well balanced, he writes: "Their heads were all inclined, either to the right or to the left; one of their eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the zenith." But lest our speculations seem too arbitrary, let us cite one more anecdote, this time from a tiny drama enacted in real life, and here reported to illustrate how, when a state of mind is pronounced in quality, the agent may be observed arranging a corresponding pattern in the very properties of the scene.

The occasion: a committee meeting. The setting: a group of committee members bunched about a desk in an office, after hours. Not far from the desk was a railing; but despite the crowding, all the members were bunched about the chairman at the desk, inside the railing. However, they had piled their hats and coats on chairs and tables outside the pale. General engagement in the discussion. But as the discussion continued, one member quietly arose, and opened the gate in the railing. As unnoticeably as possible, she stepped outside and closed the gate. She picked up her coat, laid it across her arm, and stood waiting. A few moments later, when there was a pause in the discussion, she asked for the floor. After a short speech, the chairman, who had been watching her haltingly, in embarrassment, announced with regret that she would have to resign from the committee.

Consider with what fidelity she had set the scenic elements of the situation in evidence as she stepped beyond the railing to make her announcement. Design: chairman and fellow members within the pale, sitting, without hats and overcoats — she outside the pale, standing, with coat over her arm and preparatory to departure. She had strategically modified the arrangement of the scene in such a way that it implicitly (ambiguously) contained the quality of her act.

**Ubiquity of the Ratios**

If we but look about us, we find examples of the two ratios everywhere; for they are at the very centre of motivational assumptions. But to discern them in their ubiquity, we must remain aware of the many guises which the five terms may assume in the various casualties. In the introduction to his Discourses, for instance, Machiavelli complains that people read history without applying its lessons, "as though heaven, the sun, the elements, and men had changed the order of their motions and power, and were different from what they were in ancient times. For our purposes, the quotation could be translated, "as though human agents and both the supernatural and the natural scenes had changed, with a corresponding change in the nature of motives."

Besides general synonyms for scenes that are obviously of a background character, such as "society," or "environment," we often encounter quite specific localizations, words for particular places, situations, or eras. It is 12:30 P.M. is a "noon-hour." An "hourly wage." A "week's wages." "Pensioners" are formed about a scenic contrast between morning and night, with a corresponding contrast of actions. Terms for historical epochs, cultural movements, social institutions (such as "Elizabethan period," "romanticism," "capitalism") are scenic, though often with an admixture of properties overlapping upon the areas covered by the term, agent. If we recall that the term "idea," are those things we say the chairman, or our heroine, detect this strategic overlap in Locke's expression, "the scene of ideas," the form of which Carl Becker exactly reproduces when referring to "climates of opinion," in his Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers.

The word "ground," much used in both formal philosophy and everyday speech when discussing motives, is likewise scenic, though readily encroaching upon the areas more directly covered by "agent" and "purpose." We can discern the scenic reference if the question, "On what grounds did he do this?" is translated: "What kind of scene did he say it was, that called for such an act?" Hegelian idealism exploits the double usage of "ground" as "reason" by positing "Reason" as the ultimate ground, the Grundprinzip, of all history. Thus, whereas historicism regularly treats historical scenes as the background, or motive, of individual developments, Hegel would treat reason as the background, or motive, of historical sequence in general. Let us not worry, at this point, what it may "mean" to say that "Reason" is at once the mover of history and the substance of which
history is made. It is sufficient here to note that such psychosomatic resources were utilized, and to detect the logic of the pentad behind them.

The maxim, "terrain determines tactics," is a strict localization of the scene-act ratio, with "terrain" as the causative equivalent for "scene" in a mingling of event, motive, and "tactics" as the corresponding "act."

Political commentators now generally use the word "situation" as their synonym for scene, though often without any clear concept of its function as a statement about motives. Many social psychologists consciously use the term for its motivational bearing (it has a range extending from the broadest concepts of historical setting down to the simplified, conditioned situations which the animal experimenter imposes upon his rats in a maze). The Marxist reference to "the objective situation" is explicitly motivational, and the theorists who use this formula discuss "polities" as political acts enacted in conformity with the nature of scenes. However, the scene-act ratio can be applied in two ways. It can be applied deterministically in statements that a certain policy should have been adopted in a certain situation, or it may be applied to statements that a certain policy should be adopted in conformity with the situation. The deterministic usage (in scene-agent form) was exemplified in the statement of a traveler who, on returning from a trip to Latin America, characterized the politicians as "prisoners of the situation." And the hortatory usage was exemplified when a speaker said that President Roosevelt should be granted "unusual powers" because our country was in an "unusual international situation."

In a judgment written by Justice Hugo L. Black, the Supreme Court ruled that it was not "beyond the war powers of Congress and the Executive to exclude those of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast area at the time they did." And by implication, the scene-act ratio was invoked to substantiate this judgment:

Among the most succinct instances of the scene-act ratio in dialectical materialism is Marx's assertion (cited also by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*), that "Justice can never rise superior to the economic conditions of society and to the cultural development conditioned by them."

That is, in contrast with those who would place justice as a property of personality (an attribute purely of the agent), the dialectical materialist would place it as a property of the *material situation* ("economic conditions"). The scene in which justice is to be enacted. He would say that no higher quality of justice can be enacted than the nature of the scene's properties permits. Trotsky gave the same form an ironic turn when he treated Stalin's inscrutable results of the attempt to establish socialism under the given conditions. That is, you can't get a fully socialist act unless you have a fully socialist scene, and for the dialectical materialist such a scene requires a high stage of industrial development.

And there is a variant of the usage in Cole-ridge (in his early libertarian and "necessitarian" period, he was electrified with thoughts of a "classless society," or "Pantosocracy" (the plan of Coletidge, Southey, and their associates to found a communist colony on the banks of the Susquehanna), he wrote that it would make "vain inutility." That the colonists were to a critical situation of such a sort that virtuous acts would be the logical and spontaneous result of conditions. As for "act," any verb, no matter how specific or how general, that has connotations of consciousness or purpose falls under this category. If one happened to stumble over an obstruction, that would be not an act, but a mere motion. However, one could convert even this sheer accident into something of purpose if, in the course of falling, one suddenly willed his fall (as a rebuke, for instance, to the negligence of the person who had left the obstruction in the way). Dramatically, the basic unit of action would be defined as "the human body in conscious or purposive motion." Hence we are admonished that people often speak of action in a purely figurative sense when they have only motion in mind, as with reference to the action of a motor.
Here is an interesting shift of ratios in a citation from an address by Francis Biddle when he was Attorney General:

The change of the world in terms of time and space in the past hundred years — railroad, telegraph, telephone, automobile, movie, airplane, radio — had hardly found an echo in our political growth, except in the changes and arrangements which have made it so extraordinarily complex without making it more responsive to our needs.

Note first that all the changes listed here refer to agencies of communication (the pragmatist emphasis). Then, having in their accumulation become secneic, they are said to have had a motiva tion — viz., growth. But though the complexity of the scene has called forth "the necessary patches and arrangements" (another expression for "acts"), we are told that there are still unsatisfied "needs." Now, "needs" are a property of agents, hence an act designed to produce a situation "more responsive to our needs" would have its most direct locus of motivation under the heading of agent, particularly if these were said to be "primal needs" rather than "social needs," and new needs might best be treated as "a function of the situation." I borrow the expression from a prominent educator, Edward C. Lindeman, who shortly after the Japanese have complained of a tendency "to believe that morale will now become a function of the situation and that hence it is less important to plan for education."

The ratios may often be interpreted as principles of selectivity rather than as thoroughly causal relationships. That is, in any given historical situation, there are persons of many sorts, with a corresponding variety in the kinds of acts that would be most representative of them. Thus, a given ratio may be said not to change people in their essential character, but rather to favor, or bring to the fore (to vote for), certain kinds of agents (with their appropriate actions) rather than others. Quick shifts in political sentiment is suddenly make all men "fundamentally" daring, or all men "fundamentally" cautious, in keeping with the nature of the scene; but rather, one situation calls for cautious men as its appropriate "voice," another for daring men, one for traditionalists, another for innovators. And the inappropriate acts and temperaments simply do not "count" for so much as they would in situations for which they are a better fit. One set of scenic conditions will "implement" and "amplify" given ways and temperaments which, in other situations would remain mere potentialities, unplanted seeds, "mute inglorious Miltons." Indeed, there are times when out-and-out materialistic philosophies, which are usually thought of as "the arts," can be of great solace to us precisely because their encouragement we believe in the ratios as a selective principle. For we may tell ourselves that the very nature of the materials with which men deal will not permit men to fall below or exceed "acts.""...error, greed, and dishonesty in their relations with one another, as the cooperative necessities of the situation implement and amplify only those traits of character and action that serve the ends of progress."

There is, of course, a circular possibility in the terms. If an agent acts in keeping with his nature as an agent (act-agent ratio), he may change the nature of the scene accordingly (scene-agent ratio). The same nature can have a different unity between himself and his world (scene-agent ratio). Or the scene may call for a certain kind of act, which makes for a corresponding kind of agent, thereby likening agent to scene. Or our agent change unity, bringing a mutual conformity. Such would be the Edenic paragon, applicable if we were capable of total acts that produce total transformations. In reality, we are capable of but partial acts, acts that but partially represent unities and partial transformations. Indeed, if all the ratios were adjusted to one another with perfect Edenic symmetry, they would be immutability in an unending "moment." Theological notions of creation and recreation bring us nearest to the concept of total acts. Among the controversies that centered around Lutheranism, for instance, there was a doctrine, represented forward by the theologian St. John, who held that Christ's work on the Cross had the effect of changing God's attitude towards mankind, and that men born after the historical Christ can take advantage of this change. Here we have...
something like the conversion of God himself, brought about by Christ's sacrifice (a total action, a total passion). From the godlike nature came a godlike act that acted upon God himself. And as regards mankind, it amounts to a radical change in the very structure of the Universe, since it changed God's attitude for men, and in God's attitude towards men resides the ultimate ground of human action.

A similar pattern is implicated in the close of Aeschylus's trilogy, the Oresteia, where the sufferings of Orestes terminate in the changed identity of the Furies, signalized by their change of name from Erinyes to Eumenides. Under the influence of the "new gods," their nature as negative and destructive, though still different from thing; for whereas it was their previous concern to wreak evil, it will henceforth be their concern to reward the good. An inner goal has thus been cast forth, externalized; whereby, as Athens says, men may be at peace within, their "dread passion for renown" thereafter being motivated solely by "war from without."

Only the scene-act and scene-agent ratios fit with complete comfort in this chapter on the relative weight given container and contained. The act-agent ratio tugs at its edges; and we shall close noting concerns that move us still further afield. In the last example, we referred to God's attitude. Where would attitude fall within our paradigm? It would be central. In the case of an act, which would make it a kind of symbolic act, or incipient act. But in its character as a state of mind that may or may not lead to an act, it is quite clearly to be caught under the head of metaphor, especially, the metaphor of Christ's sacrifice as "a total action, a total passion." This suggests other "grammatical" possibilities that involve a dialectical pairing of "active" and "passive." And in the reference to a state of mind, we casually invite a dialectic pairing of "acts" and "status."*  

This group of concerns will be examined in due course. Meanwhile, we should be reminded that the term agent embraces not only all words generally used for persons, actors, characters, individual, hero, villain, father, doctor, engineer, but also any words, moral or functional, for patient, and words for the motivational properties or agents, such as "drives," "instincts," "states of mind." We may also have collective words for agent, such as nation, group, the Freudian super ego," Rousseau's "volonté générale," the Ricketson "familialization 1.

ANTINOMIES OF DEFINITION

Paradox of Substance

There is a set of words comprising what we might call the Stance family, for they all derive from a concept of place, or placement. In the Indo-European languages the root for this family is *sta*, to stand (Sanscrit, sthā). And out of it there has developed this essential family, comprising such members as: consist, constancy, consti- tution, contrast, destiny, ecstasy, existence, hypostatize, obstacle, stage, state, status, statute, stead, substans, and system. In German, an im- portant number of the Stance family in exterior things, or to place, a root that figures in Vorsstellung, a philosopher's and psychologist's word for representation, conception, idea, image.

Surely, one could build a whole philosophical system by tracking down the ramifications of one root. It would be "implemented" too, for it would have stables, staves, stalls, stables, stamens, stamina, stanchions, standp, steeds, stools, and studs. It would be a quite regional world, whilst our Southern Agrarians might take their stand.*

Unquestionably, the most prominent philo- sophical member of this family is "substance." Or at least it used to be, before John Locke greatly impaired its prestige, so that many thinkers today simply banish the term from their vocabularies. But there is cause to believe that, in banishing the term, far from banishing its functions one merely conceals them. Hence, from the dramatic point of view, we are admonished to dwell upon the word, considering its embarrassments and its potentialities of transformation, so that we may detect its covert influence even in cases where it is overtly absent. Its relation to our five terms will become apparent as we proceed.

First we should note that there is, etymologically, a pun lurking behind the Latin root. "Substance" is often used to designate what some thing or agent intrinsically is, as per these meanings in Webster's: "the most important element in any existence; the characteristics and essential com- ponents of anything; the main part; essential im- port, portur." Yet etymologically "substance" is a scène word. Literally, a person's or a thing's substance would be something that stands beneath our concept of to which we give the general name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist sine re substantia, "without something to support them," we call that support substantia; which according to the true import of the word, is, in plain English, standing under, or upholding.

The same structure is present in the corre- sponding Greek word, hypostasis, literally, a standing under: hence anything set under, such as support, stay, hence metaphorically, that which is the bot- tom of a thing, as the groundwork, subject mat- ter, argument of a narrative, speech, poem; a starting point, a beginning. And then come the technical meanings of "hypostasis" (in Li- dell and Scott): subsistence, reality, real being (as applied to mere appearance), nature, essence. In ecclesiastical Greek, the word corresponds to the Latin Person, a Person of the Trinity (which leads us back into the problem of the homoeousians and the homoiousians, as to whether the three persons were of the same or similar substance). Medically, the word can designate a suppression, as of humour, that ought to come to the surface, or to the urine; and of liquids generally, the sediment, leses, dregs, grounds. When we are examining, from the standpoint of the Symbolic, metaphysical, structure of the image, that character, and to get to the "bottom" of things, this last set of meanings can admonish us to be on the lookout for what Freud might call "clausal" motives, fur- ther interwoven with speculations that may on

"General will" (i.e., the will of society). [Ed.]

*I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition (1920) is the manifestos of the Southern Agrarians movement headed by, among others, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Allen Tate. [Ed.]
the term’s adoption by other schools. A literary critic wrote of the “literary situation,” for instance, meant not the “objective conditions” under which a writer writes, but the motives peculiar to a writer’s medium. What looked “sene-
"nice” was here actually “pragmatic,” since the writer’s medium is an agency. And similarly, essayists now often speak of “the human situ-
ation” when they seem to have in mind the motives peculiar to men as men, a usage that would call for the classifying of the expression under the heading of “agency,” hence giving the apparently materialistic usage an essentially idealistic applica-
tion (since, as we have said, idealism features the term agent).

Besides the concealments of minstrel and those due to mutual borrowings among the philo-
sophic schools, there is an internal development that causes the nature of philosophy as an asser-
tion to be lost in the problems of demonstration. That is, as soon as a philosopher has begun to investigate the possibilities in whatever term he has selected his Ausgangspunkt, he finds that the term does not merely create other terms in its image. Also, it generates a particular set of problems — and the same process extends the philosopher far from his be-
innings. It is somewhat, alas! as with the design for a perpetual motion machine. Such a design may have been quite simple in its original con-
ception, but it becomes fantastically complex as the inventor finds that each new wheel or trip or
pin or cam which he added to solve his problem gave rise to a new problem, and this in turn
suggested the need of other contrivances, which obliterates his former embarrasments only by
introducing a new embarrasment of its own.

Indeed, since all the terms of the pentad con-
tinually press for consideration, and since it is not possible for us, without contradiction, to rec-
create in words a world which is itself not verbal at all, we can safely accept it as an axiom that
the more attempt to contemplate persistently the resources of any one term will lead to the dis-
covey of many more problems the answers to which will transcend the genius of this term. And if a
reader comes upon a philosophy after it has been thus sophisticated, he may find himself so caught
up in its problems-atop-problems-atop-problems and problems-within-problems-within-problems
that he cannot sense the principle of generation
behind them. For usually the thinker himself has
become similarly intrigued.

But with the pentad as a generating principle,
we may at least ourselves (rather than imagine,
by discovering the kinds of assertion which
the different schools would exemplify in a hy-
pothetical state of purity. Once this approach is
established, problems are much less likely to
arise! the underlying principles of assertion, or
even serve to assist in the characterizing of a
given philosophic work.

C. Blum has stated the case deftly, “In identifi-
cation lies the source of dedications and enslav-
ements, in fact of cooperation.”

All told, persuasion ranges from the bluntest
quest of advantage, as in sales promotion or pro-
paganda, through courtship, social etiquette, ed-
uication, and the sermon, to a “pure” form that
delights in the process of appeal for itself alone,
without ulterior purpose. And identification ranges from the politician who, addressing an
audience of farmers, says, “You are the term boy
myself,” through the mysteries of social status,
to the mystic’s devout identification with the
source of all being.

That the reader might find it gratifying to observe the many variations on our two interre-
lated themes, at every step we have sought to pro-
ceed by examples. Since we did not aim to
write a compendium, we have not tried to cover
the field in the way that a comprehensive histori-
ical survey might do — and another volume will
be needed to deal adequately with the polemic
trends of rhetoric (such as the verbal tactics now
called “cold war”).

But we have tried to show what portions of
other works should be selected as parts of a
course in rhetoric, and how they should be
considered for our particular purposes. We have
tried to show how rhetorical analysis throws light on literary texts and history, and vice versa.

While interested always in rhetorical de-
vice, we have sought above all else to write a
philosophy of rhetoric.

We do not flatter ourselves that any one book
can contribute much to奠定 the historic work of
ill will into which so many of our contemporaries
have so avidly and sanctimoniously plunged. But
the more strident our journalists, politicians, and
alas! even many of our churchmen become, the
more convinced we are that books should be
written for tolerance and contemplation.

From A Rhetoric of Motives

INTRODUCTION

The only difficult portion of this book happens,
unfortunately, to be at the start. There, selecting
texts that are usually treated as pure poetry, we
try to show why rhetorical and dialectical con-
siderations are also called for. Since these texts
involve an imagery of killing (as a typical text
for today should) we note how, behind the sur-
face, lies a quite different realm that has little to
do with the literal interpretation.

But one of many terminologies by which writers
can represent the process of change. And while
recognizing the sinister implications of a prefer-
ence for homicidal and suicidal terms, we indi-
cate that the principles developed in the trans-
formation (“rebirth”) which they stand for are
not strictly of such a nature at all.

We emerge from the analysis with the key
term, “Identification.” Hence, readers who would
prefer to begin with the other terms, gradually extricating, might go
lightly through the opening pages, with the in-
tention of not taking hold in earnest until they
give rise to the general topic of Identification.

Thereafter, with this term as instrument, we
seek to mark off the areas of rhetoric, by showing how they are related, which obliterates his former embarrasments only by
introducing a new embarrasment of its own.

Indeed, since all the terms of the pentad con-
tinually press for consideration, and since it is not possible for us, without contradiction, to rec-
create in words a world which is itself not verbal at all, we can safely accept it as an axiom that
the more attempt to contemplate persistently the resources of any one term will lead to the dis-
covey of many more problems the answers to which will transcend the genius of this term. And if a
reader comes upon a philosophy after it has been thus sophisticated, he may find himself so caught
up in its problems-atop-problems-atop-problems and problems-within-problems-within-problems
that he cannot sense the principle of generation
behind them. For usually the thinker himself has
become similarly intrigued.

But with the pentad as a generating principle,
we may at least ourselves (rather than imagine,
by discovering the kinds of assertion which
the different schools would exemplify in a hy-
pothetical state of purity. Once this approach is
established, problems are much less likely to
arise! the underlying principles of assertion, or
even serve to assist in the characterizing of a
given philosophic work.

C. Blum has stated the case deftly, “In identifi-
cation lies the source of dedications and enslav-
ements, in fact of cooperation.”

All told, persuasion ranges from the bluntest
quest of advantage, as in sales promotion or pro-
paganda, through courtship, social etiquette, ed-
uication, and the sermon, to a “pure” form that
delights in the process of appeal for itself alone,
without ulterior purpose. And identification ranges from the politician who, addressing an
audience of farmers, says, “You are the term boy
myself,” through the mysteries of social status,
to the mystic’s devout identification with the
source of all being.

That the reader might find it gratifying to observe the many variations on our two interre-
lated themes, at every step we have sought to pro-
ceed by examples. Since we did not aim to
write a compendium, we have not tried to cover
the field in the way that a comprehensive histori-
ical survey might do — and another volume will
be needed to deal adequately with the polemic
trends of rhetoric (such as the verbal tactics now
called “cold war”).

But we have tried to show what portions of
other works should be selected as parts of a
course in rhetoric, and how they should be
considered for our particular purposes. We have
tried to show how rhetorical analysis throws light on literary texts and history, and vice versa.

While interested always in rhetorical de-
vice, we have sought above all else to write a
philosophy of rhetoric.

We do not flatter ourselves that any one book
can contribute much to奠定 the historic work of
ill will into which so many of our contemporaries
have so avidly and sanctimoniously plunged. But
the more strident our journalists, politicians, and
alas! even many of our churchmen become, the
more convinced we are that books should be
written for tolerance and contemplation.

PART I

Identification and “Consubstantiality”

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But
insofar as their interest are joined, A is identified
with B. Or he may identify himself with B even

"Starting point." [561]
The Grammar dealt with the universal paradoxes of substance. It considered resources of placement and definition common to all thought. The Symbolic should deal with unique individuals, each its own peculiar context. The word "construing" is capable of treatment in isolation, the Symbolic should consider them primarily in their capacity as singulars, each a separate universe of discourse (though there are also respects in which they are consubstantial with others of their kind, since they can be classed with other unique individuals as joint participants in common principles, possessors of the same or similar properties). The Rhetoric deals with the classification of its partisan aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another.

Why "at odds," you may ask, when the titular term is "identification?" Because, to begin with, "identification" is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of division. And so, in the end, men are brought to that more tragically invested after having imposed conflicts, wherein millions of cooperative acts go into the preparation for one single destructive act. We refer to that ultimate disease of cooperation: war. (You will understand war much better if you think of the prehistoric ocean, theicteric, the head, rather as a disease, or perversion of communion. Modern wars characterized by the requisite of constructive acts for each destructive one, before each culminating blast there must be a series of interlocking operations, directed communally.)

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart and wholly different, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence. It would not be an affirmation, in any case, by the transcending of themselves. In ways of its own, it can move from the factional to the universal. But its ideal conclusions are more often beset by strife as the condition of their organized expression, or material embodiment. The rhetoric's universality becomes

not scrutinize the concept of "identification" very sharply to see, implied in it at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division. Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall. Its contribution to a "sociology of knowledge" must often carry us far into the lugubrious regions of malice and the lie.

The Identifying Nature of Property

Metaphysically, a thing is identified by its properties. In the realm of Rhetoric, such identification is frequently by property in the most materialist sense of the term, economic property, such property as Coleridge, in his "Religious Musings," calls a

two-streaming font, Whence Vice and Virtue flow, honey and gall.

And later:

From Avarice thus, from Luxury and War
Sprung heavenly Science; and from Science, Freedom.

Coleridge, typically the literary idealist, goes one step further, deeming "property" from the workings of "Imagination." But meditations upon the dual aspects of property as such are evident in the presentation of the warring of himself with properties that name his number or establish his identity, man is ethical. "Avarice" is but the scenic word "property" translated into terms of an agent's attitude, or the process of human growth. In considering the formation of nations, nations, and his relationship to other entities that are likewise forming their identity in terms of property can lead to turmoil and discord. Here is par excellence a topic to be considered in a rhetoric having "identification" as its key term. And we see why one should expect to get much insight from Marxism, as a study of collective rhetoric. Veblen is also, from this point of view, to be considered a theorist of rhetoric. (And we quickly glimpse the range of rhetoric from

read, in succession, the articles on "Property" and "Propaganda" in The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.

Bentham's utilitarian analysis of language, treating of the ways in which men find "eulogistic coverings" for "paramount interests," is thus seen to be essentially rhetorical, and to bear directly upon the motives of property as a rhetorical factor. Indeed, since it is so clearly a matter of rhetoric to persuade a man by identifying your cause with his interests, we note the ingredients of rhetoric in the animal experienter's ways of conditioning, as animals that respond avidly at a food signal suggest, underlying every human motive, the inclination, like a house dog, to seek Salvation in the Scrapped Plate. But the lessons of this "animal rhetoric" can mislead, as we learn from the United States' attempts to use food as an instrument of policy in Europe after the war. These efforts met with enough ill will to suggest that the careful "screening" of our representatives, to eliminate reformist tendencies as far as possible and to identify American aid only with conservative or even reactionary interests, practically guaranteed us a disaster in our dealings with other nations. And when Henry Wallace, during a trip abroad, began earmarking for our country the genuine good will of Europe's common people and intellectual classes, the Genius of the Scrapped Plate came into its own with a flash of joy, until the.description of Rhetoric was far from enforcing the discipline of the rhetoric department.

Therefore, if you would praise God, and in terms that happen also to sanction one system of material property over another, as we have seen, you have forced Rhetorical considerations upon us. If you would praise science, however exalted, when that same science is at the service of imperialism-militarist estimates of "The Good Life" against the environment of Science. For just as God has been identified with a certain worldly structure of ownership, so science may be identified with the interests of certain groups or classes quite different from the "rational" or "professional" ends you imagine. One's motives may, of course, be the same, the purities of identifying lacking of the edges of such situations introduce a typical Rhetorical wrangle of the sort that can never be settled once and for all, but belongs in the field of moral controversy where men properly seek to "prove opinions." Thus, when his friend, Prone, wrote of a meeting where like-minded colleagues would be present and would all be proclaiming their praise of science, Prone answered: "You fail to mention another colleague who is sure to be there too, unless you take care to rule him out. I mean John Q. Militarist-Imperialist." Whereat, Prone: "This John Q. Militarist-Imperialist must be materializable by now. I seem to have heard of him back in Biblical times, before Roger B. Science was born. Doesn't he get in everywhere, unless he is explicitly ruled out?" He does, thanks to the ways of the world. That this is not a subject for some pervasive rhetorical can draw it at different places, and their persuasiveness varies with the resources each has at his command. (Where public issues are concerned, such resources are not confined to the intrinsic powers of the speaker and the speech, but depend also for their effectiveness upon the purely technical means of communication, which can either aid the utterance or hamper it. For a "good" rhetoric neglected by the press obviously will not have on its side the poor rhetoric backed nation-wide by headlines. And often we must think of rhetoric in terms of some one particular address, but as a general body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to the interests of the listeners than to the"...
insistence upon "autonomy" reflects a vigorous concern with the all-importance of the text that happens to be under scrutiny. This cult of patient textual analysis (though it has excesses of its own) is helpful as a reaction against the excesses of extreme historicism (a leftover of the nineteenth century) whereby a work became so subordinated to its background that the student's appreciation of first-rate texts was lost behind his involvement with the collateral documents of fifth-rate literary historians. Also, the stress upon the autonomy of fields is valuable methodologically; it has been justly praised because it gives clear insight into some particular set of principles; and such a way of thinking is particularly needed now, when pseudo-scientific thinking has become "unprincipled" in its uncritical use of "facts." But along with these reasons for a primary concern with the intrinsic, there are furtive temptations that can figure here too. For so much progressive and radical criticism in recent years has been concerned with the social implications of art, that affirmations of art's autonomy can often become, by antithesis, a roundabout way of identifying oneself with the interests of political opponents. In accordance with the rhetorical principle of identification, whenever you find a doctrine of "nonpolitical" esthetics affirmed, look for its politics. But the principle of autonomy does not allow for historical shifts; and therefore the nature of an identification can change greatly. Thus in his book, The Genesis of Plato's Thought, David Winspear gives relevant insight into the aristocratic and conservative political currents with which Plato's philosophy was identified at the time of its invention. The Sophists, on the other hand, have shown to have been more closely allied with the rising business class, then relatively "progres- sive" on the social plane of view, though their position was fundamentally weakened by the fact that their enterprise was based on the acceptance of slavery. Yet at other periods in history the Platonist concern with an ideal state could itself be identified with wholly progressive trends.

During the Second World War many good writers who had previously complained of the Marxist concern with propaganda in art, themselves wrote books in which they identified their aesthetic with an anti-Fascist politics. At the very least such literature contributed to Hitlerite Germans and their collaborators the brutal and neurasthenic motives which in former years had been attributed to "Everyman" (Weisweiler's Apartment in Athens, for instance.) So the overgeneralized attempt to discredit Marxist Rhetoric by discrediting all Rhetoric was abandoned, at least by representative representatives whose criticism was itself a rhetorical act designed to identify the public with anti-Fascist attitudes and help sell anti-Fascist books (as it later contributed to the forming of anti-Soviet attitudes and the sale of anti-Soviet books). In the light of such developments, many critics have only too accommodating in their search for covert and overt identifications that link the "autonomous" field of the arts with political and economic orders of motivation. Head-on resistance to the questioning of "purity" in specialized activities usually comes now from another quarter: the liberal apologists of science.

The "Autonomy of Science"

Science, as mere instrument (agency), might be expected to take on the nature of the scenes, acts, agents, and purposes with which it is identified. And as political strategy, that perverts human relations, we might reasonably expect to find a correspondingly pervverted science. Thus, even the apologists of the Church will grant that, in corrupt times, there is a corresponding perversion among the churchmen, and it is relevant to recall those specialists whose technical training fitted them to become identified with masskillings and experimentally induced sufferings in the concentration camps and the Socialism of the USSR. Socialism there as there are similar temptations in our own society (as attested by the specialist imagery of its art), might we not expect similar motives to lurk about the edges of our sciences (though temptation in this portion as the sinister political motives themselves are tempered in our society, under our less exacting social and economic conditions)? But liberal apologists indignantly resist any suggestion that sadistic motives may lurk behind unnecessary animal experiments that cause suffering. The same people who, with reference to the scientific horrors of Hitlerism, admonish against the ingredients of Hitlerite thinking in our own society, will be outraged if you follow out the implications of their own premises, and look for similar temptations among our specialists.

One can sympathize with this anxiety. The liberal, unthinkingly discredited to consider such possibilities because applied science is for him not a mere set of instruments and methods, whatever he may assert; it is a good and absolute, and is thus circumspectly endowed with the philosopher's knowledge of the ground of values. His thinking thus vindicates indeterminately between his overt claims for science as sheer method, as sheer coefficient of power, and his covert claims for science as a substance which, like God, would be an intrinsically good power. Obviously, any purely secular power, such as the applications of technology, would not be simply "good," but could become identified with motes good, bad. Hence, in this unexamined acceptance of the uses to which it was put, and upon the ethical attitudes that, as part of the context surrounding it, contributed to its meaning in the realm of motives and action. The problem of identification, whereby a theological function is smuggled into a term on its face wholly secular, can certainly reenforce the characteristically liberal principle of occupational autonomy, itself reinforced by the naively pragmatist notion that practical specialized work is a sufficient ground of morality. If the technical expert, as such, is assigned the task of perfecting new powers of chemical, bacteriological, or atomic destruction, his morality as technical expert requires only that he apply himself to his task as effectively as possible. The question of what the new force might mean, as released into a social texture emotionally and intellectually unfit to control it, or as surrendered to men whose specialized motives are simply "none of his business," as specialist, however great may be his misgivings as father of a family, or as citizen of his nation and of the world. The extreme division of labor under late capitalism has made dispersion the norm and having transformed the state of Babel into an ideal, the true liberal must view almost as an affront the rhetorical concern with identifications whereby the principles of a specialty cannot be taken on their face, simply as the motives proper to that specialty. They are the motives proper to the specialty as such, not to the specialty as participant in a wider context of motives.

In sum, as regards tests of "autonomy," the specialist need only consider, as a disciplinary factor, the objective resistances supplied by the materials with which he works. The liberal criterion was that propounded by Rousseau in Émile: The principle of constraint was to come from the nature of things, not from authorities and their precepts. Yet, willy nilly, a science takes on the moral qualities of the political or social movements with which it becomes identified. Hence, a new anguish, a crisis in the liberal theory of science. In his Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche met the same problem keenly, but pervasively, by praising "autonomy" as the opposite, of modern political authoritarianism, like the earlier Romantic Lockes, would subordinate the autonomous specialty to overall doctrinal considerations. The rhetorical concept of "identification" does not justly express to which such doctrines be carried. But it does make clear the fact that one's morality as a specialist cannot be allowed to do duty for one's morality as a citizen. Insofar as the two roles are at odds, a specialty at the service of sinister interests will itself become sinister.

"Redemption" in Post-Christian Science

With a culture formed about the idea of redemp- tion by the sacrifice of a Crucified Christ, just what does happen in an era of post-Christian science, when the ways of socialization have been secularized? Does the need for the vicerage of the Church and the Sacred King merely dwindle away? Or must some other person or persons, individual or corporate, real or fictive, take over the redemptive role? Not all people, perhaps, seek out a Vessel to which will be ritualistically delegated a purgative function, in being symbolically laden
with the burdens of individual and collective guilt. But we know, as a lesson of recent history, how anti-Semitism provided the secularized replicas of the Divine Scapegoat in the post-Christian rationale of Hitler’s National Socialist militiamen; and we know how Jews and other minority groups are thus magically identified by many members of our society. And since we also know that there are at large in the modern world many militaristic and economic trends quite like those of Germany under the Hitlerite “science” of genocide, we should at least be admonished to expect, in some degree, similar cultural temptations. For the history of the Nazis has clearly shown that there are cultural situations in which scientists, whatever may be their claims to professional austerity, will contrive somehow to identify their specialty with modes of justification, or socialization, not discernible in the sheer motions of the material operations themselves. In its transcendence of natural living, its technical scruples, its special tests of purity, a clinic or laboratory can be a kind of secular temple, in which ritualistic devotions are taking place, however concealed by the terminology of the surface. Unless property scrutinized for traces of witchcraft, these could furtively become devotions to a satanic order of motives. At least such was the case with the technological exploiters of Hitlerite Germany. These humanitarian ideas of an “imper- sonal” terminology can contribute ironically to such disaster: for it is but a step from treating inanimate nature as mere “things” to treating animals, and then enemy peoples, as mere things. But they are not mere things, they are persons — and in the systematic denial of what one knows in his heart to be the truth, there is a perverse principle that can generate much anguish.

Dual Possibilities

But one cannot be too careful here. Religion, politics, and economics are notoriously touchy subjects. And with so many persons today, the cult of applied science has the animus of all three rolled into one. We should take pains to make this clear: we are most decidedly not saying that science must take on such malignant identifications as it presumably has, for some scientists, when fitted into the motives of a Fascist state. In the United States, for instance, the Federation of American Scientists has been urgently seeking to dissociate the idea of atomic power from the idea of national security. Thus, the Federation proclaimed, in a statement issued September 1, 1947, on the second anniversary of V-J Day:

Many persons have justified the support of science for its war potential, implying that national security will result. We hear this justification in Congress. We hear it even from the atomic mission. We assert that national security cannot result from military preparedness or the support of science for its war potential.

When men are of good will, we can always expect many such efforts to break such sinister identifications, which their knowledge of their special field enables them to recognize as false. Unfortunately, good will as thus circumscribed is not enough. The same statement goes on to say: “Our Government has advocated a sound policy in the United Nations concerning atomic energy.” Yet there seems much justice in the complaint of the Soviet delegates that the measures we propose would guarantee the United States perpetual superiority in this field unless other nations have been equally violated the proposed “imper- sonal” terminology by finding ways to continue their experiments in secret.

In a speech made before the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (September 10, 1947), the government of Great Britain was committing itself to coexist with the United States’ proposals for giving “the right of ownership” to an international organ of control. In its view, that all management would contradict the principle of state sover- eignty. Thus the socialist delegate was arguing for the restriction of ownership to national boundaries, while the world’s greatest capitalist economy argued for ownership not of the entire world, but of the body. On its face, the capitalist proposal seems much nearer to the ideal socialist solution than the position of the Soviet Union is.

However, the history of corporate manage- ment in the United States, and of political parties everywhere, gives ample evidence of all the devices whereby actual control of a property differs from nominal ownership of it. And obviously the interests in actual control of the agency that allocated the rights and resources of atomic develop- ment could have all the advantages of real ownership, however international might be the fictions of ownership. Where the control resides, there resides the function of ownership, whatever the fictions of ownership may be. It would certainly be no new thing to rhetoric if highly discr- iminatory claims were here being protected in the name of universal rights. And the Soviet delegate was not calling for measures that unmitastakely avoid such a possibility, which was not considered in the scientists’ statement as published in the press. There was a hint of “maneuvering” in our proposals, maneuvering to put the Russians in the position of seeming to delay an adequate international control over the atomic bomb, when there were strong doubts whether our own Congress would itself have agreed to such a delay.

Lying outside the orbit of the scientists’ speciality, there are psychological considerations which are nearly always slighted, since they involve identifications manifestly extrinsic to atomic affairs and not the usual crimes of deception arise particularly with those ironies whereby the scientists’ truly splendid terminology for the expert smashing of lifeless things can so catch a man’s fancy that he would transfer it to the realm of human relations likewise. It is not a great step from the purely professional poisoning of harmful insects to the purely professional blasting and poisoning of human beings, as viewed in similarly “impersonal” terms. And such inducements are particularly long as factional divi- sion (of class, race, nationality, and the like) make for the ironic mixture of identification and dissipation that marks the function of the scape- goat. Indeed, the very “global” conditions which can be reached in the conditions of science, requiring of all men universal coexistence, and one another have at the same time increased the range of human conflict, the incentives to divi- sion. It would require sustained rhetorical effort, backed by the imagery of a richly humane and spontaneous poetry, to make us fully sympathize with people in circumstances greatly different from our own. Add now the international rivial- ties that go to the opposite kind of effort, and that make it easy for some vocalizers to make their style “forceful” by simply playing up these divisive trends, and you see how perverted the austere scientific ideal may become, as released into a social texture unprepared for it.

The good will of scientists is not enough, however genuine it may be. There is the joke of the father who put his little son on the table and, holding out his arms protectively, said, “Jump.” The trusting child jumped; but instead of catching him, the father drew back, and let him fall on the floor. The child was hurt, both physically and in this violation of its confidence. Whereupon the father drove home the moral: “Let that be a lesson to you. Never trust anyone, not even your own father.” Now, when the apostles of science teach their subject thus, instead of merely exalt- ing it, we can salute them for truly admonishing us, in being as “scientific” about the criticism of science as in the past they have been about the criticism of religion.

To sum up:

(1) We know, as a matter of record, that sci- ence under Fascism became sinister. (2) We are repeating the repeatedly being debunked 10 per cent of our own society. (3) Why, then, should there not be, in our society, a correspondingly high incentive to sin- fer science? Particularly inasmuch as science is the bane of our society, both popular and recordable, while the conditions of secrecy imposed upon many experimental sci- entists today add a “conspiratorial” motive to such “autonomous” activity. In the past, the great frauds of science have been its noblest attributes, as judged from the purely humanistic point of view. But any tendency to place scientific development primarily under the heading of “war potential” must endanger this essential moralistic role of science. Hence, we must have universal clarity with the divisive demands for con- spiracy. Insofar as such conditions prevail, sci- ence loses the one ingredient that can keep it wholesome: its enrollment under the forces of
light. To this extent, the scientist must reject and resist in ways that mean the end of "autonomy," or if he accepts, he risks becoming the friend of fiends. Scientific discoveries have always, of course, been used for the purposes of war. But the demand that scientific advance per se be guided by military considerations changes the proportions of such intervention tremendously. Scientists of good will must then become uneasy, in that the morality of their specialty is no longer enough. The liberal ideal of autonomy is denied them, except perhaps as they can contrive to conceal from themselves the true implications of their role.

Ingenious and Cunning Identifications

The thought of self-deception brings up another range of possibilities here. For there is a wide range of ways whereby the rhetorical motive, through the resources of identification, can operate without conscious direction by any particular agent. Classical rhetoric stresses the element of explicit design in rhetorical enterprise. But one can systematically extend the range of rhetorical studies to the persuasiveness of false or inadequate terms which may not be directly imposed upon us from without by some skillful speaker, but which we impose upon ourselves, in varying degrees of deliberateness and unconsciousness, through motives of selfprotective and/or suicidal nature.

We shall consider these matters more fully later, when we study the rhetoric of hierarchy (or as it is less revealingly named, bureaucracy). And our latter studies of Marx and Veblen will apply here. But for the present we might merely recall the psychologist's concept of "malingering," to designate the ways of neurotic persons who, though not actually ill, put themselves as if they are, and so can claim the attentions and privileges of the ill (their feigned illness itself becoming, at one remove, genuine). Similarly, if a social or occupational class is not too exacting in the task of identifying that flatters its interests, its very philosophy of life is a profitable malingering (profitable at least until its inaccuracies catch up with it) — and as such, it is open to either attack or analysis, Rhetoric comprising both the use of persuasive resources (rhetorical utterance, as with the philosophics of Demosthenes) and the study of them (rhetoric docens, as with Aristotle's treatise on the "art" of Rhetoric).

This aspect of identification, whereby one can protect an interest merely by using terms not incisive enough to criticize it properly, often brings rhetoric to the edge of cunning. A misanthropic politician who dealt in mankind-loving imagery could still think of himself as rhetorically honest, if he meant to do well by his constituents yet thought that he could get their votes only by such display. Whatever the falsity in overplaying the role, there may be a freedom of duplicity: After the disclosure of his cunning, Julien abandons his complex rhetorical morality of hypocrisy-to-outhypocritize-the-hypocrites, and regains a new, suicidally poetic level of simplicity. Hence, the persuasive identifications of Rhetoric, in being so directly designed for use, involve us in a special problem of consciousness, as exemplified in the Rhetorician's particular purpose for a given statement.

The truth of this gets into rhetorical motives behind many characters in drama and fiction. Shakespeare's Iago and Molière's Tartuffe are demons of Rhetoric. Every word and act is addressed, being designed to build up false identifications in the minds of victims. Similarly, there is a notable ingredient of Rhetoric in Stendhal's Julien Sorel, who combines "heightened consciousness" with "freedom" by a perversely frank decision to perfect his own kind of hypocrisy, and so he might be as selfrighteous as he is self-hypocritical. All his actions thus become rhetorical, framed for their effect; his life is a spellbinding and spellbound address to an audience.

Did you ever do a friend an injury by accident, in all poetic simplicity? Then conceive of this same injury as done by sly design, and you are forthwith within the orbit of Rhetoric. If you, like the Stenholds and Gilders, discover that flattery is an interest of others, you might seek such identification, Rhetoric as the speaker's attempt to identify himself favorably with his audience then becomes so transformed that the work may seem to have been written under an esthetic of pure "expression," without regard for communicative appeal. Or it may appeal perversely, to warped motives within the audience. Or it may be but an internalizing of the rhetorical motive, as the very actions of such a representative figure take on a rhetorical cast. Hence, having woven a rhetorical motive so integrally into the very essence of his conception, the writer can seem to have ignored rhetorical considerations; yet, in the sheer effrontery of his protagonist there is embodied, however disguised or transformed, an anguish of communication (communication being, as we have said, a generalized form of love).

As regards the rhetorical ways of Stendhal's hero, the freedom of duplicity and the trap of hypocrisies is the very condition for the freedom of duplicity: After the disclosure of his cunning, Julien abandons his complex rhetorical morality of hypocrisy-to-outhypocritize-the-hypocrites, and regains a new, suicidally poetic level of simplicity. "Jamais cette âtre n'avait été aussi poétique qu'au moment où elle allait tomber." The whole structure of the book could be explained as the account of a hero who, by the disclosure of his Rhetoric, was jolted into a traumatically direct poetics. But what of the novel, "hypocrisy" in this novel, just the same thing as the word for "rhetoric," such being the quality of the rhetoric that marked the public life of France under the reign of Napoléon le Petit.

Rhetoric of "Address" (to the Individual Soul)

By our arrangement, the individual in his uniqueness falls under the head of Symbolic. But one should not thereby assume that what is known as "individuality" is any more than the empty shell of a test. Particularly in the Freudian concern with the neuroses of individual patients, there is a strongly rhetorical ingredient. Indeed, what could be more profoundly rhetorical than Freud's notion of a dream that attains expression by stylistic subterfuges designed to evade the inhibitions of a moralistic censor? What is this but the exact analogue of the rhetorical devices of literature? Under the name of "artistic" or "esthetic" expression?

The ego with its id confronts the superego much as an orator would confront a somewhat alien audience, whose susceptibilities he must flatter as a necessary step towards persuasion. The Freudian psyche is quite a parliament, with conflicting interests expressed in ways variously designed to take the claims of rival factions into account.

The best evidence of a strongly rhetorical ingredient in Freud's view of the psyche is in his analysis of Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious. In particular, we think of Freud's concern with the role of an audience, or "third person," with whom the speaker establishes rapport, in their common enterprise directed against the butt of tendentious witteisms. Here is the purest rhetorical pattern: speaker and hearer as partners in partisan jokes made at the expense of another. If you "internalize" such a variety of motives, so that the same person can participate somewhat in all three positions, you get a complex individual of many voices. And though these may be treated, under the heading of Symbolic, as a concerto of principles mutually modifying one another, they may likewise be seen, from the standpoint of Rhetoric, as a parliamentary wrangle in which the individual acts what as he puts together his fears and hopes, friendships and enmities, health and disease, or those tiny rebirths whereby, in being born to some new condition, he may be dying to a past condition, and vice versa, in a cycle of terms in perpetual transformation.

Thus by a roundabout route we come upon another aspect of Rhetoric: its nature as addressed, since persuasion implies an audience. Hence the individual is seen to be even in his secret thoughts, cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect he hopes they may have upon him; he is here what Mead would call "an 'I' addressing its 'me',' and in this respect he is being rhetorical, or seeking himself in using pleasant imagery to influence an outside audience rather than one within. In traditional Rhetoric, the relation to an external audience is stressed. Aristotle's list of Rhetoric's transcendant, deals with the appeal to audiences in this primary sense: It lists typical beliefs, so that the speaker may choose among them the ones with which he would favorably identify his cause or unfavorably identify the cause of an opponent; and it lists

"Never was that head so poetic as at the moment when it was about to fall!" [Ed.]
the traits of character with which the speaker should seek to identify himself, as a way of disposing an audience favorably towards him. But a modern "post-Christian" rhetoric must also concern itself with the thought that, under the heading of appeal to audiences, would also be included any ideas or images privately addressed to the individual self for moralistic or incantatory purposes. For you become your own audience, in some respects a very lux one, in some respects very exacting, when you become involved in psychologically stylized subterfuges for presenting your own case to yourself in sympathetic terms (even terms that seem harsh can often be found on closer scrutiny to be flattering as well as hurtful to visit sufferings upon themselves in the name of very high-powered motifs which, whatever their discomfiture, feed pride).

Such considerations make us alert to the inertedness of rhetoric in all socialization, considered as a moralistic well-glass. The individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token compelled to adopt the strategy of self-definition. To act upon himself persuasively, he must variously resort to images and ideas that are formative. Education ("indoctrination") exerts such pressure upon him from without; he completes the process from without with the intrinsic forces he now act to tell himself (as his own audience) what the various brands of rhetorician have told him, his persuasion is not complete. Only those voices from without are effective which can speak in the language of a voice within you.

Among the Tapula of Madagascar, it is said, most of those tribesmen susceptible to tromba ("neurotic seizure indicated by an extreme desire to dance") were found to be among the least favorable to the cause of the tribe. Such seizures are said to be a device that makes the possessed person "the center of all the attention." And afterwards, the richest and most powerful members of the sufferer's family foot the bill, so that "the individual's life is well satisfied and he can get along quite well until the next tromba seizure occurs." In sum, "like most hysterical seizures, tromba requires an audience."

The citations are from Lardner, The Indiscretion of H. P. Lovecraft (New York: Columbia University Press). They would suggest that, when asking what all would fall within the scope of our topic, we could also include "a rhetoric of hysteria." For here too are expressions which are addressed, and which are the ultimate irony, in glimpsing how even a catatonic lapse into sheer automatism, beyond the reach of all normally linguistic communication, is in its origins communicative, addressed, though it be a paralogical appeal that ends all appeals.

Rhetoric and Primitive Magic

The Kardiner citations are taken from a paper by C. Kluckhohn on "Navaho Witchcraft: and some incantating observations that would also bring witchcraft within the range of rhetoric. Indeed, where witchcraft is imputed as a motive behind the individual search for wealth, power, or vengeance, can we not view it as a primitive vocabulary of individualism emerging in a culture where tribal thinking had been uppermost, so that the individualist motive was to be admitted and suspect? And any breach of identification of the individual with the tribe brings about the sense of being the individual. To glimpse rhetorical motives behind the fact that Macbeth's private ambitions were figured in terms of witches?

At first glance we may seem to be straining the concept of rhetoric to the breaking point, when including even a treatise on primitive witchcraft within its range. But look again. Precisely at a time when the term "rhetoric" had fallen into greatest neglect and desuetude, writers like Frye have placed it back in the "social sciences" world, under new guises, making good contributions to the New Rhetoric. As usual with modern thought, the insights gained from comparative culture could throw light upon the classic approach to this subject; and again, as with modern thought, this light was interpreted in terms that concealed its true relation to earlier work. And though the present writer was strongly influenced by anthropologist text, he also recall nothing the word "magic" but once in not clearly discern the exact relation between the anthropologist's concern with magic and the literary critic's concern with communication until he had systematically worked on this Rhetoric of Magic for some years. Though he persisted in anthropological bankings, he

did so with a bad conscience; and he was half willing to agree with literary opportunists who considered such concerns alien to the study of literature proper.

Now, in noting methodologically how the anthropologist's concept of magic can belong in a rhetoric, we are better equipped to see exactly wherein the two fields of inquiry diverge. Anthropology is a gain to literary criticism only if one knows how to "discount" it from the standpoint of rhetoric. And, ironically, anthropology can be a source of disturbance, not only to literary criticism in particular, but to the study of human relations in general. If one does not so discount it, but allows its terms to creep into one's thinking at points where issues should be studied explicitly in terms of rhetoric.

We saw both the respects in which the anthropologists' study of magic overlaps upon rhetoric and the respects in which they are distinct when we were working on a review of Ernst Cassirer's Myth of the State. The general proposition that exercised us can be stated as follows: We must begin by confronting the typically scientific approach to the problem of scientific concepts for scientific reasons, almost as if it were magic. Since so many apologists of modern science, following a dialectic of simple antithesis, have looked upon magic merely as an early form of bad science, one seems to be left only with a distinction between good science and bad science. To a scientist this state of knowledge is thus presented as a terminology that gives an accurate and critically tested description of reality; and magic is presented as antithetical to such science. Hence magic is treated as an "irrational" concept involved in the history of science does, but under conditions where judgment and perception were impaired by the naïvely anthropomorphistic belief that the impersonal forces of nature were controlled by personal demons. One can approach the idea of magic with a civilized vocabulary of scientific description and a savage vocabulary of magical incantation.

In this scheme, "rhetoric" has no systematic logic; it recall nothing the word "magic" but once in not clearly discern the exact relation between the anthropologist's concern with magic and the literary critic's concern with communication until he had systematically worked on this Rhetoric of Magic for some years. Though he persisted in anthropological bankings, he

of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents, is certainly not "magical." If you are in trouble, and call for help, you are no practitioner of primitive magic. You are using the primary resource of human speech in a thoroughly realistic way. Nor, on the other hand, is your utterance "science," in the strict meaning of science today, as a "semantic" or "descriptive" terminology for charting the conditions of nature from an "impressionistic" point of view, regardless of one's wishes or preferences. A call for help is quite "prejudiced"; it is the most arrant kind of "wishful thinking"; it is not merely descriptive, it is hortatory. It is not the tendency to tell how things are, in strictly "emic" terms; it is trying to move people. A call for help, of course, include purely scientific statements, or preparations for action, as a person in need might give information about particular dangers to guard against or advantages to exploit in bringing help. But the call, in itself, as such, is not scientific; it is rhetorical. Whereas poetic language is a kind of symbolic action, for itself and in itself, and whereas scientific action is a theoretically rather than an imaginatively conceived, rhetorical language is in- ducement to action (or to attitude, attitude being an incipient act).

If you have only a choice between magic and science, you simply have no bin in which to choose. Science is science, and magic is magic. Hence, since "the future" is not the sort of thing one can put under a microscope, or even test by a knowledge of exactly equivalent conditions in the past, when you turn to political exhaustion, you are not to be understood within any science beyond the strictly scientific vocabularies of description. And since the effective politician is a "spellbinder," it seems to follow by elimination that the habitual use of speech for political ends can be called "magic," in the discredited sense of that term.

As a result, much analysis of political rhetoric comes to look simply like a survival of primitive magic, which is not the same as giving it its own terms, as an aspect of what it really is: rhetoric. The approach to rhetoric in terms of "word magic" gets the whole subject turned backwards. Originally, the magical use of symbolization to affect society and incantations was a mistaken transference of a
proper linguistic function to an area for which it was not fit. The realistic use of addressed language to induce action in people became the magical use of addressed language to induce magic — and human nature (as we see it: a vestige of belligerently pre-scientific magic.

To be sure, the rhetorician has the tricks of his trade. But they are not mere "bad science"; they are an "art." And any overly scientist approaches certainly treating them in terms of flagging (dialectical opposition to modern technology) must make our world look much more "nonopti-mitive" than is really the case. At the very least, we should note that primitive magic prevailed most strongly under social conditions where the rationalization of social effort in terms of money was negligible; but the rhetoric of modern politics would establish social identifications atop a way of life highly diversified by money, with the extreme division of labor and status which money served to rationalize.

Realistic Functions of Rhetoric

Gaining courage as we proceed, we might even contend that we are not so much proposing to import anthropology into rhetoric as proposing that anthropologists recognize the factor of rhetoric in their own field. That is, if you look at recent studies of primitive magic from the standpoint of this discussion, you might rather want to distinguish between magic as "bad science" and magic as "primitive rhetoric." You then discover that anthropology does clearly recognize the rhetorical function in magic; and, from dismissing the rhetorical aspect of magic merely as bad science, anthropologists recognize in it a pan in things (things by nature alien to us). One can see the survival of cultures by promoting social cohesion. (Malinowski) did much work along these lines, and the Khuchmahn essay makes similar observations about witchcraft.) But now that we have confirmed our hypothesis ("primitive rhetoric?"), we'd say that one comes closer to the true state of affairs if one treats the socializing aspects of magic as a "primitive rhetoric" than if one sees modern rhetoric simply as a "survival of primitive magic.

For rhetoric is such as is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing conformity different with the person to which the source of the language refers to symbols. Though rhetorical considerations may carry us far afield, leading us to violate the principle of autonomy separating the various disciplines, there is an intrinsically rhetorical quality to much of what we say and do. In the same way, the term "magical" had always been used to refer to the cultural role of the community, the advantages of special groups whose rights and duties are inarticulately, both a function of language, and, as with some business enterprise in our society. The "pragmatic sanction for" this function of magic lies outside the realm of strictly true or false propositions; it falls in an area of deliberation that itself draws upon the resources of rhetoric; it is a subject matter belonging to an area of "metaphysics" as well.

To illustrate what we mean by "proving opinions," here we read an article, let us say, obviously designed to dispose the reading public of the traditional "oral" theory of language. By the "proving" of American anthropologists' insights into a verbal theory of language, it seems in some ways to be a matter of value to the community, and of the speed at which the rationalized methods and technology will accomplish these changes. When considering the obvious rhetorical weight of these "facts," the suddenness, a new section. We remember a line in the Khuchmahn essay, involving what we would now venture to call "the rhetoric of witchcraft:"

In a society like the Navaho which is competitive and capitalistic, on the one hand, and still familiar on the other, any ideology which has the effect of lowering down economic mobility is decidedly adaptive. One of the most basic strains in Navaho society arises out of the incompatibility between the need to protect the community and the emulation of European patterns in the accumulating of capital.

And in conclusion we are told that the "survival of the society" is assisted by "any pattern, such as witchcraft, which tends to discourage the rapid accumulation of wealth" (witchcraft, as an "ideology," contributing to this end by identifying a new wealth with the/Documents/ jumped on the term "primitive rhetoric", we see that rhetoric involves us in problems related to
witchcraft, magic, spellbinding, ethical promptings, and the like. And in the course of discussing these subjects, we found ourselves running into another term: persuasion. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, or a study of the means of persuasion available for any given situation. We have thus, deviously, come to the point at which Aristotle begins his treatise on rhetoric.

So we shall change our purpose somewhat. Up to now, we have been trying to indicate what kinds of subject matter not traditionally labeled "rhetoric" should, in our opinion, also fall under this head. We would now consider varying views of rhetoric that have already prevailed; and we would try to "generate" them from the same basic terms of our discussion.

As for the relation between "identification" and "persuasion": we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So, there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ("contentual substantiability") and communication (the nature of rhetoric as "addressed"). But, in given instances, one or another of these elements may serve best for extending a line of analysis in some particular direction. And finally: The use of symbols, by one symbol-using entity to induce action in another (persuasion properly addressed) is in essence not magical but realistic. However, the resources of identification whereby a sense of co-substantiality is symbolically established between beings of unequal status may extend far into the realm of the idealistic. And as we shall see later, when on the subject of order, out of this idealistic element there may arise a kind of magic or mystery that sets its mark upon all human relations.

From Language as Symbolic Action

**Terministic Screens**

**I DIRECTING THE ATTENTION**

We might begin by stressing the distinction between a "scientistic" and a "dramatic" approach to the nature of language. A "scientistic" approach begins with questions of naming, or definition. Or the power of language to define and describe may be viewed as derivative; and its capacity to be treated as antidual or hortatory: antidual as with expressions of complaint, fear, gratitude, and such; hortatory as with commands or requests, or, in general, an instrument developed through its use in the social processes of cooperation and competition. I say "developed"; I do not say "originating." The ultimate origin of language seem to me as mysterious as the origins of the universe itself. One must view it, I feel, simply as the "given." But once an animal comes into being that does happen to have this particular aptitude, the various tribal idioms are unquestionably developed by their use as instruments in the tribe's way of living (the practical role of symbolism in what the anthropologists, Malinowski, has called "con-text of tradition"). Such considerations are involved as much as I have in my notion of the "dramatic," stressing language as an act of "action," that is, as "symbolic action."

The two approaches, the "scientistic" and the "dramatic" (language as definition, and language as act) are by no means mutually exclusive. Since both approaches have their proper uses, the distinction is not being introduced invidiously. Definite attention, just as my proposing of this very distinction is a symbolic act. But though at this moment of beginning, the overlap is considerable, later the two roads diverge considerably, and direct our attention to quite different kinds of observation. The quickest way to indicate the differences of direction might be by this formula: The "scientistic" approach builds the edifice of language with primary stress upon a presupposition such as "It is, or it is not." The "dramatic" approach puts the primary stress upon such hortatory expressions as "thou shalt, or thou shalt not." And at the other extreme the distinction becomes quite obvious, since the scientistic approach culminates in that kind of operation we associate with logical symbolic logic; while the dramatistic culminates in the kinds of speculation that find their handset material in stories, plays, poems, the rhetoric of oratory and advertising, mythologies, theologies, and philosophy. 

The dramatistic view of language, in terms of "symbolic action," is exercised about the necessarily amusive nature of even the most unemotional scientific nomenclatures. And we shall proceed along those lines; thus:

Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality.

In his Seventh Provincial Letter, Pascal satirizes a device which the Jesuits of his day called "directing the intention." For instance, to illustrate satirically how one should "direct the intention" into a burlesque example of this sort: 

"Dueling was forbidden by the Church. Yet it was still a prevalent practice. Pascal satirically demonstrated how, by "directing the intention," one could both take part in a duel and not violate the Church's injunctions against it. Thus, instead of intentionally going to take part in a duel, the duelists would merely go for a walk to a place where the duel was to be held. And they would carry guns merely as a precautionary means of self-protection in case they happened to meet an armed enemy. By so "directing the intention," they could have their duel without having transgressed the Church's "thou-shalt-not's" against dueling. For it was perfectly proper to go for a walk; and in case one encountered an enemy bent on murder, it was perfectly proper to protect oneself by shooting in self-defense."

I bring this satirically excessive account of directing the intention, in the hopes that I can thereby set a less serious account of the ways in which "terministic screens" direct the attention. Here the kind of deflection I have in mind concerns simply the fact that any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others. In one sense, this likelihood is painfully obvious. A textbook on physics, for instance, turns the attention in a different direction from the textbook on law or psychology. But some implications of this terministic incentive are not so obvious.

When I speak of "terministic screens," I have particularly in mind some photographs I once saw. They were different photographs of the same objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so "factual" as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded.

Similarly, a man has a dream. He reports his dream to a Freudian analyst, or a Jungian, or an Adhererian, or to a practitioner of some other school. In each case, we might say, the same dream will be subjected to a different color filter, with corresponding differences in the nature of the event as perceived, recorded, and interpreted. (It is a commonplace that patients soon learn to have the kind of dreams best suited to the terms favored by their analysts.)

**II OBSERVATIONS IMPLICIT IN TERMS**

We have now moved things one step further along. Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than another. Also, many of the "observations" are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made. In brief, much that we take as observations about reality may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms.

Perhaps the simplest illusration of this point is to be got by contrasting secular and theological approaches to history. If you want to operate, like a theologian, with a terminology that in
Michel Foucault
1926–1984

Michel Foucault was born in Poitiers, France, and educated in Paris at the École Normale Supérieure, where he took degrees in philosophy (1948), psychology (1950), and psychiatry (1952). For the next several years, he worked in psychiatric hospitals and taught psychopathology at the École Normale and elsewhere. In 1961 he published Madness and Civilization, which was accepted as his Ph.D. dissertation. In this book, Foucault shifted his attention to prisons, the treatment of prisoners, and the social history of imprisonment. He was actively involved in the prisoners’ rights movement in France and published his study of incarceration, Discipline and Punish, in 1975.

His last major project focuses on the history of sexuality, a study of the ways in which social institutions exercise power over sexual identity and attitudes. Foucault’s approach to historiography and his reconceptions of the relationships among language, knowledge, and social organization have made him a central figure in twentieth-century philosophy. Moreover, his work on the effects of discourse raises serious questions for any future definition of rhetoric.

In “The Order of Discourse” (1971; excerpted here), Foucault remarks that the tendency of Western philosophy, since the demise of the Sophists, has been to deny discourse its own reality and to think of discourse as the dress of thought or the conveyor of preexisting meaning. Foucault calls this tendency the “will to truth.” The desire to locate truth in something other than discourse itself has, says Foucault, spawned several mistaken beliefs. One is that the author or speaker is the source of discourse and that the speaker’s task is “to animate the empty forms of language.” Another is that nature is the source of discourse, which merely names things in the world. Disciplines and institutions founded on such beliefs subscribe to the will to truth and reinforce the idea that the rules of discourse are subsidiary to the expression of thought. Discourse, they say, facilitates the exchange of knowledge but does not create it.

Foucault’s project in “The Order of Discourse” and the earlier Archaeology of Knowledge (1969; excerpted here) is to question the will to truth and to “restore to discourse its character as an event.” To do so, he reverses the order of the relationship between discourse and what is traditionally taken to be its source: That is, he treats author, meaning, and knowledge itself as a function of discourse, not as its source. His method is therefore to examine discourse as a practice, a form of action, and not as a reflection of the world.

Foucault’s theory of discourse describes the relationship between language and knowledge; the functions of disciplines, institutions, and other discourse communities; the ways that particular statements come to have truth value; the constraints on the production of discourse about objects of knowledge; the effects of discursive practices on social action; and the uses of discourse to exercise power. The Archaeology of Knowledge is Foucault’s most extensive exposition of this theory. Here, Foucault attempts to describe the methods and assumptions that guided his earlier books and to sketch a theory of discourse and knowledge that will guide his further work. He begins with a discussion of historiography and the dangers of easy assumptions about the contingency of the development of ideas. He then looks at the ways in which knowledge emerges from discourse.

What, Foucault asks, connects statements about an object of knowledge? He rejects the answer that it is the object itself:

It is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground. . . . [T]he object does not await in limbo the order that will free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and polity objectivity; it does not preexist itself.

Knowledge is created not by the act of observing, Foucault says, but through “relations . . . between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization; and these relations are not present in the object.” This is not to deny the existence of phenomena but to say that what we know of them is a function of the needs or desires of society and institutions and of available methods (which may be different in different communities) of coming to know something.

When discourse about knowledge is produced, Foucault asks (echoing Friedrich Nietzsche), who is speaking? What institutional role, legal status, social privilege, or educational or other certification determines who may claim the right to speak authoritatively? Only after we have established the perspective of the discourse community that authorizes such speakers and settings, Foucault says, is it possible to look at the forms of reasoning that may have been used in the statements. To do otherwise would be “to see discourse as a phenomenon of expression—the verbal translation of a previously established synthesis.” The authority of the speaker, the authorizing powers, and the mode of expression are mutually defining, and all are part of the larger discursive formation that makes it possible to speak of certain objects at all. “Thus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject,” says Foucault, “but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined.”

Though Foucault seems eager to avoid traditional rhetorical categories, he notes that an analysis of discourse must examine the apparatus of conventions that disciplines and other discourse communities use for defining, comparing, and proving concepts. Such analysis must also look at standards of reasonableness and judgment, standards of reference to common knowledge and to the history of the community, and at communal rules for the construction of texts.
Foucault also examines the "strategies" of discourse, by which he means the functions of discourse in different periods or communities. Part of the description of discursive practices, for Foucault, must include the effects of discourse in society and the means by which its effects are brought to bear, through teaching, in the formation of laws, or in the creation of disciplines. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault admits that describing the effects of discourse is the most difficult aspect of discursive formations, and in later books he takes up the idea under the rubric of "power," through which he questions the relation of discourse to objects of observation, judgment, analysis, legal control, physical control, naming, management, regulation, and modification.

Foucault concludes that "[t]here is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms." There is no transcendental continuity to knowledge, in misty origins, in experience, or in the speaker. Knowledge is the function of a material discourse in a social order. Foucault's project, as he defines it, is an attempt to reveal discursive practices in their complexity and density; to show that to speak is to do something—something other than to express what one thinks; to translate what one knows, and something other than to play with the structures of a language [language] to show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture, which involves conditions (and not only a situation, a context, and motives), and rules (not the logical and linguistic rules of construction); to show that a change in the order of discourse does not presuppose "new ideas," a little invention and creativity, a different mentality, but transformations in a practice, perhaps also in neighboring practices, and in their common articulation.

Though Foucault avoids talking about rhetoric, preferring *discourse* as his comprehensive term, there is no question that his theory addresses a number of ideas that are central to modern rhetoric. He makes a powerful argument that discourse (for which we may read *rhetoric*) is epistemic; he states in compelling terms that discourse is a form of social action; he enriches and complicates the notion of context with a network of archives, disciplines, institutions, and social practices that control the production of discourse. And he demonstrates the microphysics of power that resides in the knowledge that is disseminated in discourse and embodied in laws, regulations, texts, and in the very architecture of hospitals, schools, and prisons, showing the ways that seemingly diverse discourses come together in formations that affect social practices and social controls. Foucault traces the routes of power through the interstices of statements and the fields of their support to their relations of appropriation and use. "It is in discourse," he says in *The History of Sexuality*, "that power and knowledge are joined together."

---

**Selected Bibliography**


Michael Clark has compiled the monumental *Michel Foucault: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1983), a testament to Foucault's influence in a surprising number of fields. A more selective bibliography is in *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric* by S. Foss, K. Foss, and R. Trapp (Prospect Hills, Ill., 1985).

There are no "basic" introductions to Foucault's thought. A broad overview of Foucault's life and ideas can be found in Alan Sheridan's *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (New York, 1980). Hayden White's essay "Michel Foucault," in *Structuralism and Semiotics: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida*, ed. John Sturrock (Oxford, 1979), is helpful. An excellent comparison of Foucault and Derrida is Edward Said's "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions" (Critical Inquiry, 4 [Summer 1978]: 673-714; revised as "Criticism Between Culture and System" in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* [Cambridge, Mass., 1983]).

From The Order of Discourse

I

I wish I could have slipped surreptitiously into this discourse which I must present today, and into the ones I shall have to give here, perhaps for many years hence. I should have preferred to be enveloped by speech, and carried away well beyond all possible beginnings, rather than have to begin it myself. I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should only have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its intervals, as if it had been signalled to me by pauses, for an instant, in suspense. Thus there would be no beginning, and instead of being the one from whom discourse proceeded, I should be at the mercy of its chance unfolding, a slender gap, the point of its possible disappearance.

I should have liked there to be a voice behind me which had begun to speak; a very long time before, doubling in advance everything I am going to say, a voice which would say: "You must go on, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens."

I think a good many people have a similar desire to be freed from the obligation to begin, a similar desire to be on the other side of discourse from the outset, without having to consider from the outside what might be strange, frightening, and perhaps niñleourmet about it. To this very common wish, the institution's reply is ironic, since it solemnizes beginnings, surrounds them with a circle of attention and silence, and imposes ritualized forms on them, as if to make them more easily recognizable from a distance.

Desire says: "I should not like to have to enter this risky order of discourse; I should not like to be involved in its peremptoriness and decisiveness; I should like to be all around me like a calm, deep transparency, infinitely open, where others would fit in with their own expectations, from which truths would emerge one by one; I should only have to let myself be carried, within it and by it, like a happy wreck." The institution replies: "You should not be afraid of beginning; we are all here in order to show you that discourse belongs to the order of laws, that we have long been looking after its appearances; that a place has been made ready for it, a place which honors it but disarms it; and that if discourse may sometimes have some pot, it is from us and us alone that it gets it."

But perhaps this institution and this desire are nothing but two contrary replies to the same anxiety: anxiety about what discourse is in its material reality, its textuality and coherence or written; anxiety about this transitory existence which admittedly is destined to be effaced, but according to a time scale which is not ours; anxiety at feeling beneath this activity (despite discourse's powers and ordinariness) grave and dangers that are hard to imagine; anxiety at suspecting the struggles, victories, injuries, dominations and enslavements, through so many words even though long usage has worn away their roughnesses.

II

What, then, is so perilous in the fact that people speak, and that their discourse proliferates to infinity? Where is the danger in that?

Here is the hypothesis which I would like to put forward tonight in order to fix the terrain — or perhaps the very tragi-comedy expectation — of the work I am doing: that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.

In a society like ours, the procedures of exclusion are well known. The most obvious and familiar is the prohibition. We know quite well that we do not have the right to say anything, that we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatever, and that not everyone has the right to speak about anything whatever. In the taboo on the object of speech, and the ritual of the circumstances of speech, and the privileged or exclusive right of the speaking subject, we have the play of three types of prohibition which intersect, reinforce, or compensate each other, forming a complex grid which changes constantly. I will merely note that at the present time the regions where the grid is tightest, where the black squares are most numerous, and where the prohibition is greatest, if discourse is far from being that transparent or neutral element in which sexuality is disarmed and politics pacified, is in fact one of the places where sexuality and politics exercise in a privileged way some of their most powerful powers. It does not matter that discourse appears to be of little account, because the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveal its link with desire and with power.

There is nothing surprising about that, since, as psychoanalysis has shown, discourse is not simply that which manifests (or hides) desire — it is also the object of desire; and since, as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.

There exists in our society another principle of exclusion, not another prohibition but a division and a binary opposition between reason and madness. Since the depths of the Middle Ages, the madman has been the one whose discourse cannot have the same currency as others. His word may be considered null and void, having neither truth nor import. His word is worthless as evidence in law, inadmissible in the authentication of deeds or contracts, incapable even of bringing about the transubstantiation of bread into body at Mass. On the other hand, words are not only attributed to the madman's speech; the power of uttering a hidden truth, of telling the future, of seeing in all naiveté what the others' wisdom cannot perceive. It is curious to note that for centuries in Europe the speech of the madman was either not heard at all or else taken for the word of truth. It either fell into the void, being rejected as soon as it was prefaced, or else people dreamed it in a rationality, naive or crafty, which they regarded as more rational than that of the sane. In any event, whether excluded, or secretly invested with reason, the madman's speech, strictly, did not exist. It was through his words that his madness was positioned; they were the place where the division between reason and madness was exercised, but they were never recorded or listened to. No doctor before the end of the eighteenth century had ever thought of finding out what was said, or how and why what was said, in this speech which nonetheless determined the difference. This whole immense discourse of the madman was taken for mere noise, and he was only symbolically allowed to speak, in the theater, where he would step forward, disarmed and reconciled, because there he played the role of truth in a mask.

You will tell me that all this is finished today or is coming to an end; that the madman's speech is no longer on the other side of the divide; that it is no longer null and void; and on the contrary, it puts us on the alert; that we now look for a meaning in it, for the outline or the ruminations of some others; and that we have even gone so far as to come across this speech of madness in what we
articulate ourselves, in that slight stumbling by which we lose track of what we are saying. But all this attention to the speech of madness does not prove that the old division is no longer operative. You have only to think of the whole framework of knowledge through which we describe that speech, and of the whole network of institutions which permit someone—a doctor or a psychoanalyst—to listen to it, and which at the same time permit the patient to bring along his personal and, in desperation, to withhold them. You have only to think of all this to become suspicious that the division, far from being effaced, is working differently along other lines, through new institutions, and with effects that are essentially the same. And even if the doctor’s role were only that of lending an ear to a speech that is free at last, he still does this listening in the context of the same division. He is listening to a discourse which is invested with desire, and which, for its greater exaltation or its greater anguish—thinks it is loaded with terrible powers. If the silence of reason is required for the curing of monsters, it is enough for that silence to be on the alert, and it is in this that the division remains.

It is perhaps risky to consider the opposition between true and false as a third system of exclusion, along with those just mentioned. How could one reasonably compare a constraint of truth with divisions like those, which are arbitrary to start with or which at least are organized around historical contingencies; which are not only modificable but in perpetual displacement; which are supported by a whole system of institutions which maintain and renew them; and which act in a constraining and sometimes violent way?

Certainly, when viewed from the level of a proposition inside of a discourse, the division between true and false is neither arbitrary nor modifiable nor institutional nor violent. But when we view things on a different scale, when we ask the question of what this will to truth has been and constantly is, throughout our discourses, this will to truth which has crossed so many centuries of our history; what is, in its very general form, the type of division which governs our will to know (mote volonté de savoir), then what we see taking shape is perhaps something like a system of exclusion, a historical, modifiable, and institutionally constraining system.

There is no doubt that this division is historically constituted. For the Greek poets of the sixth century b.c., the true discourse (in the strong and valorized sense of the word), the discourse which inspired respect and terror, and to which one had to submit because it ruled, was the one pronounced by non-sages as of right and according to the required ritual; the discourse which dispensed justice and gave everyone his share; the discourse which in promising the future not only announced what was going to be, but also promised it. The triangle of objects as of right, of the range of objects known to be of the knowing subject, of the material, technical, and instrumental investments of knowledge.

This will to truth, like the other systems of exclusion but bolstered by historical support: it is both reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy, of course; and the system of books, publishing, libraries, learned societies in the past and laboratories now. But it is also renewed, no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorized, distributed, and in a sense attributed, in a society. Let us recall at this point, and only symbolically, the old Greek principle: though art was established in the cities, division of discourse is not from discourse: a new division because henceforth the true discourse is no longer precious and desirable, since it is no longer the one linked to the exercise of power. The sophist is exalted.

This historical division probably gave our will to know its general form. However, it has never stopped shifting: sometimes the great mutations in scientific thought can perhaps be read as the consequences of this; but they can also be read as the appearance of new forms in the will to truth. There is doubtless a will to truth in the nineteenth century which differs from the will to know characteristic of Classical culture in the consequence of which, it bases itself, and in the techniques on which it is based. To go back a little further: at the turn of the sixteenth century (and particularly in England), there is a new discourse. I am also thinking of the thinking of the way in which a body as prescriptive as the penal system sought its bases or its justification, at first of course in a theory of justice, then, since the nineteenth century, in a sociological, psychological, medical, and psychiatric knowledge: it is as if even the word of the law could no longer be authorized, in our society, except by a discourse of truth.

Of the three great systems of exclusion which forge discourse—"the forbidden speech, the division of madness, and the will to truth," I have spoken of the third at the greatest length. The fact is that it is towards this third system that the other two have been drifting constantly for centuries. They are trying to assimilate the others, both in order to modify them and to provide them with a foundation. The first two are constantly becoming more fragile and more uncertain, to the extent that they are now involved in a sort of battle in which the part constantly grows stronger, deeper, and more implacable.

And yet we speak of the will to truth no doubt least of all. It is as if, for us, the will to truth and its vicissitudes were marked by truth itself in its necessary unfolding. The reason is perhaps this: although since the Greeks "true" discourse is no longer the discourse that answers to the demands of desire, or the discourse which exerts power, what is at stake is the division in the will to enter this "true" discourse, if not desire and power? "True" discourse, freed from desire and power by the necessity of its form, cannot recognize truth in a different way; and the will to truth, having imposed itself on us for a very long time, is such that the truth it wants cannot fail to mask it.

Thus all that appears to our eyes is a truth conceived as a richness, a fecundity, a gentle one, insidiously universal force, and in contrast we are unaware of the will to truth, that prodigious machinery designed to exclude. All those who, from time to time in our history, have tried to dodge this will to truth and to put it into question against truth, at the very point where truth undertakes to justify the prohibition and to define madness, all of them, from Nietzsche to Artaud and Bataille, must now serve as (the no doubt lofty) signs for our daily work.

III

There are, of course, many other procedures for controlling and delimiting discourse. Those of
which I have spoken up to now operate in a sense from the exterior. They function as systems of exclusion. They have to do with the part of discourse which puts power and desire at stake.

I believe we can isolate another group: internal procedures which discourse themselves exercise over their own control; procedures which function rather as principles of classification, of ordering, of distribution, as if this time another dimension of discourse had to be mastered; that of events and fact.

In the first place, commentary: I suppose — but without being very certain — that there is scarcely a society without its major narratives, which are recounted, repeated, and varied; formalized texts, collections of discourses which are recited in well-defined circumstances; things said once and preserved because it is suspected that behind them there is a secret or a treasure. In short, we may suspect that there is in all societies, with great consistency, a kind of gradation among discourses: those which are said in the ordinary course of days and exchanges, and which vanish as soon as they have been pronounced; and those which give rise to a certain number of new speech acts which take them up, transform them or speak of them, in short, those discourses which, over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and so said again. We know them in our own cultural system: they are religious or juridical texts, but also those texts (curious ones, when we consider their status) which are called literary; and to a certain extent, scientific texts.

This differentiation is certainly neither stable, nor constant, nor absolute. There is not, on the one side, the category of fundamental or creative discourses, given for all time, and on the other, the category of discourses which repeat, gloss, and comment. Plenty of major texts become blurred and disappear, and sometimes commentaries move into the primary position. But though its points of application may change, the function remains the same: the principle of a differentiation is continuously put back in play. The radical effect of this gradation can only ever be play, utopia, or anguish. The Borges-play style of a commentary which is nothing but the solemn and

expected reappearance word for word of the text that is commented on; or the play of a criticism that would speak forever of a work which does not exist. The lyrical dream of a discourse which is reborn absolutely new and innocent at every point, and which reappears constantly in its freshness, derived from things, feelings, or thoughts. The anguish of that patient of Janet’s for whom the least utterance was gospel truth, concealing inexpressible treasures of meaning and worthy to be repeated, recommended, and commented on indefinitely: “When I think,” he would say when reading or listening, “when I think of this sentence which like the others will go off the edge of eternity, and which I have perhaps not yet fully understood.”

But who can fail to see that this would be to annul one of the terms of the relation each time, and not to do away with the relation itself? It is a relation which is constantly changing with time, which takes multiple and divergent forms in a given epoch. The juridical exigencies is very different from the religious commentary (and this has been the case for a very long time). One and the same text can simultaneously be very truly to very different types of discourse: the Odyssey as a primary text is repeated, in the same period, in the translation by Bérard, and in the endless “explications de texte,” and in Joyce’s Ulysses.

For the moment I want to do no more than indicate that, in what is broadly called commentary, the hierarchy between primary and secondary text plays two roles which are in solidarity with each other. On the one hand it allows the (endless) construction of new discourses: the dominance of the primary text, its permanence, its status as a discourse which can always be reactualized, the multiple or hidden meaning with which it is credited, the essential tenacity and richness which is attributed to it, all this is the basis for an open possibility of speaking. But on the other hand the commentary’s only role, whatever its technical or aesthetic value from its author, was what silently articulated “beyond” in the text. By a paradox which it always displaces but never escapes, the commentary must say for the first time what had, nonetheless, already been said, and must tirelessly repeat what had, however, never been said. The infinite rippling of commentaries is worked from the inside by the dream of a repetition in disguise: at its horizon there is perhaps nothing but what was at its point of departure — mere recitation. Commentary exorcizes the historian’s discourse by giving it its due; it allows us to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is this text itself which is said, and in a sense comprised. The open multiplicity, the element of chance, the basis of the principle of commentary, from what might risk being said, on to the number, the form, the mask, and the circumstances of the repetition. The new thing here lies not in what is said but in the event of its return.

I believe there exists another principle of rarification of a discourse, complementary to the first, to a certain extent: the author. Not, of course, in the sense of the speaking individual who may or may not be a real author, but in the sense of a principle of grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, as the focus of their coherence. This principle is not everywhere at work, nor in a constant manner: there is a plenty of discourses which circulate without deriving their meaning or their efficacy from an author to whom they could be attributed: everyday remarks, which are efficacious immediately; decrees or contracts which require signatories but no author; technical instructions which are transmitted anonymously. But in the domains where it is the rule to attribute things to an author — literature, philosophy, science — it is quite evident that this attribution does not always play the same role. In the order of discourse, it is indispensable, during the Middle Ages, that a text should be attributed to an author, since this was an index of truthfulness. A proposition was considered as dripping the author’s services on a text: not necessarily on a discourse, but rather on the name of a different author. Since the seventeenth century, this function has steadily been eroded in scientific discourse: it now functions only to give a name to a theorem, an effect, an example, a syndrome. On the other hand, in the order of literary discourse, starting from the same epoch, the function of the author has steadily grown stronger: all those tales, poems, dramas, or comedies which were allowed to circulate in the Middle Ages in at least a relative anonymity are now asked (and obliged to say) where they come from; who wrote them.

The author is asked to account for the unity of the texts which are placed under his name. He is asked to reveal or at least carry authentication of the hidden meaning of the discourses he is asked to connect them to his lived experiences, to the real history which saw their birth. The author is what gives the disturbing language of fiction its unities, its nodes of coherence, its insertion in the real world.

I know that I will be told: “But you are speaking there of the author as he is reinvented after the event by criticism, after he is dead and there is nothing left except for a tangled mass of scribblings; in those circumstances little order surely has to be introduced into all that, by imagining a project, a coherence, a thematic structure that is demanded of the consciousness or the life of an author who in this whole happens to be a trifle fictitious.” But that does not mean he does not impress himself as a real author, who bursts into the midst of all these worn-out words, bringing to them his genius or his disorder.

It would of course, be absurd to deny the existence of the individual who writes and invents. But I believe that — at least since a certain epoch — the individual who sets out to write a text on the horizon of which a possible oeuvre is prowling, takes upon himself the function of the author: what he writes and what he does not write, what he sketches out, even by way of provisional drafts, as an outline of the oeuvre, and what he lets fall by way of commonplace remarks — this whole play of differences is prescribed by the author-function, as he receives it from his epoch, or as he modifies it in his turn. He may very well overturn the traditional image of the author; nevertheless, it is from some new and often rather alien position that he may say the one thing he could say and from all that he does say every day at any moment, the still trembling outline of his oeuvre.

The commentary-principle limits the chance-element in discourse by the play of an identity

---

2 See Borge’s story, “Pierre Menard’s Don Quixote.” [Ed.]


which would take the form of repetition and sameness. The author-principle limits this same element of chance by the play of an identity which has the form of individuality and the self.

We must also recognize another principle of limitation in what is called, not sciences but "disciplines": a principle which is itself relative and mobile; which permits construction, but within narrow confines.

The organization of disciplines is just as much opposed to the principle of commentary as to that of the author. It is opposed to the principle of the author because a discipline is defined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, and a frame of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments: all this constitutes a sort of anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants to or is able to use it, without their meaning or validity being linked to the one who happened to be their inventor. But the principle of a discipline is also opposed to that of commentary: in a discipline, unlike a commentary, what is supposed at the outset is not a meaning which has to be rediscovered, but knowledge, which has to be repeated, but the requisites for the construction of new statements. For there to be a discipline, there must be the possibility of formulating new propositions, ad infinitum.

But there is more, there is no doubt, in order for there to be less: a discipline is not the sum of all that can be truthfully said about something; it is not even the set of all that can be accepted about the same data in virtue of some principle of systematization. Medicine is not constituted by the total of what can be truthfully said about illness; botany cannot be defined by the sum of all the truths concerning plants. There are two reasons for this: first of all, botany and medicine are made up of errors as well as truths, like any other discipline — errors which are not residues or foreign bodies but which have positive functions, a historical efficacy, and a role in the system; and second, it is indisputable that the things of the sciences. And besides, for a proposition to belong to botany or pathology, it has to fulfill certain conditions, in a sense stricter and more complex than pure and simple truth: but in any case, other conditions. It must address itself to a

determine plane of objects: from the end of the seventeenth century, for example, for a proposition to be "botanical" it had to deal with the visible structure of the plant, the system of its close and distant resemblances or the mechanism of its fluids; it could no longer retain its symbolic value, as was the case in the sixteenth century, nor the set of virtues and properties which were accorded to it in antiquity. But without belonging to the domain of a discipline, the proposition must use conceptual or technical instruments of a well-defined type; from the nineteenth century, a proposition was no longer medical — it fell "outside of medicine" and acquired the status of an individual phantasm which was distant and close at the same time metaphorical, qualitative, and substantial (like those of engorgement, of over-heated liquids or of dry-out solids). In contrast it could and had to make use of notions which were equally metaphorical, but based on another model, a functional and physiological one (that of the irritation, inflammation, or degeneration of the tissues). Still further: in order to be part of a discipline, a proposition must be referred to a certain type of theoretical horizon: suffice it to recall that the search for the primitive language, which was a perfectly acceptable theme up to the eighteenth century, was by now a very unpopular subject. And finally, Mendel was a true innovator, to make any discourse fall into — I hesitate to say error — chimeras and reverie, into pure and simple linguistic monstrosity.

Within its own limits, each discipline recognizes true and false propositions; but it proposes back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond its margins. The exterior of a science is both more and less populated than is often believed: there is of course immediate experience, the imaginary themes which endlessly carry and rework interpretational and moral beliefs; but perhaps there are no errors in the strict sense, for error can only arise and be decided inside a definite practice; on the other hand, there are monsters on the prow whose form escapes the living from his knowledge. In short, a proposition must fulfill complex and heavy requirements to be able to belong to the grouping of a discipline: before it can be called true or false, it must be "in the true," as Con- gurnin would say.

People have often wondered how the botanists or biologists of the nineteenth century managed not to see that what Mendel was saying was true. But it was because Mendel was speaking of objects, applying methods, and placing himself on a theoretical horizon which were alien to the biology of his time. Naudin, before him, had of course posited the thesis that hereditary traits are discrete; yet, no matter how new or strange this principle may appear, it is not new and strange to the discourse of biology, at least as an enigma. What Mendel did was to constitute the hereditary trait as an absolutely new biological object, thanks to a kind of filtering which had never been used before: he defined in the first place what individuals who play a role in the phenomena of heredity do not transmit; he defined the sex which transmits it; the field in which he observed it being the infinitely open series of the generations, where it appears and disappears according to statistical regularities. This was a new object which called for new conceptual instruments and new theoretical foundations. Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not "within the true" of the biological discourse of his time: it was not according to such rules that biological objects and their transformations could be perceived. It was only when, near the end of the nineteenth century, the change of scale, the deployment of a whole new range of objects in biology for Mendel to enter into the true and for his propositions to appear (in the scientific sense) that it truly became a true monster, which meant that science could not speak of him; whereas about thirty years earlier, at the height of the nineteenth century, Scheiden, for example, who denied plant sexuality, but in accordance with the rules of biological discourse, was merely formulating a disciplined error.

It is always possible that one might speak the truth in the space of a wild exteriority, but one is "in the true" only by obeying the rules of a discourse "policing" which one has to reactivate in each of one's discourses.

The discipline is a principle of control over the production of discourse. The discipline fixes limits for discourse by the action of an identity which can not override the form of a permanent re-actualization of the rules.

We are accustomed to see in an author's fecundity, in the multiplicity of the commentaries, and in the development of a discipline so many infinite resources for the creation of discourses. Perhaps so, but they are nonetheless principles of constraint; it is very likely impossible to account for their positive and multiplicative role if we do not take into consideration their restrictive and constraining function.

IV.

There is, I believe, a third group of procedures which permit the only construction of the legitimate. This time it is not a matter of mastering their powers or averting the unpredictability of their appearance, but of determining the condition of their application, of imposing a certain number of rules on a domain in which individuals who play a role in the phenomena of heredity do not transmit; he defined the sex which transmits it; the field in which he observed it being the infinitely open series of the generations, where it appears and disappears according to statistical regularities. This was a new object which called for new conceptual instruments and new theoretical foundations. Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not "within the true" of the biological discourse of his time: it was not according to such rules that biological objects and their transformations could be perceived. It was only when, near the end of the nineteenth century, the change of scale, the deployment of a whole new range of objects in biology for Mendel to enter into the true and for his propositions to appear (in the scientific sense) that it truly became a true monster, which meant that science could not speak of him; whereas about thirty years earlier, at the height of the nineteenth century, Scheiden, for example, who denied plant sexuality, but in accordance with the rules of biological discourse, was merely formulating a disciplined error.

It is always possible that one might speak the truth in the space of a wild exteriority, but one is "in the true" only by obeying the rules of a discourse "policing" which one has to reactivate in each of one's discourses.

The discipline is a principle of control over the production of discourse. The discipline fixes limits for discourse by the action of an identity which can not override the form of a permanent re-actualization of the rules.

We are accustomed to see in an author's fecundity, in the multiplicity of the commentaries, and in the development of a discipline so many infinite resources for the creation of discourses. Perhaps so, but they are nonetheless principles of constraint; it is very likely impossible to account for their positive and multiplicative role if we do not take into consideration their restrictive and constraining function.
ometry in the course of working in a shipyard. Should we see this story as the expression of one of the great myths of European culture? The universal communication of knowledge and the infinite free exchange of discourses in Europe, against the monopolized and secret knowledge of Oriental tyranny?

This idea, of course, does not stand up to examination. Exchange and communication are positive figures working inside complex systems of restriction, and probably would not be able to function independently of them. The most superficial and visible of these systems of restriction is constituted by what can be gathered under the name of ritual, a very complex qualification which may be possessed by individuals who speak (and who must occupy such-and-such a position and formulate such-and-such a type of statement, in the play of a dialogue, of interrogation or recitation); it defines the gestures, behavior, circumstances, and the whole set of signs which must accompany discourse; finally, it fixes the supposed or imposed efficacy of the words, their effect on those to whom they are addressed, and their constitutive value. Religious, judicial, therapeutic, and in large measure also political discourses can scarcely be dissociated from this deployment of a ritual which determines both the particular properties and the stipulated roles of the speaking subjects.

A somewhat different way of functioning is that of the "societies of discourse," which function to preserve or produce discourses, but in order to make them circulate in a closed space, distanced from and according to strict rules and without the holders being dispossessed by this distribution. An archaic model for this is provided by the groups of rhapsodists who possessed the knowledge of the poems to be recited or potentially to be recited and transformed. But though the object of this knowledge was after all a ritual recitation, the knowledge was protected, defended and preserved within a definite group by the exercise of memory rather than by what is implied. To pass an apprenticeship in it allowed one to enter both a group and a secret which the act of recitation showed but did not divulge; the roles of speaker and listener were not interchangeable.

There are hardly any such "societies of discourse" now, with their ambiguous play of the secret and its divulgation. But this should not deceive us: even in the order of "true" discourse, even in the order of discourse that is published and free from all ritual, there are still forms of appropriation of secrets, and noninterchangeable roles. It may well be that the act of writing as it is institutionalized today, in the book, the publication of the production and the reproduction on the basis of the speaking subjects, to the extent that the doctrine always stands as the sign, manifestation, and instrument of a prior adherence to a class, a social status, a race, a nationality, an interest, a revolt, a resistance or an acceptance. Doctrine binds individuals to certain types of enunciation and consequently forbids them all others; but it uses, in return, certain types of enunciation to bind individuals among themselves, and to differentiate them by that very fact from all others. Doctrine brings about a double subjection: of the speaking subjects to discourses, and of discourses to the (at least virtual) group of speaking individuals.

On a much broader scale, we are obliged to recognize large cleavages in what might be called the social appropriation of discourses. Although education may well be, by right, the instrument thanks to which a "denial" in a society like ours can have access to any kind of discourse whatever, this does not prevent it from following, as is well known, in its distribution, in what it allows and what it prevents, the lines marked out by the social and institutional factors that I have just mentioned. Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry.

As it stands, that is to say, this is not to say that it is very abstract to separate speech-rituals, societies of discourse, doctrinal groups, and social appropriations, as I have just done. Most of the time, they are linked to each other by kinds of great efficacies which ensure the distribution of speaking subjects into the different types of discourse and the appropriation of discourses to certain categories of subject. Let us say, in a word, that those are little programs of subjection used by discourse. While, after all, it is an educational system, other than a ritualization of speech, a qualification and a fixing of the roles for speaking subjects, the constitution of a doctrinal group, however diffuse, a distribution and an appropriation of discourse with its powers and knowledges? What is "écriture" (the writing of the "writers") other than a similar system of subjection, which perhaps takes slightly different forms, but forms whose main rhythms are analogous? Does not the judicial system, does not the institutional system of medicine likewise constitute, in some of their aspects at least, similar systems of subjection and of discourse?
way of eliding the reality of discourse. The founding subject, indeed, is given the task of directly animating the empty forms of language with his aims; it is he who in moving through the density and inertia of empty things grasps by intuition the meaning lying deposited within them; it is likewise the founding subject who founds horizons of meaning beyond time which history will henceforth only have to elucidate and where concepts, and deductive ensembles will find their ultimate grounding. In his relation to meaning, the founding subject has at his disposal signs, marks, traces, letters. But he does not need to pass via the singular instance of discourse in order to manifest them.

The opposing theme, that of originating experience, plays an analogous role. It supposes that at the very basis of experience, even before it could be grasped in the form of a cogito, there were prior significations — in a sense, already said — wandering around in the world, arranging it all around us and opening it up from the outset to a sort of primitive recognition. Thus a primitively the mediation of the world is supposed to be the foundation of our possibility of speaking of it, in it, or indicating it and naming it, or judging it and ultimately of knowing it in the form of truth. If there is discourse, then, what can we legitimate other than a discreet reading? Things are already murmuring meanings which our language has only to pick up; and this language, right from its most rudimentary project, was already speaking to us of a being of which it is like the skeleton.

The idea of universal mediation is yet another way, I believe, of eliding the reality of discourse, and despite appearances to the contrary. For it would seem at first glance that by rediscovering everywhere the movement of a logos which elevates particularities to the status of concepts and allows immediate consciousness to unfurl in the end the whole rationality of the world, one puts discourse itself at the center of one's speculation. But this logos, in fact, is only a discourse that has already been held, or rather it is things themselves, and events, which imperceptibly turn themselves into discourse as they unfold the secret of their own essence. Thus discourse is little more than the eluding of a truth in the process of being born to its own gaze; and when everything finally can take the form of discourse, when everything can be said and when discourse can be spoken about everything, it is because all things, having manifested and exchanged their meaning, can go back into the silent inferiority of their consciousness of self.

Thus in a philosophy of the founding subject, in a philosophy of originary experience, and in a philosophy of universal mediation alike, the discourse no more than a play; of writing in the first case, of reading in the second, and of exchange in the third, and this exchange, this reading, this writing never putting anything at stake except signs. In this way, discourse is annulled in its reality and put at the disposal of the signifier. What civilization has ever appeared to be more respectful of discourse than ours? Where has it ever been more honored, or better honored? Where has it ever been, seemingly, more radically liberated from its constraints, and universalized? Yet it seems to me that beneath this apparent veneration of discourse, under this apparent logophilia, a certain fear is hidden. It is just as if prohibitions, barriers, thresholds, and limits had been set up in order to master, at least partly, the great proliferation of discourse, in order to remove from its richness the most dangerous part, and in order to organize its disorder according to figures which dodge what is otherwise uncontrollable about it. It is as if we had tried to efface all trace of its irruption into the activity of thought and language. No doubt there is in our society, and, I imagine, in all others, but following a different order of events and rhythms, a profound logosophia, a sort of mute terror against these events, against this mass of things said, against the surging-up of all these statements, against all that could be violent, devastating, continuous, disregard as well, and perilous about them — against this great incoherent and disordered buzzing of discourse.

And if we want to — I would not say, efface this fear. For, in its conditions, its action, and its effects, we must, I believe, resolve to take three decisions which our thinking today tends to resist and which correspond to the three groups of functions which I have just mentioned: we must, first of all, question our will to truth; restore to discourse its character as an event, and finally throw off the sovereignty of the signifier.

Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida was born in Algiers in 1930. He is a Sephardic Jew (in Glas and elsewhere, he comments on his interest in the Jewish tradition) who was educated in Algeria and in France; in France, he studied philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure. Derrida also studied at Harvard for a year (1966–1967) so that in the sixties was associated with the avant-garde journal Tel Quel. He is Directeur d'Études (Director of Studies) of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Having taught for many years at the École Normale Supérieure and at Yale, Derrida now teaches at the University of California at Irvine. In his many books and articles, Derrida persistently attacks the idea that language is or can be referential. He finds this idea active as a premise in philosophy, in most discussions of language, and in everyday thought. For Derrida, as for Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and a few others, including the Sophists, language does not mediate our relationship to a more or less knowable world. Rather, Derrida maintains that "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" — there is nothing outside of the text. By this he means that our knowledge of the world is constructed from language, and language is not a transparent medium of reference or of thought. Language cannot be transcended to reach the thing signifies while disposing of the signifier. This effort to reach past language to the reality it names is what Derrida calls "the metaphysics of presence."

In his attack on the metaphysics of presence that dominates philosophy, Derrida focuses on the notion that speech is prior to and somehow superior to writing. He points out that Plato was the first of many philosophers who distrusted writing. Speech, those philosophers claimed, is immediate, in the sense that it takes place at the moment of interaction between people who are exchanging their thoughts. It is, they argue, an expression of thought. It is clearly the expression of the speaker, and of course, present, directed to the interlocutor, who is also present. Speech is an attempt to represent something else, to transfer thoughts, to communicate ideas. In this sense, speech is an attempt to overcome language. Plato distrusted both rhetoric and writing because they subverted the attempt of speech to transcend itself. Rhetoric focused on motives for speaking that were not intended to reach the absolute truth. Rhetoric, moreover, made a virtue of linguistic facility, attending to the material effects of style and structure, Plato similarly distrusted writing, which complicated the problems introduced by rhetoric by allowing the writer to manage the language, to revise and rewrite, to polish, and then to disappear. Because the author of written discourse does not utter the words, complains Plato, the speech situation is absent; therefore, also absent is the possibility of the kind of dialogue that prompts clarification, probing of premises, corrections, and so on.