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The ETHICS of **Rhetoric**

By RICHARD M. WEAVER

ὥστε συμβαίνει τὴν πρῶτην αἰὼν
παράφωτος τι τῆς διαλεκτικῆς εἶναι καὶ
τῆς περὶ τὰ ἦθη πραγματείας

Thus it happens that rhetoric is an offshoot
of dialectic and also of ethical studies.

—ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*

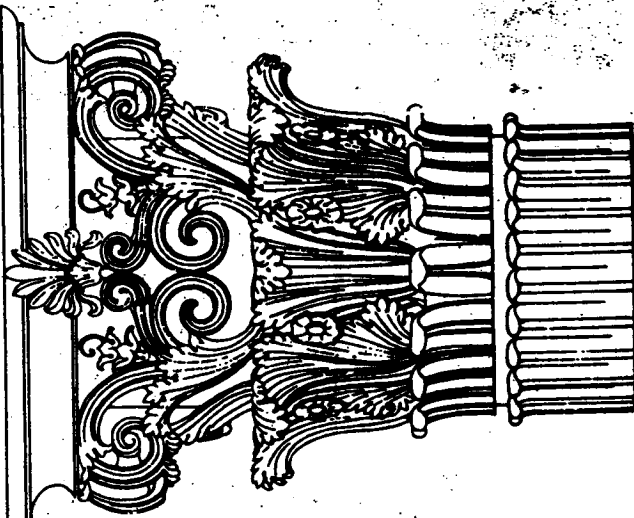
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Hermagoras of Temnos, a Greek rhetor who flourished in the second century before Christ, is best known for his theory of *stasis*, by which a speaker can identify the "issue" or main point of controversy in a given case. While his own works have not survived, he was a major influence on Cicero, Quintilian, and a number of other Roman theorists.

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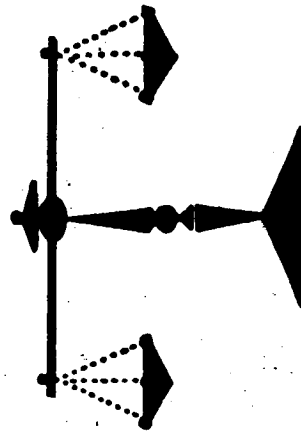
THE ETHICS OF RHETORIC

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Chapter I

THE PHAEDRUS AND THE NATURE OF RHETORIC

OUR SUBJECT begins with the threshold difficulty of defining the question which Plato's *Phaedrus* was meant to answer. Students of this justly celebrated dialogue have felt uncertain of its unity of theme, and the tendency has been to designate it broadly as a discussion of the ethical and the beautiful. The explicit-topics of the dialogue are, in order: love; the soul, speechmaking, and the spoken and written word, or what is generally termed by us "composition." The development looks random, and some of the most interesting passages appear *jeux d'esprit*. The richness of the literary art diverts attention from the substance of the argument.

But a work of art which touches on many profound problems justifies more than one kind of reading. Our difficulty with the *Phaedrus* may be that our interpretation has been too literal and too topical. If we will bring to the reading of it even a portion of that imagination which Plato habitually exercised, we should perceive surely enough that it is consistently, and from beginning to end, about one thing, which is the nature of rhetoric.¹ Again, that point may have been missed because most readers conceive rhetoric to be a system of artifice rather than an idea,² and the *Phaedrus*, for all its apparent divagation,

1. Cf. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: the Man and his Work* (New York, 1936), p. 300.

2. Cf. P. Albert Duhamel, "The Concept of Rhetoric as Effective Expression," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, X, No. 3 (June, 1949), 344-56 *passim*.

keeps very close to a single idea. A study of its rhetorical structure, especially, may give us the insight which has been withheld, while making us feel anew that Plato possessed the deepest divining rod among the ancients.

For the imaginative interpretation which we shall now undertake, we have both general and specific warrant. First, it scarcely needs pointing out that a Socratic dialogue is in itself an example of transcendence. Beginning with something simple and topical, it passes to more general levels of application; and not infrequently, it must make the leap into allegory for the final utterance. This means, of course, that a Socratic dialogue may be about its subject implicitly as well as explicitly. The implicit rendering is usually through some kind of figuration because it is the nature of this meaning to be ineffable in any other way. It is necessary, therefore, to be alert for what takes place through the analogical mode.

Second, it is a matter of curious interest that a warning against literal reading occurs at an early stage of the *Phaedrus*. Here in the opening pages, appearing as if to set the key of the theme, comes an allusion to the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia. On the very spot where the dialogue begins, Boreas is said to have carried off the maiden. Does Socrates believe that this tale is really true? Or is he in favor of a scientific explanation of what the myth alleges? Athens had scientific experts, and the scientific explanation was that the north wind had pushed her off some rocks where she was playing with a companion. In this way the poetical story is provided with a factual basis. The answer of Socrates is that many tales are open to this kind of rationalization, but that the result is tedious and actually irrelevant. It is irrelevant because our chief concern is with the nature of the man, and it is beside the point to probe into such matters while we are yet ignorant of ourselves. The scientific criticism of Greek mythology, which may be likened to the scientific criticism of the myths of the Bible in our own day, produces at best "a boorish sort of wisdom (*ἀγροίκη σοφία*)."³ It is a limitation to suppose that the truth of the story

lies in its historicity. The "boorish-sort-of-wisdom" seeks to supplant poetic allegation with fact, just as an archaeologist might look for the foundations of the Garden of Eden. But while this sort of search goes on the truth flies off, on wings of imagination, and is not recoverable until the searcher attains a higher level of pursuit. Socrates is satisfied with the parable, and we infer from numerous other passages that he believed that some things are best told by parable and some perhaps discoverable only by parable. ~~Real investigation goes forward with the help of analogy.~~ "Freud-without-Sophocles is unthinkable," a modern writer has said.³

With these precepts in mind, we turn to that part of the *Phaedrus* which has proved most puzzling: why is so much said about the absurd relationship of the lover and the non-lover? Socrates encounters Phaedrus outside the city wall. The latter has just come from hearing a discourse by Lysias which enchanted him with its eloquence. He is prevailed upon to repeat this discourse, and the two seek out a shady spot on the banks of the Ilissus. Now the discourse is remarkable because although it was "in a way, a love speech," its argument was that people should grant favors to non-lovers rather than to lovers. "This is just the clever thing about it," Phaedrus remarks. People are in the habit of preferring their lovers, but it is much more intelligent, as the argument of Lysias runs, to prefer a non-lover. Accordingly, the first major topic of the dialogue is a eulogy of the non-lover. The speech provides good subject matter for jesting on the part of Socrates, and looks like another exhibition of the childlike ingenuousness which gives the Greeks their charm. Is it merely a piece of literary trifling? Rather, it is Plato's dramatic presentation of a major thesis. Beneath the surface of repartee and mock seriousness, he is asking whether we ought to prefer a neuter form of speech to the kind which is ever getting us aroused over things and provoking an expense of spirit.

3. James Blish, "Rituals on Ezra Pound," *Sewanee Review*, LVIII (Spring, 1950), 223.

Sophistications of theory cannot obscure the truth that there are but three ways for language to affect us. It can move us toward what is good; it can move us toward what is evil; or it can, in hypothetical third place, fail to move us at all.⁴ Of course there are numberless degrees of effect under the first two heads, and the third, as will be shown, is an approximate rather than an absolute zero of effect. But any utterance is a major assumption of responsibility, and the assumption that one can avoid that responsibility by doing something to language itself is one of the chief considerations of the *Phaedrus*, just as it is of contemporary semantic theory. What Plato has succeeded in doing in this dialogue, whether by a remarkably effaced design, or unconsciously through the formal pressure of his conception, is to give us embodiments of the three types of discourse. These are respectively the non-lover, the evil lover, and the noble lover. We shall take up these figures in their sequence and show their relevance to the problem of language.

The eulogy of the non-lover in the speech of Lysias, as we hear it repeated to Socrates, stresses the fact that the non-lover follows a policy of enlightened self-interest. First of all, the non-lover does not neglect his affairs or commit extreme acts under the influence of passion. Since he acts from calculation, he never has occasion for remorse. No one ever says of him that he is not in his right mind, because all of his acts are within prudential bounds. The first point is, in sum, that the non-lover never sacrifices himself and therefore never feels the vexation which overtakes lovers when they recover from their passion and try to balance their pains with their profit. And the non-lover is constant whereas the lover is inconstant. The first argument then is that the non-lover demonstrates his superiority through prudence and objectivity. The second point of superiority found in non-lovers is that there are many

4. The various aesthetic approaches to language offer refinements of perception, but all of them can be finally subsumed under the first head above.

more of them. If one is limited in one's choice to one's lovers, the range is small; but as there are always more non-lovers than lovers, one has a better chance in choosing among many of finding something worthy of one's affection. A third point of superiority is that association with the non-lover does not excite public comment. If one is seen going about with the object of one's love, one is likely to provoke gossip; but when one is seen conversing with the non-lover, people merely realize that "everybody must converse with somebody." Therefore this kind of relationship does not affect one's public standing, and one is not disturbed by what the neighbors are saying. Finally, non-lovers are not jealous of one's associates. Accordingly they do not try to keep one from companions of intellect or wealth for fear that they may be outshone themselves. The lover, by contrast, tries to draw his beloved away from such companionship and so deprives him of improving associations. The argument is concluded with a generalization that one ought to grant favors not to the needy or the importunate, but to those who are able to repay. Such is the favorable account of the non-lover given by Lysias.

We must now observe how these points of superiority correspond to those of "semantically purified" speech. By "semantically purified speech" we mean the kind of speech approaching pure notation in the respect that it communicates abstract intelligence without impulsion. It is a simple instrumentality, showing no affection for the object of its symbolizing and incapable of inducing bias in the hearer. In its ideal conception, it would have less power to move than $2 + 2 = 4$, since it is generally admitted that mathematical equations may have the beauty of elegance, and hence are not above suspicion where beauty is suspect. But this neuter language will be an unqualified medium of transmission of meanings from mind to mind, and by virtue of its minds can remain in an unprejudiced relationship to the world and also to other minds.

Since the characteristic of this language is absence of any-

thing like affection, it exhibits toward the thing being represented merely a sober fidelity, like that of the non-lover toward his companion. Instead of passion, it offers the serviceability of objectivity. Its "enlightened self-interest" takes the form of an unvarying accuracy and regularity in its symbolic references, most, if not all of which will be to verifiable data in the extramental world. Like a thrifty burgher, it has no romanticism about it; and it distrusts any departure from the literal and prosaic. The burgher has his feet on the ground; and similarly the language of pure notation has its point-by-point contact with objective reality. As Stuart Chase, one of its modern proponents, says in *The Tyranny of Words*: "*If we wish to understand the world and ourselves, it follows that we should use a language whose structure corresponds to physical structure*" (italics his). So this language is married to the world, and its marital fidelity contrasts with the extravagances of other languages.

In second place, this language is far more "available." Whereas rhetorical language, or language which would persuade, must always be particularized to suit the occasion, drawing its effectiveness from many small nuances, a "utility" language is very general and one has no difficulty putting his meaning into it if he is satisfied with a paraphrase of that meaning. The 850 words recommended for Basic English, for example, are highly available in the sense that all native users of English have them instantly ready and learners of English can quickly acquire them. It soon becomes apparent, however, that the availability is a heavy tax upon all other qualities.

5. *The Tyranny of Words* (New York, 1938), p. 80. T. H. Huxley in *Lay Sermons* (New York, 1883), p. 112, outlined a noticeably similar ideal of scientific communication: "Therefore, the great business of the scientific teacher is, to imprint the fundamental, irrefragable facts of his science, not only by words upon the mind, but by sensible impressions upon the eye, and ear, and touch of the student in so complete a manner, that every term used, or law enunciated should afterwards call up vivid images of the particular structural, or other, facts which furnished the demonstration of the law, or illustration of the term."

Most of what we admire as energy and fullness tends to disappear when mere verbal counters are used. The conventional or public aspect of language can encroach upon the suggestive or symbolical aspect, until the naming is vague or blurred. In proportion as the medium is conventional in the widest sense and avoids all individualizing, personalizing, and heightening terms, it is common, and the commonness constitutes the negative virtue ascribed to the non-lover.

Finally, with reference to the third qualification of the non-lover, it is true that neuter language does not excite public opinion. This fact follows from its character outlined above. Rhetorical language on the other hand, for whatever purpose used, excites interest and with it either pleasure or alarm. People listen instinctively to the man whose speech betrays inclination. It does not matter what the inclination is toward, but we may say that the greater the degree of inclination, the greater the curiosity or response. Hence a "style" in speech always causes one to be a marked man, and the public may not be so much impressed—at least initially—by what the man is for or against as by the fact that he has a style. The way therefore to avoid public comment is to avoid the speech of affection and to use that of business, since, to echo the original proposition of Lysias, everybody knows that one must do business with others. From another standpoint, then, this is the language of prudence. These are the features which give neuter discourse an appeal to those who expect a scientific solution of human problems.

In summing up the trend of meaning, we note that Lysias has been praising a disinterested kind of relationship which avoids all excesses and irrationalities, all the dementia of love. It is a circumspect kind of relationship, which is preferred by all men who wish to do well in the world and avoid tempestuous courses. We have compared its detachment with the kind of abstraction to be found in scientific notation. But as an earnest of what is to come let us note, in taking leave of this part, that Phaedrus expresses admiration for the eloquence,

especially of diction, with which the suit of the non-lover has been urged. This is our warning of the dilemma of the non-lover.

Now we turn to the second major speech of the dialogue, which is made by Socrates. Notwithstanding Phaedrus' enthusiastic praise, Socrates is dissatisfied with the speech of the non-lover. He remembers having heard wiser things on the subject and feels that he can make a speech on the same theme "different from this and quite as good." After some playful exchange, Socrates launches upon his own abuse of love, which centers on the point that the lover is an exploiter. Love (*ἔρως*) is defined as the kind of desire which overcomes rational opinion and moves toward the enjoyment of personal or bodily beauty. The lover wishes to make the object of his passion as pleasing to himself as possible; but to those possessed by this frenzy, only that which is subject to their will is pleasant. Accordingly, everything which is opposed, or is equal or better, the lover views with hostility. He naturally therefore tries to make the beloved inferior to himself in every respect. He is pleased if the beloved has intellectual limitations because they have the effect of making him manageable. For a similar reason he tries to keep him away from all influences which might "make a man of him," and of course the greatest of these is divine philosophy. While he is working to keep him intellectually immature, he works also to keep him weak and effeminate, with such harmful result that the beloved is unable to play a man's part in crises. The lover is, moreover, jealous of the possession of property because this gives the beloved an independence which he does not wish him to have. Thus the lover in exercising an unremitting compulsion over the beloved deprives him of all praiseworthy qualities, and this is the price the beloved pays for accepting a lover who is "necessarily without reason." In brief, the lover is not motivated by benevolence toward the beloved, but by selfish appetite; and Socrates can aptly close with the quotation: "As wolves love lambs, so lovers love their loves." The speech is on the single

theme of exploitation. It is important for us to keep in mind the object of love as here described, because another kind of love with a different object is later introduced into the dialogue, and we shall discuss the counterpart of each.

As we look now for the parallel in language, we find ourselves confronting the second of the three alternatives: speech which influences us in the direction of what is evil. This we shall call base rhetoric because its end is the exploitation which Socrates has been condemning. We find that base rhetoric hates that which is opposed, or is equal or better because all such things are impediments to its will, and in the last analysis it knows only its will. Truth is the stubborn, objective restraint which this will endeavors to overcome. Base rhetoric is therefore always trying to keep its objects from the support which personal courage, noble associations, and divine philosophy provide a man.

The base rhetorician, we may say, is a man who has yielded to the wrong aspects of existence. He has allowed himself to succumb to the sights and shows, to the physical pleasures which conspire against noble life. He knows that the only way he can get a following in his pursuits (and a following seems necessary to maximum enjoyment of the pursuits) is to work against the true understanding of his followers. Consequently the things which would elevate he keeps out of sight, and the things with which he surrounds his "beloved" are those which minister immediately to desire. The beloved is thus emasculated in understanding in order that the lover may have his way. Or as Socrates expresses it, the selfish lover contrives things so that the beloved will be "most agreeable to him and most harmful to himself."

Examples of this kind of contrivance occur on every hand in the impassioned language of journalism and political pleading. In the world of affairs which these seek to influence, the many are kept in a state of pupillage so that they will be most docile to their "lovers." The techniques of the base lover, especially as exemplified in modern journalism, would make a long

catalogue, but in general it is accurate to say that he seeks to keep the understanding in a passive state by never permitting an honest examination of alternatives. Nothing is more feared by him than a true dialectic, for this not only endangers his favored alternative, but also gives the "beloved"—how clearly here are these the "lamb" of Socrates' figure—some training in intellectual independence. What he does therefore is dress up one alternative in all the cheap finery of immediate hopes and fears, knowing that if he can thus prevent a masculine exercise of imagination and will, he can have his way. By discussing only one side of an issue, by mentioning cause without consequence or consequence without cause, acts without agents or agents without agency,⁶ he often successfully blocks definition and cause-and-effect reasoning. In this way his choices are arrayed in such meretricious images that one can quickly infer the juvenile mind which they would attract. Of course the base rhetorician today, with his vastly augmented power of propagation, has means of deluding which no ancient rhetor in forum or market place could have imagined.

Because Socrates has now made a speech against love, representing it as an evil, the non-lover seems to survive in estimation. We observe, however, that the non-lover, instead of being celebrated, is disposed of dialectically. "So, in a word, I say that the non-lover possesses all the advantages that are opposed to the disadvantages we found in the lover." This is not without bearing upon the subject matter of the important third speech, to which we now turn.

At this point in the dialogue, Socrates is warned by his monitory spirit that he has been engaging in a defamation of love despite the fact that love is a divinity. "If love is, as indeed he is, a god or something divine, he can be nothing evil; but the two speeches just now said that he was evil." These discourses were then an impiety—one representing non-love as admirable and the other attacking love as base. Socrates re-

6. That is, by mentioning only parts of the total situation.

solves to make amends, and the recantation which follows is one of the most elaborate developments in the Platonic system. The account of love which emerges from this new position may be summarized as follows.

Love is often censured as a form of madness, yet not all madness is evil. There is a madness which is simple degeneracy, but on the other hand there are kinds of madness which are really forms of inspiration, from which come the greatest gifts conferred on man. Prophecy is a kind of madness, and so too is poetry. "The poetry of the sane man vanishes into nothingness before that of the inspired madman." Mere sanity, which is of human origin, is inferior to that madness which is inspired by the gods and which is a condition for the highest kind of achievement. In this category goes the madness of the true lover. His is a generous state which confers blessings to the ignoring of self, whereas the conduct of the non-lover displays all the selfishness of business: "the affection of the non-lover, which is alloyed with mortal prudence and follows mortal and parsimonious rules of conduct will beget in the beloved soul the narrowness which common folk praise as virtue; it will cause the soul to be a wanderer upon the earth for nine thousand years and a fool below the earth at last." It is the vulgar who do not realize that the madness of the noble lover is an inspired madness because he has his thoughts turned toward a beauty of divine origin.

Now the attitude of the noble lover toward the beloved is in direct contrast with that of the evil lover, who, as we have seen, strives to possess and victimize the object of his affections. For once the noble lover has mastered the conflict within his own soul by conquering appetite and fixing his attention upon the intelligible and the divine, he conceives an exalted attitude toward the beloved. The noble lover now "follows the beloved in reverence and awe." So those who are filled with this kind of love "exhibit no jealousy or meanness toward the loved one, but endeavor by every means in their power to lead him to the likeness of the god whom they honor." Such is

the conversion by which love turns from the exploitative to the creative.

Here it becomes necessary to bring our concepts together and to think of all speech having persuasive power as a kind of "love."⁷ Thus, rhetorical speech is madness to the extent that it departs from the line which mere sanity lays down. There is always in its statement a kind of excess or deficiency which is immediately discernible when the test of simple realism is applied. Simple realism operates on a principle of equilibrium or correspondence; one thing must match another, or, representation must tally with thing represented, like items in a tradesman's account. Any excess or deficiency on the part of the representation invokes the existence of the world of symbolism, which simple realism must deny. This explains why there is an immortal feud between men of business and the users of metaphor and metonymy, the poets and the rhetoricians.⁸ The man of business, the narrow and parsimonious soul in the allusion of Socrates, desires a world which is a reliable materiality. But this the poet and rhetorician will never let him have, for each, with his own purpose, is trying to advance the borders of the imaginative world. A primrose by the river's brim will not remain that in the poet's account, but is promptly turned into something very much larger and something highly implicative. He who is accustomed to record the world with an abacus cannot follow these transfigurations; and indeed the very occurrence of them subtly undermines the premise of his business. It is the historic tendency of the tradesman, therefore, to confine passion to quite narrow channels so that it will not upset the decent business arrangements of the world. But if the poet, as the chief transformer of our picture of the world, is the peculiar enemy of this mentality, the rhet-

7. It is worth recalling that in the Christian New Testament, with its heavy Platonic influence, God is identified both with *logos*, "word, speech" (*John* 1:1); and with *agape*, "love" (*2 John* 4:8).

8. The users of metaphor and metonymy who are in the hire of businessmen of course constitute a special case.

orician is also hostile when practicing the kind of love proper to him. The "passion" in his speech is revolutionary, and it has a practical end.

We have now indicated the significance of the three types of lovers; but the remainder of the *Phaedrus* has much more to say about the nature of rhetoric, and we must return to one or more points to place our subject in a wider context. The problem of rhetoric which occupied Plato persistently, not only in the *Phaedrus* but also in other dialogues where this art is reviewed, may be best stated as a question: if truth alone is not sufficient to persuade men, what else remains that can be legitimately added? In one of the exchanges with Phaedrus, Socrates puts the question in the mouth of a personified Rhetoric: "I do not ~~compel anyone to learn to speak~~ without knowing the truth; but if my advice is of any value, he learns that first and then acquires me. So what I claim is this, that without my help the knowledge of the truth does not give the art of persuasion."

Now rhetoric as we have discussed it in relation to the lovers consists of truth plus its artful presentation, and for this reason it becomes necessary to say something more about the natural order of dialectic and rhetoric. In any general characterization of rhetoric will include dialectic,⁹ but for the study of method it is necessary to separate the two. Dialectic is a method of investigation whose object is the establishment of truth about doubtful propositions. Aristotle in the *Topics* gives a concise statement of its nature. "A dialectical problem is a subject of inquiry that contributes either to choice or avoidance, or to truth and knowledge, and that either by itself, or as a help to

9. Cf. 277 b: "A man must know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes, and must be able to define every thing separately; then when he has defined them, he must know how to divide them by classes until further division is impossible; and in the same way he must understand the nature of the soul, must find out the class of speech adapted to each nature, and must arrange and adorn his discourse accordingly, offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul."

the solution of some other such problem. It must, moreover, be something on which either people hold no opinion either way, or the masses hold a contrary opinion to the philosophers, or the philosophers to the masses, or each of them among themselves."¹⁰ Plato is not perfectly clear about the distinction between positive and dialectical terms. In one passage¹¹ he contrasts the "positive" terms "iron" and "silver" with the "dialectical" terms "justice" and "goodness"; yet in other passages his "dialectical" terms seem to include categorizations of the external world. Thus Socrates indicates that distinguishing the horse from the ass is a dialectical operation,¹² and he tells us later that a good dialectician is able to divide things by classes "where the natural joints are" and will avoid breaking any part "after the manner of a bad carver."¹³ Such, perhaps, is Aristotle's dialectic which contributes to truth and knowledge.

But there is a branch of dialectic which contributes to "choice or avoidance," and it is with this that rhetoric is regularly found joined. Generally speaking, this is a rhetoric involving questions of policy, and the dialectic which precedes it will determine not the application of positive terms but that of terms which are subject to the contingency of evaluation. Here dialectical inquiry will concern itself not with what is "iron" but with what is "good." It seeks to establish what belongs in the category of the "just" rather than what belongs in the genus *Canis*. As a general rule, simple object words such as "iron" and "house" have no connotations of policy, although it is frequently possible to give them these through speech situations in which there is added to their referential function a kind of impulse. We should have to interpret in this way "Fire!" or "Gold!" because these terms acquire something through intonation and relationship which places them in the class of evaluative expressions.

10. 104 b.

11. 263 a.

12. 260 b.

13. 265 a.

Any piece of persuasion, therefore, will contain as its first process a dialectic establishing terms which have to do with policy. Now a term of policy is essentially a term of motion, and here begins the congruence of rhetoric with the soul which underlies the speculation of the *Phaedrus*. In his myth of the charioteer, Socrates declares that every soul is immortal because "that which is ever moving is immortal." Motion, it would appear from this definition, is part of the soul's essence. And just because the soul is ever tending, positive or indifferent terms cannot partake of this congruence. But terms of tendency—goodness, justice, divinity, and the like—are terms of motion and therefore may be said to comport with the soul's essence. The soul's perception of goodness, justice, and divinity will depend upon its proper tendency, while at the same time contacts with these in discourse confirm and direct that tendency. The education of the soul is not a process of bringing it into correspondence with a physical structure like the external world, but rather a process of rightly affecting its motion. By this conception, a soul which is rightly affected calls that good which is good; but a soul which is wrongly turned calls that good which is evil. What Plato has prepared us to see is that the virtuous rhetorician, who is a lover of truth, has a soul of such movement that its dialectical perceptions are consonant with those of a divine mind. Or, in the language of more technical philosophy, this soul is aware of axiological systems which have ontic status. The good soul, consequently, will not urge a perversion of justice as justice in order to impose upon the commonwealth. Insofar as the soul has its impulse in the right direction, its definitions will agree with the true nature of intelligible things.

There is, then, no true rhetoric without dialectic, for the dialectic provides that basis of "high speculation about nature" without which rhetoric in the narrower sense has nothing to work upon. Yet, when the disputed terms have been established, we are at the limit of dialectic. How does the noble rhetorician proceed from this point on? That the clear-

est demonstration in terms of logical inclusion and exclusion often fails to win assent we hardly need state; therefore, to what does the rhetorician resort at this critical passage? It is the stage at which he passes from the logical to the analogical, or it is where figuration comes into rhetoric.

To look at this for a moment through a practical illustration, let us suppose that a speaker has convinced his listeners that his position is "true" as far as dialectical inquiry may be pushed. Now he sets about moving the listeners toward that position, but there is no way to move them except through the operation of analogy. The analogy proceeds by showing that the position being urged resembles or partakes of something greater and finer. It will be represented, in sum, as one of the steps leading toward ultimate good. Let us further suppose our speaker to be arguing for the payment of a just debt. The payment of the just debt is not itself justice, but the payment of this particular debt is one of the many things which would have to be done before this could be a completely just world. It is just, then, because it partakes of the ideal justice, or it is a small analogue of all justice (in practice it will be found that the rhetorician makes extensive use of *synecdoche*), whereby the small part is used as a vivid suggestion of the grandeur of the whole). It is by bringing out these resemblances that the good rhetorician leads those who listen in the direction of what is good. In effect, he performs a cure of souls by giving impulse, chiefly through figuration, toward an ideal good.

We now see the true rhetorician as a noble lover of the good, who works through dialectic and through poetic or analogical association. However he is compelled to modulate by the peculiar features of an occasion, this is his method.

It may not be superfluous to draw attention to the fact that what we have here outlined is the method of the *Phaedrus* itself. The dialectic appears in the dispute about love. The current thesis that love is praiseworthy is countered by the antithesis that love is blameworthy. This position is fully developed in the speech of Lysias and in the first speech of

Socrates. But this position is countered by a new thesis that after all love is praiseworthy because it is a divine thing. Of course, this is love on a higher level, or love re-defined. This is the regular process of transcendence which we have noted before. Now, having rescued love from the imputation of evil by excluding certain things from its definition, what does Socrates do? Quite in accordance with our analysis, he turns rhetorician. He tries to make this love as attractive as possible by bringing in the splendid figure of the charioteer.¹⁴ In the narrower conception of this art, the allegory is the rhetoric, for it excites and fills us with desire for this kind of love, depicted with many terms having tendency toward the good. But in the broader conception the art must include also the dialectic, which succeeded in placing love in the category of divine things before filling our imaginations with attributes of divinity.¹⁵ It is so regularly the method of Plato to follow a subtle analysis with a striking myth that it is not unreasonable to call him the master rhetorician. This goes far to explain why those who reject his philosophy sometimes remark his literary art with mingled admiration and annoyance.

The objection sometimes made that rhetoric cannot be used by a lover of truth because it indulges in "exaggerations" can be answered as follows. There is an exaggeration which is mere wantonness, and with this the true rhetorician has nothing to do. Such exaggeration is purely impressionistic in aim. Like caricature, whose only object is to amuse, it seizes upon any trait or aspect which could produce titillation and exploits this without conscience. If all rhetoric were like this, we should have to grant that rhetoricians are persons of very low responsibility and their art a disreputable one. But the rhetorician we have now defined is not interested in sensationalism.

The exaggeration which this rhetorician employs is not car-

14. In the passage extending from 246 a to 256 d.
15. Cf. 263 d ff.

icature but prophecy; and it would be a fair formulation to say that true rhetoric is concerned with the potency of things. The literalist, like the anti-poet described earlier, is troubled by its failure to conform to a present reality. What he fails to appreciate is that potentiality is a mode of existence, and that all prophecy is about the tendency of things. The discourse of the noble rhetorician, accordingly, will be about real potentiality or possible actuality, whereas that of the mere exaggerator is about unreal potentiality. Naturally this distinction rests upon a supposal that the rhetorician has insight, and we could not defend him in the absence of that condition. But given insight, he has the duty to represent to us the as yet unactualized future. It would be, for example, a misrepresentation of current facts but not of potential ones to talk about the joys of peace in a time of war. During the Second World War, at the depth of Britain's political and military disaster, Winston Churchill likened the future of Europe to "broad sunlit uplands." Now if one had regard only for the hour, this was a piece of mendacity such as the worst charlatans are found committing; but if one took Churchill's premises and then considered the potentiality, the picture was within bounds of actualization. His "exaggeration" was that the defeat of the enemy would place Europe in a position for long and peaceful progress. At the time the surface trends ran the other way; the actuality was a valley of humiliation. Yet the hope which transfigured this to "broad sunlit uplands" was not irresponsible, and we conclude by saying that the rhetorician talks about both what exists simply and what exists by favor of human imagination and effort.¹⁶

16. Indeed, in this particular rhetorical duel we see the two types of lovers opposed as clearly as illustration could desire. More than this, we see the third type, the non-lover, committing his ignominious failure. Britain and France had come to prefer as leaders the rhetorically businesslike type. And while they had thus emasculated themselves, there appeared an evil lover to whom Europe all but succumbed before the mistake was seen and rectified. For while the world must move, evil rhetoric is of more force than no rhetoric at all; and Herr Hitler, employ-

This interest in actualization is a further distinction between pure dialectic and rhetoric. With its forecast of the actual possibility, rhetoric passes from mere scientific demonstration of an idea to its relation to prudent conduct. A dialectic must take place *in vacuo*, and the fact alone that it contains contraries leaves it an intellectual thing. Rhetoric, on the other hand, always espouses one of the contraries. This espousal is followed by some attempt at impingement upon actuality. That is why rhetoric, with its passion for the actual, is more complete than mere dialectic with its dry understanding. It is more complete on the premise than man is a creature of passion who must live out that passion in the world. Pure contemplation does not suffice for this end. As Jacques Maritain has expressed it: "love . . . is not directed at possibilities or pure essences; it is directed at what exists; one does not love possibilities, one loves that which exists or is destined to exist."¹⁷ The complete man, then, is the "lover" added to the scientist; the rhetorician to the dialectician. Understanding followed by actualization seems to be the order of creation, and there is no need for the role of rhetoric to be misconceived.

The pure dialectician is left in the theoretical position of the non-lover, who can attain understanding but who cannot add impulse to truth. We are compelled to say "theoretical position" because it is by no means certain that in the world of actual speech the non-lover has more than a putative existence. We have seen previously that his speech would consist of strictly referential words which would serve only as des-

ing images which rested on no true dialectic, had persuaded multitudes that his order was the "new order," *i.e.*, the true potentiality. Britain was losing and could only lose until, reaching back in her traditional past, she found a voice which could match his accents with a truer grasp of the potentiality of things. Thus two men conspicuous for passion fought a contest for souls, which the nobler won. But the contest could have been lost by default.

17. "Action: the Perfection of Human Life," *Sevane Review*, LVI (Winter, 1948), 3.

ignata. Now the question arises: at what point is motive to come into such language? Kenneth Burke in *A Grammar of Motives* has pointed to "the pattern of embarrassment behind the contemporary ideal of a language that will best promote good action by entirely eliminating the element of exhortation or command. Insofar as such a project succeeded, its terms would involve a narrowing of circumference to a point where the principle of personal action is eliminated from language, so that an act would follow from it only as a non-sequitur, a kind of humanitarian after-thought."¹⁸

The fault of this conception of language is that scientific intention turns out to be enclosed in artistic intention and not *vice versa*. Let us test this by taking as an example one of those "fact-finding committees" so favored by modern representative governments. A language in which all else is suppressed in favor of nuclear meanings would be an ideal instrumentality for the report of such a committee. But this committee, if it lived up to the ideal of its conception, would have to be followed by an "attitude-finding-committee" to tell us what its explorations really mean. In real practice the fact-finding committee understands well enough that it is also an attitude-finding committee, and where it cannot show inclination through language of tendency, it usually manages to do so through selection and arrangement of the otherwise inarticulate facts. To recur here to the original situation in the dialogue, we recall that the eloquent Lysias, posing as a non-lover, had concealed designs upon Phaedrus, so that his fine speech was really a sheep's clothing. Socrates discerned in him a "peculiar craftiness." One must suspect the same today of many who ask us to place our faith in the neutrality of their discourse. We cannot deny that there are degrees of objectivity in the reference of speech. But this is not the same as an assurance that a vocabulary of reduced meanings will solve the problems of mankind. Many of those problems will have

18. *A Grammar of Motives* (New York, 1945), p. 90.

to be handled, as Socrates well knew, by the student of souls, who must primarily make use of the language of tendency. The soul is impulse, not simply cognition; and finally one's interest in rhetoric depends on how much poignancy one senses in existence.¹⁹

Rhetoric moves the soul with a movement which cannot finally be justified logically. It can only be valued analogically with reference to some supreme image. Therefore when the rhetorician encounters some soul "sinking beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice" he seeks to re-animate it by holding up to its sight the order of presumptive goods. This order is necessarily a hierarchy leading up to the ultimate good. All of the terms in a rhetorical vocabulary are like links in a chain stretching up to some master link which transmits its influence down through the linkages. It is impossible to talk about rhetoric as effective expression without having as a term giving intelligibility to the whole discourse, the Good. Of course, inferior concepts of the Good may be and often are placed in this ultimate position; and there is nothing to keep a base lover from inverting the proper order and saying, "Evil, be thou my good." Yet the fact remains that in any piece of rhetorical discourse, one rhetorical term overcomes another rhetorical term only by being nearer to the term which stands ultimate. There is some ground for calling a rhetorical education necessarily an aristocratic education in that the rhetorician has to deal with an aristocracy of notions, to say nothing

19. Without rhetoric there seems no possibility of tragedy, and in turn, without the sense of tragedy, no possibility of taking an elevated view of life. The role of tragedy is to keep the human lot from being rendered as history. The cultivation of tragedy and a deep interest in the value-conferring power of language always occur together. The *Phaedrus*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Cratylus*, not to mention the works of many teachers of rhetoric, appear at the close of the great age of Greek tragedy. The Elizabethan age teemed with treatises on the use of language. The essentially tragic Christian view of life begins the long tradition of homiletics. Tragedy and the practice of rhetoric seem to find common sustenance in preoccupation with value, and then rhetoric follows as an analyzed art.

of supplementing his logical and pathetic proofs with an ethical proof.

All things considered, rhetoric, noble or base, is a great power in the world; and we note accordingly that at the center of the public life of every people there is a fierce struggle over who shall control the means of rhetorical propagation. Today we set up "offices of information," which like the sly lover in the dialogue, pose as non-lovers while pushing their suits. But there is no reason to despair over the fact that men will never give up seeking to influence one another. We would not desire it to be otherwise; neuter discourse is a false idol, to worship which is to commit the very offense for which Socrates made expiation in his second speech.

Since we want not emancipation from impulse but clarification of impulse, the duty of rhetoric is to bring together action and understanding into a whole that is greater than scientific perception.²⁰ The realization that just as no action is really indifferent, so no utterance is without its responsibility introduces, it is true, a certain strenuousness into life, produced by a consciousness that "nothing is lost." Yet this is preferable to that desolation which proceeds from an infinite dispersion or feeling of unaccountability. Even so, the choice between them is hardly ours to make; we did not create the order of things,

20. Cf. Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4: "The truth of practical intellect is understood not as conformity to an extramental being but as conformity to a right desire; the end is no longer to know what is, but to bring into existence that which is not yet; further, the act of moral choice is so individualized, both by the singularity of the person from which it proceeds and the context of the contingent circumstances in which it takes place, that the practical judgment in which it is expressed and by which I declare to myself: this is what I must do, can be right only if, *hic et nunc*, the dynamism of my will is right, and tends towards the true goods of human life.

That is why practical wisdom, *prudentia*, is a virtue indivisibly moral and intellectual at the same time, and why, like the judgment of the conscience itself, it cannot be replaced by any sort of theoretical knowledge or science."

but being accountable for our impulses, we wish these to be just.

Thus when we finally divest rhetoric of all the notions of artifice which have grown up around it, we are left with something very much like Spinoza's "intellectual love of God." This is its essence and the *fons et origo* of its power. It is "intellectual" because, as we have previously seen, there is no honest rhetoric without a preceding dialectic. The kind of rhetoric which is justly condemned is utterance in support of a position before that position has been adjudicated with reference to the whole universe of discourse²¹—and of such the world always produces more than enough. It is "love" because it is something in addition to bare theoretical truth. That element in addition is a desire to bring truth into a kind of existence, or to give it an actuality to which theory is indifferent. Now what is to be said about our last expression, "of God"? Echoes of theological warfare will cause many to desire a substitute for this, and we should not object. As long as we have in ultimate place the highest good man can intuit, the relationship is made perfect. We shall be content with "intellectual love of the Good." It is still the intellectual love of good which causes the noble lover to desire not to devour his beloved but to shape him according to the gods as far as mortal power allows. So rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for. This is the justified affection of which no one can be ashamed, and he who feels no influence of it is truly outside the communion of minds. Rhetoric appears, finally, as a means by which the impulse of the soul to be ever moving is redeemed. It may be granted that in this essay we have gone some dis-

21. Socrates' criticism of the speech of Lysias (263 d ff.) is that the latter defended a position without having submitted it to the discipline of dialectic.

tance from the banks of the Ilissus. What began as a simple account of passion becomes by transcendence an allegory of all speech. No one would think of suggesting that Plato had in mind every application which has here been made, but that need not arise as an issue. The structure of the dialogue, the way in which the judgments about speech concentrate, and especially the close association of the true, the beautiful, and the good, constitute a unity of implication. The central idea is that all speech, which is the means the gods have given man to express his soul, is a form of eros, in the proper interpretation of the word. With that truth the rhetorician will always be brought face to face as soon as he ventures beyond the consideration of mere artifice and device.

Chapter VIII

THE RHETORIC
OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

ONE OF THE serious problems of our age is the question of how scientific information, which is largely the product of special tools of investigation, shall be communicated to the non-specialist world. A few sciences operate in fields of theory so abstract that they can create their own symbology, and most of what they transmit to the public will be in the form of highly generalized translation. But there are other sciences whose very success depends upon some public understanding of what they are trying to solve, and these are faced with peculiar problems of communication. None are in so difficult a position as social science. The social sciences have been, since their institution, jealous of their status as science, and that is perhaps understandable. But their data is the everyday life of man in society, and naturally if there is an area of scientific discovery upon which the general public should be posted, it is just this one of the laws of social phenomena. Caught between this desire to remain scientific and the necessity of public expression, most social scientists are in a dilemma. They have not devised (and possibly they cannot devise) their own symbology to rival that of the mathematician and physicist. On the other hand, they have not set themselves to learn the principles of sound rhetorical exposition. The result is that the publications of social scientists contain a large amount of conspicuously poor writing, which is now under growing attack.¹ Some of these attacks have been perceptive

¹ E. g., Samuel T. Williamson, "How to Write Like a Social Scientist," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXX, No. 40 (October 4, 1947), 17.

as well as witty; but I feel that no one has yet made the point which most needs making, which is that the social scientists will never write much better until they make terms with some of the traditional rules of rhetoric.

I propose in the study which follows to ignore the isolated small faults and instead to analyze the sources of pervasive vices. I shall put the inquiry in the form of a series of questions, which lead to cardinal principles of conception and of choice.

I

Does the writing of social scientists suffer from a primary equivocation? The charge against social science writing which would be most widely granted is that it fails to convince us that it deals clearly with realities. This impression may lead to the question of whether the social scientist knows what he is talking about. Now this is a serious, not a frivolous, question, involving matters of logic and epistemology; it is a question, furthermore, that one finds the social scientists constantly putting to themselves and answering in a variety of ways. Any field of study is liable to a similar interrogation; in this instance it merely asks whether those who interpret social behavior in scientific terms are aware of the kind of data they are handling. Are they dealing with facts, or concepts, or evaluations, or all three? The answer given to this question will have a definite bearing upon their problem of expression, and let us see how this can happen in a concrete instance.

We have had much to say in preceding chapters about the distinction between positive and dialectical terms; and nowhere has the ignoring of this distinction had worse results than in the literature of social science. We have seen, to review briefly, that the positive term designates something existing simply in the objective world: the chair, the tree, the farm. Arguments over positive terms are not arguments in the true sense, since the point at issue is capable of immediate and public settlement, just as one might settle an "argument" over the

width of a room by bringing in a publicly-agreed-upon yardstick. Consequently a rhetoric of positive terms is a rhetoric of simple description, which requires only powers of accurate observation and reporting.

It is otherwise with ~~dialectical~~ terms. These are terms standing for concepts, which are defined by their negatives or their privations. "Justice" is a dialectical term which is defined by "injustice"; "social improvement" is made meaningful by the use of "privation of social improvement." To say that a family has an income of \$800.00 a year is positive; to say that the same family is underprivileged is dialectical. It can be underprivileged only with reference to families which have more privileges. So it goes with the whole range of terms which reflect judgments of value; "unjust," "poor," "underpaid," "undesirable" are all terms which depend on something more than the external world for their significance.

Now here is where the social scientist crosses a divide that he seldom acknowledges and often seems unaware of. One cannot use the dialectical term in the same manner as one uses the positive term because the dialectical term always leaves one committed to something. It is a truth easily seen that all dialectical terms make presumptions from the plain fact that they are "positional" terms. A writer no sooner employs one than he is engaged in an argument. To say that the universe is purposeless is to join in argument with all who say it is purposeful. To say that a certain social condition is inequitable is to ally oneself with the reformers and against the standpaters. In all such cases the presumption has to do with the scope of the term and with its relationship to its opposite, and these can be worked out only through the dialectical method we have analyzed in other chapters. When the reader of social science comes to such terms, he is baffled because he has not been warned of the presumptions on which they rest. Or, to be more exact, he has not been prepared for presumptions at all. He finds himself reading at a level where the facts have been subsumed, and where the exposition is a process of ad-

justing categories. The writer has passed with indifference from what is objectively true to what is morally or imaginatively true. The reader's uneasiness comes from a feeling that the categories themselves are the things which should have been examined. Just here, however, may lie the crux of the difficulty.

It begins to look as though the social scientist working with his regular habits is actually a dialectician without a dialectical basis. His dilemma is that he can neither use his terms with the simple directness of the natural scientist pointing to physical factors, nor with the assurance of a philosopher who has some source for their meaning in the system from which he begins his deduction. Or, the social scientist is trying to characterize the world positively in terms which can be made good only dialectically. He can never make them good dialectically as long as he is by theory entirely committed to empiricism. This explains why to the ordinary beholder there seem to be so many smuggled assumptions in the literature of social science. It will explain, moreover, why so much of its expression is characterized by diffuseness and by that verbosity which is certain to afflict a dialectic without a metaphysic or an ontology. This uncertainty of the social scientist about the nature of his datum often leads him to treat empirical situations as if they carried moral sanction, and then to turn around and treat some point of contemporary mores—which is by definition a "moral" question—as if it had only empirical aspects. In direct consequence, when the social scientist should be writing "positively," like a crack newspaper reporter, one finds him writing like Hegel, and, when the stage of his exposition might warrant his writing more or less like Hegel, one finds him employing dialectical terms as if they had positive designations.

Paradoxically, his very reverence for facts may tend to make him sound like Hegel or some other master of categorical thinking. Anyone sampling the literature of social science cannot fail to be impressed with the proportion of space given to

definition. Indeed, one of the most convincing claims of the science is that our present-day knowledge of man is defective because our definitions are simplistic. His behavior is much more varied than the unscientific suppose; and therefore a central objective of social study is definition, which will take this variety into account and supplant our present "prejudiced" definitions. With this in mind, the social scientist toils in library or office to prepare the best definitions he can of human nature, of society, and of psychosocial environment.

The danger for him in this laudable endeavor seems twofold. First, one must remark that the language of definition is inevitably the language of generality because only the generalizable is definable. Singulars and individuals can be described but not defined; e.g., one can define man, but one can only describe Abraham Lincoln. The greater, then, his solicitude for the factual and the concrete, the more irresistibly is he borne in the direction of abstract language, which alone will encompass his collected facts. His dissertations on human society begin with obeisance to facts, but the logic of his being a scientist condemns him to abstraction. (He is forced toward the position of the proverbial revolutionary, who loves mankind but has little charity for those particular specimens of it with whom he must associate.)

In the second place and more importantly, the definition of non-empirical terms is itself a dialectical process. All such definition takes the form of an argument which must prove that the *definiendum* is one thing and not another thing. The limits of the definition are thus the boundary between the things and the not-things. Someone might inquire at this stage of our account whether the natural scientists, who must also define, are not equally liable under this point of the argument. The distinction is that definitions in natural science have a different ontological basis. The properties about which they generalize exist not in logical connection but in empirical conjunction, as when "mammal," "vertebrate," and "quadruped" are used to distinguish the genus *Felis*. The doctrine of "nat-

ural kinds" thus remains an empirical classification, as does the traditional classification of elements.² Consequently the genus *Felis* has a reality in the form of compositent positive attributes which "slum" cannot have. The establishment of the genus is not a matter of negating or depriving other classes, but of naming what is there. On the other hand one could never arrive positivistically at a definition of "slum" because its meaning is contingent upon judgment (and theoretically our standard of living might move up to where Westchester, Grosse Point, and Winnetka are regarded as slums). Thus "slum" no more exists objectively than does "bad weather." There are collections of sticks and stones which the dialectician may call "slums," just as there are processions of the elements which he may call "bad." But these are positive things only in a reductionist equation. Of course, the natural scientist works always with reductionist equations; but the social scientist, unless he is an extreme materialist, must work with the full equation.

It is a grave imputation, but at the heart of the social scientist's unsatisfactory expression lies this equivocation. Remedy here can come only with a clearer defining of province and of responsibility.

II

Is social science writing marred by "pedantic empiricism"?

The natural desire of everyone to carry away something from his reading encounters in this literature curious obstacles. Its authors often seem unduly coy about their conclusions. After the reader has been escorted on an extensive tour of facts and definitions, he is likely to be told that little can be affirmed at this stage of the inquiry. So it is that, however much we read, we are made to feel that what we are reading is preliminary.

2. See Bertrand Russell, "The Postulate of Natural Kinds or of Limited Variety," *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948), pp. 438-44.

We come almost to look for a formula at the close of a social science monograph which takes an excessively modest view of its achievement while expressing the hope that someone else may come along and do something with the data there offered. Burgess and Cottrell's *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage* provides an illustration. After presenting their case, the authors say: "In this study, as in many others, the most significant contribution is not to be found in any one finding but in the degree to which the study opens up a new field to further research."³ Again, from an article appearing in *Social Forces*: "The findings here mentioned are merely suggestive; and they are offered in no sense as proof of our hypothesis of folk-urban personality differences. The implementation of the analysis given here would demand a field project incorporating the type of methodological consciousness advocated above. Thus we need to utilize standard projective devices, but must be prepared to develop, in terms of situational demands, additional analytic instruments."⁴ And Herman C. Beyle in a chapter on the data and method of political science, which constitute the underpinning of his whole study, can only say that "the foregoing comments on the data and technology of political science have been offered as most tentative statements intended to provide a background for the testing and application of the technique here proposed, that of attribute-cluster-bloc identification and analysis."⁵ "Most tentative" becomes a sort of leitmotiv. Everything sounds like a prolegomenon to the real thing. Exclamations that social scientists are taking in one another's washing or are only trying to make work for themselves are inspired by this kind of performance. But, even after one has made allowance for the fact that

3. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1939), p. 349.

4. Melvin Seeman, "An Evaluation of Current Approaches to Personality Differences in Folk and Urban Societies," *Social Forces*, XXV (December, 1946), 165.

5. *Identification and Analysis of Attribute-Cluster-Blocs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 214.

social science is not one of the exact sciences and that its disciplines work in a field where induction is far from complete, their fear of commitment still seems obsessive. They could at least have the courage of the facts which they have accumulated. Virtually everyone who is seeking scientific enlightenment on this level knows that conclusions are given in the light of evidence available, and that hypothesis always extends some distance beyond what is directly observable. Indeed, everyone makes use of the method of scientific investigation, as T. H. Huxley liked to assure his audiences, but not everyone finds necessary such an armor of qualifications as is likely to appear here: "On the basis of available evidence, it is not unreasonable to suppose"; "It may not be improbable in view of these findings"; "The present survey would seem to indicate." All these rhetorical contortions are forms of needless hedging.

It would be a different matter if such formulas of reservation made the conclusion more precise. But in the majority of cases it could be shown that the conclusion is obvious enough in terms of the discussion itself, and they serve only to make it sound timid. These scholars move to a tune of "induction never ends," and their scholarship often turns into a pedantic empiricism. They seem to be waiting for the fact that will bring with it the revelation. But that fact will never arrive; experience does not tell us what we are experiencing, and at some point they are going to have to give names to their findings—even at the expense of becoming dialecticians.

If the needlessly hedged statement is one result of pedantic empiricism, another occurs in what might be called "pedantic analysis." This is analysis for analysis' sake, with no real thought of relevance or application or, indeed, of a resynthesis which might redeem the whole undertaking. Just as it is assumed that an endless collection of data will necessarily yield fruits, so it is assumed that a remorseless partitioning will illuminate. But analysis can be carried so far that it seems to lose all bearing upon points at issue. The writer shows himself a sort of *virtuoso* at analysis, and one feels that his real interest

lies in demonstrating how thoroughly a method can be followed. Let us look, for example, at a passage from an article entitled "Courtship as a Social Institution in the United States, 1930-1945." The author has said that activities of courtship show different patterns and that sometimes the patterns need to be harmonized:

To be compatible, patterns should be adapted to the following components: (1) the *hominid component*, which is the biological human being; (2) the *social component*, which includes the potentialities for social relations as they are affected by "the number of human beings in the situation, their distribution in space, their ages, their sex, their native ability to interstimulate and interact, the interference of environmental hindrances or helps, and the presence and amount of certain types of social equipment"; (3) the *environmental component*, or all the "natural" features of the situation except the hominid, the social, the psychological and artificial components; it includes topography, physiography, flora, fauna, weather, geology, soil, etc.; (4) the *psychological component*, defined as the principles involving the acquisition and performance of human customs not adequately explained on purely biological principles; (5) the *artifactual component*, which consists collectively of the material results and adjuncts of human customary activities.⁶

It is not always safe for the layman to generalize about the value of specific sociological findings, but I am inclined to think that this is verbiage, resulting from analysis pushed beyond any useful purpose. There is a real if obscure relationship between the vitality of what one is saying and the palatability of one's rhetoric. No rhythm, no *tournaire* of phrase, no architecture of the sentences could make this a good piece of writing, for its content lies on the outer fringe of significance. It is the nature of such pedantry to habit itself in a harsh and crabbed style.

6. Donald L. Taylor, "Courtship as a Social Institution in the United States, 1930-1945," *Social Forces*, XXV (October, 1946), 68.

The primary step in literary composition is *invention*, or the discovering of something to talk about. No writer is finally able to make good the claim that his subject matter is one thing and his style of expression another; the subject matter enters into the expression inevitably and extensively, although sometimes in ways too subtle for elucidation. What of the invention of this passage? If we take the word in its etymological sense of "finding," are not these distinctions "findings" for findings' sake? Analysis carried to such a humorless extreme reflects discredit upon the very principle of division which was employed.

It may appear contradictory to call the social scientist a "tendentious dialectician" and a "pedantic empiricist" at the same time. But the contradiction is inherent in his situation and merely expresses the equivocation found earlier. In all likelihood the empiricism is an attempt to compensate for the dialectic. If a writer feels guilty about his dialectic exercises (his definitions), he may seek to counterweight them with long empirical inquiries. The object of the empirical analysis is primarily to give the work a scientific aspect and only secondarily to prove something. In fact, this is almost the pattern of inferior social science literature.

III

Does social science writing suffer from a melioristic bias? This question directs our attention to the matter of vocabulary. There is danger in criticising any writer's vocabulary through application of simple principles, because demands vary widely. For some purposes a small vocabulary of denotative terms will be satisfactory. Other purposes cannot be adequately met without a large and learned vocabulary which may, incidentally, sound pretentious. Our question then becomes whether the ends of social science are being well served by the means employed. For example, social scientists are often charged with addiction to polysyllabic vocabulary. Other

men of learning show the same addiction, but there are special reasons for weighing critically the polysyllabic diction of social scientists.

Of course, when one faces the issue concretely, one discovers that there is no single standard by which a word is classified "big." Some words are called "big" because they actually have four or five syllables and hence are measurably so; other words of one or two syllables are called "big" because, coming out of technical or scientific vocabularies, they are unfamiliar to the average man; others, actually no longer, are called "big" because of the company they keep; that is to say, they are words of learned or dignified association. Sometimes a word seems big when it is simply too pretentious for the kind of thing it is describing. Readers of H. L. Mencken will recall that he obtained many of his best satirical effects by describing what was essentially *picayune* or *tawdry* in a vocabulary of grandiloquence.

A cursory inspection will show that social scientists are given to words which are "big" in yet another respect: they have a Latin origin. Even in analysis of simple phenomenon the reader comes to expect a parade of terms which seem to go by on stilts, as if it were important to keep from touching the ground. Without raising questions of semantic theory, one inclines to wonder about their relationship to their referents. In course of time one may come to suspect that the words employed are not dictated by the subject matter, but by some active principle out of sociological theory. To see whether that suspicion has a foundation, let us try a test on a specimen of this language.

The passage which will be used is fairly representative of the ordinary social science prose to be encountered in articles and reports. The subject is expressed in the title "Social Nearness among Welfare Institutions":

7. For example: "id," "ion," "alga."

It was noticed in the preceding sections that the social welfare organizational milieu presents an interdependence, a formal solidarity, a coerced feeling of unity. However divergent the specific objectives of each organization, theoretically they all have a common purpose, the care of the so-called underprivileged. Whether they execute what they profess or not is a different question and one which does not fall within the confines of these pages.⁸

There occur in this short excerpt about a dozen words of Latin origin for which equivalents of Anglo-Saxon (or old English, if the name is preferred) origin are available, and this without giving up presumably operational terms like "organizational" and "milieu."⁹ In place of "noticed," why not "seen"? In place of "divergent," why not "unlike"? In place of "objective," why not "goal"? Instead of "execute what they profess," why not "do what they say"? Did these terms not suggest themselves to the writer, or were they deliberately passed by?

It might be arbitrary to insist that any one of these substitutes is better than the original, but the piling-up of such terms causes language to take on a special aspect. There are, of course, margins within which preference in terminology means little, but a preference for Latinate terms as marked as this must be, to employ one of their customary expressions, "significant."

That significance lies in the kind of attitude that social scientists must have in order to practice social science. It seems beyond dispute that all social science rests upon the assumption that man and society are improvable. That is its origin and its guiding impulse. The man who does not feel that social behavior and social institutions can be bettered through the application of scientific laws, or through some philosophy finding its basic support in them, is surely out of place in

8. Samuel H. Jameson, "Social Nearness among Welfare Institutions," *Sociology and Social Research*, XV (March-April, 1931), 322.

9. The natural scientists, too, use many Latinate terms, but these are chiefly "name" words, for which there are no real substitutes.

sociology. There would really be nothing for him to do. He could only sit on the sidelines and speculate dourly, like Nietzsche, or ironically, like Santayana. The very profession which the true social scientist adopts compels him to be a kind of a priori optimist. This is why a large part of social science writing displays a *melioristic-bias*. It is under compulsion, often unconsciously felt, I am sure, to picture things a little better than they are. Such expression provides a kind of proof that its theories are "working."

An indubitable connection exists between the melioristic bias and a Latinate vocabulary. Even a moderate sensitivity to the overtones of language will tell one that diction of Latin derivation tends to be euphemistic. For this there seem to be both extrinsic and intrinsic causes. It is a commonplace of historical knowledge that after the Norman ~~Congress~~ the Anglo-Saxons were forced into a ~~servile-rele~~. They were sent into the fields to do chores for the Norman overlords, and Anglo-Saxon names have clung to the things with which they worked. Thus to the Anglo-Saxon in the field the animal was "cow"; to the Norman, when the same animal was served at his table, it was "beef" (*L. bos, bovis*). So "calf" is translated "veal"; "thegn" becomes "servant"; "folk" becomes "people," and so on. This distinction of common and elegant terms persists in an area of our vocabulary today. Another circumstance was that Latin for centuries constituted the language of learning and of the professions throughout Europe, and from the fourteenth century onward, there occurred a large amount of "learned borrowing."¹⁰ This reflects the fact that those cultures which carried civility and *politesse* to highest perfection drew from a Latin source. Finally, I would suggest that the greater number of syllables in many Latinate terms is a factor in the effect. Whatever the complete explanation, the truth remains that to give a thing a Latinate name is to couple

10. See J. B. Greenough and C. L. Kittredge, *Words and Their Ways in English Speech* (New York, 1931), pp. 94-99.

it with social prestige and with the world of ideas, whereas to give it a name out of Anglo-Saxon is to forgo such dignifying associations. Thus "combat" sounds more dignified than "fight"; "labor" has resonances which "work" does not have; "impecunious" seems to indicate a more hopeful condition than "needy" or "penniless"; "involuntary separation" sounds less painful than "getting fired." The list could be extended indefinitely. With exceptions too few to make a difference, the Anglo-Saxon word is plain and workaday, whereas the word of Latin derivation seems to invest whatever it describes with a certain upward tendency. Of course, the Anglo-Saxon word has its potencies, but they are not those of the other. It seems to cling to the brute empirical fact, while its Latinate counterpart seems at once to become ideological, with perhaps a slight aura of hortation about it. Whenever one hears the average man condemning a piece of discourse as "flowery," it is most likely that he is pointing, with the only term at his command, to an excess of Latinate diction.

In the same connection, let us remember that the last few years have seen much newspaper wit at the expense of the language of government ~~bureaucracy~~, which is even more responsive to the melioristic bias. The bureaucrat lives in a world where nothing is incorrigible; the solution to every contemporary difficulty waits only for the devising of some appropriate administrative machinery. Compared with him, the social scientist is a realist, for social science at least begins by admitting that many situations leave something to be desired. The bureaucrat's world is prim and proper and aseptic, and his language reflects it [perhaps one could say that the discourse of the bureaucrat is social science "politicalized"]. At any rate, here we might profitably look at a specimen of bureaucratic parlance from Masterson and Phillips' *Federal Prose*, a recently published burlesque of official language. The authors posed for themselves as one exercise the problem of how a bureaucrat would express the ancient adage "Too many cooks spoil the broth." Their translation is a caricature, but, like

caricature, it brings out the dominant features of the subject: "Undue multiplicity of personnel assigned either concurrently or consecutively to a single function involves deterioration of quality in the resultant product as compared with the product of the labor of an exact sufficiency of personnel."¹¹ One notices, first of all, the leap into polysyllabic diction, along with the total disappearance of those homely entities "cooks" and "broth." "Personnel," for example, is an abstract dignifier, and "resultant product" is safe, since it does not leave the writer on record as affirming that the concoction in question actually is broth. He is further protected by the expunging of "spoil," with its positive assertion, and he can hide behind the relativity of "deterioration of quality . . . as compared with. . ."

Such language, when used to express the phenomenology of social and political behavior, gives a curious impression of being foreign to its subject matter. The impression of foreignness may be explained as follows. In all writing which has come to be regarded as wisdom about the human being, there is an undertone of the sardonic. Man at his best is a sort of caricature of himself, and even when we are eulogizing him for his finer attributes, there has to be a minor theme of deprecation, much as a vein of comedy weaves in and out of a great tragedy. The "great" actions of history appear either sublime or ridiculous, depending on one's standpoint, and it may be the part of sagacity to regard them as both at the same time. This note of the sardonic is found in biblical wisdom, in Plato's realism of situations, and even in Aristotle's dry categorizing. It appears in the *Federalist* papers,¹² as the authors, while debating political theory in high terms, kept a cagey eye upon economic man. Man is neither an angel nor any kind of disembodied spirit, and the attempt to treat him as such

11. James R. Masterson and Wendell Brooks Phillips, *Federal Prose: How to Write in and/or for Washington* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), p. 10.

12. Cf., for example, Madison in No. 10.

only arouses our sense of the ridiculous. The comic animal must be there before we can grant that the representation is "true." The typical social science report, even when it discusses situations in which baseness and irrationality figure prominently, does not get in this ingredient. Every social fact may be serious, but not every social action is serious because action is not fully explainable without motive. It is this abstract man which causes some of us to wonder about the predications of an unhumanistic social science.

The remedy might be to employ, except where the necessity of conceptualizing makes it difficult, something nearer the language of the biblical parable (one shudders to think how our bureaucrat would render "A sower went forth to sow"), or the language of the best British journalism. I have often felt that writers on social science might learn a valuable lesson from the limpid prose of the *Manchester Guardian*. There one usually finds statement without eulogistic or dyslogistic tendency, adequacy without turgidity. It is perhaps the nearest thing we have in practice to that supposititious reality, objective language. There is some truth in the observation of John Peale Bishop that, whereas American English is more vigorous, English English is far more accurate. A good reportorial medium will be, to a considerable extent, an English English, and it will reflect something of the English genius for fact.

To sum up, the melioristic bias is a deflection toward language which glosses over reality without necessarily giving us a philosophic vocabulary. One could go so far as to say that such language is comparatively lacking in responsibility. It is the language that one expects from those who have become insulated or daintified. It carries a slight suggestion of denial of evil, which in lay circles, as in some ecclesiastical ones, is among the greatest heresies. Perhaps the sociologist would inspire more confidence as a social physician if his language had more of the candor described above, and almost certainly he would get a better understanding of his diagnosis.

IV

Do the social scientists lose more than they gain by a distrust of metaphor? Dr. Johnson once remarked of Swift, "The rogue never hazards a metaphor," and that may well be the reaction of anyone who has plowed through the drab pages of a contemporary sociologist. It has long been suspected that sociologists and poets have little confidence in one another, and here their respective procedures come into complete contrast. The poet works mainly with metaphor, and the sociologist will have none of it. Which is right? Or, if each is doing instinctively the thing that is right for him, must we affirm that the works they produce are of very unequal importance?

One can readily see how the social scientist might be guided by the simple impression that, since metaphor characterizes the language of poetry, it has, for that very reason, no place in the language of science. Or, if he should become more analytical, he might conclude that metaphor, through its very operation of analogy or transference, implies the existence of a realm which positivistic study denies. To use metaphor, then, would be to pass over to the enemy. But he would be a very limited kind of sociologist, a sort of doctrinaire mechanist, not fully posted on all the resources open to scientific inquiry.

There are two more or less familiar theories of the nature of metaphor. One holds that metaphor is mere decoration. It is like the colored lights and gewgaws one hangs on a Christmas tree; the tree is an integral tree without them, but they do add sparkle and novelty and so are good things for such occasions. So the metaphors used in language are pleasurable accessories, which give it a certain charm and lift but which are supererogatory when one comes down to the business of understanding what is said. This theory has been fully discredited not only by those who have analyzed the language of poetry, but also by those who have gone furthest into the psychology of language itself and have explored the "meaning of meaning."

A second theory holds that metaphor is a useful concession to our feeble imagination. We are all children of Adam to the extent that we crave material embodiments. Even the most highly trained of us are wearied by long continuance of abstract communication; we want the thing brought down to earth so that we can see it. For the same reason that principles have to be put into fables for children, the abstract conceptions of modern science require figures for their popular expression. Thus the universe of Einstein is represented as "like the surface of an orange; or the theory of entropy is illustrated by the figure of a desert on which Arabs are riding their camels hither and thither. From the standpoint of rhetoric, this theory has some validity. Visualization is an aid to seeing relationships, and there are rhetorical situations which demand some kind of picturization. Many skilled expositors will follow an abstract proposition with some easy figure which lets us down to earth or enables us to get a bearing. There is some value, then, in the "incarnation" of concepts. On this ground alone one could defend the use of metaphors in communication.¹³

There is yet another theory, now receiving serious attention, that metaphor is itself a means of discovery. Of course, metaphor is intended here in the broadest sense, requiring only some form of parallelism.¹⁴ But when its essential nature is understood, it is hard to resist the thought that metaphor is one of the most important heuristic devices, leading us from a known to an unknown, but subsequently verifiable, fact of principle. Thus George de Santillana, writing on "Aspects of Scientific Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century," can de-

13. It is possible that there exists also a concrete understanding, which differs qualitatively from abstract or scientific understanding and is needed to supplement it, particularly when we are dealing with moral phenomena (see Andrew Bongiorno, "Poetry as an Educational Instrument," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, XXXIII [Autumn, 1947], 508-9).

14. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1410 b: "... for when the poet calls old age 'stubble,' he produces in us a knowledge and information by means of a common genus; for both are past their prime."

clare, "There is never a 'strict induction' but contains a considerable amount of deduction, starting from points chosen analogically."¹⁵ In other words, analogy formulates and to some extent directs the inquiry. Any investigation must start from certain minimal likenesses, and that may conceal the truth that some analogy lies at the heart of all assertion. Even Bertrand Russell is compelled to accept analogy as one of the postulates required to validate the scientific method because it provides the antecedent probability necessary to justify an induction.¹⁶

We might go so far as to admit the point of George Lundberg, who has given attention to the underlying theory of social science, that artists and philosophers make only "allegations" about the world, which scientists must put to the test.¹⁷ For the inquiry may go from allegation to allegation, through a series of metaphorical constructs. This in no wise diminishes the role of metaphor but rather recognizes the role it has always had. If we should speak, for example of the "dance of life," we would be using a metaphor of considerable illuminating power, in that it rests upon a number of resemblances, some of which are hidden or profound. If we push it vigorously, we may be surprised at some of the insights which will turn up. Our naïve question, "What is it like?" which we ask of anything we are confronting for the first time, is the intellect's cry for help. Unless it is like something in some measure, we shall never get to understand it.

The usual student of literature is prone to feel that there is more social psychology in *Hamlet* than in a dozen volumes on the theory of the subject. *Hamlet* is a category, a kind of concrete universal; why would he yield less as a factor in an analysis than some operational definition? At least one social psychologist has felt no hesitation about employing this kind

15. *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), II, No. 8, 7.

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 487.

17. *Foundations of Sociology* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 383.

of factor, the only difference being that his is Babbitt, of more recent creation. Ellsworth Faris, in developing a thesis that every person has several selves, presents his meaning as follows:

Moreover, whatever the list of personalities or roles may be, there is always room for one more, and indeed for many more. When war comes, Babbitt will probably be a member of the committee for public defense. He may become a member of a law enforcement league yet to be formed. He may divorce his wife or elope with his stenographer or misuse the mails and become a Federal prisoner in Leavenworth. Each experience will mean a new role with new personal attitudes and a new axiological conception of himself.¹⁸

This is none the less illuminating because Babbitt is not the product of a controlled scientific induction. He is a sort of "alleged" symbol which works very well in a psychological equation. Surely, it is enlightening to know that some men are like Babbitt and others like Hamlet, or that we all have our Babbitt and Hamlet phases. But here we should be primarily interested in the fact that the Lynds' *Middletown* (1929) followed rather than preceded Lewis's *Main Street* (1920). In the best of literary and sociological worlds, *Main Street* directs attention to Middletown, and *Middletown* reduces Main Street to an operable entity.

The task of taking language away from poetry is a larger operation than appears at first, and in the eyes of some students an impossible one, even if it were desirable. We are all like Emerson's scholar in that the ordinary affairs of life come to us business and go from us poetry—at least as soon as we start expressing them in speech. Many words which we think of as prosaic literalisms can be shown to have their origin in long-forgotten comparisons. The word "depend" analogizes

18. "The Nature of Human Nature," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXII (July, 1926), 17.

the action of hanging from; "contact" analogizes a relationship. "Discoverer" and "detect" stand for the literal operation of taking off a covering, hence exposing to view. A "profound study" apparently goes back to our perception of physical depth. In this way the meaning which we attach to these words is transferred from their analogues; and, of course, the process is more obvious in language that is more consciously metaphorical. It thus becomes plain that somewhere one has to come to terms with metaphor anyhow, and there is a way to turn the necessity into a victory.

V

Is the expression of social science affected by a caste spirit? The fact that social scientists are, in general, dedicated to the removal of caste, or at least to a refutation of caste presumptions, unfortunately does not prevent their becoming a caste. Circumstances exist all the while to make them an *élite*. For one thing, the scientific method of procedure sets them off pretty severely from the average man, with his common-sense approach to social problems. Not only is he likely to be nonplussed by techniques and terminologies; he is also likely to be repelled by what scientists consider one of their greatest virtues—their detachment. Finally, it has to be admitted that social scientists' extensive patronage by universities, foundations, and governments serves to give them a protected status while they work. Every other group so situated has tended to create a jargon, and thus far the social scientists have not been an exception. Their jargon is a product partly of imitation and partly of defense-mindedness.

Naturally one of the first steps in entering a profession is to master the professional language. A display of familiarity with the language is popularly taken as a sign of orthodoxy and acceptance; and thus there arises a temptation to use the special nomenclature freely even when one has doubts about its aptness. This condition affects especially the young ones

who are seeking recognition and establishment—the graduate students and the instructors—in general, the probationers in the field. Departure from orthodoxy can be interpreted as a sign of ignorance or as a sign of independence, and, in the case of those who have not passed probation, we usually interpret it as the former. Accordingly, there is a degree of risk involved in changing the pattern of speech laid down by one's colleagues. So the problem of what one has to do to show that one belongs can be a problem of style. It is entirely possible that many young social scientists do not write so well as they could because of this inhibition. They are in the position of having to satisfy teachers and critics, and they produce what is expected or what they think is expected. In this way a natural gift for the direct phrase and the lucid arrangement can be swallowed up in tortuosities. The pattern can be broken only by some gifted revolutionary or by someone invested with all the honors of the guild.

It is, moreover, true, as Harold Laski has pointed out, that every profession builds up a distrust of innovation, and especially of innovation from the outside.¹⁹ It requires an unusual degree of humility to see that the solution to our problem may have to come from someone outside our number, perhaps from some naive person whose advantage is that he can see the matter only in broad outline. Professions and bureaucracies are on guard against this sort of person, and one of the barriers they unconsciously set up is just this one of jargon. If certain government policies were announced in the language of the barbershop, their absurdity might become overwhelmingly apparent. If certain projects in social science research (or in language and literature research, for that matter) were explained in the language of the daily news report, their futility might become embarrassingly clear. One can only surmise how an experienced political reporter would phrase the find-

19. "The Limitations of the Expert," *Harper's*, CLXII (December, 1930), 102-3.

ings in Beyle's *Identification and Analysis of Attribute-Cluster Blocs*, but one has a notion that his account would sound very little like the original. Would it be unfair? The reply that such language would destroy essential meanings in the original would have to be weighed along with the alternative possibility that the language was used in the first place because it was euphemistic, in the sense we have outlined, or protective. A user of such language may feel safe because the definition of terms is, in a way, his possession. And so technical language, as sometimes employed, may be Pickwickian, inasmuch as it serves not just scientifically but also pragmatically. The average citizen, faced with sociological explanations and bureaucratic communiques, may feel as poor culprits used to feel when confronted with law Latin.

VI

The rhetorical obligation of the scientists has been aptly expressed by T. Swann Harding in a discussion of the general character of scientific writing. "Scientists," he says, "gain nothing by showing off, and the simpler they can make their reports the better. Even their technical reports can be made very much simpler without loss of accuracy or precision. Nor is there really any valid substitute for a good working knowledge of English composition and rhetoric."²⁰ The last statement is true with certain qualifications, which ought to be made explicit. In a final estimate of the problem it has to be recognized that social science writing cannot be judged altogether by literary standards. It is expression with a definite assignment of duty; and those who have made a comparative study of methods and styles know that every formula of expression incurs its penalty. It is a rule in the realm of writing that one pays for the choice one makes. The payment is exacted when the form of expression becomes too exclusively what it is. In course of use a defined style becomes its own enemy.

20. "The Sad Estate of Scientific Publication," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLVII (January, 1942), 600.

If one's writing is abstract, it will accommodate ideas, but it will fatigue the reader. If it is concrete, it will divert and relieve; but it may become cloying, and it will have difficulty in encompassing ideas. If it is spare, it will come to seem abrupt; if it practices a degree of circumlocution, it will first seem elegant but will come to seem inflated. The lucid style is suspected of oversimplifying. And so the dilemma goes.

Now the social scientist has to write about a kind of thing, and, notwithstanding his uncertain allocation of facts and concepts, he may as well accept his penalty at the beginning. He can never make it a primary goal to be "pleasing," and for this reason the purely literary performance is not for him. Dramatic presentation, a leading source of interest in all literary production, is largely, if not entirely, out of his reach. The only kind of writing that gets people emotionally involved contains some form of dramatic conflict, which requires a dichotomy of opposites. Yet the only dichotomy that social science (as a science) contemplates is that of the norm and the deviate, and these two are supposed to exist in an empirical rather than in a moral context, and the injunction is implicit that all we shall do is observe. The work, then, is going to be either purely descriptive, or critical with reference to the norm-deviate opposition. Not many people are going to develop a sense of poignant concern over such presentations. To a certain extent *Middletown* did catch the popular imagination, but the contrast developed here was between what the American observably was through the eyes of detached social scientists and his picture of himself, with its compound of self-esteem, aspiration, and social mythology. The community empirically found was put on the stage to challenge the community sentimentally and otherwise conceived. The same will hardly hold for the typical case of scientific norm and empirically discovered deviate, for no such ideas are involved in the contrast. *Recent Social Trends in the United States*,²¹ for example, the monumental report of President Hoover's Research Com-

21. (2 vols.; New York, 1933.)

mittee on Social Trends, could not look to this kind of interest for its appeal. Unless, therefore, we regard metaphor as a means of dramatic presentation, this resource is not ordinarily open to social science.

Yet within the purpose which the social scientist sets himself there is a considerable range of rhetorical possibility, which he ignores at needless expense. Rhetoric is, among other things, a process of coordination and subordination which is very close to the essential thought process. That is to say, in any coherent piece of discourse there occur promotion and demotion of thoughts, and this is accomplished not solely through logical outlining and subsumation. It involves matters of sequence, of quantity, and some understanding of the rhetorical aspects of grammatical categories. These are means to clear and effective expression, and the failure to see and use them as means can produce a condition in which means and ends seem not discriminated, or even a subversion in which means seem to manipulate ends. That condition is one which social science, along with every other instrumentality of education, should be combating in the interest of a reasonable world.

Chapter IX

ULTIMATE TERMS IN CONTEMPORARY RHETORIC

WE HAVE shown that rhetorical force must be conceived as a power transmitted through the links of a chain that extends upward toward some ultimate source. The higher links of that chain must always be of unique interest to the student of rhetoric, pointing, as they do, to some prime mover of human impulse. Here I propose to turn away from general considerations and to make an empirical study of the terms on these higher levels of force which are seen to be operating in our age.

We shall define term simply here as a name capable of entering into a proposition. In our treatment of rhetorical sources, we have regarded the full predication consisting of a proposition as the true validator. But a single term is an incipient proposition, awaiting only the necessary coupling with another term; and it cannot be denied that single names set up expectancies of propositional embodiment. This causes everyone to realize the critical nature of the process of naming. Given the name "patriot," for example, we might expect to see coupled with it "Brutus," or "Washington," or "Parnell"; given the term "hot," we might expect to see "sun," "stove," and so on. In sum, single terms have their potencies, this being part of the phenomenon of names, and we shall here present a few of the most noteworthy in our time, with some remarks upon their etiology.

Naturally this survey will include the "bad" terms as well

as the "good" terms, since we are interested to record historically those expressions to which the populace, in its actual usage and response, appears to attribute the greatest sanction. A prescriptive rhetoric may specify those terms which, in all seasons, ought to carry the greatest potency, but since the affections of one age are frequently a source of wonder to another, the most we can do under the caption "contemporary rhetoric" is to give a descriptive account and withhold the moral until the end. For despite the variations of fashion, an age which is not simply distraught manages to achieve some system of relationship among the attractive and among the repulsive terms, so that we can work out an order of weight and precedence in the prevailing rhetoric once we have discerned the "rhetorical absolutes"—the terms to which the very highest respect is paid.

It is best to begin boldly by asking ourselves, what is the "god term" of the present age? By "~~god-term~~" we mean that expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate and serving dominations and powers. Its force imparts to the others their lesser degree of force, and fixes the scale by which degrees of comparison are understood. In the absence of a strong and evenly diffused religion, there may be several terms competing for this primacy, so that the question is not always capable of definite answer. Yet if one has to select the one term which in our day carries the greatest blessing, and—to apply a useful test—whose antonym carries the greatest rebuke, one will not go far wrong in naming "progress." This seems to be the ultimate generator of force flowing down through many links of ancillary terms. If one can "make it stick," it will validate almost anything. It would be difficult to think of any type of person or of any institution which could not be recommended to the public through the enhancing power of this word. A politician is urged upon the voters as a "progressive leader"; a community is proud to style itself "progressive"; technologies and methodologies claim to the "progressive"; a peculiar kind of emphasis in modern educa-

tion calls itself "progressive," and so on without limit. There is no word whose power to move is more implicitly trusted than "progressive." But unlike some other words we shall examine in the course of this chapter, its rise to supreme position is not obscure, and it possesses some intelligible referents.

Before going into the story of its elevation, we must prepare ground by noting that it is the nature of the conscious life of man to revolve around some concept of value. So true is this that when the concept is withdrawn, or when it is forced into competition with another concept, the human being suffers an almost intolerable sense of being lost. He has to know where he is in the ideological cosmos in order to coordinate his activities. Probably the greatest cruelty which can be inflicted upon the psychic man is this deprivation of a sense of tendency. Accordingly every age, including those of rudest cultivation, sets up some kind of sign post. In highly cultivated ages, with individuals of exceptional intellectual strength, this may take the form of a metaphysic. But with the ordinary man, even in such advanced ages, it is likely to be some idea abstracted from religion or historical speculation, and made to inhere in a few sensible and immediate examples.

Since the sixteenth century we have tended to accept as inevitable an historical development that takes the form of a changing relationship between ourselves and nature, in which we pass increasingly into the role of master of nature. When I say that this seems inevitable to us, I mean that it seems something so close to what our more religious forebears considered the working of providence that we regard as impiety any disposition to challenge or even suspect it. By a transposition of terms, "progress" becomes the salvation man is placed on earth to work out; and just as there can be no achievement more important than salvation, so there can be no activity more justified in enlisting our sympathy and support than "progress." As our historical sketch would imply, the term began to be used in the sixteenth century in the sense of continuous development or improvement; it reached an

apogee in the nineteenth century, amid noisy demonstrations of man's mastery of nature, and now in the twentieth century it keeps its place as one of the least assailable of the "uncontested terms," despite critical doubts in certain philosophic quarters. It is probably the only term which gives to the average American or West European of today a concept of something bigger than himself, which he is socially impelled to accept and even to sacrifice for. This capacity to demand sacrifice is probably the surest indicator of the "god term," for when a term is so sacrosanct that the material goods of this life must be mysteriously rendered up for it, then we feel justified in saying that it is in some sense ultimate. Today no one is startled to hear of a man's sacrificing health or wealth for the "progress" of the community, whereas such sacrifices for other ends may be regarded as self-indulgent or even treasonable. And this is just because "progress" is the coordinator of all socially respectable effort.

Perhaps these observations will help the speaker who would speak against the stream of "progress," or who, on the other hand, would parry some blow aimed at him through the potency of the word, to realize what a momentum he is opposing.

Another word of great rhetorical force which owes its origin to the same historical transformation is "fact." Today's speaker says "It is a fact" with all the gravity and air of finality with which his less secular-minded ancestor would have said "It is the truth."¹ "These are facts"; "Facts tend to show"; and "He knows the facts" will be recognized as common locutions drawing upon the rhetorical resource of this word. The word "fact" went into the ascendant when our system of verification changed during the Renaissance. Prior to that time, the type of conclusion that men felt obligated to accept came either through divine revelation, or through dialectic, which obeys logical law. But these were displaced by the system of

1. It is surely worth observing that nowhere in the King James Version of the Bible does the word "fact" occur.

verification through correspondence with physical reality. Since then things have been true only when measurably true, or when susceptible to some kind of quantification. Quite simply, "fact" came to be the touchstone after the truth of speculative inquiry had been replaced by the truth of empirical investigation. Today when the average citizen says "It is a fact" or says that he "knows the facts in the case," he means that he has the kind of knowledge to which all other knowledges must defer. Possibly it should be pointed out that his "facts" are frequently not facts at all in the etymological sense; often they will be deductions several steps removed from simply factual data. Yet the "facts" of his case carry with them this aura of scientific irrefragability, and he will likely regard any questioning of them as sophistry. In his vocabulary a fact is a fact, and all evidence so denominated has the prestige of science.

These last remarks will remind us at once of the strongly rhetorical character of the word "science" itself. If there is good reason for placing "progress" rather than "science" at the top of our series, it is only that the former has more scope, "science" being the methodological tool of "progress." It seems clear, moreover, that "science" owes its present status to an hypostatization. The hypostatized term is one which treats as a substance or a concrete reality that which has only conceptual existence; and every reader will be able to supply numberless illustrations of how "science" is used without any specific referent. Any utterance beginning "Science says" provides one: "Science says there is no difference in brain capacity between the races"; "Science now knows the cause of encephalitis"; "Science says that smoking does not harm the throat." Science is not, as here it would seem to be, a single concrete entity speaking with one authoritative voice. Behind these large abstractions (and this is not an argument against abstractions as such) there are many scientists holding many different theories and employing many different methods of investigation. The whole force of the word nevertheless de-

pends upon a bland assumption that all scientists meet periodically in synod and there decide and publish what science believes. Yet anyone with the slightest scientific training knows that this is very far from a possibility. Let us consider therefore the changed quality of the utterance when it is amended to read "A majority of scientists say"; or "Many scientists believe"; or "Some scientific experiments have indicated." The change will not do. There has to be a creature called "science"; and its creation has as a matter of practice been easy, because modern man has been conditioned to believe that the powers and processes which have transformed his material world represent a very sure form of knowledge, and that there must be a way of identifying that knowledge. Obviously the rhetorical aggrandizement of "science" here parallels that of "fact," the one representing generally and the other specifically the whole subject matter of trustworthy perception.

Furthermore, the term "science" like "progress" seems to satisfy a primal need. Man feels lost without a touchstone of knowledge just as he feels lost without the direction-finder provided by progress. It is curious to note that actually the word is only another name for knowledge (L. *scientia*), so that if we should go by strict etymology, we should insist that the expression "science knows" (i.e., "knowledge knows") is pure tautology. But our rhetoric seems to get around this by implying that science is *the* knowledge. Other knowledges may contain elements of quackery, and may reflect the selfish aims of the knower; but "science," once we have given the word its incorporation, is the undiluted essence of knowledge. The word as it comes to us then is a little pathetic in its appeal, inasmuch as it reflects the deeply human feeling that somewhere somehow there must be people who know things "as they are." Once God or his ministry was the depository of such knowledge, but now, with the general decay of religious faith, it is the scientists who must speak *ex cathedra*, whether they wish to or not.

The term "modern" shares in the rhetorical forces of the others thus far discussed, and stands not far below the top. Its place in the general ordering is intelligible through the same history. Where progress is real, there is a natural presumption that the latest will be the best. Hence it is generally thought that to describe anything as "modern" is to credit it with all the improvements which have been made up to now. Then by a transference the term is applied to realms where valuation is, or ought to be, of a different source. In consequence, we have "modern living" urged upon us as an ideal; "the modern mind" is mentioned as something superior to previous minds; sometimes the modifier stands alone as an epithet of approval: "to become modern" or "to sound modern" are expressions that carry valuation. It is of course idle not to expect an age to feel that some of its ways and habits of mind are the best; but the extensive transformations of the past hundred years seem to have given "modern" a much more decisive meaning. It is as if a difference of degree had changed into a difference of kind. But the very fact that a word is not used very analytically may increase its rhetorical potency, as we shall see later in connection with a special group of terms.

Another word definitely high up in the hierarchy we have outlined is "efficient." It seems to have acquired its force through a kind of no-nonsense connotation. If a thing is efficient, it is a good adaptation of means to ends, with small loss through friction. Thus as a word expressing a good understanding and management of cause and effect, it may have a fairly definite referent; but when it is lifted above this and made to serve as a term of general endorsement, we have to be on our guard against the stratagems of evil rhetoric. When we find, to cite a familiar example, the phrase "efficiency apartments" used to give an attractive aspect to inadequate dwellings, we may suspect the motive behind such juxtaposition. In many similar cases, "efficient," which is a term above reproach in engineering and physics, is made to hold our attention where ethical and aesthetic considerations are entitled

to priority. Certain notorious forms of government and certain brutal forms of warfare are undeniably efficient; but here the featuring of efficiency unfairly narrows the question.

Another term which might seem to have a different provenance but which participates in the impulse we have been studying is "American." One must first recognize the element of national egotism which makes this a word of approval with us, but there are reasons for saying that the force of "American" is much more broadly based than this. "This is the American way" or "It is the American thing to do" are expressions whose intent will not seem at all curious to the average American. Now the peculiar effect that is intended here comes from the circumstance that "American" and "progressive" have an area of synonymy. The Western World has long stood as a symbol for the future; and accordingly there has been a very wide tendency in this country, and also I believe among many people in Europe, to identify that which is American with that which is destined to be. And this is much the same as identifying it with the achievements of "progress." The typical American is quite fatuous in this regard: to him America is the goal toward which all creation moves; and he judges a country's civilization by its resemblance to the American model. The matter of changing nationalities brings out this point very well. For a citizen of a European country to become a citizen of the United States is considered natural and right, and I have known those so transferring their nationality to be congratulated upon their good sense and their anticipated good fortune. On the contrary, when an American takes out British citizenship (French or German would be worse), this transference is felt to be a little scandalous. It is regarded as somehow perverse, or as going against the stream of things. Even some of our intellectuals grow uneasy over the action of Henry James and T. S. Eliot, and the masses cannot comprehend it at all. Their adoption of British citizenship is not mere defection from a country; it is treason to history. If Americans wish to become Europeans, what has happened to the hope of

the world? is, I imagine, the question at the back of their minds. The tremendous spread of American fashions in behavior and entertainment must add something to the impetus, but I believe the original source to be this prior idea that America, typifying "progress," is what the remainder of the world is trying to be like.

It follows naturally that in the popular consciousness of this country, "un-American" is the ultimate in negation. An anecdote will serve to illustrate this. Several years ago a leading cigarette manufacturer in this country had reason to believe that very damaging reports were being circulated about his product. The reports were such that had they not been stopped, the sale of this brand of cigarettes might have been reduced. The company thereupon inaugurated an extensive advertising campaign, the object of which was to halt these rumors in the most effective way possible. The concocters of the advertising copy evidently concluded after due deliberation that the strongest term of condemnation which could be conceived was "un-American," for this was the term employed in the campaign. Soon the newspapers were filled with advertising rebuking this "un-American" type of depreciation which had injured their sales. From examples such as this we may infer that "American" stands not only for what is forward in history, but also for what is ethically superior, or at least for a standard of fairness not matched by other nations.

And as long as the popular mind carries this impression, it will be futile to protest against such titles as "The Committee on un-American activities." While "American" and "un-American" continue to stand for these polar distinctions, the average citizen is not going to find much wrong with a group set up to investigate what is "un-American" and therefore reprehensible. At the same time, however, it would strike him as most droll if the British were to set up a "Committee on un-British Activities" or the French a "Committee on un-French Activities." The American, like other nationals, is not apt to be much better than he has been taught, and he has been taught sys-

tematically that his country is a special creation. That is why some of his ultimate terms seem to the general view provincial, and why he may be moved to polarities which represent only local poles.

If we look within the area covered by "American," however, we find significant changes in the position of terms which are reflections of cultural and ideological changes. Among the once powerful but now waning terms are those expressive of the pioneer ideal of ruggedness and self-sufficiency. In the space of fifty years or less we have seen the phrase "two-fisted American" pass from the category of highly effective images to that of comic anachronisms. Generally, whoever talks the older language of strenuousness is regarded as a reactionary, it being assumed by social democrats that a socially organized world is one in which cooperation removes the necessity for struggle. Even the rhetorical trump cards of the 1920's, which Sinclair Lewis treated with such satire, are comparatively impotent today, as the new social consciousness causes terms of centrally planned living to move toward the head of the series.

Other terms not necessarily connected with the American story have passed a zenith of influence and are in decline; of these perhaps the once effective "history" is the most interesting example. It is still to be met in such expressions as "History proves" and "History teaches"; yet one feels that it has lost the force it possessed in the previous century. Then it was easy for Byron—"the orator in poetry"—to write, "History with all her volumes vast has but one page"; or for the commemorative speaker to deduce profound lessons from history. But people today seem not to find history so eloquent. A likely explanation is that history, taken as whole, is conceptual rather than factual, and therefore a skepticism has developed as to what it teaches. Moreover, since the teachings of history are principally moral, ethical, or religious, they must encounter today that threshold resentment of anything which savors of the prescriptive. Since "history" is inseparable from judgment of historical fact, there has to be a considerable community of

mind before history can be allowed to have a voice. Did the overthrow of Napoleon represent "progress" in history or the reverse? I should say that the most common rhetorical uses of "history" at the present are by intellectuals, whose personal philosophy can provide it with some kind of definition, and by journalists, who seem to use it unreflectively. For the contemporary masses it is substantially true that "history is bunk."

An instructive example of how a coveted term can be monopolized may be seen in "allies." Three times within the memory of those still young, "allies" (often capitalized) has been used to distinguish those fighting on our side from the enemy. During the First World War it was a supreme term; during the Second World War it was again used with effect; and at the time of the present writing it is being used to designate that nondescript combination fighting in the name of the United Nations in Korea. The curious fact about the use of this term is that in each case the enemy also has been constituted of "allies." In the First World War Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey were "allies"; in the Second, Germany and Italy; and in the present conflict the North Koreans and the Chinese and perhaps the Russians are "allies." But in the rhetorical situation it is not possible to refer to them as "allies," since we reserve that term for the alliance representing our side. The reason for such restriction is that when men or nations are "allied," it is implied that they are united on some sound principle or for some good cause. Lying at the source of this feeling is the principle discussed by Plato, that friendship can exist only among the good, since good is an integrating force and evil a disintegrating one. We do not, for example, refer to a band of thieves as "the allies" because that term would impute laudable motives. By confining the term to our side we make an evaluation in our favor. We thus style ourselves the group joined for purposes of good. If we should allow it to be felt for a moment that the opposed combination is also made up of allies, we should concede that they are united by a principle, which in war is never done. So as the

usage goes, we are always allies in war and the enemy is just the enemy, regardless of how many nations he has been able to confederate. Here is clearly another instance of how tendencies may exist in even the most innocent-seeming language.

Now let us turn to the terms of repulsion. Some terms of repulsion are also ultimate in the sense of standing at the end of the series, and no survey of the vocabulary can ignore these prime repellants. The counterpart of the "god term" is the "devil term," and it has already been suggested that with us "un-American" comes nearest to filling that role. Sometimes, however, currents of politics and popular feeling cause something more specific to be placed in that position. There seems indeed to be some obscure psychic law which compels every nation to have in its national imagination an enemy. Perhaps this is but a version of the tribal need for a scapegoat, or for something which will personify "the adversary." If a nation did not have an enemy, an enemy would have to be invented to take care of those expressions of scorn and hatred to which peoples must give vent. When another political state is not available to receive the discharge of such emotions, then a class will be chosen, or a race, or a type, or a political faction, and this will be held up to a practically standardized form of repudiation. Perhaps the truth is that we need the enemy in order to define ourselves, but I will not here venture further into psychological complexities. In this type of study it will be enough to recall that during the first half century of our nation's existence, "Tory" was such a devil term. In the period following our Civil War, "rebel" took its place in the Northern section and "Yankee" in the Southern, although in the previous epoch both of these had been terms of esteem. Most readers will remember that during the First World War "pro-German" was a term of destructive force. During the Second World War "Nazi" and "Fascist" carried about equal power to condemn, and then, following the breach with Russia, "Communist" displaced them both. Now "Communist" is beyond any

rival the devil term, and as such it is employed even by the American president when he feels the need of a strong rhetorical point.

A singular truth about these terms is that, unlike several which were examined in our favorable list, they defy any real analysis. That is to say, one cannot explain how they generate their peculiar force of repudiation. One only recognizes them as publicly-agreed-upon devil terms. It is the same with all. "Tory" persists in use, though it has long lost any connection with redcoats and British domination. Analysis of "rebel" and "Yankee" only turns up embarrassing contradictions of position. Similarly we have all seen "Nazi" and "Fascist" used without rational perception; and we see this now, in even greater degree, with "Communist." However one might like to reject such usage as mere ignorance, to do so would only evade a very important problem. Most likely these are instances of the "charismatic term," which will be discussed in detail presently.

No student of contemporary usage can be unmindful of the curious reprobative force which has been acquired by the term "prejudice." Etymologically it signifies nothing more than a prejudgment, or a judgment before all the facts are in; and since all of us have to proceed to a great extent on judgments of that kind, the word should not be any more exciting than "hypothesis." But in its rhetorical applications "prejudice" presumes far beyond that. It is used, as a matter of fact, to characterize unfavorably any value judgment whatever. If "blue" is said to be a better color than "red," that is prejudice. If people of outstanding cultural achievement are praised through contrast with another people, that is prejudice. If one mode of life is presented as superior to another, that is prejudice. And behind all is the implication, if not the declaration, that it is un-American to be prejudiced.

I suspect that what the users of this term are attempting, whether consciously or not, is to sneak "prejudiced" forward as an uncontested term, and in this way to disarm the opposi-

tion by making all positional judgments reprehensible. It must be observed in passing that no people are so prejudiced in the sense of being committed to valuations as those who are engaged in castigating others for prejudice. What they expect is that they can nullify the prejudices of those who oppose them, and then get their own installed in the guise of the *sensus communis*. Mark Twain's statement, "I know that I am prejudiced in this matter, but I would be ashamed of myself if I weren't" is a therapeutic insight into the process; but it will take more than a witticism to make headway against the repulsive force gathered behind "prejudice."

If the rhetorical use of the term has any rational content, this probably comes through a chain of deductions from the nature of democracy; and we know that in controversies centered about the meaning of democracy, the air is usually filled with cries of "prejudice." If democracy is taken crudely to mean equality, as it very frequently is, it is then a contradiction of democracy to assign inferiority and superiority on whatever grounds. But since the whole process of evaluation is a process of such assignment, the various inequalities which are left when it has done its work are contradictions of this root notion and hence are "prejudice"—the assumption of course being that when all the facts are in, these inequalities will be found illusory. The man who dislikes a certain class or race or style has merely not taken pains to learn that it is just as good as any other. If all inequality is deception, then superiorities must be accounted the products of immature judgment. This affords plausible ground, as we have suggested, for the coupling of "prejudice" and "ignorance."

Before leaving the subject of the ordered series of good and bad terms, one feels obliged to say something about the way in which hierarchies can be inverted. Under the impulse of strong frustration there is a natural tendency to institute a pretense that the best is the worst and the worst is the best—an inversion sometimes encountered in literature and in social deportment. The best illustration for purpose of study here

comes from a department of speech which I shall call "GI rhetoric." The average American youth, put into uniform, translated to a new and usually barren environment, and imbued from many sources with a mission of killing, has undergone a pretty severe dislocation. All of this runs counter to the benevolent platitudes on which he was brought up, and there is little ground for wonder if he adopts the inverted pose. This is made doubly likely by the facts that he is at a passionate age and that he is thrust into an atmosphere of superinduced excitement. It would be unnatural for him not to acquire a rhetoric of strong impulse and of contumacious tendency.

What he does is to make an almost complete inversion. In this special world of his he recoils from those terms used by politicians and other civilians and by the "top brass" when they are enunciating public sentiments. Dropping the conventional terms of attraction, this uprooted and specially focussed young man puts in their place terms of repulsion. To be more specific, where the others use terms reflecting love, hope, and charity, he uses almost exclusively terms connected with the excretory and reproductive functions. Such terms comprise what Kenneth Burke has ingeniously called "the imagery of killing." By an apparently universal psychological law, faeces and the act of defecation are linked with the idea of killing, of destruction, of total repudiation—perhaps the word "elimination" would comprise the whole body of notions. The reproductive act is associated especially with the idea of aggressive exploitation. Consequently when the GI feels that he must give his speech a proper show of spirit, he places the symbols for these things in places which would normally be filled by prestige terms from the "regular" list. For specimens of such language presented in literature, the reader is referred to the fiction of Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer.

Anyone who has been compelled to listen to such rhetoric will recall the monotony of the vocabulary and the vehemence of the delivery. From these two characteristics we may infer a great need and a narrow means of satisfaction, together with

the tension which must result from maintaining so arduous an inversion. Whereas previously the aim had been to love (in the broad sense) it is now to kill; whereas it had been freedom and individuality, it is now restriction and brutalization. In taking revenge for a change which so contradicts his upbringing he is quite capable, as the evidence has already proved, of defiantly placing the lower level above the higher. Sometimes a clever GI will invent combinations and will effect metaphorical departures, but the ordinary ones are limited to a reiteration of the stock terms—to a reiteration, with emphasis of intonation, upon "the imagery of killing."² Taken as a whole, this rhetoric is a clear if limited example of how the machine may be put in reverse—of how, consequently, a sort of devil worship may get into language.

A similar inversion of hierarchy is to be seen in the world of competitive sports, although to a lesser extent. The great majority of us in the Western world have been brought up under the influence, direct or indirect, of Christianity, which is a religion of extreme altruism. Its terms of value all derive from a law of self-effacement and of consideration for others, and these terms tend to appear whenever we try to rationalize or vindicate our conduct. But in the world of competitive sports, the direction is opposite: there one is applauded for egotistic display and for success at the expense of others—should one mention in particular American professional baseball? Thus the terms with which an athlete is commended will generally point away from the direction of Christian passivity,

2. Compare Sherwood Anderson's analysis of the same phenomenon in *A Story Teller's Story* (New York, 1928), p. 198: "There was in the factories where I worked and where the efficient Ford type of man was just beginning his dull reign this strange and futile outpouring of men's lives in vileness through their lips. Ennui was at work. The talk of the men about me was not Rabelaisian. In old Rabelais there was the salt of infinite wit and I have no doubt that the Rabelaisian flashes that came from our own Lincoln, Washington, and others had point and a flare to them."

But in the factories and in army camps!"

although when an athlete's character is described for the benefit of the general public, some way is usually found to place him in the other ethos, as by calling attention to his natural kindness, his interest in children, or his readiness to share his money.

Certainly many of the contradictions of our conduct may be explained through the presence of these small inverted hierarchies. When, to cite one further familiar example, the acquisitive, hard-driving local capitalist is made the chief lay official of a Christian church, one knows that in a definite area there has been a transvaluation of values.

Earlier in the chapter we referred to terms of considerable potency whose referents it is virtually impossible to discover or to construct through imagination. I shall approach this group by calling them "charismatic terms." It is the nature of the charismatic term to have a power which is not derived, but which is in some mysterious way given. By this I mean to say that we cannot explain their compulsiveness through referents of objectively known character and tendency. We normally "understand" a rhetorical term's appeal through its connection with something we apprehend, even when we object morally to the source of the impulse. Now "progress" is an understandable term in this sense, since it rests upon certain observable if not always commendable aspects of our world. Likewise the referential support of "fact" needs no demonstrating. These derive their force from a reading of palpable circumstance. But in charismatic terms we are confronted with a different creation: these terms seem to have broken loose somehow and to operate independently of referential connections (although in some instances an earlier history of referential connection may be made out). Their meaning seems inexplicable unless we accept the hypothesis that their content proceeds out of a popular will that they *shall* mean something. In effect, they are rhetorical by common consent, or by "charisma." As is the case with charismatic authority, where the populace gives the leader a power which can by no

both the professed and the disguised. Americans were hearing the terms "OGPU," "AMTORG," and "NEP" before their own government turned to large-scale state planning. Since then we have spawned them ourselves, and, it is to be feared, out of similar impulse. George Orwell, one of the truest humanists of our age, has described the phenomenon thus: "Even in the early decades of the twentieth century, telescoped words and phrases had been one of the characteristic features of political language; and it had been noticed that the tendency to use abbreviations of this kind was most marked in totalitarian countries and totalitarian organizations. Examples were such words as Nazi, Gestapo, Comintern, Inprecor, Agitprop."⁴

I venture to suggest that what this whole trend indicates is an attempt by the government, as distinguished from the people, to confer charismatic authority. In the earlier specimens of charismatic terms we were examining, we beheld something like the creation of a spontaneous general will. But these later ones of truncated form are handed down from above, and their potency is by fiat of whatever group is administering in the name of democracy. Actually the process is no more anomalous than the issuing of pamphlets to soldiers telling them whom they shall hate and whom they shall like (or try to like), but the whole business of switching impulse on and off from a central headquarters has very much the meaning of *Gleichschaltung* as that word has been interpreted for me by a native German. Yet it is a disturbing fact that such process should increase in times of peace, because the persistent use of such abbreviations can only mean a serious divorce between rhetorical impulse and rational thought. When the ultimate terms become a series of bare abstractions, the understanding of power is supplanted by a worship of power, and in our condition this can mean only state worship.

It is easy to see, however, that a group determined upon control will have as one of its first objectives the appropriation

4. "Principles of Newspeak," *Nineteen Eighty-four* (New York, 1949), p. 310.

of sources of charismatic authority. Probably the surest way to detect the fabricated charismatic term is to identify those terms ordinarily of limited power which are being moved up to the front line. That is to say, we may suspect the act of fabrication when terms of secondary or even tertiary rhetorical rank are pushed forward by unnatural pressure into ultimate positions. This process can nearly always be observed in times of crisis. During the last war, for example, "defense" and "war effort" were certainly regarded as culminative terms. We may say this because almost no one thinks of these terms as the natural sanctions of his mode of life. He may think thus of "progress" or "happiness" or even "freedom"; but "defense" and "war effort" are ultimate sanctions only when measured against an emergency situation. When the United States was preparing for entry into that conflict, every departure from our normal way of life could be justified as a "defense" measure. Plants making bombs to be dropped on other continents were called "defense" plants. Correspondingly, once the conflict had been entered, everything that was done in military or civilian areas was judged by its contribution to the "war effort." This last became for a period of years the supreme term: not God or Heaven or happiness, but successful effort in the war. It was a term to end all other terms or a rhetoric to silence all other rhetoric. No one was able to make his claim heard against "the war effort."

It is most important to realize, therefore, that under the stress of feeling or preoccupation, quite secondary terms can be moved up to the position of ultimate terms, where they will remain until reflection is allowed to resume sway. There are many signs to show that the term "aggressor" is now undergoing such manipulation. Despite the fact that almost no term is more difficult to correlate with objective phenomena, it is being rapidly promoted to ultimate "bad" term. The likelihood is that "aggressor" will soon become a depository for all the resentments and fears which naturally arise in a people. As such, it will function as did "infidel" in the mediaeval period and as "reactionary" has functioned in the recent past. Mani-

means be explained through his personal attributes, and permits him to use it effectively and even arrogantly, the charismatic term is given its load of impulsion without reference, and it functions by convention. The number of such terms is small in any one period, but they are perhaps the most efficacious terms of all.

Such rhetorical sensibility as I have leads me to believe that one of the principal charismatic terms of our age is "freedom." The greatest sacrifices that contemporary man is called upon to make are demanded in the name of "freedom"; yet the referent which the average man attaches to this word is most obscure. Burke's dictum that "freedom inheres in something sensible" has not prevented its breaking loose from all anchorages. And the evident truth that the average man, given a choice between exemption from responsibility and responsibility, will choose the latter, makes no impression against its power. The fact, moreover, that the most extensive use of the term is made by modern politicians and statesmen in an effort to get men to assume more responsibility (in the form of military service, increased taxes, abridgement of rights, etc.) seems to carry no weight either.³ The fact that what the American pioneer considered freedom has become wholly impossible to the modern apartment-dwelling metropolitan seems not to have damaged its potency. Unless we accept some philosophical interpretation, such as the proposition that freedom consists only in the discharge of responsibility, there seems no possibility of a correlation between the use of the word and circumstantial reality. Yet "freedom" remains an ultimate term, for which people are asked to yield up their first-born.

There is plenty of evidence that "democracy" is becoming the same kind of term. The variety of things it is used to symbolize is too weird and too contradictory for one to find even a core meaning in present-day usages. More important

3. One is inevitably reminded of the slogan of Oceania in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*: "Freedom is Slavery."

than this for us is the fact, noted by George Orwell, that people resist any attempt to define democracy, as if to connect it with a clear and fixed referent were to vitiate it. It may well be that such resistance to definition of democracy arises from a subconscious fear that a term defined in the usual manner has its charisma taken away. The situation then is that "democracy" means "be democratic," and that means exhibit a certain attitude which you can learn by imitating your fellows.

If rationality is measured by correlations and by analyzable content, then these terms are irrational; and there is one further modern development in the creation of such terms which is strongly suggestive of irrational impulse. This is the increasing tendency to employ in the place of the term itself an abbreviated or telescoped form—which form is nearly always used with even more reckless assumption of authority. I seldom read the abbreviation "U S" in the newspapers without wincing at the complete arrogance of its rhetorical tone. Daily we see "U S Cracks Down on Communists"; "U S Gives OK to Atomic Weapons"; "U S Shocked by Death of Official." Who or what is this "U S"? It is clear that "U S" does not suggest a union of forty-eight states having republican forms of government and held together by a constitution of expressly delimited authority. It suggests rather an abstract force out of a new world of forces, whose will is law and whom the individual citizen has no way to placate. Consider the individual citizen confronted by "U S" or "FBI." As long as terms stand for identifiable organs of government, the citizen feels that he knows the world he moves around in, but when the forces of government are referred to by these bloodless abstractions, he cannot avoid feeling that they are one thing and he another. Let us note while dealing with this subject the enormous proliferation of such forms during the past twenty years or so. If "U S" is the most powerful and prepossessing of the group, it drags behind it in train the previously mentioned "FBI," and "NPA," "ERP," "FDIC," "WPA," "HOLC," and "OSS," to take a few at random. It is a fact of ominous significance that this use of foreshortened forms is preferred by totalitarians,

festly it is of great advantage to a nation bent upon organizing its power to be able to stigmatize some neighbor as "aggressor," so that the term's capacity for irrational assumption is a great temptation for those who are not moral in their use of rhetoric. This passage from natural or popular to state-engineered charisma produces one of the most dangerous lesions of modern society.

An ethics of rhetoric requires that ultimate terms be ultimate in some rational sense. The only way to achieve that objective is through an ordering of our own minds and our own passions. Every one of psychological sophistication knows that there is a pleasure in willed perversity, and the setting up of perverse shibboleths is a fairly common source of that pleasure. War cries, school slogans, coterie passwords, and all similar expressions are examples of such creation. There may be areas of play in which these are nothing more than a diversion; but there are other areas in which such expressions lure us down the roads of hatred and tragedy. That is the tendency of all words of false or "engineered" charisma. They often sound like the very gospel of one's society, but in fact they betray us; they get us to do what the adversary of the human being wants us to do. It is worth considering whether the real civil disobedience must not begin with our language.

Lastly, the student of rhetoric must realize that in the contemporary world he is confronted not only by evil practitioners, but also, and probably to an unprecedented degree, by men who are conditioned by the evil created by others. The machinery of propagation and inculcation is today so immense that no one avoids entirely the assimilation and use of some terms which have a downward tendency. It is especially easy to pick up a tone without realizing its trend. Perhaps the best that any of us can do is to hold a dialectic with himself to see what the wider circumferences of his terms of persuasion are. This process will not only improve the consistency of one's thinking but it will also, if the foregoing analysis is sound, prevent his becoming a creature of evil public forces and a victim of his own thoughtless rhetoric.