This text explores the history, theories, and practices of rhetoric. But, as literary critic Wayne Booth suggests in the quotation above, the term *rhetoric* may pose some problems at the outset because of the various meanings it has acquired in our contemporary cultural setting. For example, for some people *rhetoric* is synonymous with “empty talk,” or even “deception.” We may hear clichés like “That’s mere rhetoric” or “That’s just empty rhetoric” used as an insult when directed at someone else’s comments on a subject. Meanwhile, rhetoric has become an important topic of study in recent years, and its significance to public discussion of important political, social, and even scientific issues has been widely recognized. Scholars and teachers have expressed great interest in the topic. Many colleges and universities are again offering courses in rhetoric after having banished the term from their curricula for years, and dozens of books are published every year with *rhetoric* in their titles. Clearly, *rhetoric* arouses mixed feelings—it is widely condemned and widely studied, employed as an insult and recommended to students as an important subject of study. What is going on here? Why all the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the term *rhetoric*?

The negative attitude toward rhetoric reflected in comments such as “That’s empty rhetoric” is not, as we shall see, of recent origin. In fact, one of the earliest and most influential discussions of rhetoric occurs in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias*, a work written in the opening decades of the fourth century B.C. when rhetoric was popular in Athens. Plato, as his dialogue makes clear, takes a dim view of rhetoric, at least as practiced by some. The character Socrates, apparently representing Plato’s own perspective, argues that the type of rhetoric being taught in Athens was simply a means by which “naturally clever” people “flatter” their unsuspecting listeners into agreeing with them and doing their bidding. Plato condemns rhetoric as “foul” and “ugly.”! We will discuss his specific criticisms of rhetoric in Chapter 3.

Ever since Plato’s *Gorgias* first appeared, rhetoric has had to struggle to redeem its tarnished public image. Rhetoric bashing continues in an almost unbroken tradition
from Plato’s day to the present. In 1690 another great philosopher, John Locke, advanced a view of rhetoric not unlike, and likely influenced by, Plato’s. Here is Locke writing in his famous and highly influential *Essay on Human Understanding*:

If we speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness: all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats....

We might discover many similar condemnations of rhetoric in Western literature over the past two thousand years.

But it is also true that opinion about rhetoric has always been divided. Plato’s criticisms of rhetoric were themselves answers to someone else’s claims about its power and usefulness, and Locke’s view has often been answered as well. Recent writers have reevaluated rhetoric, and they have sometimes come to surprising conclusions. Wayne Booth is one of the twentieth-century’s leading figures in literary studies. Just a few years ago Booth wrote that he believed rhetoric held “entire dominion over all verbal pursuits. Logic, dialectic, grammar, philosophy, history, poetry, all are rhetoric.” Similarly, another great literary scholar, Richard McKeon, expressed virtually the same opinion of rhetoric. For McKeon, rhetoric was best understood as “a universal and architectonic art.” Rhetoric is “universal,” that is, present everywhere we turn. But what about *architectonic*? By this term, McKeon meant that rhetoric organizes and gives structure to the other arts and disciplines, that it is a kind of master discipline that exercises a measure of control over all other disciplines. This is because rhetoric is, among other things, the study of how we organize and employ language effectively, and thus it becomes the study of how we organize our thinking on a wide range of subjects.

In apparent agreement with Booth and McKeon, Richard Lanham of the University of California has recently called for a return to rhetorical studies as a way of preparing us to understand the impact of computers on how we read and write. Rather than developing a completely new theory for the computer age, Lanham argues that “we need to go back to the original Western thinking about reading and writing—the rhetorical pedagia [educational program] that provided the backbone of Western education for 2,000 years.” For Lanham, the study that originally taught the Western world its approach to reading and writing can still teach us new things, like how to adapt to the new medium of electronic communication.

Can Booth, McKeon, and Lanham be talking about the same “rhetoric” that Plato condemned as “foul and ugly,” or about those elements of eloquence that Locke referred to as “perfect cheats”? Or, are we now at a point in our cultural history, as Lanham and others have suggested, where rhetoric can reestablish itself as an important study with insights to offer about a surprisingly broad spectrum of human activities? In rhetoric do we have the disciplinary equivalent of Robert Louis Stephenson’s famous and frightening two-sided character, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a study that dramatically and without notice changes its character from benign to malevolent? How is it that rhetoric can elicit such sharply opposed judgments about its nature or value from such eminent observers? A complete answer to this question requires some knowledge of rhetoric’s long history, which is the subject of this book. But almost certainly rhetoric’s mixed reviews have a lot to do with its association with persuasion, that most suspect but essential human activity. A brief digression to explore this connection between rhetoric and persuasion will be worth our while.

**RHETORIC AND PERSUASION**

Though I will be taking the position that there is more to rhetoric than persuasion alone, rhetoric traditionally has been closely concerned with the techniques for gaining compliance. In fact, rhetoric has at times been understood simply as the study of persuasion. This close association with persuasion has always been at the heart of the conflict over whether rhetoric is a neutral tool for bringing about agreements, or an immoral activity that ends in manipulation and deception.

Rhetoric’s intimate connection with persuasion has long prompted both suspicion and interest. After all, we all are leery of persuasion. Who hasn’t had a bad experience as the object of someone else’s persuasive efforts? Think of the last time you knew you were being persuaded by a telephone solicitor, a religious advocate in an airport, a high-pressure salesperson, a politician, a professor, or simply a friend or family member. Something inside you may have resisted the persuasion effort, and you may even have felt some irritation. But you may also have felt you were being drawn in by the appeal, that you were, in fact, being persuaded. If the person doing the persuading had been employing the techniques of rhetoric, you would think you had some reason to distrust both rhetoric and the people who practice it. So, most of us have developed a healthy suspicion of persuasion, and perhaps a corresponding mistrust of rhetoric understood as the techniques of persuasion.

At the same time, all of us seek to persuade others on a regular basis. Many professions, in fact, require a certain understanding of and capacity to persuade. Economist Deirdre McCloskey has written that “persuasion has become astonishingly important” to the economy. Based on Census Bureau data, she estimates that “more than 28 million out of 115 million people in civilian employment—one quarter of the U.S. labor force—may be heavily involved in persuasion in their economic life,” a finding she regards as “startling.” She concludes that “economics is rediscovering the importance of words” as economists begin to understand “that persuasion is vital for the exchange of goods, services, and monies....”

Outside the arena of professional endeavors, we are perpetual persuaders in our personal relationships. Who doesn’t make arguments, advance opinions, and seek compliance from friends? Moreover, we typically engage in all these persuasive activities without thinking we are doing anything wrong. In fact, it is difficult not to persuade. We also engage in the practice on almost a daily basis in our interactions with friends, colleagues at work, or members of our family. We may attempt to influence friends or family members to adopt our political views; we will happily argue...
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the merits of a movie we like; we are that salesperson, religious advocate, or politician. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a human relationship in which persuasion has no role, or a human organization that does not depend on some degree of efforts to change other people’s thoughts and actions.

Consider some additional examples of how universal persuasion can be. We usually think of sports as a domain of physical competition, not of verbal battles. Yet, even sports involve disagreements about such things as the interpretation of rules, a referee’s call, or which play to call. And, these disagreements often are settled by arguments and appeals of various kinds, that is, by persuasion. British writer Michael Billig notes that many of the rules governing play in a sporting event are the result of rhetorical interactions about such issues as how much violence to allow on the field of play. He writes, “the rules of rugby and soccer were formulated in order to transform informal agreements, which had permitted all manner of aggressive play, into defined codes that restricted violence.” Rhetoric, especially its argumentative aspect, was crucial to the creation of these rules of play. “Above all, the rules were formulated against a background of argument.” Thus, even the rules by which athletes compete came into being through rhetoric.

What about a technical field, like medicine? If medicine is a science, shouldn’t rhetorical practices such as argument and persuasion be nonexistent? In fact, medical decisions often are made after a convincing case for or against a particular procedure has been advanced by one doctor in a persuasive exchange with other doctors. And, the decision-making exchange often is not limited to technical issues such as the interpretation of medical data, for instance, the results of a blood test. To be sure, the arguments advanced typically will involve medical principles, but they are arguments nonetheless; they are intended to be persuasive, and they range beyond strict medical guidelines. For instance, in medical dialogue we are likely to hear ethical concerns raised, the wishes of a family considered, and even questions of cost evaluated. Moreover, the patient involved often has to be persuaded to take a particular medicine or follow a specified diet or allow doctors to perform a surgical procedure. Moreover, as physicians argue, rival medical theories may be in conflict and rival egos clash. Who should perform a needed corneal transplant on a famous politician? Shouldn’t an important decision like this be resolved on the basis of medical criteria alone? Yet, even a question like this may be resolved on the basis of arguments between two well-known physicians at rival hospitals over which one of them is the best eye surgeon. Even medicine, it appears, has its rhetorical side.

Let’s bring the focus down to a more personal level. Does romance involve persuasion? When I seek the attention of someone in whom I am romantically interested, I start to develop a case—though perhaps not an explicit and public one—about my own good qualities. When in the vicinity of the individual concerned, I may attempt to appear humorous, intelligent, and considerate. My words and actions take on a rhetorical quality as I build the case for my own attractiveness. I might be convincing, or may fail to convince, but in either event I have made choices about how to develop my appeal, so to speak. Once begun, romantic relationships go forward (or backward) on the basis of persuasive interactions on topics ranging from how serious the relationship should be to whether to attend a particular concert.

What about the marketplace? Business transactions, from marketing strategies to contract negotiations, frequently involve persuasive efforts. As McCloskey has pointed out, many people make their livings on the basis of their abilities as persuasive speakers. Nor is education immune from rhetorical influence. You often are aware that a professor is advocating a point of view in a lecture that ostensibly presents simple “information,” or that classmates argue with one another hoping to persuade others to their point of view. As a matter of fact, you have been reading an extended persuasive case for the importance of studying rhetoric. Textbooks, it should come as little surprise, often have embedded within them a persuasive agenda. So, efforts at persuasion mark many, perhaps all, of our interpersonal activities. In fact, we even persuade ourselves. The internal rhetoric of “arguing with yourself” accompanies most of life’s decisions, big or small.

So, though our experiences may leave us leery of persuasion, persuasion is also an important component of our occupational, social, and private lives. Now, back to rhetoric. If rhetoric is in part the systematic study of persuasion, recognizing how crucial persuasion is to daily life may suggest that this controversial art deserves our attention. To recognize what we might call “the pervasiveness of persuasiveness” is not to condemn persuasion or rhetoric. Rather, it is to begin to appreciate the centrality of this activity to much of life, and to recognize that human beings are rhetorical beings. At this point it will be important to develop a more precise definition of rhetoric.

DEFINING RHETORIC

Jane Donaworth notes that “recently James Murphy suggested ‘advice to others about future language use’ as a good definition of rhetoric.” She adds, “as the term ‘rhetoric’ has changed in meaning, what counts as rhetoric has also changed, from the formal public speaking of ancient Greece—political, legal, and celebratory speech making—to any spoken or written form of nonliterary discourse (and many would include a great deal of literary discourse).”

George Kennedy, a scholar writing on the history of rhetoric, has defined rhetoric even more broadly as “the energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions.” This also is an interesting definition, and it suggests again that rhetoric is simply part of who we are as human beings. Kennedy asserts that when we express emotions and thoughts to other people with the goal of influencing (persuading) them, we are engaged in rhetoric. And, as we have just seen, expressing ourselves in this way is a common human activity indeed. Notice that for Kennedy rhetoric involves “signs, including language.” I’d like to focus attention on this important point for a moment, and suggest that rhetoric develops in the realm of symbols of one type or another. So, what are symbols?

An individual word such as boat is an example of a symbol, a general term referring to any sign, sound, or gesture that communicates meaning based on social agreement. Individual symbols usually are part of a larger symbolic system, such as a language. Language is a familiar symbol system using written and spoken
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words to communicate meaning. But language is certainly not the only symbol system available for the communication of meaning. Several examples from the arts may help to establish the breadth of the human symbolic realm.

Musical notation and performance constitute a symbol system, one that employs notes, markings, sound, key, harmony, and rhythm to communicate meanings. In 1983 the musician Sting created a sinister aura in his song “Every Breath You Take” by the use of a driving bass rhythm, frequently repeated chord changes, but relatively little melodic variation. The menacing song that resulted has been called a “musical ransom note.” Many of the movements in dance are symbolic because they express meaning on the basis of agreements among dancers, choreographers, and audience members. For instance, three dancers in a row performing the same robotic movement may symbolize the tedium and regimentation of modern life.

Similarly, gestures, postures, and facial expressions allow actors to communicate with audiences symbolically but without employing the symbols of spoken language. For instance, there is no actual connection between pondering a question and scratching your head, and yet a theatrical scratch of the scalp means “I don’t know” or “I’m thinking about it” by a kind of unstated social agreement. In a painting, the use of form, line, color, and arrangement can be symbolic. A stark line of dark clouds may symbolize impending disaster, even though clouds do not typically accompany actual disasters. But, because storms and calamity are sometimes associated, we understand the artist’s intent even when dark clouds appear in a picture in which a storm is not the likely source of danger.

The lines, shapes, and materials used in architecture often are employed symbolically to communicate meaning. The protests by veterans’ groups that greeted the unveiling of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., were responses to what some observers took to be the meaning of the monument, a meaning with which they did not agree. For example, much of the monument is below ground, perhaps suggesting invisibility or even death. Is it significant that the monument, because it is below ground, cannot be seen from Capitol Hill? The principal material used in the monument is black granite rather than the more traditional and triumphal white marble. The memorial’s polished surface is covered with the names of the 50,000 Americans who died in the war rather than with carved scenes of battle and victory. What does the Vietnam Memorial mean? One would be hard-pressed to find its meaning to be “A united America triumphs again in a foreign war.”

Language is the symbol system on which most of us rely for communicating with others on a daily basis. However, arts such as music, dance, theater, painting, and architecture also provide symbolic resources for communicating. In fact, human social life depends on our ability to use various symbol systems to communicate meanings to one another. As we have seen, our social life also depends on using symbols for achieving the persuasion that brings about the cooperation, compromise, and coordination of effort inherent to forming and maintaining societies. If persuasion is central to social organization, and if the art of rhetoric takes in the study of persuasion, then our lives as members of human communities are inherently and inescapably rhetorical. It may even be the case that individual conscious thought often is rhetorical in nature. Understanding rhetoric, then, is crucial to the success and happiness of communities and of individuals.

Earlier we discussed rhetoric’s connection with persuasion or influence. It is true that persuasion has long been an important goal of rhetoric, and the principal reason people have studied the art. But I would like to expand the definition of rhetoric to include other goals such as achieving clarity through the structured use of symbols, awakening our sense of beauty through the aesthetic potential in symbols, or bringing about mutual understanding through the careful management of common meanings attached to symbols. Thus, I will define the art of rhetoric as the systematic study and intentional practice of effective symbolic expression. Effective here will mean achieving the purposes of the symbol-user, whether that purpose is persuasion, clarity, beauty, or mutual understanding. The art of rhetoric can render symbol use more persuasive, beautiful, memorable, forceful, thoughtful, clear, and thus generally more compelling. In all of these ways, rhetoric is the art of employing symbols effectively. The systematic presentation of the art of rhetoric, descriptions of rhetoric’s various functions, and explanations of how rhetoric achieves its goals are collectively known as rhetorical theory. Discourse crafted according to the principles of the art of rhetoric, that is, the product of this art, I will call rhetorical discourse or simply rhetoric. Rhetorical discourse bears certain marks of this crafting that I will discuss in the following section. I will sometimes use the term rhetor (RAY-tor) to refer to an individual engaged in creating or presenting rhetorical discourse.

As we shall see later in the text, for most of its history the art of rhetoric has focused on persuasion employing the symbol system of language. This more traditional approach to rhetoric is still important. But recently both the goals of rhetoric and the symbolic resources available to those practicing the art have expanded dramatically. Does this mean that all communication, regardless of goal or symbol system employed, is rhetoric? Some scholars make communication and rhetoric synonymous, but this seems to ignore genuine and historically important distinctions among types of communication ranging from information and reports through casual conversations to outright propaganda. I will be taking the position that rhetorical discourse is a particular type of communication possessing several identifying characteristics. What, then, are the features of rhetorical discourse that set it apart from other types of communication? The following section describes five distinguishing qualities of rhetorical discourse as we encounter it in writing, speaking, the arts, and other media of expression.

**RHETORICAL DISCOURSE**

This section identifies five distinguishing characteristics of rhetorical discourse, the marks the art of rhetoric leaves on messages. Rhetorical discourse characteristically is (1) planned, (2) adapted to an audience, (3) shaped by human motives, (4) responsive to a situation, (5) persuasion-seeking, and (6) concerned with contingent issues. Not all writing or speaking that might meaningfully be termed rhetoric clearly satisfies all
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The lines, shapes, and materials used in architecture are often employed symbolically to communicate meaning. The protests by veterans’ groups that greeted the unveiling of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., were responses to what some observers took to be the meaning of the monument, a meaning with which they did not agree. For example, much of the monument is below ground, perhaps suggesting invisibility or even death. Is it significant that the monument, because it is below ground, cannot be seen from Capitol Hill? The principal material used in the monument is black granite rather than the more traditional and triumphal white marble. The memorial’s polished surface is covered with the names of the 50,000 Americans who died in the war rather than with carved scenes of battle and victory. What does the Vietnam Memorial mean? One would be hard-pressed to find its meaning to be “A united America triumphs again in a foreign war.”

Language is the symbol system on which most of us rely for communicating with others on a daily basis. However, arts such as music, dance, theater, painting, and architecture also provide symbolic resources for communicating. In fact, human social life depends on our ability to use various symbol systems to communicate meanings to one another. As we have seen, our social life also depends on using symbols for achieving the persuasion that brings about the cooperation, compromise, and coordination of effort inherent to forming and maintaining societies. If persuasion is central to social organization, and if the art of rhetoric takes in the study of persuasion, then our lives as members of human communities are inherently incomparably rhetorical. It may even be the case that individual conscious thought often is rhetorical in nature. Understanding rhetoric, then, is crucial to the success and happiness of communities and of individuals.

Earlier we discussed rhetoric’s connection with persuasion or influence. It is true that persuasion has long been an important goal of rhetoric, and the principal reason people have studied the art. But I would like to expand the definition of rhetoric to include other goals such as achieving clarity through the structured use of symbols, awakening our sense of beauty through the aesthetic potential in symbols, or bringing about mutual understanding through the careful management of common meanings attached to symbols. Thus, I will define the art of rhetoric as the systematic study and intentional practice of effective symbolic expression. Effective here will mean achieving the purposes of the symbol-user, whether that purpose is persuasion, clarity, beauty, or mutual understanding. The art of rhetoric can render symbol use more persuasive, beautiful, memorable, forceful, thoughtful, clear, and thus generally more compelling. In all of these ways, rhetoric is the art of employing symbols effectively. The systematic presentation of the art of rhetoric, descriptions of rhetoric’s various functions, and explanations of how rhetoric achieves its goals are collectively known as rhetorical theory. Discourse crafted according to the principles of the art of rhetoric, that is, the product of this art, I will call rhetorical discourse or simply rhetoric. Rhetorical discourse bears certain marks of this crafting that I will discuss in the following section. I will sometimes use the term Rhetor (RAY-tor) to refer to an individual engaged in creating or presenting rhetorical discourse.

As we shall see later in the text, for most of its history the art of rhetoric has focused on persuasion employing the symbol system of language. This more traditional approach to rhetoric is still important. But recently both the goals of rhetoric and the symbolic resources available to those practicing the art have expanded dramatically. Does this mean that all communication, regardless of goal or symbol system employed, is rhetoric? Some scholars make communication and rhetoric synonymous, but this seems to ignore genuine and historically important distinctions among types of communication ranging from information and reports through casual conversations to outright propaganda. I will be taking the position that rhetorical discourse is a particular type of communication possessing several identifying characteristics. What, then, are the features of rhetorical discourse that set it apart from other types of communication? The following section describes five distinguishing qualities of rhetorical discourse as we encounter it in writing, speaking, the arts, and other media of expression.

**RHETORICAL DISCOURSE**

This section identifies five distinguishing characteristics of rhetorical discourse, the marks the art of rhetoric leaves on messages. Rhetorical discourse characteristically is (1) planned, (2) adapted to an audience, (3) shaped by human motives, (4) responsive to a situation, (5) persuasion-seeking, and (6) concerned with contingent issues. Not all writing or speaking that might meaningfully be termed rhetoric clearly satisfies all
of these criteria, but the criteria will serve as a starting point for identifying, understanding, and responding to rhetorical discourse. We begin by considering rhetoric’s most fundamental quality.

**Rhetoric Is Planned**

Regardless of the goal at which it aims, rhetorical discourse involves forethought or planning. Thinking of rhetoric as planned symbol use directs our attention to the choices people make about how they will address their audiences. Issues that arise in planning a message include: Which arguments will I advance? Which evidence best supports my point? How will I order and arrange my arguments and evidence? What aesthetic resources are available to me, given my topic and audience?

The planned nature of rhetoric has long been recognized as one of its defining features. Some early rhetorical theorists developed elaborate systems to assist would-be orators in planning their speeches. The Roman writer Cicero, for instance, used the term *invenitio* (invention) to describe the process of discovering the arguments and evidence for a persuasive case. He then provided specific methods for inventing arguments quickly and effectively. Cicero also discussed the effective ordering of arguments and appeals under the heading *dispositio* (arrangement), while he used the term *elocutio* to designate the process of finding the right linguistic style for one’s message, whether elegant or conversational. Such concerns, already clearly defined and extensively studied in the ancient world, reflect the planned quality that characterizes rhetorical discourse. In subsequent chapters we will look more closely at a number of rhetorical systems designed to assist the planning of messages.

**Rhetoric Is Adapted to an Audience**

Concern for forethought or planning points up a second characteristic of rhetorical discourse. Rhetoric is planned with some audience in mind. *Audience* should not be understood strictly in the traditional sense of a large group of people seated in rows of chairs in a large hall. Some audiences are of this type, many are not. When you speak to a small group of employees at work, they are your audience, and you may adapt your discourse to them. The author of a letter to the editor of the local paper also writes with an audience in mind, though the audience is not made up of people whom the author can see or know personally in most cases. Similarly, a novelist writes with particular groups of readers in mind who constitute her audience.

Typically a rhetor must make an educated guess about the audience she is addressing. This imagined audience is the only one present when a message is actually being crafted, and it often guides the invention of important ways. The audience that hears, reads or otherwise encounters a message may be quite similar to the imagined audience, but even highly trained writers or speakers guess wrongly at times. Wayne Booth has spoken to hundreds of groups over his long career. He points out that even when he thought he knew his audience, he was sometimes mistaken:

> I always wrote with some kind of imaginary picture of listeners responding with smiles, scowls, or furrowed brows. Such prophecies often proved to be wildly awry: An imag-

Booth’s experience is not at all unusual. Nevertheless, some effort to estimate one’s audience has always been, and remains, a crucial component in the rhetorical process.

Rhetorical discourse, then, forges links between the rhetor’s views and those of an audience. This means attending to an audience’s values, experiences, beliefs, social status, and aspirations. Aristotle, one of the first writers to advance a complete and systematic treatment of rhetoric, emphasized a type of argument he called the enthymeme. Though scholars differ on exactly how Aristotle defined an enthymeme, most will agree that it is an argument built from values, beliefs, or knowledge held in common by a speaker and an audience. In fact, Aristotle went so far as to claim that the art of rhetorical’s central concern was the enthymeme. Perhaps this was because persuasion—for Aristotle, the principal goal of rhetoric—depends on commonality between a rhetor and an audience.

An example may be helpful to illustrate this point about commonality. A friend tries to persuade you that colorizing old films is wrong. He uses the following argument as part of his case:

> I think colorization violates the original filmmaker’s intentions. Early directors made artistic decisions about composition, lighting, and even camera angle based on the limitations of black-and-white cinematography. Colorizing black-and-white films is no different from putting brighter clothes and a new hairstyle on the Mona Lisa because the majority of people today would find these additions more appealing.

You understand the argument as it stands, even though you may not agree with it or are not persuaded by it. But, notice, it is lacking a crucial contention that you had to supply in order to understand the argument. Your friend probably doesn’t have to add this reason to his argument because you both understand that it is implied. Perhaps more to the point, you would have to accept this missing statement in order to be persuaded by the argument. The unstated claim in this argument is something like, “It is wrong to violate an artist’s intentions by modifying a work of art to suit current tastes or desires.” Your friend’s hope of persuading you depended on the two of you acknowledging the principle of not violating artistic intentions. Rhetoric stresses commonality between a rhetor and an audience, something rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke termed *identification*. Such identification is crucial to persuasion, and, thus, to cooperation, consensus, compromise, and action.

Our discussion to this point suggests that a rhetor must consider what an audience accepts as true, probable, or desirable. Rhetorical theorists Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca have written that in rhetoric “the important thing...is not knowing what the speaker regards as true or important, but knowing the views of those he is addressing.” Changes made in a message to tailor it to a particular audience are
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referred to, not surprisingly, as audience adaptation. So important is this process to rhetoric that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca affirm that "no orator can afford to neglect this effort of adaptation" and that rhetoric should be seen as involving "continuous adaptation of the speaker to an audience." 15

No effective rhetoric, then, can ignore the beliefs, values, and related concerns of her audience. But emphasizing the audience does not end with a heightened awareness of the centrality of audience adaptation to rhetoric. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that the audience actually "has the major role in determining the quality of argument and the behavior of orators." 16 That is to say, an ignorant or noncritical audience can be one cause of weak or unethical rhetoric, while a well-informed and critically minded audience demands that the rhetoric addressed to it be well reasoned and honestly presented.

This constant pursuit of audience approval in rhetoric has led to the longstanding criticism that rhetors decide what to say or write solely on the basis of what their audiences believe or prefer. This concern is justified in many cases. Some politicians, for instance, apparently spend more time trying to figure out what their audiences want them to say than speaking from their own convictions. But whether audience adaptation is done to achieve a hidden and, perhaps, questionable agenda, or to promote the audience's welfare, this activity is an important defining characteristic of rhetoric.

Rhetoric Reveals Human Motives

A third quality of rhetoric is closely related to the concern for the audience. In rhetoric we find people acting symbolically in response to their motives, a general term taking in commitments, goals, desires, or purposes that lead to action. Rhetors address audiences with goals in mind, and the planning and adaptation processes that mark rhetoric are governed by the desire to achieve these goals. The motives animating rhetorical discourse include making converts to a point of view, seeking cooperation to accomplish a task, building a consensus that enables group action, finding a compromise that breaks a stalemate, forging an agreement that makes peaceful coexistence possible, wishing to be understood, or simply having the last word on a subject. Rhetors accomplish such goals by aligning their own motives with an audience's commitments. For this reason, the history of rhetoric is replete with efforts to understand human values, identify factors prompting audiences to action, and to grasp the symbolic resources for drawing people together.

Of course, human motives have a moral quality: There are good and bad motives. Imagine, for instance, a governor running for president. As you study the governor's public statements, you look for motives animating that rhetoric: Is the governor concerned to serve the public good? Does he or she hope to see justice prevail? Is fame a motive, or greed? Perhaps all of these elements enter the governor's motivation. Of course, motives may be either admitted or concealed. The same politician would likely admit to desiring the public good, but would be unlikely to admit to seeking fame, fortune, or even merely employment. Thus, you are unlikely to hear the following admission from our imaginary governor:

My principal concern in this campaign is to ensure my election to the esteemed office of president of the United States in order that I might become wealthy, powerful, and famous. If elected I promise to serve the interests of my own small group of friends, and will do my best to conceal any unscrupulous actions taken to ensure the accomplishment of my narrow, self-interested goals.

Any informed critic of rhetoric must be aware that motives may be elusive or clearly evident, hidden or openly admitted.

Rhetoric Is Responsive

Fourth, rhetorical discourse typically is a response either to a situation or to a previous rhetorical statement. By the same token, any rhetorical statement, once advanced, is automatically an invitation for other would-be rhetors to respond. Rhetoric, then, is both "situated" and "dialogic." What does it mean for rhetoric to be situated? Simply that rhetoric is crafted in response to a set of circumstances, including a particular time, location, problem, and audience. In Chapter 10 we will consider the ideas of Lloyd Bitzer, who made this factor the principal characteristic of rhetoric in a famous essay entitled, "The Rhetorical Situation." 17 For Bitzer the rhetorical situation involves an "exigence" or problem, an audience made up of individuals who can address the problem, and "constraints," which include a range of circumstantial factors including the rhetor's abilities.

The situation prompting a rhetorical response may be a political controversy concerning welfare, a religious conflict over the role of women in a denomination, a debate in medical ethics over assisted suicide, the discussions about a policy that would control visitors in university dormitories, or a theatrical performance in which a plea for racial harmony is advanced. Regardless of the topic or particular circumstances calling it forth, the rhetorical discourse advanced in any such situation is some individual's response to a particular situation. Thus, rhetoric is a matter of response-making.

But rhetoric is also response-inviting. That is, any rhetorical expression may elicit a response from someone advocating an opposing view. Aware of this response-inviting nature of rhetoric, rhetors will imagine likely responses as they compose their rhetorical appeals. They may find themselves coaxing their mental conception of a particular audience to respond the way they think the actual audience might.

The response-inviting nature of rhetoric is easy to imagine when we are envisioning a setting such as a political campaign or a courtroom. In those settings one expects that a candidate's speeches will receive a response from the opposition, or that the prosecution's case will be answered by the defense. But does rhetoric also invite response in less formal settings? Think of a conversation between yourself and a friend regarding buying expensive tickets for a concert. You have given some thought to what you might say to persuade your friend to buy tickets for the concert, and you are even aware of the response your arguments will receive. Your first argument runs something like this: "Look, how often do you get to hear the Chicago Symphony live? And besides, it's only thirty bucks." You have argued from the rareness of the experience and
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the minimal costs involved. But your friend, ever the studied rhetor, is ready with a response: "Hey, thirty bucks is a lot of money, and I haven’t paid my sister back the money she loaned me last week." Your friend has argued from the magnitude of the costs, and from the need to fulfill prior obligations. Not to be denied your goal by such an eminently answerable argument, you respond: "But your sister has plenty of money, and thirty bucks is barely enough to buy dinner out."

And so it goes, each rhetorical statement invites a response. Maybe you persuade your friend, maybe you don’t. But the rhetorical interaction will likely involve the exchange of statement and response so characteristic of rhetoric. In Chapter 8 we will see that British social psychologist Michael Billig believes that the response-inviting nature of rhetoric reveals something important about how the human mind works.

**Rhetoric Seeks Persuasion**

As we noted earlier in this chapter, the factor most often associated with rhetorical discourse historically has been its pursuit of persuasion. Though I acknowledge that rhetoric often seeks other goals, such as aesthetic appreciation of language or clarity of expression, it is important to recognize the centrality of this particular goal throughout rhetoric’s long history. Greek writers noted more than twenty-five hundred years ago that rhetorical discourse sought persuasion, and today a rhetorical theorist like Joseph Wenzel can be found stating straightforwardly that "the purpose of rhetoric is persuasion."[1] Most of the discourse referred to as rhetoric manifestly seeks to alter an audience’s views in the direction of those of a speaker or writer. It may be useful, then, to examine more closely rhetoric’s pursuit of persuasion.

Rhetorical discourse is usually intended to influence an audience to accept an idea, and then to act in a manner consistent with that idea. For example, an attorney argues before a jury that the accused is guilty of a crime. The attorney seeks the jurors’ acceptance of the idea that the defendant is guilty, and in this way to bring about the action of finding the defendant guilty. Or, consider a more common example, I try to persuade a friend that a particular candidate should be elected mayor on the basis of the argument that the candidate has effective plans to reduce property taxes and to improve education in the city. I want my friend to accept the idea that this candidate is the best person for the job, and to take the action of voting for my candidate. Let’s shift the focus to the arts. A play reveals through the symbols of the theater the vicious nature of racism. It is reasonable to conclude that the author hopes both to influence the audience’s thinking about racism and to affect the audience’s actions on racial matters.

How does rhetorical discourse achieve persuasion? Subsequent chapters reveal the rich variety of answers this question has received in different historical periods. Answering this intriguing question is a major goal of the discipline known as rhetorical theory. Speaking in the most general terms, we can say that rhetoric seeks persuasion by employing various resources of symbol systems such as language. Four resources of symbols have long been recognized as assisting the goal of persuasion.

For convenience I will call them: arguments, appeals, arrangement, and aesthetics. Let’s look briefly at each resource.

**Argument.** First, rhetoric seeks to persuade by means of argument. An argument is made when a conclusion is supported by reasons. An argument is simply reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience. Suppose that I wish to persuade a friend of the following claim: "The coach of the women’s basketball team ought to be paid the same salary as the coach of the men’s team." To support this claim, I then advance the following two reasons:

First, the coach of the women’s team is an associate professor, just as is the coach of the men’s team. Second, the women’s coach has the same responsibilities as the men’s coach: to teach two courses each semester, and to prepare her team to play a full schedule of games.

I have now made an argument, and have sought to persuade my friend through the use of reasoning. Argument has almost always been associated with the practice of rhetoric. Chapter 5 considers the rhetorical theory of the Roman writer Cicero, who developed elaborate systems to assist students of rhetoric in discovering arguments to support their contentions.

**Appeals.** Appeals are those symbolic strategies that aim either to elicit an emotion or to engage the audience’s loyalties or commitments. We are all familiar with emotional appeals, such as those to pity or anger or fear. You are likely also to have encountered appeals to authority, to patriotism, or to organizational loyalty. Appeals can be difficult to distinguish from arguments at times, and the difference may be simply one of degree.

An argument is more clearly directed to reason, an appeal to something more visceral such as an emotion or a conviction. For instance, an advertisement shows a young woman standing in front of an expensive new car while cradling a baby in her arms. The caption reads: "How much is your family’s safety worth?" Though we could say that an argument is implied in the picture and the caption, the advertisement seems to be structured as an appeal to one’s sense of responsibility to one’s family. Even if reason responded, "Yes, safety is worth a great deal, but I still can’t afford that car," the advertisement’s appeal could perhaps still achieve its intended effect. Chapter 4 takes up the rhetorical theory of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who devoted a great deal of attention to the place of appeals to the emotions in rhetoric.

**Arrangement.** Arrangement refers to the planned ordering of a message to achieve the greatest effect, whether of persuasion, clarity, or beauty. A speaker makes the decision to place the strongest of her three arguments against animal experimentation last in her speech on the topic. The decision is made solely on the basis of her belief that her strongest argument stands to have the greatest impact on her audience if it is the last point they hear. Clearly, speakers and writers make decisions about arrangement to achieve clarity and persuasiveness in their messages. But the designers of a public
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**Argument.** First, rhetoric seeks to persuade by means of argument. An argument is made when a conclusion is supported by reasons. An argument is simply reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience. Suppose that I wish to persuade a friend of the following claim: “The coach of the women’s basketball team ought to be paid the same salary as the coach of the men’s team.” To support this claim, I then advance the following two reasons:

First, the coach of the women’s team is an associate professor, just as is the coach of the men’s team. Second, the women’s coach has the same responsibilities as the men’s coach; to teach two courses each semester, and to prepare her team to play a full schedule of games.

I have now made an argument, and have sought to persuade my friend through the use of reasoning. Argument has almost always been associated with the practice of rhetoric. Chapter 5 considers the rhetorical theory of the Roman writer Cicero, who developed elaborate systems to assist students of rhetoric in discovering arguments to support their contentions.

**Appeals.** Appeals are those symbolic strategies that aim either to elicit an emotion or to engage the audience’s loyalties or commitments. We are all familiar with emotional appeals, such as those to pity or anger or fear. You are likely also to have encountered appeals to authority, to patriotism, or to organizational loyalty. Appeals can be difficult to distinguish from arguments at times, and the difference may be simply one of degree.

An argument is more clearly directed to reason, an appeal to something more visceral such as an emotion or a conviction. For instance, an advertisement shows a young woman standing in front of an expensive new car while cradling a baby in her arms. The caption reads: “How much is your family’s safety worth?” Though we could say that an argument is implied in the picture and the caption, the advertisement seems to be structured as an appeal to one’s sense of responsibility to one’s family. Even if reason responded, “Yes, safety is worth a great deal, but I still can’t afford that car,” the advertisement’s appeal could perhaps still achieve its intended effect. Chapter 4 takes up the rhetorical theory of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who devoted a great deal of attention to the place of appeals to the emotions in rhetoric.

**Arrangement.** Arrangement refers to the planned ordering of a message to achieve the greatest effect, whether of persuasion, clarity, or beauty. A speaker makes the decision to place the strongest of her three arguments against animal experimentation last in her speech on the topic. The decision is made solely on the basis of her belief that her strongest argument stands to have the greatest impact on her audience if it is the last point they hear. Clearly, speakers and writers make decisions about arrangement to achieve clarity and persuasiveness in their messages. But the designers of a public
building may make similar decisions about arrangement. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., for instance, is physically arranged to make the strongest case possible against the racial hatred that resulted in the horrors of the concentration camps, and against all similar attitudes and actions. Careful planning went into decisions about which scenes visitors would encounter as they entered the museum, as they progressed through it, and as they exited. The great impact of this museum is enhanced by its careful arrangement. Like arguments and appeals, the arrangement of a message has occupied the attention of rhetorical theorists such as Cicero from very early times.

**Aesthetics.** The aesthetics of rhetoric are elements adding form, beauty, and force to symbolic expression. Writers, speakers, composers, or other sources typically wish to present arguments and appeals in a manner that is attractive, memorable, or perhaps even shocking to the intended audience. Abraham Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address” is a striking example of language’s aesthetic resources employed to memorable and moving effect. Consider the use of metaphor, allusion, consonance, rhythm, and even of rhyme in the following lines:

> Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

Lincoln engages the aesthetic resources of language in a traditional way to make his speech more beautiful and thus more moving and memorable. In some cases, however, a source may decide intentionally to offend traditional aesthetic categories to achieve persuasive effect. In the following passage, for example, Malcolm X answers some of the arguments of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. with provocative language that violates traditional aesthetic expectations.

> This is a real revolution. Revolution is always based on land. Revolution is never based on begging somebody for an integrated cup of coffee. Revolutions are never based on love-your-enemy and pray-for-those-who-spitefully-use-you. And revolutions are never waged singing “We Shall Overcome.” Revolutions are based on bloodshed.

Notice that Malcolm X, like Abraham Lincoln, employs allusion, consonance, repetition, and other aesthetic devices to enhance the impact of his discourse and to make it more vivid and memorable. Though Malcolm X employs the aesthetic resources of language, it would not be quite accurate to say that his goal has been to make his speech more beautiful or pleasant to listen to. Rather, his goal is apparently to shock his audience out of complacency, and to get them to reject one suggested course of action and to accept a different one.

The aesthetic dimension of rhetoric has always been important to the art. In the next chapter we will see that one of the early Sophists, Gorgias, believed that the sounds of words, when manipulated with skill, could captivate audiences. In the Middle Ages, the aesthetic dimension of rhetoric was central to rhetorical treatises that instructed readers in the art of poetry writing. The persuasive potential in the beauty of language is a persistent theme in rhetorical history.

Arguments, appeals, arrangement, and aesthetics each remind us that rhetoric is carefully planned discourse, adapted to a particular audience, revealing human motives, and responsive to a set of circumstances. This quality of planning is the defining characteristic of rhetoric with which we began our discussion in this section, and the one to which we now have returned. Rhetoric is intentionally fashioned discourse, and the art of rhetoric has developed around the activity of crafting discourse to achieve various effects including persuasion, clarity, and beauty of expression.

**Rhetoric Addresses Contingent Issues**

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote in his work, *Rhetoric*, that “it is the duty of rhetoric to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us” and when “the subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities.” He adds, “about things that could not have been, and cannot be, other than they are, nobody who takes them to be of this nature wastes his time in delineation.”

> What was this great thinker’s point regarding the subject matter of the art of rhetoric? Aristotle apparently thought that rhetoric is especially important when we are faced with particular kinds of questions—practical questions about matters that confront everyone and about which there are no definite and unavoidable answers. The term rhetorical scholars use to describe such questions is *contingent*, and about contingent questions, deliberation or careful weighing of options is crucial. The art of rhetoric assists that process of weighing the options before us when issues are contingent.

To deliberate simply means to reason through various alternatives until we reach a decision, and Aristotle says no one does this when things cannot be “other than they are.” Rhetorical theorist Thomas Farrell puts the same point this way: “It makes no sense to deliberate over things which are going to be the case anyway or things which could never be the case.”

> So, the art of rhetoric would not address a question such as whether the sun will rise tomorrow morning, nor one such as whether France should be made the fifty-first state in the American Union. The one is an inevitable fact (it is “going to be the case anyway”), the other a virtual impossibility (it "could never be the case”).

Lloyd Bitzer, quoting the nineteenth-century writer Thomas DeQuincey, has this to say about contingency: “Rhetoric deals mainly with matters which lie in that vast field ‘where there is no pros and cons, with the chance of right and wrong, true and false, distributed in varying proportions among them.’” Bitzer adds, “rhetoric applies to contingent and probable matters which are subjects of actual or possible disagreement by serious people, and which permit alternative beliefs, values, and positions.”

The art of rhetoric addresses contingent issues, those matters about which we must reason together because we need to make a decision and because a reasoned decision is appropriate.
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Thus, we could say that the art of rhetoric has both a practical and a moral component. That is, it addresses real and unresolved issues that do not dictate to us a resolution, and it engages our decision-making capacities on matters that involve our value commitments. It is for these reasons that, according to Farrell, Aristotle treated "the very best audiences as a kind of extension of self, capable of weighing the merits of practical alternatives." 24 That is, rhetoric addresses many of the same kinds of issues that face us as individuals, practical and moral issues that demand decisions or judgments, such as, Is participating in war immoral? Of course, in a democracy similar issues face us as members of the larger public. When there are alternatives to be weighed—when matters are neither inevitable nor impossible—we are facing contingencies. And, when faced with contingencies that must be resolved, typically rhetoric comes into play.

In the following section I would like to shift the focus just a bit, and consider the social functions performed by the art of rhetoric itself. We will turn our attention away from the kind of discourse we would call rhetorical, and emphasize the art that helps to create such discourse. I will be making an argument of sorts as we proceed through these benefits, and thus will be writing rhetorically. The argument aims at this conclusion: When the art of rhetoric is taken seriously, studied carefully, and practiced well, it performs various vital social functions in the society. I will emphasize six such functions.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE ART OF RHETORIC

We began this chapter by noting some unpleasant associations the art of rhetoric has carried with it through its history. But, though rhetoric can be used for wrong ends such as deception, it also plays many important social roles. Bear in mind that rhetoric’s misuse is more likely when the art of rhetoric is available only to an elite, when it is poorly understood by the audience, or when it is unethically practiced by rhetors. What functions, then, are performed by a sound, ethically grounded practice of the art of rhetoric? The six functions I will highlight are: (1) ideas are tested, (2) advocacy is assisted, (3) power is distributed, (4) facts are discovered, (5) knowledge is shaped, and (6) communities are built. Each of the six functions introduced here will be discussed in greater detail as we consider the history of the art of rhetoric in subsequent chapters.

Rhetoric Tests Ideas

One of the most important functions of rhetoric is that it allows ideas to be tested on their merits. The practice of rhetoric, both in the development and presentation of messages, provides an important and peaceful means for testing ideas publicly. In order to win acceptance for an idea in a free society, in most cases I have to advocate it. Effective advocacy, as we have already seen, means preparing and presenting arguments and appeals, considering how these will be arranged to their best effect, and asking which aesthetic resources of symbols I will employ to make my message memorable and persuasive. The process of advocacy, then, calls on our knowledge of the art of rhetoric. One of the great benefits of this process is that my ideas will be tested and refined.

In preparing my ideas for presentation, in their actual presentation to an audience, and in the responses that follow, the process of testing those ideas continues. The notion that rhetoric tests ideas brings us back to the concept of the audience. Audience is a vital element in rhetoric’s capacity to test ideas. As we seek an audience’s acceptance of an idea, we recognize that the audience will examine the case advanced to support that idea. Recall that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca maintained that the quality of audiences determines the quality of rhetoric in a society. One way of understanding this phenomenon is to recognize that some audiences test ideas carefully, while others are careless in this responsibility. The better equipped an audience is to test the ideas a rhetor advocates, and the more care that goes into that testing, the better check we have on the quality of those ideas. Thus, training in the art of rhetoric is just as important for audience members as it is for advocates.

In addition to the mental testing of ideas audiences undertake, actual rhetorical responses also help ensure that ideas are tested before the public. Thus, the rhetorical response of a friendly critic, or even of an opponent, helps me strengthen my arguments and refine my ideas. These responses make my case clearer, stronger, more moving, and more persuasive. Of course, I aim to do the best job I can initially to present my ideas effectively. But whether preparing my initial message or making corrections after hearing responses to it, the process of testing and refining ideas is tied directly to understanding the art of rhetoric. Such testing answers questions such as: Is the idea being advocated clear to me or has it been intentionally obscured? Are the arguments employed clear and convincing? Is the evidence advanced recent and from reliable sources? Have emotional appeals been excessively employed to distract attention away from arguments and evidence? Are contradictions present in the case? Each of these questions finds its answer in some dimension of the art of rhetoric.

This discussion of testing ideas assumes that disagreement need not imply that one party to a dispute is completely in error. In fact, it is not unusual that both sides to a debate modify some of their views as a result of the rhetorical exchange. Rhetoric’s idea-testing function means that each side may have to review and, perhaps, modify its arguments. 25

Rhetoric Assists Advocacy

The art of rhetoric is the method by which we advocate ideas we believe to be important. Rhetoric gives our private ideas a public voice, thus directing attention to them. Richard Lanham actually defines rhetoric as the study of "how attention is created and allocated." 26 For this reason he also speaks of rhetoric as teaching "the economics of attention." 27

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make their case to legislators, when constituents write letters to their representatives, and when committees debate the merits of a proposal. The art of rhetoric helps judicial advocates to make their cases as well. Attorneys prepare to plead their clients’ cases guided in part by their understanding of the principles that will render their advocacy clear and convincing, that is, the principles of rhetoric. Traditional courtroom pleading has involved rhetorical skill since courts resembling the ones we know first appeared. But advocates in newer legal arenas, such as environmental law, also turn to the art of rhetoric when developing their arguments.

Advocacy in less structured settings often follows the principles taught by the art of rhetoric as well. This is true whether or not advocates have had the benefit of formal education in rhetoric, though effective advocacy is perhaps more likely when actual rhetorical training has been available. When you express an artistic judgment, for example, that the films of Oliver Stone are better than those of Stephen Spielberg, you advance your reasons guided by some sense of how to present ideas effectively to an audience. In a twenty-minute video presenting interviews with AIDS patients, a student builds a case for increased funding for AIDS research. The video will be shown to funding agencies and service organizations. Editorial decisions have to be made guided by principles inherent to the art of rhetoric; Which portions of the interviews will be used in the video? Which interviews will come first, in the middle, and last? Will the interviewee be a prominent voice in the presentation, or will the people with AIDS alone speak? Such judgments are made with some sense of how an effective case is constructed in the medium of video, within a limited amount of time, and before a particular audience. Thus, whether we are considering formal contexts such as a courtroom or legislative assembly, or less structured settings such as a conversation, the art of rhetoric is important to effective advocacy.

The art of rhetoric is the study of effective advocacy. As such, it provides a voice for ideas, thus drawing attention to them and making it possible to gain adherence to them. This important function of rhetoric may easily be overlooked. But any time an idea moves from private belief to public statement, elements of the art of rhetoric are employed. For example, the women’s movement made tremendous changes in the way our society understands women, their work, and their concerns. The struggle to change societal attitudes about women has been a long and difficult one, and the art of rhetoric has been a major resource for feminist advocates in their search for justice. Hundreds of feminist writers, speakers, and artists have drawn on rhetorical insights in adapting messages to particular audiences, and in rendering those messages more persuasive.

In fact, among the most important resources available to individuals and groups engaged in responsible advocacy—second only to the merits of their ideas—is the art of rhetoric. But, it is important to recognize that false and destructive ideas also draw on rhetoric for achieving acceptance. Perhaps this is why the Greek philosopher Aristotle said that rhetoric’s potential for advocating true ideas was one of the main reasons for studying the art. As we shall see when we overview his rhetorical theory in Chapter 4, Aristotle believed that false ideas prevail only when advocates of what is true fail to understand rhetoric.

There can be little doubt that understanding the art of rhetoric enhances one’s skill in advocacy. We may at times wish that some persons or groups did not understand rhetoric, because we disagree with their aims or find their ideas repugnant. The solution to this problem (if it is a problem) would appear to be an improved understanding of rhetoric on our part. When we disagree with a point of view, rhetoric helps us to prepare an answer, to advance the counterargument. This brings us to the third benefit of the art of rhetoric, its capacity to distribute power.

Rhetoric Distributes Power

Our discussion of rhetoric’s role in advocacy raises a closely related issue that deserves separate treatment—rhetoric’s relationship to power. When we think of rhetoric and power, certain questions come to mind: Who is allowed to speak in a society, that is, whose ideas have a voice? On what topics are we permitted to speak? In which settings is speech allowed? What kind of language is permissible to employ? Which media are available to which advocates, and why? The answers a culture provides to these questions have a lot to do with the distribution of power or influence in that culture. Issues of power and its distribution have always been central to rhetorical theory, according to James A. Berlin. “Those who construct rhetorics...are first and foremost concerned with addressing the play of power in their own day.” Berlin is asserting, then, that even the guidelines one sets out as normative for writing and speaking are influenced by, and maybe developed in the service of, existing power structures.

Though symbolic expression plays an enormous role in the distribution of power in a society, we sometimes minimize the power of language. For instance, when we contrast talk to action in statements like, “Let’s stop talking and do something,” we may be misleading ourselves regarding language’s great power to shape our thinking and, thus, our actions. Nevertheless, people have long recognized that language and power are intimately connected. The great Chinese leader Mao Tse Dung was fond of saying, “power comes from the barrel of a gun.” But power in a society is more than just sheer physical force. Because speaking and writing are forms of action, and because symbols shape thought and action, rhetoric as the study of how symbols are used effectively is itself a source of power.

Rhetoric is connected to power at three levels. The first I will call the personal level. Rhetoric as personal power provides an avenue to success and personal advancement through training the capacity to express oneself effectively. Seminars in effective speaking, writing, and even in vocabulary building suggest that the relationship between personal success and ability with language is widely acknowledged. Clear, effective, and persuasive expression is not simply a matter of demonstrating your sophistication; it is an important means of advancing toward the goals you have set for yourself.

But rhetoric is also a form of psychological power, that is, the power to shape the thinking of other people. Symbols and the structure of human thought are intricately connected. Thus, we may change the way people think simply by altering the
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Rhetoric Distributes Power

Our discussion of rhetoric's role in advocacy raises a closely related issue that deserves separate treatment—rhetoric's relationship to power. When we think of rhetoric and power, certain questions come to mind: Who is allowed to speak in a society, that is, whose ideas have a voice? On what topics are we permitted to speak? In which settings is speech allowed? What kind of language is it permissible to employ? Which media are available to which advocates, and why? The answers a culture provides to these questions have a lot to do with the distribution of power or influence in that culture. Issues of power and its distribution have always been central to rhetorical theory, according to James A. Berlin. "Those who construct rhetorics...are first and foremost concerned with addressing the play of power in their own day." Berlin is asserting, then, that even the guidelines ones sets out as normative for writing and speaking are influenced by, and maybe developed in the service of, existing power structures.

Though symbolic expression plays an enormous role in the distribution of power in a society, we sometimes minimize the power of language. For instance, when we contrast talk to action in statements like, “Let's stop talking and do something,” we may be misleading ourselves regarding language's great power to shape our thinking and, thus, our actions. Nevertheless, people have long recognized that language and power are intimately connected. The great Chinese leader Mao Tse Dung was fond of saying, "power comes from the barrel of a gun." But power in a society is more than just sheer physical force. Because speaking and writing are forms of action, and because symbols shape thought and action, rhetoric as the study of how symbols are used effectively is itself a source of power.

Rhetoric is connected to power at three levels. The first I will call the personal level. Rhetoric as personal power provides an avenue to success and personal advancement through training the capacity to express oneself effectively. Seminars in effective speaking, writing, and even in vocabulary building suggest that the relationship between personal success and ability with language is widely acknowledged. Clear, effective, and persuasive expression is not simply a matter of demonstrating your sophistication; it is an important means of advancing toward the goals you have set for yourself.

But rhetoric is also a form of psychological power, that is, the power to shape the thinking of other people. Symbols and the structure of human thought are intricately connected. Thus, we may change the way people think simply by altering the
symbolic framework they employ to organize their thinking. It also becomes possible to change the way people behave by the same method. Rhetoric, then, is often the means by which one person alters the psychological world of another. In fact, symbols are perhaps the only avenue into the mental world of another person.

Advertising is a ready example of rhetoric’s psychological power. Through the strategic use of symbols, advertisers seek to shape our psychological frame and, thus, our behavior. The repeated symbolic association in advertising between a very thin body and personal attractiveness has led many women to become dissatisfied with their appearance. This alteration in the psychological world of the individual can have harmful consequences when it begins to affect a behavior such as eating. But other sources seek similar ends through symbols. Several years ago radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh created controversy by introducing the term feminazi into English. By combining the terms feminist and Nazi, Limbaugh sought to alter his listeners’ psychological frame regarding feminists and feminism. Qualities associated with the Nazis were now associated with feminists through a strategic choice of symbols. An altered way of thinking about the feminist movement and about leading feminists was sought through this new symbol, feminazi.

Rhetoric is also a source of political power. How influence gets distributed in a culture is often a matter of who gets to speak, where they are allowed to speak, and on what subjects. As we shall see in Chapter 11, French philosopher Michel Foucault has explored this intersection of rhetoric and political power in a society. He suggests that power is not a fixed, hierarchical social arrangement, but rather a fluid concept closely connected to the symbolic strategies that hold sway at any particular time.

Some rhetorical theorists point out that certain social groups have a greater opportunity to be heard in public debates than do others. This fact raises a concern for the role of ideology in rhetorical transactions. The “privileging” of some voices or points of view over others means that they are awarded preference or superiority in the persuasive transactions that shape public beliefs and attitudes. An ideology can be defined as a system of belief, or a framework for interpreting the world. The term often carries with it the notion of concealment. That is, an unexamined ideology prevents its adherents from seeing things “as they are.” The concept of ideology also reminds us to be wary of rhetoric’s use to concentrate power in a few social groups. When rhetoric is employed to advocate ideas, but its capacity to test ideas is subverted, the reign of unexamined ideology becomes a real possibility.

Rhetoric, ideology, and power are linked in another way as well. When one ideology dominates in a society, it can shape even our basic conceptions of rhetoric in ways that deliver power to one group. Thus, a patriarchal ideology suggests that rhetorical training and opportunities to speak be available only to men. Feminist writers have advanced a powerful analysis of this ideology’s role in shaping our view of rhetoric, a topic we will return to in Chapter 11. Feminist rhetoricians have pointed out how male values, male ways of thinking, male beliefs, and male motives have dominated Western rhetoric for more than two thousand years. Speeches by men often have been considered more important than speeches by women. Feminist critics have demanded access by women to the rhetorical process, and have advocated that women’s ways of thinking and arguing should be recognized as having value and benefit. Efforts in this direction include the publication of anthologies of speeches by women.

**Rhetoric Discovers Facts**

A fourth important function of rhetoric is that it helps us to discover facts and truths that are crucial to decision making. Rhetoric assists this important task in at least three ways. First, in order to prepare a case, you must locate evidence to support your ideas. This investigative process is an integral part of the art of rhetoric. Though we may have strong convictions, if we are to convince an audience to agree with us, these convictions are going to have to be supported with evidence and arguments. A solid set of facts as evidence allows better decisions to be made about controversial issues.

Second, creating a message involves thinking critically about the facts available to you. This compositional process—what rhetorical theorists call “invention”—often suggests new ways of understanding facts and new relationships among facts. Third, the clash of differing argumentative cases that often accompanies rhetorical efforts brings new facts to light and refines available facts.

Audiences expect advocates to be well informed. As an advocate you are an important source of information crucial to decision making. But your audience, which may include opponents, will also be evaluating the evidence you present. Some facts may be misleading, outdated, irrelevant, or not convincing. Thus, the art of rhetoric assists not just the discovery of new facts, but determinations about which facts are actually relevant and convincing.

As we will see in Chapter 2, the insight that rhetoric assists the process of discovering facts and ideas is an ancient one. Chapter 5 considers sophisticated systems—known as *stasis* systems—that Roman orators and teachers designed to help discover the relevant facts and arguments in a criminal case.

**Rhetoric Shapes Knowledge**

How do communities come to agreements about what they know or value? For example, how does a particular view of justice come to prevail in one community or culture? How does a value for equality under the law become established? How do we know that equality is better than inequality? Though the answer to these questions is complex, an important connection exists between social knowledge and rhetorical practices such as speaking and writing. Chapters 2 and 3 present the intense debate between the Greek Sophists and Plato over rhetoric’s relationship to knowledge.

Rhetoric often plays a critical social role in making determinations about what is true, right, or probable. For this reason Robert Scott refers to rhetoric as “epistemic,” that is, knowledge-building. What does he mean? Through rhetorical interaction, people come to accept some ideas as true and to reject others as false. Thus, rhetoric’s knowledge-building function derives from its tendency to test ideas. Once an idea has been thoroughly tested by a community or society, it becomes part of what is accepted as known by that group.
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That knowledge develops rhetorically runs counter to our usual understanding of the sources of knowledge. We often think that knowledge comes through our direct experience, or through the indirect experience we call "education." In other words, knowledge is treated as an object to be discovered in the same way an astronomer discovers a new star. The star was always out there, and the astronomer just happened to see it. Some knowledge fits this objective description better than does other knowledge. A star's existence is something demonstrable, and so can be taken as known on the basis of physical evidence. Perhaps rhetoric plays a limited role in establishing this sort of knowledge. But, the star's age is less certain than is its existence, and may require argument among scientists to determine. Rhetoric now begins to play a role in establishing knowledge, for the scientists involved in the debate will draw on what they know of the art to persuade their peers. If the majority of scientists do reach a working agreement about the star's known age, members of the public might have other ideas. Knowledge about the universe's age has religious significance for many people. Do we know that the star's age should be taught in schools? Do we know that money should be invested in trying to launch a telescope to get a better look at the new star? Do we know that the star has an effect on the course of our lives, as astrologers would argue? Rhetorical interactions are involved in resolving each of these questions, and the art of rhetoric becomes important to determining what finally is accepted as "knowledge." Thus, rhetoric influences every aspect of knowledge-building, from what counts as a fact through how the fact will be interpreted to how it will be employed to justify actions. We will look more closely at the issue of rhetoric in the scientific realm in Chapter 8.

Rhetoric Builds Community

What defines a community? One answer to this question is that what people value, know, or believe in common defines a community. Some observers fear that Americans may be losing their sense of constituting a community in the face of growing pressures toward fragmentation. If this is the case, and if preserving a sense of community is a goal worth striving for, what can be done about this problem of social fragmentation? Many of the processes by which we come to hold beliefs and values in common, as was suggested in the preceding section, are rhetorical in nature. Michael J. Hogan, a scholar who has studied the relationship between rhetoric and community, writes that "rhetoric shapes the character and health of communities in countless ways..." Many writers who have sought to understand the ways in which communities define themselves, and the forces that contribute either to the strength or weakness of communities, have concluded that "communities are largely defined, and rendered healthy or dysfunctional, by the language they use to characterize themselves and others." If this is indeed the case, as Hogan and others have suggested, then it is important to explore the specific function played by rhetoric in building—or perhaps in destroying—communities.

I am not speaking here about communities as geographical entities bounded by certain borders or streets, or contained in particular districts of a city. Rather, I have in mind communities of people who find common cause with one another, who see the world in a similar way, who identify their concerns and aspirations with similar concerns and aspirations of other people. Thus, a church might constitute a community, a group of employees forming a union might constitute a community, and members of an ethnic group living in the same city might also be a community. Not every aspect of such communities results from the practice of rhetoric. For example, ethnicity is not a function of discourse. But developing common values, common aspirations, and common beliefs very often are a result of what is said, by whom, and with what effect.

Consider, for example, the community that developed around the civil rights advocacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1950s and 1960s. Dr. King was clearly a highly skilled and knowledgeable practitioner of the art of rhetoric. He, and others working with him, created a community of value and action. And much of their work was accomplished by means of effective rhetorical discourse. More specifically, Dr. King advocated certain values in a persuasive manner. Among the values he advocated were equality, justice, and peace. He also tested particular ideas in public settings—ideas like racism, which he rejected, and ideas like unity among races, which he embraced. He brought facts to light for his audiences, such as facts about the treatment of African American people in America. Dr. King even provided a language for talking about racial harmony in America. His notion of a "dream" of a racially unified America and of a method of "nonviolent resistance" inspired many in the civil rights movement who made his terminology part of their own vocabulary.

As Dr. King spoke and wrote, his ideas were expressed, tested, and either embraced or rejected, those who embraced his ideas became part of a larger community that King was gradually building. Through his rhetorical efforts, King built a "community of discourse" that enabled people to think and act with unity to address a wide range of serious social problems. He developed an active community around certain very powerful ideas to which he gave voice rhetorically. Rhetorical processes were central to his vital work of community-building.

It is interesting to note that often members of a particular community—examples might include feminists, Orthodox Jews, or animal rights activists—do not know all of the other members of their community personally. In fact, any particular member of a large and diffuse community might know only a very small fraction of the people who would say they belong to the group. How is a sense of community maintained when a community is geographically diffuse? Certainly the group's symbols, metaphors, and ways of reasoning function to create a common bond that promotes a strong sense of community despite physical separation. Moreover, communities are sustained over time by the rhetorical interactions of their members with one another and with members of other groups. As Hogan writes, "communities are living creatures, nurtured and nourished by rhetorical discourse."38

This section has discussed six functions performed by the practice of rhetoric: (1) assisting advocacy, (2) testing ideas, (3) distributing power, (4) discovering facts, (5) shaping knowledge, and (6) building community. These functions are closely related to major themes in the history of rhetoric and provide connections among subsequent chapters. The next section sets out some of these themes in greater detail.
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CONCLUSION

We began this chapter by considering some common meanings of the term *rhetoric*, such as empty talk, beautiful language, or persuasion. Whereas these meanings frequently are associated with the term, *rhetoric* was defined as the study or practice of effective symbolic expression. We also noted that rhetoric refers to a *type of discourse* marked by several characteristics that include being planned, adapted to an audience, and responsive to a set of circumstances. We considered some of rhetoric’s social functions such as testing ideas, assisting advocacy, and building communities.

This chapter suggests that several important issues arise when we begin to think seriously about the art of rhetoric and its various uses. We will return to these themes as we consider the ways in which the art of rhetoric has developed over the past twenty-five hundred years. The following issues will be revisited throughout this text:

1. **Rhetoric and power.** Rhetoric bears an important relationship to power in a society. The art of rhetoric itself brings a measure of power. But rhetorical practices also play an important role in distributing power. Determinations are made in any culture regarding who may speak, before which audiences, and on which topics. All of these determinations have important implications for how power is distributed. If a segment of a society lacks the knowledge of rhetoric, or is denied the ability to practice rhetoric, does this mean that their access to power is correspondingly diminished? We will examine this question at several junctures in the history of rhetoric.

2. **Rhetoric and truth.** Rhetoric discovers facts relevant to decision making. Moreover, rhetoric helps to shape what we say we know or believe. What, then, is rhetoric’s relationship to truth? Does rhetoric discover truth? Or, does rhetoric simply provide the means of communicating truth discovered by other means? Some theorists contend that rhetoric actually creates truth. As we explore the history of rhetoric, we will uncover various answers to these questions. The stakes could not be higher. If truth is transcendent and absolute, rhetoric’s role in its discovery or creation is minimal. In fact, rhetoric might even be a threat to truth. If, on the other hand, truth is a matter of social agreements, rhetoric plays a major role in shaping our view of truth.

3. **Rhetoric and ethics.** Persuasion is a central concern in the study and practice of rhetoric. This means that rhetoric always raises moral or ethical questions. If persuasion is always wrong, then rhetoric shares this moral condemnation. If persuasion is acceptable, what are the ethical obligations of a speaker, writer, or artist with regard to an audience? What are the moral restraints within which rhetoric ought to be practiced? In a society in which various moral views are present, how do we derive a standard of ethical practice that all rhetors can accept? Clearly the question of rhetoric’s relationship to ethics is an important one. Few people would want to live in a society in which rhetoric is practiced without any regard for ethical responsibility on the part of advocates.

4. **Rhetoric and the audience.** The question of the ethics of rhetoric is inseparable from the question of a rhetor’s potential influence on an audience. It is because rhetoric is a form of power that ethical considerations attend rhetoric. It is because rhetorical audiences are made up of human beings that rhetoric’s power poses ethical concerns in the first place. How does rhetoric achieve effects such as altering thought or prompting action? What factors in language and other symbol systems allow skilled advocates to influence their audiences? What role does the style or beauty of one’s language play in affecting an audience? If audiences do have some control over the quality of rhetoric, some effort to educate audiences seems to be in everyone’s best interest. Yet, as a culture we invest relatively little time and effort in such education. As we explore the history of rhetoric, the audience will often be a central concern.

5. **Rhetoric and society.** Our discussion in this chapter has also raised the larger issue of rhetoric’s various roles in the development and maintenance of societies. What are rhetoric’s specific functions, if any, in building and maintaining a society? Do we depend on rhetoric to forge the compromises and achieve the cooperation needed to live and work together in a democratic society? How does rhetoric shape and propagate the societal values that give us both a corporate identity and a common direction? Would it be preferable to establish a society in which rhetoric played no role at all? Issues of power and ethics will attend this critical question of rhetoric’s role in society.

These themes and questions will animate our discussion of rhetoric’s history. The different answers to our questions suggested by a wide range of writers, and their reasons for their answers, make the history of rhetoric a rich and intriguing source of insight into the development of human thought, relationship, and culture. In Chapter 2 we encounter most of these themes as we begin our study of rhetoric’s long and rich history by looking at its controversial origins and early development in ancient Greece.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How are the following terms defined in the chapter?
   - rhetoric
   - the art of rhetoric
   - rhetorical discourse
   - rhetor

2. What are the marks or characteristics of rhetorical discourse discussed in this chapter?

3. Which specific resources of language are discussed under the heading, Rhetoric Is Planned?

4. What social functions of the art of rhetoric are discussed in this chapter?

5. Which three types of power are enhanced by an understanding of the art of rhetoric?
CONCLUSION

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These themes and questions will animate our discussion of rhetoric’s history. The different answers to our questions suggested by a wide range of writers, and their reasons for their answers, make the history of rhetoric a rich and intriguing source of insight into the development of human thought, relationship, and culture. In Chapter 2 we encounter most of these themes as we begin our study of rhetoric’s long and rich history by looking at its controversial origins and early development in ancient Greece.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. How are the following terms defined in the chapter?
   - rhetoric
   - the art of rhetoric
   - rhetorical discourse
   - rhetor

2. What are the marks or characteristics of rhetorical discourse discussed in this chapter?

3. Which specific resources of language are discussed under the heading, Rhetoric Is Planned?

4. What social functions of the art of rhetoric are discussed in this chapter?

5. Which three types of power are enhanced by an understanding of the art of rhetoric?
6. Given the definition and description of rhetoric advanced in this chapter, what might historian of rhetoric George Kennedy mean by saying that the yellow pages of the phone book are more rhetorical than the white pages? (Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition, p. 4.)

7. What is meant by the statement that rhetoric addresses contingent issues?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The following artifacts, Abraham Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address” and Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Success Is Counted Sweetest,” were written at about the same time, and each is written with reference to the Civil War. The two pieces are often held to represent two different types of discourse: Lincoln’s address is categorized as rhetoric, while Dickinson’s work fits best into the category of poetry. Thinking back on the characteristics of rhetorical discourse discussed in this chapter, what case could be made, if any, for distinguishing Lincoln’s work from Dickinson’s? Do they belong in different literary categories? Refer back to the resources of language—argument, appeal, arrangement, and artistic devices—in thinking about these two pieces. Does each employ all four resources?

SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS
Abraham Lincoln

Fellow-citizens: At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued seemed very fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avoid it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it with war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide the effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let it perish, and the war came. One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, by war, while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease when, or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in warring their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces, but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayer of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh. If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must come, but which having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern there any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Success Is Counted Sweetest
Emily Dickinson

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne’er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple host
Who took the flag to-day
Can tell the definition.
So clear, of victory,
As he, defeated, dying,
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonized and clear.

2. If rhetoric accomplishes the benefits and performs the functions discussed in this chapter, it might follow that rhetorical training should be a central component in education. Has training in rhetoric or some related discipline been part of your educational experience? Should education focus more on the skills that make up the art of rhetoric?

3. Is rhetoric as pervasive in private and social life as the chapter suggests? In what realms of life, if any, does rhetoric appear to have little or no part to play? Where is its influence greatest, in your estimation?

4. Respond to the claim that rhetoric is important to the process of building community. Has it been your experience, when people come together to form a community, that ways of speaking and reasoning in common are an important part of that process?
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Could a greater understanding of the art of rhetoric enhance this process of building a community?

5. Some people have criticized rhetoric for being manipulative. Do you believe that rhetoric is, by its very nature, manipulative? If not, what ethical guidelines might be important for constraining the practice of rhetoric so that it did not become a tool for manipulation?

TERMS

Aesthetics: Study of the persuasive potential in the form, beauty, or force of symbolic expression.

Appeals: Symbolic methods that aim either to elicit an emotion or to engage the audience's loyalties or commitments.

Argument: Discourse characterized by reasons advanced to support a conclusion. Reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience.

Arrangement: The planned ordering of a message to achieve the greatest persuasive effect.

Audience adaptation: Changes made in a message to tailor it to a particular audience.

Dispositio: Arrangement; Cicero's term for the effective ordering of arguments and appeals.

Elocutio: Style; Cicero's term to designate the concern for finding the appropriate language or style for a message.

Enthymeme: An argument built from values, beliefs, or knowledge held in common by a speaker and an audience.

Ideology: A system of belief, or a framework for interpreting the world.

Inventio (invention): Cicero's term describing the process of coming up with the arguments and appeals that would make up the substance of a persuasive case.

Motives: Commitments, goals, desires, or purposes when they lead to action.

Rhetor: Anyone engaged in preparing or presenting rhetorical discourse.

Rhetoric: Art of: The study and practice of effective symbolic expression.

Type of discourse: Goal-oriented discourse that seeks, by means of the resources of symbols, to adapt ideas to an audience.

Rhetorical discourse: Discourse crafted according to the principles of the art of rhetoric.

Rhetorical theory: The systematic presentation of the art of rhetoric, descriptions of rhetoric's various functions, and explanations of how rhetoric achieves its goals.

Symbol: Any mark, sign, sound, or gesture that represents something based on social agreement.

ENDNOTES


7. McCloskey, 15.
14. For a very good recent translation of Aristotle's Rhetoric, see the Kennedy translation cited above. For Aristotle's discussion of the enthymeme, see Rhetoric, Book I, Chapter I.
34. For example: Women's Voices in Our Time, eds. Victoria L. DeFrancisco and Marvin Jensen (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1994).
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38. Hogan, 292.


CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORY OF RHETORIC

It is typical of histories to identify origins, and this chapter will make this history typical in that way. However, the “history” of rhetoric cannot have a beginning point any more than can the history of dance have such an unambiguous genesis. When human beings recognized in movement the capacity, not just for mobility, but also for expression, dance began. When people found in symbols the capacity, not merely for communicating meaning, but also, through some planning, for accomplishing their goals, rhetoric began. Thus, though rhetoric’s precise origin as the planned use of symbols to achieve goals cannot be known, its systematic presentation within a particular cultural tradition can be located historically.

The history of rhetoric in the Western tradition begins, as do several other histories or arts or disciplines, with that ancient cluster of highly inventive societies, the Greek city–states of the eighth through the third centuries b.c. But knowing when in Greek history to date the origins of rhetoric, or of those ideas about discourse that became the Greek study of rhetoric, is difficult. Richard Leo Enos points out that theories about the power of language were already present in the writings of Homer in the ninth century B.C. In Homeric writing Enos finds three functions of language: the “heuristic, eristic, and protreptic.”

Briefly, the heuristic function of discourse is that of discovery, whether of facts, insights, or even of “self-awareness.” The heuristic function of discourse is essential to “the inventive processes,” that is the ability to discover the means of expressing our thoughts and sentiments effectively to others. Second, the eristic function of discourse draws our attention to “the inherent power of the language itself.” Eristic expresses discourse’s power to express, to captivate, to argue, even to injure. Third, the protreptic function of discourse expresses “the capacity [of words]...