THE JOY OF RHETORIC: TURNS IN RHETORIC AND ONTOLOGY THAT ORIENT BEING IN AESTHETIC HABITUATION

A Dissertation in
Communication Arts and Sciences
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2008
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ABSTRACT

Human beings have been called “political animals,” “animals with speech,” “Cartesian egos,” and many other names by metaphysicians of philosophy. My reading of rhetoric against the traditional canon of metaphysics places human being within dialectics of materiality and ideality, and dialectics of tradition and natality. Embodied and temporal, human beings are rhetorical beings insofar as they must make, aesthetically, something of their dialectical positions (*topoi*) by participating in dialectical turns that are dramatistic in giving rise to character (*tropos*). Human beings can easily feel swept up by or thrown into their places, times, and situations; all hopes for agency and justice must turn on a being’s capacity to exercise, or habituate, so as to be prepared to make dialectical placement take on significance in the web of relations called meaning. This dialectical placement may take on significance if form and matter work together, if the patterns of tradition are bent (*tropos*) to meet the uniqueness of new situations, and if the human being in the middle of it all is properly trained so as to facilitate rhetoric’s work.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None have influenced my thinking more powerfully than Lyle Jackson, Jim Hanson, and Matt Taylor in their roles as my debate coaches, and Jessica Clarke and Geof Brodak as my mentors (regardless of which circles each may now inhabit).

Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, from whom I took only two classes, remains a powerful influence on my thinking through his book Creatures of Prometheus. His book was the beginning of my academic program as a graduate student, and will dominate the direction of my work for many years yet to come.

David Peterson, Nader Haddad, Toni Nielson, Eric Maag, Anne Fleisher, and especially Rachel Hastings are all deserving of credit for my turn to aesthetics and for any remaining optimism I have about academics and politics.

The members of my dissertation committee are all worthy of praise—and they get quite a lot of that in the citations found throughout this work, which I take to be no flattery on my part, but only a reflection of their simple goodness as people and quality as scholars. Drs. Rosa A. Eberly, Stephen H. Browne, Thomas W. Benson, and Christopher P. Long all influenced my thinking in detectable directions, so it was inevitable that they make so many appearances as they did in this work. Dr. Long was cited the most times among the committee members because without his teaching I think that the significant amount I thought I knew about Aristotle would have continued to be wrong. Of the four of committee members, Dr. Browne’s influence may be least detectible—because I took courses on Hannah Arendt and Close-Textual Analysis from him—so he, alone, of the committee members may just have to take my word for it that he made some differences
in my thinking (because I often skipped past him to cite Arendt directly or to practice close-textual analysis). Members of my previous thesis committees who have not yet been listed, Jeannine Uzzi and Karen Rasmussen, also deserve credit for working with me while I developed the direction of my research into the present dissertation.

Emily Young, Sarah-Stone Watt, Una Kimokeo-Goes, Brandon Whearty, and Tony de la Garza all deserve a measure of credit for keeping me alive, keeping me from acting foolishly, or keeping me alive after acting foolishly. Joe DeSantiz and Dr. Ann Johnson, who are deserving of the same credit, are also the two people most responsible for helping me to finally pry California State University, Long Beach’s hands off of my M.A. diploma. David Somers should probably also be thanked for croaking right as I was finishing my first reading of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and putting the finishing touches on the dissertation; no one I know has actualized so much of “one’s own most potentiality-for-being” than David had.

A special thanks goes to my academic advisors over the years and to their outstanding qualities of patience: Drs. Robert Withycombe, Craig R. Smith, and Rosa A. Eberly. How on earth you all put up with me and let me get away with the things that I did I will never know.

Finally, I would like to thank the Devil, without whom I would not be in the place I am today. I have now been his Advocate for some time. Any originality, sharp wittedness, and outstanding character I surely owe to Your Unholyness. See you soon.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC AND ONTOLOGY

Rhetoric and ontology confound each other—at least so much so that rhetorical theory cannot do without an account of ontology’s meaning for rhetorical theory. Ontology, too, needs a rhetorical account for itself, but that account may be provided by rhetoric or by other means (as philosophers have continued to study linguistics, hermeneutics, heuristics, and more without needing to invoke rhetoric overtly). Ontology, used interchangeably with the term “metaphysics,” is roughly defined as the “study of being, existence, or reality.” Although I will have to come back around to discussing the meaning of some of these terms, I will first attempt to justify my claim concerning the mutual “confounding” of rhetoric and ontology by presenting several examples, each of which I call a “failure of metaphysical understanding.” In each case of “failure” a question of rhetoric is found unanswerable or even inarticulable because ontological clarity is missing.

1 “Ontology” is formed from two ancient Greek words, ontos and logos. Ontos is the genitive (denoting possession) form of on, meaning “being.” “Metaphysics” has a bit spicier etymology. Although it is clearly formed from the ancient Greek meta (“beyond” or “after”) and phusis (“nature”), the word was probably first used as a misnomer for a work by Aristotle. Some fluky at the Library of Alexandria came across a set of Aristotle’s books and, not seeing any title to them (or obvious organization according to some traditions), the librarian titled the books the Metaphysics since they were thought to be written after Aristotle wrote his Physics. Aristotle’s true subject in the Metaphysics concerned “first principles” and the meaning of the term ousia (“being,” but especially “human being”). Had Aristotle been present to organize his works, scholars today might not have the word “metaphysics,” but instead refer to Aristotle’s work as the Ontos or the Archê, or even Latinized forms like De Ontics or De Archæics.
1. “Failures of Metaphysical Understanding”

Rhetoric can be ontologically confounded when rhetorical scholars grapple with the idealism of their concepts. Taking on questions about the representation of “Woman” in her book, Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure, Michelle Ballif (whose work I admire) declined to even define her term “Woman,” except as it was represented by others (1-2). She opposed herself to viewing of human beings as “subjects” because subjectivity was a “strategy of domination” that “observes, objectifies, and negates the other in an act of violence”; naturally her opposition to the subject also led her to reject “the Western metaphysical and humanist epistemologies which sustain that subject” (3). After all those rejections, how could Ballif come to a “grounding” uninfected by Western metaphysics or humanist epistemology? Representation-as-violence made Ballif so careful in writing about her topic that she could not even come to admit that the people she hoped to benefit are women (which she could not say because the “is” or “are” implants the metaphysics she hoped to dodge by approaching representations instead of the people represented). Ballif was right to worry about the gloss\(^2\) that a category “women” could place on some human beings—but she was, and probably still is, well aware that the category has its uses and those uses need not be abandoned even as they contradict strict principles of representational justice. Identity politics and perhaps even all speaking about identity are failures of metaphysical understanding because the stability of identity on which speech and politics rely is ever, at best, a temporary but necessary fiction that has not yet found itself articulable (though

\(^2\) *Glōssa* is the ancient Greek word for “tongue” (hence our word for stage fright or fear of public speaking, “glossophobia”).
it has often been pointed toward by Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and more). In three pages of text, so as to be specific on what bases Ballif intended to reject those Western metaphysics and epistemologies of the subject, Ballif namedropped Sigmund Freud, Cheryl Glenn, Krista Ratcliffe, Andrea Lunsford, Jacques Derrida, Félix Guattari, Hélène Cixous, Alice Jardine, Luce Irigaray, Jacques Lacan, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Giles Deleuze, Michael Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, Jürgen Habermas, and Gorgias of Leontini (Ballif 2-4). I have no quarrel with “calling on the Muses” for inspiration, especially so many of them, and in fairness to Ballif she did explain, though quickly, how she fit the contributions of all these thinkers together. But one is still left with a daunting task should one wish to test, to falsify, her claims concerning the “strategy of domination” sustained by Western metaphysics. One would only have to answer the collective oeuvre of postmodern philosophers and anti-essentialist feminists from the last century! Should one be so sure that metaphysics must go? Can no material understanding be found that approves of idealism while avoiding essentialism?

Rhetoric can be ontologically confounded when rhetorical scholars confront the materialist stage through which rhetorical performances take place. Marxists, for example, base the power of their critique of capitalism in materialist metaphysics (because control of resources, the means of production, the distribution of labor, and requirements for survival are all conceived of as materialist). Time after time I have

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3 I will go on to use several different thinkers (especially Aristotle, Michel Foucault, and Hannah Arendt) with very different meanings for the term “power.” I will aim to be specific when I am using “power” as a term of art from one of these thinkers, but the careful reader should try hard to avoid pigeon-holing me to one use of such a common word. In this instance, for example, “power” clearly indicates only the “persuasive forcefulness” of Marxist critique.
heard an NCA panelist argue that it is the material that “counts” (Dana L. Cloud, and any of her Marxist students, cannot fail to come to mind). Human beings labor on and need materials; when they have control over the means of production for these materials, they grow rich and can make use of leisure. Leisure is meanwhile denied to most others because they are themselves the means of production; the best they can do is cobble a living together and hope for a better future. Imagine that Marxists were to be granted their point that materialism is crucial: then what? Captains of industry would not just hand over the bridge and navigational charts. Capitalists will not simply start sharing—that is the whole point of a materialist metaphysics, after all. Materialism would so thoroughly determine human beings that persuading them to be other than Hobbesian clockwork would be as fruitless after the revolution as it has been before it. Marxist materialists do have the option of violence, since that is material and is thought to be persuasive in certain ways. But assuming that Marxists could win whatever conflict they started, why would materialism then fail to determine human beings as it had determined them before? Would not the new “haves” then lord it over the mass of “have nots”? Is this not the reason that Stalinism is, in fact, a faithful representation of the Marxist ideal in practice? Because Marxist politics cannot overcome Marxist metaphysics? One might go on using the violence, to keep the “have-nots” at bay, but the French tried that in their first revolution, an experience not fondly remembered by anyone. The failure of social and economic justice is a failure of metaphysical understanding because Marxist

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4 Dr. Eberly suggested that “materialist metaphysics” was an oxymoron. That would be true only if one were a strict materialist in denial about other possibilities.

5 For a much more moderate take on Marxist metaphysics, see James Arnt Aune, *Rhetoric and Marxism*, Polemics Series (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). Aune defended an interpretation of materiality that acknowledged the importance of ideas to their adherents even as materiality remained central.
materialism would so completely determine human beings that no room for agency would remain to ensure that capitalism’s Marxist successors would not become new capitalists who, themselves, could not be determined except through additional “material” means. Can materialist metaphysics be modified? Might some idealist understanding be found that took up materiality while also acknowledging the persuasive power latent in the concepts and ideologies human beings have made for themselves conventionally as meaning?

Rhetoric can be ontologically confounded by essentialism. Racism and sexism and heterosexism are ontological problems. They are manifest in social and political behaviors, roles, and attitudes, but they are necessarily ontological concerns because one is conditioned to act in ways that reflect a culture’s attitudes toward essentializing definitions of race, sex, sexual orientation, and more. Even if one resisted culture, ontology as a marker of “what one is” permits some responses while making others impossible. Law Professor Mari J. Matsuda has even argued that racism has inevitable, unavoidable psychological consequences for all people in a racist society because race’s meanings are pervasive. Targets of racism get the worst, obviously, but sympathizers too are psychologically troubled by their secret relief that they do not have to go through everyday racism, their inability to talk about race for fear of crossing the line, and the inability to escape racism’s most basic hateful meanings: “‘Those people’ are lazy, dirty, sexualized, money-grubbing, dishonest, inscrutable, we [sympathizing non-targets] are told. We reject the idea, but the next time we sit next to one of ‘those people’ the dirt message, the sex message, is triggered. We stifle it, reject it as wrong, but it is there, interfering with our perception and interaction with the person next to us” (Matsuda
For targets, ontology is the reason that critique cannot help a black man get a cab in Manhattan at 3 a.m. Even “passing” (pretending publicly to be straight when one is not, for example) reflects an ontology as a capacity to occasionally or often “escape” the cultural attitudes toward one’s cloaked identity, leaving the one who passes with internal conflicts or external questions of authenticity. And then confounding race by being of many races or confounding gender by not fitting into sex’s binary roles throws the whole network of meanings into question. But, somehow, questions are not strong enough to throw the network away. The failure of our whole world to overcome what bell hooks has called “white capitalist heterosexist patriarchy” is surely a failure of metaphysical understanding because critique has moved human beings, so we think, to the precipice of progress many times, but the material conditions of our bodies have yet to be freed from the idealistic psychological powers of essentialism. Can “essence” be metaphysically turned inside-out so that a greater range of rhetorical performances—freedoms—might be possible?

Rhetoric can be ontological confounded by the ontological meanings of freedom, responsibility, guilt, and madness. In fact, I first became interested in metaphysics because I observed from afar an event wherein the incorrectly established premises for what was the case came to dominate the why and the how. Andrea Yates, hemmed in by her marriage, her dying father, the institution of motherhood, madness, and especially her children, murdered all five kids, drowning them one by one in the bathtub. Teetering between postpartum depressive psychosis and moments of clarity induced by medication,

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6 Matsuda’s entire article is worth a read. She took down “colorblindness” with unparalleled skill.
Andrea Yates told the authorities that she was a bad mother and that she was saving her children from her bad mothering. The Texas criminal justice system found only two ways to “make sense” of her actions: “guilty” or “not guilty by reason of insanity.” The apparatus for judging the responsibility for the murders was not adequate to the task of investigating whether agency is more complex than the bifurcation into “she had agency” or “she did not.” She had two trials, each one coming to a different of the two possible conclusions, and so I can say on an empirical basis that neither option was satisfactory in any sense of the word “justice.” Prison, the first conclusion, is a hell on earth; a mental institution, the second and current conclusion, is a prison without the legal protections afforded to sane people (because insane people are not likely to have metaphorical or literal standing to sue). The failed judgment upon Andrea Yates is a failure of metaphysical understanding because the judgment could not make sense of the madness and murder without choosing between them, disregarding alternatives or even a partial mix.

Rhetoric can be ontologically confounded by “the media” and media’s powers of idealism. Never in the history of knowledge were so many conversing of so much to the enlightenment of so few. What is human being-on-the-internet? They have moved from couch potatoes to uplinked, electric potatoes. Marshall McLuhan outlined the evolution of human beings from primates (Neanderthals who were reliant on bodily gestures because of their dental anatomy) to literate animals (who have been reliant on sight) to zombies (seeing and hearing all that a television can grasp from them from moment to moment), and now the internets threaten to break open the involvements of the senses in the systems of communication by engaging sight, hearing, and touch all at once. Can
taste and smell be far behind? Some people are already said to live “virtual” lives. Will living be a virtual kind of being? Rhetoric as a way of being virtually existent?\(^8\) The failures to see, and fear, the changes human technology have used to remake human beings have also been a series of failures of metaphysical understanding because human beings are hubristic Cartesians, and they see all of being, including their own individual embodiments, as being-for themselves, for their “use.” How will rhetoric “as a way of being” be transformed?\(^9\) What will technological changes mean for meaning itself?

Rhetoric can be ontologically confounded by embodiment, psychology, feelings of pleasure, of anxiety, and especially feelings of pain. Elaine Scarry, Emmanuel Levinas, and Susan Sontag have all explored the meaning of pain. No one, excepting “masochists” (who are people too), thinks pain is a good thing; no one experiencing pain has an identity or justification or anything else but a need to no longer be in pain. Scarry called pain “language destroying” and, thus, “world destroying” because all meaning and connectedness with the world of meanings is lost in the insufferable “ouch!” Levinas said that suffering was “useless” and that attempts to find use for the suffering of others must be the very core of what we mean by immorality. There is no “sense-datum” to suffering according to Levinas, only the ache, the woe. Sontag argued that violence turned its target into a “thing,” and since being dehumanized and “ready at hand” for use is what “things” are, the transformation of a human being into a thing is simply and

\(^8\) Dr. Eberly thought these questions were dated, “like 1995,” but I do not think the questions have left us and, fast as the technology develops, I expect to be asking them again and again for decades to come.

\(^9\) I will refer to rhetoric “as a way of being” consistently throughout the dissertation. It is clearly meant to call on Thomas W. Benson, Rhetoric as a Way of Being, American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989). Rest assured that, even as I invoke his argument, I mean also to suggest “being” has possibilities not addressed by Dr. Benson by virtue of the difference of our projects.
completely violent. But still we live in a world, a universe of pain. Women face outrageous violence worldwide—even in our “civilized” nation, where protections for domestic violence remain tacitly intact, where the procedures for punishing rapists are so thoroughly (re)traumatizing that most rapes are not brought to trial, and many trials fail to obtain convictions. Women in many other places have it far worse: in the continuing conflict along the Congo boarder with Uganda and Rwanda, aid workers see three rape survivors daily—piling on months and years of conflict, the spread of HIV, the crumbling infrastructures of development programs that never scratched the surface of an economic boom. And still there is female genital mutilation. And genocide in Darfur. And ethnic conflict in Iraq, some directed at the interlopers stationed there ostensibly to collect the flowers they were to be greeted with. Starvation wraps around the whole world. If ethics is, as in Levinas’ work, an “infinite responsibility” to the other, there are no optimistic indications that even a definite responsibility to the sufferers of the world could be realized.10 The world’s suffering is a failure of metaphysical understanding because the inability of human beings to understand feeling the pain of the other (and even the probability of actively avoiding such a confrontation) makes human beings apt not to bother. Hobbes understated the case against humanity. We are not wolves; wolves are not so vicious against each other. As widely available as are “self-help” books, advice columns, and talk-shows espousing techniques for living a better life, one might well be thought absurd for claiming that pain is not examined enough. Or maybe the problem

10 “Infinite” in “infinite responsibility” is being slightly decontextualized in the sense I am using it here. Levinas meant for “infinity” to represent the otherness that overflows my (yes, my) capacity for totally (yes, totally) grasping. Because most of the other is beyond my reach, otherness is “infinite” in the sense of always being beyond me. To have “infinite responsibility,” then, is not merely to have an “unending” responsibility (though that is also true), but it also means that my responsibility is to the infinity of the other, to the protection of the otherness that is beyond my grasp.
could be identified as “half-assed”: there are plenty of ways to wallow in my suffering, in our suffering, but not so many for understanding the suffering of others. How can a rhetoric of social justice prevail in the face of ontological obstacles to knowing the pain of others? If one cannot feel another’s pain, how can one be convinced of the necessity of relieving that pain? Even at the cost of one’s time, money, career, lifestyle, and life?

2. What Can Be Done About These “Failures”?

My questions are not meant to ask what a “human being” is, not in any final sense, because imagining a perfect model of the human “subject” is not a practical goal and probably not even an answerable question. One will never rid oneself, except by dying or being killed young, of the poisonous influences of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, racism, and their intersections (to be henceforth referred to as “bigotries” so that “white capitalist heterosexist patriarchy” need not be spelled out each time it comes up). One can be self-reflexive in criticism while holding on to explicit acknowledgement of the pervasive nature of bigotries so as to struggle against “strategies of domination” as best as one can—but even this pragmatically workable way of being is a Freudian-Foucaultian nightmare. If you liked the panopticon, you will love “postmodern” ethical practices: watch yourself and watch yourself watching yourself

11 I have always wondered what “whole-assed” would mean? That does not sound better.
12 So I am cowardly like Ballif? No, I just want to explicitly state that my work ought not be taken to mean “this is the only way that beings and things are as they are.”
13 Hesiod: best among all possibilities is to have never been born. To all the people who never were: you have my greatest jealousy.
(and then there are still others to worry about). Hannah Arendt argued against such comprehensive and continuous practice (because it would be impossibly exhausting), even though she had painted herself into the corner of arguing for just that practice by finding evil in “banality,” or thoughtlessness, a characteristic of bureaucratic and managerial doings that simply cannot be avoided in such a complex happening as the living a life (Arendt "Thinking and Moral Considerations" 160). If thoughtlessness was what allowed millions of Germans to let the Holocaust happen, surely one must always be thinking so as to prevent that—but would one not have to think about everything and all the time so that no thoughtlessness would go unnoticed? I have found myself similarly by my belief in the feminist principle that “the personal is political.”

Politicizing the personal makes every power relation—every relation, every meaning—cry out for criticism and scrutiny. Early in my study of feminist theory, I railed against an article in the journal Ethics by John Hardwig, “Should Women Think in Terms of Rights?,” because it asserted that the values obtained in personal relationships were precisely valuable for not being political (453). A likely story, I chortled, since patriarchy continues even to the present to damage women through the depoliticized domestic sphere (the place the neighbors have that is “none of my business”). Nothing can be allowed shelter from political critique because it is shelter, precisely, that makes a thing sheltered suspicious enough to warrant critique; pay no attention to that man behind the curtain! But, once again, notice how panoptic the imperative of politicizing the personal might become: one might even begin thought-policing against oneself, chastising the self for “impolitic” or “patriarchal” thoughts. Hand over the cat ‘o nine tails.
Does this not mean that my goal, far from describing the being of a model subject, must be an ontology of mediocrity? A metaphysical theory that posits and glosses enough for “practical” functioning, but not enough to be thoughtlessly damaging? Or might there be some nuanced path to a metaphysical theory that allowed rhetoric to work through its failures of metaphysical understanding without also making some of them worse? Can a “reflexive” path be found? Reflexive in the sense of being self-critical, even showing humility, without taking on the “self” as an enemy to be hounded or destroyed?

My dissertation asserts an “ontology of rhetoric,” especially with reference to rhetoric’s “performance,” which means that I want to theorize about reality in terms of rhetoric as “a way of being” suasive, strategic, motivated, and problematized. Ontology or metaphysics, traditionally, has theorized about what is really real—but, I will strive to avoid a “binding” description of rhetoric’s truth by preferring a probabilistic (ancient Greek: eikos) ontology for rhetoric. The Western rhetorical tradition has mostly, and rightly, eschewed the fascination with truth that philosophy took up. Instead, rhetoricians from Gorgias and Protagoras to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca have seen rhetoric’s strength in being concerned with probability instead of certainty, “quasi-logical” arguments instead of mathematically certain propositions. Probabilities necessarily imply a level of uncertainty that leaves room open for other possibilities, and I see that opening as welcome. I will argue that (1) the ontology of rhetoric is the generation of meaning from embodied performances that are dialectics of form and matter, meaning that our material world governs our embodied performances as much or more than does our ideological strategizing; (2) our struggles in rhetorical being are also
products of dialectics of traditions and the future, as we must bend (Greek: *tropos*) old meanings to fit new situations so as to make sense of the new and (in)opportune; and (3) we give ourselves the best chance of “using” metaphysics to our advantage by cooperating with it, but we can only cooperate by remaining flexible while training ourselves for expected and especially unexpected changes in materiality and temporality. The upshot of that third argument is that rhetoric should employ itself in aesthetic exercises of making (which I will contend are necessarily “doing” and “being”).

Exercises with the dialectics of materiality and temporality will build habits and, if the best is made of the possibilities given, then those who exercise will have built habits that are reflexive, that do not necessarily respond to the new by crushing it, that are capable of acting most appropriately at the most opportune times. *Carpe diem.*

The remainder of this introduction will explain the significance of my project, trace the development of my research questions, and briefly summarize previous work done by rhetorical scholars on metaphysical concepts. I will finish the introduction with a preview of the chapter to come.

3. What is at Stake in Rhetoric’s Confrontation With its Metaphysical “Failures”?

Martin Heidegger, a twentieth-century existentialist philosopher, argued that human beings spend most of their waking hours in a state he called “average

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14 Dr. J. Michael Hogan personally objects to statements of this sort, about what rhetoric “should” be. But I think his objection misunderstands what is often meant by the “should” statement. I do not claim a moral imperative. Neither do I claim that all rhetoric *must* be a certain way. I only assert that I can show such advantages to theorizing rhetoric in a certain way that would pragmatically justify my approach, an approach which therefore *should* be accepted as a legitimate one.
everydayness”: “For the most part Da-sein,” Da-sein being Heidegger’s phrase referring to a hypothetical person\textsuperscript{15}, “evades the being that is disclosed in moods” (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit). Human beings may hear evasions even in their everyday “idle talk.” Stuff gets in the way. Our world is chaotic. Its tendency is toward entropy. Things break. Things do not go the way they were supposed to. Things happen. Sometimes, things “just” happen. Accidents happen. Even shit happens. You cannot win; you cannot break even; the game is rigged. The center cannot hold. Murphy’s law: anything that can “go wrong” will go wrong. Each of these clichés expresses an acknowledgement of the ontological—but each is a special expression in that each highlights the side of metaphysics wherein a human intention is frustrated. Frustration is a good place to start because frustration will often accompany rhetoric (like “crisis rhetoric”) which may then be used for examining the frustration. But frustration also makes a good beginning for this study because people take metaphysics “for granted,” and accidents reassert metaphysical being as if to say, “I am existence, hear me roar!” The “taken for granted,” Heidegger’s “average-everydayness,” often exerts such a hold on human beings as to quickly rush back over the intervention of the accident—explaining it, protecting against it, repairing it, taking steps so that it does not happen again. One may observe rhetoric throughout these actions and reactions. What is the persuasive or motivating force of the “hold” on human beings exerted by average-everydayness? What happens when that hold is broken? What motivates explaining,

\textsuperscript{15} Da-sein will later be shown to have greater complexity than meaning simply “a person,” but bear with me for the moment so that I can deliver an introduction.
protecting, repairing, and so on? What is contingency or chance such that it frightens us, gives us Angst, as it does? What are the meanings of all of these goings on?

Metaphysicians more recent than Heidegger have taken the task of theorizing about the real with a unique kind of care. That is not to say that metaphysicians were ever careless, but Heidegger contributed to a transformation in carefulness with metaphysics in two important ways: first, he made “care” a key concept of his philosophy in the sense of “authentic being-in-the-world” (whatever that is); second, he was a member of the Nazi Party from 1932-1936 (Safranski). His party membership was not coincidental with his care for the world: Heidegger sought to turn philosophy upside-down (as far back as Plato) but his Party membership ironically made him a party to the apotheosis of the Enlightenment project. Eventually, Heidegger saw the contradiction, but not early enough to avoid becoming the central tempest of ontological ethics for both the reasons described above. But, “the central tempest” includes another element beyond care, beyond being a Nazi: there is evidence that modernity itself had Nazism as its apotheosis, its crowning achievement.

16 By the “Enlightenment project” or “modernism,” I mean to refer to the European-Western movement since the mid-18th century that “killed God” and made reason its paramount value in determining truth (some may see that movement going back to the Renaissance, but I am not interested in splitting hairs over this). A large part of that project has been “science,” which I mean in the narrower sense of scientific method and logical positivism, but also in the sense of its application to and interventions on human beings as in Foucault’s phrase, the “human sciences.” I am well aware that “modernism” has a different meaning in literature; readers should be aware that when I mention modernism, I am not talking about literature. However, my understanding of “modernism” vis-à-vis “postmodernism,” as well as “structuralism” and post-structuralism,” is closer to the literary understanding of the relations of these terms to one another in that I do not see any “clean breaks,” but rather each “post-” as both breaking with and extending from its origin.

17 Dr. Eberly asked me if he “cared” for Hannah Arendt—a cute joke, but bittersweet, too, since the answer would almost certainly have to have been “no.” They became lovers while he was her professor and she was his student, and when that relationship threatened his career and family, Heidegger convinced Arendt to leave and study under Karl Jaspers (with whom she developed a life-long friendship). Heidegger once claimed that she was the true love of his life, but he never showed it. See Rüdiger Safranski, Heidegger:
The Enlightenment, in its various stages, centered on human beings (men, really) and transformed various types of scholarship into what Foucault called “the human sciences.” Trade became economics. Politics became political science. Natural history became biology. Alchemy became chemistry. Astrology became physics. Unusual people, who may or may not have been thought of as unusual before, became mad. Psychology and sociology arose as legitimate fields of study, while more aesthetic fields faded to the background (even, as Foucault argued in *Madness and Civilization*, to the point that literature became the one safe place for someone who was mad) (*Madness and Civilization*). In short, Reason took over as the explanation for all things, and its methods became the standard for all study (and the humanities, to this day, have not lived this down). If only scientific reason were applied to all things, then perhaps all things would be explicable, predictable, useable, and so on—the ontological implications being clear. In the early twentieth-century, before the “Great War,” thinkers gave the sum of all this scientific reasoning a name: totalitarianism.

“Totalitarianism,” the word, came into this world with a utopian connotation (Isaac). We could know everything if we studied it properly. Knowing everything, we

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*Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Arendt loved Heidegger and his work, and she went so far as to defend him at the de-Nazification trials (an ironic defense given not only the way Heidegger had shoved Arendt off to Jaspers, but said nothing as she fled Germany for her life). Heidegger showed no regard for Arendt’s work or her fame from it. There is no evidence he picked up *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and surely he could not have read *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (since it is filled with mentions of the complete failure of Germany’s intelligentsia to stop what was happening). I doubt Richard Wolin’s view that Arendt was simply a head-over-heels sucker for Heidegger’s mostly disdainful treatment of her. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl and Safranski both contend that Arendt was an impressive figure even as a young student, the kind of person whose intelligence and thoughtfulness often left others in stunned silence. See Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). And Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2nd ed. (New Haven [Conn.] ; London: Yale University Press, 2004).

could use it to our best advantage and make the lives of all people better. Should anything slip, should any accident occur, we need only study it more so as to find a means of controlling it. Our cities will be emerald, our waves of grain will be amber, and our streets will be paved with good intentions.

Heidegger, then, should lead us to take care in the sense of attending to being and being’s wonderment, but also to take care that we avoid the *hubris* of total control. The evil of such *hubris* is a topic that I have addressed previously in my research on the “problem of evil” or “theodicy.” “The danger of ontology,” and certainly of ontology’s rhetoric, “is its arrogance” (Thomas "Levinas, Arendt, and the Problem of Rhetoric in Theodicy as a Justification of Evil" 26). It may compose “categories that ignore otherness while claiming to represent the total of all beings. The economizing principle of ontology, what Levinas calls *totality* (as in ‘totalitarianism’), consists of the sweeping optic whereby one would categorize beings. Totalizers make a claim to be above the gameboard,” not even in an objective sense necessarily, “but merely as an observer distant enough to be able to distinguish light from dark, rook from pawn.\(^\text{19}\) The project of the Western Enlightenment’s ontology has been to form totality: to account for any and all pieces and places they might occupy, to define a place for everything and everything in its place” (Thomas "Levinas, Arendt, and the Problem of Rhetoric in Theodicy as a Justification of Evil" 26). Metaphysics is, thus, a deathly serious business: from Levinas on, the stakes will be dehumanization, concentration, Holocaust.

\(^\text{19}\) I am told that the “above the gameboard” metaphor originates from the work of Jean-François Lyotard, though I have heard this metaphor many times from others who did not cite Lyotard. See Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition : A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
“You have got to be kidding me,” says a voice from the back of the room.

“Neither the Holocaust nor totalitarianism may be reducible to metaphysics, rhetoric has only ever been a passing concern for the metaphysicians involved here, and we are not going to find rhetorical scholars who measure up like ‘Indiana Jones,’ swashbuckling their way through a horde of Nazis.” Fair enough. One certainly should not reduce the Holocaust or totalitarianism to ivory tower philosophy—but those movements among the intelligentsia were not irrelevant either. Dehumanization is an ontological act given its far-reaching implications for the transformation of a thinking-subject to a dead-object. As for which thinkers did or did not address Dame Rhetoric directly, I do not care: people, theorists, use representations that have meanings that further imply strategies and ambiguities—and I will study rhetoric as rhetoric on the basis of those contexts. Direct addresses to rhetoric are useful and are used in this work, but rhetoric, like being, has capacities beyond the mere suggestion of its own name. Rhetoricians do not carry bullwhips, but tongue-lashings can make a difference in how the world is seen and, perhaps the reader has heard, “seeing is believing.” Rhetoric’s way of seeing being will play a huge role in how this work unfolds—but some preparatory set-up remains to be cared for.

20 Is that you, Dr. Long?
21 Hannah Arendt might be able to claim the title! But she was not a rhetorician, for sure.
22 Definitions of rhetoric cloud our field. Rhetoricians need some definitions obviously, but just as Heidegger exhorted phenomenologists to return to “the things themselves,” rhetoricians should get over their academic discipline-arity and do the theorizing or criticizing that they fancy. Philosophy has not had such a panic over its own meaning in over 2,000 years, but rhetoric just insists on being old-fashioned. A later chapter of this dissertation will, however, address a direct insult to Dame Rhetoric by a philosopher, Eugene Garver, for his chauvinism.
23 “What or who does not have capacities beyond their own names?” Dr. Eberly asked me. That question is at the heart of the 20th century’s ontological horrors: the failure to remember possibilities beyond the name—to remember that totality is arrogance and its reductions are not binding—is the dehumanizing character of metaphysics and rhetoric gone wrong.
The stakes (dehumanization via essentialism or totalitarianism) become important for rhetoric for several reasons: (a) all thinking and doing presumes an ontology, and ontologies can stack the deck in favor of certain kinds of dangerous political understandings, like essentialism and totalitarianism; (b) rhetoric cannot save itself from its capacity to propagandize because human beings cannot “be” and be free of the didacticism generated by their performances—old habits are hard to break, and “good” habits will always “fall prey” to types of the “discipline” condemned by Foucault or the sorts of bureaucratic “banality” condemned by Arendt; (c) the artistic, aesthetic side of rhetoric is the best shot human beings have at creating some kind of worldly justice because creating the new, continuously, is the only hope human beings have of breaking free of the disciplinary influences of traditional performances—we must always be turning against the totality, turning and turning to the point of spinning and dizziness; (d) rhetoricians who turn to science, rationality or reason, oversimplified identities, oversimplified politics, or ethics (privatized and, so, depoliticized principles) are excusable so long as they are self-reflexive, but these rhetoricians remain dangerous because the stability they seek can manifest itself as the recurrent nightmare of Necessity and the corollary impulse to discipline audiences, citizens, students, and themselves.

Necessity is the traditional domain of ontology or metaphysics—things that cannot be otherwise than they are. Definitions of ontology or metaphysics are slippery to the point of bitter frustration. Ontology is the study of being. Metaphysics is the study of foundations for the realities and epistemologies of being. And being is anybody’s guess. Or maybe everybody’s guess. Rather than struggle with definitions of these complex ideas, one may be better able to grasp what ontology is about if one considers the topoi of
the field of metaphysics and the divisive questions raised by those *topoi*. After I explore these *topoi*, I will show how they link to my project. Many agree that being has existence somehow, but existence implies non-existence. A first set of questions common to ontology concerns the relation of existence and non-existence, what they are or what they mean (in fact, Gorgias of Leontini addressed such questions). A second set of questions, related to the first, concerns permanence and change, coming to be, and passing away—all of which are necessarily questions of time because permanence and change are made cognizant to us only to the degree that one moment’s reality can be distinguished from the reality of another moment (Heraclitus addressed these questions first, and most all existentialists deal with them). Third, ontology inquires about what it means to exist as *some kind of being* that is stable or unstable—do people have “essences,” elemental pieces that are permanent, or are at least temporarily stable, that make them who they are even as other pieces around essences may change? These are the ontological questions most commonly associated with a troublesome “traditional” metaphysics laid out by Plato, Aristotle, and their followers. Critical studies of metaphysical essence have revealed two great dangers in using ontology, basically a single phenomenon that may go by a few different names. *Essentialism* is the misrepresentation born of hasty generalization, jumping to conclusions about the particular because of a characteristic thought to belong to a whole genre (usually, a group of people). The “essence” in essentialism is a traditional translation of Aristotelian ontology: human beings were said to have an essence, an underlying real self (the Latin *essentia* is a translation of Aristotle’s *ousia*, “being,” or *hupokeimenon*, “underlying being”). In the practical world, essentialism is typically known as “stereotype.” The second danger of using ontology
was previously introduced with Levinas: totality or totalization is the meta-narrative counterpart of essentialisms. A totality claims to be the total, the all, inclusive of all things without exception—which is, of course, impossible. But one may nevertheless be convinced of a totality, resulting in reduction of exceptions, forcibly fitting them into the totality or freely eliminating them on the basis of their non-being. Reductive totalization has, since the appearance of what Foucault called the “human sciences,” taken place as calculation in economizing principles: the classification, placement, and fabrication of an identity within a disciplinary structure. In the fourth set of topoi (by no means the final set), metaphysicians ask about the constitution of beings out of materials and ideals (though even mentioning them this way may be stacking the deck in favor of a specific kind of ontology). Beings have appeared to be of two simultaneous but differing natures. On the one hand, beings are material: beings have bodies that respond to environments, that feel pleasures and pains, that are born and change and die. On the other hand, beings are ideal: beings have minds (some religious types might say souls), personalities, and memories that are not physically present but also somehow near enough to be brought forth as necessary or possible in thinking. Beings have imagination, a capacity to “see” a different world than the one they materially inhabit, empowering them to desire, to fantasize, or even to act so as to realize—to bring into the material world—what they have dreamt. Ideality is capable of transcending materiality in imagination, but materiality is also capable of swatting imagination’s flight from the earth through assertion of its rock-hard, iron-clad, steel-cast limits, Necessities. The problems of embodiment, then, figure into clashes between notions of freedom and determinism. These topoi (existence and non-existence, permanence and change across time, essences
that are stable or unstable, and the relation of materiality and ideality especially in the “mind-body” problem) are the most common themes of ontological analysis through 2,000 plus years of metaphysical study.

All those topoi are quite a mess. But ontological topoi are unique in their nagging character: they persist and bother most all human beings regardless of how far anyone gets in attempting to settle their questions. Ontology nags because it claims priority. Should it not be obvious that an examination of a why or a how stands on an examination of a what? Or else what is purposed so as to be asked why? Or what is planned so as to be asked how? Martin Heidegger made himself a rising star in philosophy by insisting that two-thousand-plus years of philosophy had taken the what for granted such that the what’s very fact of being had been obscured, even beyond how elusive that fact can be when not obscured.24

Rhetoric’s study confronts a similar problem: though rhetoric has been defined ad nauseum, the task of defining it has never been so far away from coming-to-be as it now is. The post-Heideggerian confrontation with theory should be familiar to most scholars of the humanities: theory casts its net, drags its bounty from the sea—from what used to be a “natural habitat”—and then transforms what was taken into readily consumable morsels. Thus consumed, these morsels bear little if any relationship to the habitat in its naturalness, to the sea, its beings, their relations, their currents, and so on. The theorist

would seem without any means of coming to “know” about the sea in its undisturbed naturalness.

Heidegger’s solution—perhaps not entirely satisfactory—was to allow being to show itself (a “middle voice” may be appropriate in this formulation) and then to notice it circumspectly. Being would happen, and then the analysis of that happening would happen while also trying to hold on to its historicity, while trying to notice the violence with which text and context were ripped asunder, and yet somehow allowing being to do its being. The impossibility of reconciling these tensions is apparent in any example of an everyday instance of rhetoric: I notice many people speaking each day, and surely speaking with strategic means and ends, but does that make them rhetors? Or do I make them rhetors when I apply my theory and appropriate their stories for my own retelling? Was Socrates a man with a being of his own, or was he a sock puppet in Plato’s theorizing? Allow me to clarify this terminology so that one may understand what I mean when I use these terms. I understand a “speaker” to be a user of rhetoric (because I take the hubristic step of asserting that speakers are motive-laden and strategic, even if irrational, actors, and because I draw them into rhetorical theory for my analysis).

“Rhetors” and “orators” are users of rhetoric in public forums, and both words are basically the same (“orator” was Latinized from the Greek, ho rhetor, losing the initial “h” sound since it was expressed in the Greek only as a punctuation mark that was

25 Dr. Eberly asked if this was yet another dialectic, and I think the answer is yes. In this case, however, that dialectic is probably called the “hermeneutic circle.”

26 Essentialisms, totalities, and theorizing are dangerous—but not necessarily evil. More importantly, if they are understood as contingent judgments open to further deliberation—as I understand them to be—then the possibility of “correcting” judgments may forgive (some) of the hubris involved in their assertions. As will be shown in Chapter Three, especially the section concerning Eric Charles White’s Kaironomia, these hubristic moves are risks we must take and then watch carefully.
unrecognized as a Latin letter). A “rhetorical scholar” is someone who studies rhetoric from a distance or through a telescope. And a “rhetorician” is both a user and a scholar of rhetoric. But, before all else, let one remember that while I understand a speaker to be “a user of rhetoric,” that does not mean that I understand speakers to need rhetorical training per se—rhetoric has the virtue of being a “populist” art, an art practiced by anyone with the power of expression, so much so that most of students of rhetoric are already expert “speakers” before they take their first public speaking courses.

Nevertheless, my understandings of those terms are still “impositions of theory” onto a world that did just fine without them (i.e. that world would continue “to be” had I not come along and pronounced it a world of “rhetoric” according to my theory judgments). But there is a major flaw in my assertion that the world would continue to be: the world posited by the phrase “to be” assumes the primacy of ontological theory. I have not escaped the “imposition of theory” at all, but only shifted to a more subtle, and therefore potentially more dangerous kind of theory. Emmanuel Levinas, in his essay “Is Ontology Fundamental?,” answered Heidegger by setting out to challenge the supposed primacy of metaphysics and epistemology—theory—to other philosophy (especially ethics, which Levinas regarded as nearly “religion”):

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27 The difference between rhetorical scholars and rhetoricians is easily seen at any rhetoric conference. The rhetorical scholars read their papers. The rhetoricians perform.

28 Notice the radical departure this course would take from the view of Isocrates, who believed that the aptitude for artful speaking was a “natural talent.” Though he insisted that his educational program could increase the likelihood that one would be a good citizen, he still attributed most good speaking to nature, to something beyond human control. While I concede a modest amount of truth to that (since there are a few human beings to whom nature has given no or little capacity for speaking for themselves—an important point not to be forgotten), I contend that my students arrive in my classes most of their aptitudes realized (as technē or hexis), so that all that remains is for me to do something about the bad habits they have also realized (glossophobia, mostly).
all knowledge of relations connecting or opposing beings to one another implies
an understanding of the fact that these beings and relations exist. To articulate
this fact—i.e., to take up once again the problem of ontology, which is implicitly
resolved by each one of us, even if by forgetting about it—would seem
tantamount to constructing a fundamental knowledge without which all
philosophical, scientific or common fields of knowledge are naïve ("Is Ontology
Fundamental?" 1).

Scrap metaphysics for pragmatism; go ahead and try!29 One must still make assumptions
about what is the case even as one seeks to focus on what ought to be the case. Or else
one could just ignore metaphysics and go on with a philosophical task while dismissing
any ontological assumptions being made. A wily pragmatist, like John Dewey (who was
very familiar with Hegel and, through him, German idealism), would meet the challenge
effortlessly. Countless problems may be faced and even solved without knowing the
precise number of angels that may dance on the head of a pin (John Dewey: The Later
Works, 1925-1953). Ontology may often be dismissed (as we know from our “average
everydayness”); practical assumptions can sometimes be made without trouble.

Except when they cannot. The “is” will often get in the way of the “ought,”
unraveling ideologies that were peopled by experts and activists who thought very highly
of themselves, of their status as noble beings.30 What, for example, is an enemy? Jeremy

29 Does this statement mean that I am shifting ground to favor the “should” as Necessity rather than
pragmatic exhortation? No, but I am shifting to suggest that the dichotomy between those alternatives is
false, that deliberate pragmatic calculation of costs and benefits is deluded if it believes that it posits no
ontological assumptions.
30 Dr. Eberly has reminded me that these issues may also be considered as rhetorical stases (see footnotes
above): the conjectural and definitional questions coming before those of cause or consequence, value, and
procedure or purpose. That Roman law has come down to modern jurisprudence with the stases basically
Engels has asked about “enemyship” in his pursuit of a uniquely American state-ritualization of military-industrial complexity. The “ought” finds itself enraptured by the “is” because the distinction “is” or “is not” the enemy, the terrorist, the traitor, has become a question of life or death. I have also investigated what evil “is.”

A contingency? An ontological monolith? A rule of nobody? Whatever evil “is” determines what responsibility “is” which then determines what justice “is,” or rather what justice “ought” to be. Maybe these questions can be “practically” suppressed so that fighting the “clear” enemy or the “obvious” evil can take place—but if one is a believer in justice, that everyone “ought” to have his or her day in court, pragmatism may justly be charged with shooting first and asking questions later. If pragmatism should fail in its ontological work and unjustly steamroll over someone, what means have been arranged for compensation? The unjustly essentialized or totalized may not even be so lucky as to be recognized as “victims,” and then they may not be fortunate enough to transcend the status of their own victimhood. Surely rhetorical theory has something to say about these ontological problems, but what? And how?

intact is surely a testament to the power of the “is” over the “ought.” See Edward P.J. Corbett and Rosa A. Eberly, The Elements of Reasoning, 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000).

31 So has Dr. Eberly! See Rosa A. Eberly, “Deliver Ourselves from ‘Evil’,” Rhetoric & Public Affairs 6 (2003). In that piece, Dr. Eberly dismissed any “ontological” discussion of the meaning of evil, and I used that dismissal as the “exigency” for my own master’s thesis. 80-some odd pages later, I concluded that Dr. Eberly had been right to dismiss the ontological meaning of evil.
4. The “Transcendental” Research Question

Immanuel Kant, in The Critique of Pure Reason, asked about the conditions for the possibility of knowledge that is certain.\(^{32}\) His “transcendental” question was a clever work-around for a philosophical problem of epistemology, an eighteenth-century crisis in knowing. Whereas some insisted that certain knowledge came from within, and others claimed it came from without, and others still claimed that it could not be called certain at all, Kant stepped back from the whole mess to ask what conditions would have to be met for knowing what human beings already know. After investigating the conditions for possibility, one would hypothetically be in a better position for saying whether some knowledge was certain based on whether conditions for it had been met. If I step outside and notice that the ground is wet everywhere, what were the conditions for the possibility of that wetness? First there had to be the possibility of its contingent opposite (dryness); second there had to be some way of introducing water to the scene so as to make it wet (rain, or snow, or a plumbing disaster). Precipitation is a condition for the possibility of the wetness of the ground. Deducing precipitation by working backwards from what I already knew to be the case (the ground was wet) is what Kant meant by transcendentalism.

Rhetoric has almost always had a touch of this kind of transcendentalism. The ability for seeing in any given case the available means of persuasion implies the

\(^{32}\) That “certain” should refer both to “certainty” but also to “particularity” is a great oddity of our language. For Kant and his contemporaries, the important knowledge about which there was certainty was presumed to be universal, not particular.
transcendental both in conditions (given cases) and possibilities (available means). But rhetoric has not been handled transcendently, in the Kantian sense, because the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric has sought out rhetoric’s end (persuasion) from the beginning (some point before persuasion takes place) or else the scholar was doing history (wherein the fact of persuasion or dissuasion was well known). The genius of Kant’s transcendental question was that it worked backward from the end (knowledge that is known with certainty). Prior to Kant, failed attempts had sought certainty from beginnings: Descartes began with the knowledge that he was a thinking thing (\textit{a priori} knowledge or “rationalism”), and Locke began with the knowledge made available by the senses (\textit{a posteriori} knowledge or “empiricism”). The debates of rationalists and empiricists came to naught when Hume’s skepticism exposed the limits of both approaches. Kant answered skepticism by beginning at the end: \textit{we know} that we know things with certainty, so we should ask ourselves what would need to be in place—what in fact \textit{is} in place—for such knowing to occur. If human beings began with certainty as a premise, what means of knowing could be deduced from it? Correlatively, the transcendental question of rhetoric would be, “What are the conditions (given cases) for the possibility (available means) of persuasion?” Since this study, however, seeks an end

\begin{itemize}
\item[33] One of the major remaining differences between Aristotle’s \textit{Rhetoric} and Kant’s transcendental realism is the third term, the term sought as the end of the investigations: persuasion versus certain knowledge. Each of these ends was merely a stepping stone for the philosophers. Persuasion by probabilistic means was Aristotle’s goal in the \textit{Rhetoric}, but not necessarily in the Aristotelian system (if such a system can be said to have existed). Likelier candidates for Aristotle’s end of ends might be justice, happiness, virtuous magnanimity, and good politics. Kant sought out certain knowledge for the sake of establishing a foundation for science.
\item[34] Of course scholars have addressed Kant and rhetoric (in the third critique, \textit{The Critique of Judgment}, he revealed that he did not think very much of rhetoric), but other scholars have not taken up the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric and interpreted its two transcendental possibilities in the Kantian sense of transcendence (as opposed to Kenneth Burke’s sense of transcendence, or others). Like the philosophers of metaphysics and epistemology before Kant, rhetorical scholars up to now have not “worked backwards” from what they already knew about rhetoric.
\end{itemize}
even more specific than persuasion, the question must be modified: “What are the conditions for the possibility of persuading agents?” Or, to make more plain what is being sought in the term “agent,” the question may be read as “What are the conditions for the possibility of persuading a person to take action on behalf of a belief?” And, predicative of the last question, one should ask “What are the conditions for the possibility of action?”

The conditions for the possibility of persuasion are ontological question marks. Acting from persuasion is, all at once, a question of psychology (the way influence works within the psyche), embodiment (the driving of action and the forces resistant to acting in neurology or biology), time (the measure of change, causes and consequences, traditions and opportunities), and more. Psychology, broadly speaking, is what most rhetorical scholars study: reasoning, emotion, weight of evidence, effects of style, culturally contextual meanings—all these concerns connect themselves directly to consciousness (making psychoanalysis, oddly enough, the exception since it looks at the unconscious!). Embodiment is increasingly of interest to rhetorical scholars (especially via performance studies), but has only been a major development of the last 15 years or so. Time has always mattered to rhetorical scholars, but almost never in a metaphysical sense. What, then, is meant by studies of embodiment and time as concerns my “ontology of rhetoric”? What is the study of ontology and how would it relate to rhetoric? What have rhetorical scholars said about all these questions of ontology? And how does ontology figure into any civic question of being interested? With those questions in mind, I will now review
the present state of the literature in rhetoric concerning metaphysics. *Listen my children and you shall hear of the history of rhetoric in ontology queer.*

5. Action, Rhetoric, and Being: What Rhetorical Scholars Have Said So Far

Though disconnected from philosophical metaphysics, rhetorical scholars (those working since the organization of rhetoric into a modern University discipline) have made metaphysical claims about rhetoric. That is, rhetorical scholars have made claims about what it means to *be* engaged in persuasion-related acts. The beings related to a persuasive act come to stand for metaphysical standpoints of difference: the *being* that is discussed by rhetorical scholars is a metaphysical construct, tied somehow to an ontology through the fact of the event of persuasion. Burke’s view that people are symbol-using animals is well known and has been rearticulated in explicitly ontological language by scholars such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Bryan Crable. In 1968’s “Oral Rhetoric, Rhetoric, and Literature,” Carroll C. Arnold articulated a metaphysical view of rhetorical being that emphasized idealism, materialism, time, and change: “In speech the physical person and the existential self are invested—in what is prepared to be spoken, in what is spoken, and in the instant-by-instant *being* of speaking” (179). Arnold’s oral rhetor always experiences a “rhetoric-in-stress,” continuously judging and reconsidering the situation and purposes of others present, not unlike the Heideggerian *Da-sein* that experiences the anxiety of being and the “hermeneutic circle” (176). Arnold also argued that speakers are necessarily makers, that “by choosing speech as his mode, a maker of

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35 With no apologies whatsoever to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
36 This quotation is also cited by Benson, "Rhetoric as a Way of Being."
oral rhetoric commits himself to ‘make something’ of a human relationship. He, as person, and his symbolized claims must stand or fall by the qualities of the relationships he can create, sustain, and direct…. One who speaks rhetorically chooses to inaugurate and to try to sustain until attainment of a purpose a series of events in human relations” (178). To be rhetorical is to do judging is to make and remake persona. Being is doing is making is remaking. And, speaking of personas, I do not approve of Arnold’s gendered language, or the male-specific pronouns used by any authors who mean (or ought to mean) to speak more generally of all people. However, I will not replace the pronouns preferring that the fact of past sexism remain visible. I will, however, point out gendered language wherever I find it.

Rhetorical-being-as-persona was introduced by Edwin Black as he was reacting to work about real and implied authors by Wayne C. Booth’s (The Rhetoric of Fiction). For Black, texts speak not only of an implied author but also an implied audience, which Black subsequently christened the “second persona” (333). Several personae have since been added. Philip Wander introduced the “third persona,” an audience that is excluded by the text ("The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Criticism" 357). Charles E. Morris, III introduced a “fourth persona” to refer to “pink” herrings designed to allow J. Edgar Hoover (Morris’ case study) to pass as straight by persecuting the group to which he belonged. Finally, Dana L. Cloud has written of a “null persona,” a purposeful and strategic silence, surely the most nebulous and idealistic of the persona
outside of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s “universal audience” ("The Null Persona: Racialized Rhetorics of Silence in the Uprising of ’34").

Intended or not, the rhetorical personae depart from Burke and Arnold in at least one significant way: the personae are divorced from materiality because they refer to beings conjured up by texts as opposed to the “real” author, the “real” auditor, and so forth. The simplest explanation for why personae are not material is the predication of a persona’s existence on hypothetical situations posited by the text. Black, for example, suggested consideration of a text that is judged to be “designed for a hostile audience” (333). Until the text actually gets around to an encounter with the hostile audience hypothesized by the text’s author, the hostile audience has no reality save that of the imagination’s power to dream. Audiences are similarly theoretical when excluded (the third persona), pump-faked (the fourth persona), and strategically absent (the null persona—a uniquely immaterial persona since it is characterized by a lack, however strategic).

One important alternative to the personae did account for materiality while drawing explicitly from Arnold’s piece on oral rhetoric and Burke’s oeuvre, Dr. Thomas W. Benson’s 1989 “Rhetoric as a Way of Being.” According to Burke, all audiences come to rhetoric expecting something; audience reactions to rhetoric turn on how their expectations are fulfilled or frustrated (Counter-Statement). In “Rhetoric as a Way of Being,” an audience was presented as a group of people expecting to become something and not liking all of their choices ("Rhetoric as a Way of Being"). A crowd of a few thousand Penn State students and others gathered to block traffic in protest of Vietnam

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37 *Enthymeme*, in Greek, is best translated as “straight to the heart.”
War developments during the spring of 1972. Two speakers failed to provide the crowd with acceptable options for becoming something—that is, the first two speakers attempted too hastily to simply disperse the crowd with the information that the protesters had succeeded in shutting down an on-campus research laboratory, which did work for the military, for three days. The third speaker, faculty member Wells Keddie, succeeded in dispersing the crowd by telling them that they had “won a battle” but not “the war” (Benson "Rhetoric as a Way of Being" 305). Shutting down the lab for three days was a victory, but continued success required that the audience move on to organizing and preparing for the next step. “As Keddie concluded,” Dr. Benson wrote, “the enormous crowd,” one that had grown from 85 to over 5,000 people blocking traffic for three days on one of State College’s busiest streets, “cheered and, within a few minutes, dispersed” ("Rhetoric as a Way of Being" 306). The crowd might have stayed, might even have turned violent, but did not because Keddie “presented the crowd with an opportunity to construe its actions as a victory, to write its autobiography in its deeds…. he was able to interpret a movement away from violence as a move forward, not as a retreat” (Benson "Rhetoric as a Way of Being" 314).

I have no quarrel with Dr. Benson’s points—they worked just fine for the argument he was making—but his use of the term “being” was too limited in scope for my use, as in fact were almost all of the approaches to metaphysics between rhetoric’s disciplinary reorganization and the present day. 38 Two such limitations stand out. First, the work of these rhetorical scholars has failed to engage a larger tradition of ontological

38 Or else I am presumptively asserting that the concept did not run deeper only on the basis of my failure to notice it. My “average everydayness” is almost never circumspect about its own supposed uniqueness.
or metaphysical study—rhetoric as a way of being is silent on philosophy. There are some exceptions (Michael J. Hyde, Craig R. Smith, and Burke in places), but the words “ontology,” “metaphysics,” and “being” have otherwise been used with a gumption would strike a philosopher as careless. Rhetorical scholars are surely under no obligation to study philosophy on these issues, and the above scholars may rightly answer that their projects were simply working on something other than the philosophy of being. That is fine, but that does not negate the likelihood of finding rhetorically useful information in philosophical work, nor the general scholarly obligation to do the research that respects and builds on the academic conversations that have already happened and are relevant to a rhetorical scholar’s goals.

The second limitation of the scope of previous studies on rhetorical being is in their failure to ask the transcendental question I covered above, “What are the conditions for the possibility of action?” If audiences want to become something different and rhetoric can enable such becoming, what conditions must necessarily be met for rhetorical enabling to occur? Several more questions can spin off from the transcendental question of rhetoric. What created the opportunity for persuasion? Or, to put it in transcendental terms, what were the conditions for the possibility of the

39 Sometimes I am not circumspect about my own humility in average everydayness. On the other hand, there are some pieces, like the one by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory,” Philosophy & Rhetoric (1970), vol. 3., that simply embarrass me in their carelessness with words like “Ontological Foundations.” Nothing in Campbell’s work suggests she had the slightest idea, outside of what she could take from Kenneth Burke, what ontology was about.

40 I am not interested in distinguishing “being” and “becoming” except to the degree that being is a useful illusion or a comparatively more stable form of becoming. All being is becoming—nothing has pure stability against temporal change—but the illusion of stability or the relative slowness of change that make some things more stable than others are nevertheless very important to human beings. When my dissertation considers these differences, it will do so using language other than “being” and “becoming” (which will be used interchangeably).
possibility of persuading? Also, and this is the question of the scope that Benson attended to, why did some strategies fail to move the audience while another succeeded? Or, in transcendental terms, what were the conditions for the actualization of the possibility of persuasion? And how can we strategize persuasion in such as way as to move beyond establishing belief and into motivating action? Transcendently (but also strategically), what are the conditions for the probability of actualizing a possibility recommended by persuasion?

Possibilities seem rare. Not for all of us, of course—wild animals know possibilities, as do some young children, and probably some others (others). But in the bourgeois market, the place of worship, the ivory tower, and other “halls of power” life seems thoroughly and securely determined. Nine to five. Novenas. Muses. Supreme Court Justices. And human beings may tell themselves that they would not have it any other way because these are the marks of civilization upon which “freedom” is made possible (Paglia). Republics, which presumably make freedom possible, make possible also the freedom to let the conditions of freedom slip. People who care about civics do so because they want to create freedom, but freedoms—like the family dog—only subsist as long as people submit themselves to taking care of them. People must be interested in civic action. Therefore, any inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of action ought to inquire into conditions that threaten to make action impossible or, at least, less likely. Hence, the rationale for this study: if rhetorical scholars are to have a more complete picture of what “makes” people do what they do, scholars must study the ontological barriers to the persuasion that renders action. Rhetoric that cannot help audiences
surmount these barriers will likely fail, and only could succeed by luck. Each of these ontological barriers serves as its own rationale for study: for persuasion to succeed in gaining action, barriers must be overcome. The rhetoric that enables being—rhetorics of becoming—are blocked, at least, by five ontological constraints (which may overlap considerably), which might also be called “conditions” as in “conditions for the possibility of” persuasion. I will now describe the first two of these ontological conditions in depth: materiality and ideality, and temporality. The remaining three conditions—Necessity, stability, and agency—will have to wait since I cannot do them justice as yet in my research (though I will give them some greater attention in my final chapter as I look ahead to my future research).

6. A First Ontological Condition: Materiality and Ideality

The divide between symbol and sensation is a classic ontological problem, the division of idealism and materialism, mind and body, form and matter. Material has by now given up enough of its secrets to science—biological cells, physical motion, the chemistry of atoms and molecules—that philosophers no longer speculate about matter the way that Thales, Anaxagoras, and Democritus once did. Rather than a universe composed entirely of water, we know that all things are composed of atoms. And atoms are composed from quarks. And nevermind what quarks are composed of or what

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41 But I would rather be lucky than ontologically determined. Dr. Eberly also pointed out that this is a point of distinction in Aristotle’s Rhetoric: technē and tuchē, skill and chance. Aristotle was open from the beginning of the Rhetoric that some speakers were “skillful” merely by chance, but that patterns could be detected in their skillfulness is precisely what demonstrated that rhetoric was a technē, that it was capable of being theorized.
purpose or meaning they might have. The “material” refers to things with properties like taking up space, having mass and density, and unsettlingly increasing in size around the mid-section as one ages. No joke: the body, and all its imperfections, accounts for the most direct contact with materiality that human beings have. No wonder then that human beings spend so much time studying materials. Science so completely dominates questions of matter that philosophical speculation without scientific data or theory would now be unthinkable. Science has also threatened to explain away the ideal with recourse to matter, but ideality still offers fruitful ground for philosophical speculation if only because we have not quite convinced ourselves that our lives are as mechanistically determined as science sometimes implies. The “ideal” refers to non-material “things”—ideas are not really “things” exactly, Heidegger might grumble (“The Origin of the Work of Art”). Ideas are “things” like the mind, the soul, experience, memory, abstractions, form, and discourse—from which idea systems or “disciplines” like rhetoric may be derived.

I will argue that rhetoric demands an aesthetic investigation of ontology because the matter / form divide is central to making. I have an idea for a wooden circle, I carve it from some lumber, and *voilà* I have invented the wheel. And from where did that idea for the wheel come? Oh, I am just a da Vinci. Or else something I witnessed inspired me to slightly alter the circumstances of my witnessing—perhaps I saw someone rolling a rock, or rolling an overturned tree log down a hillside. One could account for human
inventiveness by just taking human beings for being really great, but more likely we are just great at taking the old and toying with it until we stumble upon the new. And why would we not toy around given all the toying around we see nature doing, in the world that is ceaselessly changing? Early metaphysicians simply posited permanence and change as facts. Heraclitus saw both permanence and change, and he argued that they must have some relationship. Theologians, regardless of the number of divinities they figured on, simply explained away temporal metaphysics with recourse to miracles or divine vengeance. Epidemics were expressions of divine wrath (and this can still be seen in the way some AIDS patients are spoken of by perverse doomsayers, as though infection were an obvious punishment for supposed sexual promiscuity or deviancy). Natural disasters might appear arbitrary, but an Augustine or a Leibniz was always available to defend against the charge that God was a jerk. Creativity and invention were rationalized by visits from the Muses or simple “natural talent.” Perhaps only in questioning human freedom against an atheistic, scientifically totalized universe would temporal relationships become huge philosophical problems (when referring to “science,” this dissertation means modern conceptions of science based on logical positivism, scientific method, and the ability to reproduce results; when I discuss ancient notions of science, which were not as narrow in scope, I will specify that I am doing so). People tend to want to believe that they are free agents, but embracing science too tightly while excluding the supernatural brought metaphysicians face to face with the specter of determinism—maybe free agency is no more than predictable biochemistry, freedom

44 “Mimesis,” Dr. Eberly pointed out, is what I am invoking here.
45 Shall I discuss Isocrates here? Be patient. (“If you’re lucky,” Dr. Eberly replied.)
merely an illusion.\textsuperscript{46} What accounts for the capacity of beings to be inventive when confronted with new situations? Are inventions determined, agency-dependent, chaotically accidental, or something else? The rhetorical canon of invention, being treated so often in our discipline as the most hallowed of the canons, leads rhetoric and metaphysics to the question of agency. As rhetoric goes, so must aesthetics because rhetoric is \textit{an art, not a science} (as Aristotle and Isocrates correctly argued, rhetoric is \textit{technë}, not \textit{episteme}, not \textit{tuchê}). And as agency goes, so must politics because our abilities to cooperate and improve our lives are premised entirely on the capacity for freedom (since completely determined beings would not have the option of improving their lives).

A sensible, “pragmatic” reader ought to wonder if the whole set of questions is not full of shit. And, in fact, John Dewey’s “Art as Experience” ("Art as Experience") (among others) proposed a very useful model of being partially premised on that sensible reader’s guess scatology. \textit{When the world ends / You’re gonna come with me / We’re going to be crazy / Like a river bends / Through the criss-cross of the mountains} (Matthews). Metaphysics and rhetoric are river bends; one might say that our whole world turns on them. Meaning is transferred via a bend, making tradition flow into present situations, or making “useful” materials that bend meaning back onto its “users.” Rhetoric, too, is useful and meaningful in these ways.

To summarize and expand on the exigencies dealt with in this project: rhetorical scholars should also be rhetoricians. Taboo as it may be to insist that rhetorical scholars

\textsuperscript{46} I have been asked about the spelling of the word “specter.” “Specter” is a phantom; “Spectre” is the “Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, Extortion.”
must be something, one might still argue for practical purposes that certain activities improve the value of rhetorical scholarship. Saying that rhetorical scholars should be rhetoricians is not meant, necessarily, as a moral imperative, or a threat, or a qualification. Rather, rhetorical scholars who want to be better scholars should become rhetoricians, not orators alone (practitioners) nor mere rhetorical scholars (theorists), but people who unite their theory and practice and thereby make their scholarship more appealing to public audiences. Unity of theory and practice is nothing new to speak of, but whether it is ever actually achieved is questionable (Edwards). Hence the prescriptive claim of this project: rhetorical critics and theorists should recognize themselves as artists, as people who persuade, if they are truly practitioners of a phronetic ideal.48

Up to now, the field of rhetoric has been divided by materialists and idealists, and probably some in-betweens and many more I-don’t-cares. The material-ideal division is one concerned with the metaphysical question of what is real. When, in this dissertation, I refer to “rhetorical idealism” I mean the rhetorical theories that argue or assume that rhetoric is constitutive of some reality, even if only as the one available lens through which to look at a world that cannot be materially known with any certainty (the earliest modern works of rhetorical idealism, and many up to the present time, call themselves

47 Must we all be rhetorical theorists? If one is a scholar who sees rhetoric through only a telescope, yes, one is only a rhetorical theorist. One may only qualify as other than a rhetorical theorist if one acknowledges one’s performative role as a participant in rhetoric (as a critic, an interpreter, a maker of meaning, as one who makes an appearance in the space of appearances called the “public”).

“epistemological,” constitutive of knowing). 49 Though rhetorical idealism is being defined with reference to “reality,” rhetorical idealism should not be confused with “realism,” which is a theory of worldliness that leans in the direction of materiality in its cavalier dismissal of high-mindedness and ideological complexity. “Rhetorical materialism,” then, will refer to the rhetorical theories that argue or assume that rhetoric’s influence on reality is constrained by materiality such that rhetoric happens through material means or in spite of them. This next sub-section of my argument will describe the treatment of idealism and materialism in contemporary rhetorical theories.

A concern among rhetorical scholars for materiality and epistemology can be traced back as far as Kenneth Burke in 1935 (Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose). But the dominance of neo-Aristotelian criticism prevented materiality and epistemology from surfacing as contentious issues until the late 60s. In 1967, two works of considerable influence on the field of communication-rhetoric brought rhetorical idealism to the surface. In that year, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann published The Social Construction of Reality—widely cited by rhetorical scholars interested in rhetoric’s constitutive powers. Also in 1967, Robert L. Scott published “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,” inaugurating a lasting series of investigations into rhetoric’s role as a producer of knowledge instead of a mere ornamentation of it. Applying work by Stephen Toulman, beyond just the model, Scott made an argument now so familiar it feels passé: the only certain truths are analytic, but analytic truths are not useful for very

much (a point also made by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca). The temporally contingent truths that necessarily lend themselves to rhetoric—because they involve probability and interpretation—are the only alternative.

Matters sat for about ten years until 1978 when Fredric Jameson began critiques of Burke’s legacy in the journal *Critical Inquiry*. Though he conceded the importance of Burke’s work in many ways (such as its work on symbolism), Jameson concluded that Burke’s aims failed because his work “fails to account for—and, even represses—the concept of ideology.” When Marxists attack, stand back. Burke responded, and the two scholars tussled with each other in *Critical Inquiry* issues for the remainder of the year. According to Bryan Crable, Burke’s major strategy was to insist that he accounted for ideology, but did not have the major investment in it that his Marxist kin did (304).

The term “ideology” could use some clarification, and Philip Wander once gave a good summary worth recounting. He claimed that ideology was used derisively by Napoleon Bonaparte to refer to useless, ivory tower intellectualism. Karl Marx then “appropriated the term and used it to mean the ruling ideas of the ruling class. He stressed the connection between established economic interests and the spiritual formulations in law, religion, and philosophy growing out of them and working in their favor” (Wander "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism" 97). The Marxists in the Frankfurt School then used the term to indicate “the partiality or ‘party’ interest in any formulation but also the connection between what is embraced or concealed and the

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51 I find no fault with Scott’s major argument, but labeling rhetoric epistemic was probably a mistake. Scott meant only that it related to epistemology, which I find true enough, but the Greek episteme means something specifically not contingent. Therefore, Scott proved not that rhetoric is epistemic, but that rhetoric is not any less epistemic than everything else (except analytic philosophy).
interests served by a particular formulation” (Wander "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism“ 97).

The Marxist mix-up feels tangential to issues of metaphysics, at first. But Marxism carries an unusual relationship to metaphysics that makes Marxism, like science and theology (other meta-narratives), establish pragmatic links with ontological properties. For Marx, ideology was essentially “false consciousness,” the alienation of workers from the products of their own labor as though those products were not “theirs.” The analysis of history with dialectical materialism revealed oppression to be rooted in control over wealth or its means of production. Marxist materialism, then, took an absolutist stand on metaphysics: idealism was mere ideology, and, divorced as it was from material realities, it would only cloud attempts to liberate the working class. Thus, more than Marxist politics and class struggle were at stake in the debate between Burke and Jameson. They were also arguing over understandings of metaphysics that would have political effects.

The Burke-Jameson dust up marked the beginning of a party for rhetorical materialism. Michael C. McGee, Celeste Michelle Condit, Raymie E. McKerrow, and Philip Wander all published important work on rhetorical materialism within five years of the Critical Inquiry debate. As strong as the rhetorical materialists appeared to be (given a lack of direct opposition), it must have been a big surprise to rhetorical materialists when, in 1994, Dana L. Cloud wrote that “a reminder is overdue that discourse is not the only thing that ‘matters’” ("The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to
Critical Rhetoric" 141). Despite the quality of the piece, it is not often cited by later work if the Web of Science’s index of humanities citations is any indication—very few references are made to Cloud’s article, and none of those references take issue with Cloud. Dr. Eberly has repeatedly pointed out that, with the possible exception of Ronald Greene, none take up the “challenge.”

The “materiality of discourse,” as Cloud defined it, sounds like pure idealism: she called it “the idea that discourse itself is influential in or even constitutive of social and material reality” ("The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 141). What sticks out in her definition is the lack of qualification. She did not write “some social and material reality” or “all social and material reality.” But Cloud took an absolutist tack throughout the rest of the essay. The materiality of discourse theory comes in two forms: an idealist form that she identified with (*gasp!* ) her teacher, McGee, and a relativist form that she identified with McKerrow.

Cloud gave an unusual definition of idealism, which helps clarify why she thought McGee could be called a kind of idealist: “Idealism, when defined in opposition to historical materialism, refers not to the common-sense notions of wishful thinking or hopefulness about the possibility of social change, but rather to the tendency to overemphasize consciousness, speech, and text as the determinants of such change” (Cloud "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 145). Cloud asserted that idealism, definitively, is an exaggeration of the power of

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52 Cloud provides a list, on page 142, of scholars contributing to the development of a critical rhetoric that assumes the materiality of discourse thesis; notably, she cites Michael McGuire’s materialism chapter for the collection Rhetoric and Philosophy, wherein McGuire was responsible for explaining and defending the materialist point of view. That Cloud named his piece among the offenders implies that she did not think McGuire’s treatment was materialistic enough.
ideas. Thus, Cloud would not see anyone as a “moderate idealist.” Rather, “ideas—or ideologies—have material consequences. This simple claim is not in itself idealist, but rather is congruent with historical materialism” ("The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 145). Cloud stacked the deck by defining the middle as materialist and only the radical fringe as idealist.

Cloud did, however, have the goods on her teacher, McGee. In 1990, McGee published “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,” wherein he joined the “death of the author” bandwagon (Barthes). Cloud identified three mistakes McGee made. First, he tried to establish the fragmented nature of culture, identifying audiences as “the true authors of rhetorical texts in that they assemble a meaningful whole from the fragments offered them in discourse” (Cloud "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 151). Though McGee remained committed to his materialism in this piece, Cloud insisted that he defined discursive contexts “as themselves intertextual, rather than material” ("The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 151). Second, McGee overemphasized the ability of the audience to reassemble pieces into texts of their own. Third, Cloud pointed out that audiences were unlikely to come up with consciousness-raising texts anyway, having been trained by the capitalist machine precisely how to interpret things.

Concerning McKerrow, Cloud chose to label the social constructivist perspective “relativism” according to Brummett’s definition in the book Rhetoric and Philosophy.  

The definition I gave of “rhetorical idealism” is not in tension with my critique of Cloud here. Cloud contends that idealism is exaggeration, root and branch. To say, as I have, that rhetorical idealism has constitutive power over reality does not fence in idealists as only the most radically relativist conjurers.
“the belief that what is real and true is determined only by the social, symbolic, and historical context from which the knowing human arises” (82). While technically correct (if one agrees with Brummett’s definition—suspect for its exclusionary use of the word “only”—and if one agrees with Cloud about the meaning of social constructivism), Cloud’s label is still cheating. “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality,” Burke wrote (Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method 45). Representation is selection. Would social constructivists have chosen to represent themselves by the name “relativists”? I would suppose not since almost no one, even the craziest postmodernists ascribed to that label.54 “Relativism” is almost always applied as a derogation or accusation, and even those who will claim it will do so with great qualification so as to avoid being charged with nihilism.

Tricks like naming have a way of haunting authors. In Cloud’s case, it sets up a straw figure: “in a relativist’s world, reality is malleable and subject to interpretation. The [relativist] critic is not in a credible position to adjudicate the truth or falsity of a discourse, or to speculate about whose interests are served by a particular set of texts” (“The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric” 153). The hell they aren’t! First, truths can still be judged by their coherence with theory regardless of their lack of independent grounding in the world: as Timothy Kaufman-

54 A distinction must be made between relativism and lack of a foundation: those who are critical of foundations do accept relativism to a degree, but they often believe that such relativism can be painted over by consensus building, deal making, or marketplace debate. The relativist who gives up on it all because everything is measured relatively is either a myth or just a cynical teenager.
Osborn once put it in class, if one moves a rook to the end of a chessboard and says “King me” one has acted contrary to the truth of the rules of chess. Plenty of dangers exist with that type of truth—like consistently finding things human beings test for because they developed the answer to fit the test—but if human beings could obtain by persuasion a great amount of agreement to a set of rules like universal human rights, then they would be able to make statements about the truths of oppression on the basis of truth-by-convention (McKeon). Second, the critic has a credibility constrained by subject position, but not necessarily annihilated by it. In fact, the critic would have to be able to retain some credibility if human beings are not to give up hope entirely of changing the world: if subject position completely determined one’s credibility beyond idealistic hope, Cloud would have to indict herself because the material conditions of her life would deny her the credibility with which to speak of material oppression. Critics would either be able to transcend the conditions of their spectator status enough to sympathize with a world of survivors, or they would not and criticism would need to be dismissed as mere bourgeois footsie. Third, and most importantly, no one reputable takes the position Cloud was attacking—we know that “one cannot live by the word for bread alone,” that materiality is a constraint on idealism (The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action xvi). Cloud is correct that scholars occasionally forget the constraint of materiality when they address the implications of criticism: “when discourse counts as material, emancipation is seemingly possible in ‘mere talk’” (Cloud "The Materiality of

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55 Once again, Kaufman-Osborn may have taken this example from Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. But Kaufman-Osborn performed this example in class, and my notes do not record any citation if he gave one.

56 “Footsie,” according to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footsie downloaded on January 10, 2007), “is a practice in which two people use their feet to play with each other’s feet.”
Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 154). But, once reminded, who fails to agree that materiality is where the oppression happens? Besides Baudrillard and Berkeley, there are no pure idealists.57

Cloud asserted further that the “alternative” to strictly materialist critique “is the aestheticization and depoliticization of political struggle” (Cloud "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 157). She offered no reasons for those implications. But—taking her at her word—Cloud’s materialist position would leave rhetoricians without aesthetics, without a critique of disciplinary power (she attacked Foucault too), without a significant role for close-textual criticism, and without any other purpose than exposing capitalist oppression which would, by strictly materialist reasoning, be better accomplished by a full-time activist anyway (because they are the ones engaging with the material realities of the world, after all).58 Cloud says as much with her epigram, by Trotsky, condemning silly intellectuals for thinking that the world follows their minds instead of vice-versa. One may wonder why Cloud studies rhetoric at all.

Perhaps I am being too harsh? Cloud did give the materiality of discourse some credit: “social constructionism usefully challenges the idea that a given economic or political reality is natural, permanent, and transparent and argues that representations of

57 So should I not deal with Baudrillard and Berkeley? In due time.
58 I am not questioning Dr. Cloud’s activism here, only her scholarship. The question is not “Is she a good enough activist?” The question is “If scholarship can only be a waste of time, why does Cloud do it?” “To pay her bills,” Dr. Eberly answered me—but that, I think, reeks of Baudrillardian “banal” strategizing (since it embraces the “game” of rhetorical idealism) that I would otherwise have thought Dr. Cloud to be above. See Jean Baudrillard, Forget Foucault, 2nd Revised ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007). Also see Jean Baudrillard, Seduction (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1990). I ought to confess here that I have not any ground from which to question Cloud’s commitment, dedication, or past work for her commendable causes. None of that is my scholarly concern here—I am concerned only with the question “Why bother with rhetoric?”
that reality are persuasive constructs that obscure the real interests at stake and the possibilities of change” (Cloud "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric" 145). This admission, however, flies in the face of her overall thesis that the materiality of discourse is an oxymoron; if it is an oxymoron, it appears to have been a useful one in some circumstances (especially to the degree that one may partially credit advances in civil rights to critiques of arbitrarily constructed social orders).

Recall that rhetorical idealism had, since Scott’s 1967 article, principally gone by the name “epistemology.” One exception was in a piece published by Michael J. Hyde and Craig R. Smith on rhetoric and hermeneutics in 1979—these existentialist rhetoricians advanced rhetorical idealism as interpretation. Also in 1979, Barry Brummett argued (according to Chesebro) that “epistemic modes of inquiry create all sensations, ultimately denying the existence of any independent, physical, and phenomenal reality” (Chesebro 136). Brummett’s statement was the most expansive argument for rhetorical idealism yet. In 1982, Richard Cherwitz and James Hikins wrote “John Stewart Mill’s Doctrine of Assurance as a Rhetorical Epistemology and Toward a Rhetorical Epistemology.” Cherwitz and Hikins completed that work in their 1986 book, Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology. In 1983, Burke, still alive and kicking, published “Dramatism and Logology,” an attempt to explain his life’s work as a dialogic study—on the one hand was the “logological

59 Chesebro cited a conference presentation, but the words here are Chesebro’s description of Brummett’s position, they are not Brummett’s words. Chesebro’s citation is: Brummett, B. (1979). *Three meanings of epistemic rhetoric*. Paper read at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Antonio, TX.

60 Clauses beginning with “Toward” in a title seem like a sure marker that someone has not yet completed scholarly work, but wants to rush something into print just to be sure that somebody else does not beat them to it. We must give this a name. I propose, “Ad Fisherum.”

61 Dr. Eberly points out that Burke is “still kicking.” Clearly, that makes her a rhetorical idealist!
theory” which “examines rhetoric in practice,” and on the other hand was the “dramatistic theory of symbol-using” which dealt “with universals of the human condition and universals of communication” (Chesebro 143; Burke "Dramatism and Logology"). None of Burke’s clarifications did anything to stop the increasing number of debates over what his system meant. In 1984 for example, Walter Fisher and Wayne Brockriede proclaimed Burke a “realist” even while Robert L. Heath argued that Burke had “broken” with formalism. In 1984 Klaus Krippendorff wrote “An Epistemological Foundation for Communication” and Walter B. Weimer wrote “Why All Knowing is Rhetorical.” In 1985, an issue of Communication Quarterly devoted a symposium to “Epistemology and Ontology in Kenneth Burke’s Dramatism” (a contribution by that title was written by Bernard L. Brock; other contributions came from Burke, Parke G. Burgess, and Herbert W. Simons, with an introduction by then editor James W. Chesebro). Thus, the rhetorical debates over ideology, Burke’s legacy, epistemology, and ontology were briefly unified. That unity is best demonstrated in a 1988 capstone work by Chesebro called “Epistemology and Ontology as Dialectical Modes in the Writings of Kenneth Burke,” a piece which sought to reassert the claims Burke had made about his theories in 1983. Brock echoed Chesebro’s thoughts in a similarly named piece in 1993.

1990 saw the publication of the book Rhetoric and Philosophy. The book was populated by reputable rhetorical scholars, and they did have insightful observations on the use of philosophy in rhetorical theory and criticism, but the book was cobbled by its own strange compartmentalization of philosophical movements. Each author was assigned a philosophy to write about—giving some history, defending its approaches from common criticisms, and generally being partisan on its behalf. Although the
authors occasionally whimpered that some idea was not what they themselves believed and that the idea was only being reported, by and large the compartmentalized partisanship has the effect of making a reader believe the author is closer to accepting the idea than rejecting it. The divisions of the book also carried a generalizing gloss—not necessarily problematic in given contexts, but lumping several philosophers together within a school and then conveying that school’s ideas in a simplified form made the book feel like an undergraduate textbook. Hikins argued for “realism,” Brummett for “relativism,” C. Jack Orr for “critical rationalism,” John Lyne for “idealism,” Michael McGuire for “materialism,” Hyde for “existentialism,” James Arnt Aune for “deconstruction,” and James A. Mackin, Jr. for “pragmatism.” Some of these subjects look pretty safe: pragmatists have a history of being linked with each other, and so discussion of them as a school was possible. Existentialists really have very little in common and, except for Jean Paul Sartre’s circle, never met. But Hyde focused on those few similarities the existentialists did have and he got the most out of them. Brummett intelligently handled the issues related to relativism without feeling too great a need to base his discussion around a core school of theorists (which was good because relativism is more an effect of some philosophies than a school unifying philosophers together). But Lyne and McGuire got themselves in gigantic trouble, in the main by attempting to stake out the middle ground and insist that their opposite was only its worst and most radical case. Lyne, as McGuire pointed out, attacked materialism as though materiality could only be fully determinist. But McGuire then proceeded to attack idealism as though all idealistic manifestations worth discussing were reducible to materiality. At

62 Glass house alert.
one point, McGuire gave away the game entirely: “There are no nonmaterial phenomena; there are only nonmaterial interpretations of phenomena” (McGuire 189). Would “interpretation” be classifiable as “phenomena”? If so, then there would indeed be such things as nonmaterial phenomena (and quite a lot of it, quite important too); if not, McGuire remains stuck with the burden of demonstrating that interpretation is material.

A lot of work remains to be done on these questions of rhetorical materiality and ideality, not least of all because so few rhetorical scholars have engaged philosophical literature on these topics (existentialist rhetoricians being the exception). Concerning the issue of action, materiality and ideality bring up questions about what kinds of beings humans are that can take action, what action is and what it means, and where persuasion is or should be directed. Cloud’s challenge is a problem generalizable to all scholars of rhetoric: if she’s right about rhetoric’s meaninglessness in the face of materiality, one must wonder why any of us do rhetorical work.

7. A Second Ontological Condition: Temporality

To say that time constrains possibilities for action is really to say that the world’s capacity for changing its materials and ideals makes only some actions workable at some times. Time is, thus, always a question of opportunity and appropriateness, possibility and the right formula for actualization of possibility. Anyone who tells jokes or stories well is aware of the strategy, and luck, of timing from immediate experience.
Contemporary rhetoric has embarrassingly little to say about time. The ancients knew better: Protagoras, Gorgias, Isocrates, Aristotle to some degree, and even the Greek translation of the Old Testament all have important things to say about kairos or “opportune timing” and to prepon or “appropriateness” (Sipiora 3). Appropriateness should be understood here in the sense of actualizing the opportunity made available by time—appropriateness as decorum would seem to be the very opposite of kairos because it is an assumed norm taken into account by careful speakers regardless of the time. Kairos and to prepon marked rhetoric as necessarily phronetic, concerned with the particular and contingent. In fact, the contingency of kairos can be so radically contingent that it breaks off from all known standards of judgment, only lending itself to judgment for its appropriateness after the fact.

One contemporary example of kairos that radically breaks with traditional means of strategizing is Lloyd Bitzer’s “The Rhetorical Situation.” When a problem arises—a problem with big stakes, immediate proximity, characteristics that cannot be ignored—and the situation demands a rhetorical response, the situation may be christened a “rhetorical situation” (forever to haunt poor undergraduates, and their teachers, who don’t see why such a name should not also be given to “situations with rhetoric”). Unfortunately, especially given Bitzer’s familiarity with classical rhetoric, no mention of kairos was made in his essay. “No major theorist has treated rhetorical situation thoroughly as a distinct subject in rhetorical theory,” Bitzer wrote (59).

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When rhetorical scholars have acknowledged time, they have often done so only in passing. McGee treated time in an “existential” way: “What happens in time is the emergence of a particular rhetorical object out of the half-articulate wishes of an ethnic group or language community” (J. A. Campbell 348). Some emergences get taken up into a larger narrative, others are ignored or forgotten. Time mattered to McGee only post hoc, judgment in the present implying that the judgment can occur precisely because the objects of judgment are past, are visible because they are past. John Angus Campbell contrasted McGee’s view with that of Michael Leff, who took time to be more periodic. Of Leff’s theoretical assumptions, Campbell wrote that “the audience is led by the rhetorical art of the speech (or text) to resolve a contingent issue demanding decision. Leff’s project sees time as a series of densely structured but discrete episodes bracketed in history and enacted in texts; each text/context has its proximate beginning and proximate end” (J. A. Campbell 348). McGee—an arch materialist—had a “big picture” view of time. Leff had a particularizing view that stressed what the text was doing in its own time—making Leff a rhetorical idealist for focusing on the message as a form acting with materials but not reducible to materiality?

One direct approach to time came from Medhurst and Benson in their essay “The City: The Rhetoric of Rhythm.” Their piece is about a documentary, a film, so the rhythm they refer to is the timing of lengths of shots. How long do we get a single shot of a particular thing? And then what do the arrangement of the shots with their lengths set up a rhythm for the viewer? Medhurst and Benson did excellent work for film in “The City,” but they conceded that they were merely scratching the surface: “The forms of rhythm discussed in this essay do not begin to exhaust the potential levels at which this
principle functions” (71). Most important of all, their rhetoric of rhythm is one of the reel, not the real, watching but not being (necessarily).

The most complete and thoughtful treatment of time by a contemporary rhetorical scholar is in Kaironomia: On the Will-to-Invent, by Eric Charles White. White’s focus wasn’t kairos alone; the titular reference to nomos (custom, law) is meant, with kairos, to refer to invention that occurs between opportune timing and custom. White argues that invention is the present situation that confronts the new and attempts to understand newness by using the old. One is, thus, always living an opportune moment because one is always living in a moment in which the unknowable future can be interpreted only with recourse to tradition.64 But White goes further: a postmodern doubter of any essential or universal Truth, White says that invention’s kaironomic character makes the self live “a fugitive existence, always on the move from one newly constituted version of itself to another…. Transformed even as it transforms the world, the self would continually improve a response to its experience on the basis of fresh intrusions of desire from outside itself” (52). White’s work is most exciting when considered with the rest of the literature on rhetorical being—White and rhetorical being should fit seamlessly together. Combining the Kaironomia with a rhetoric that appropriately deals with materiality and ideality and using that combination to make light of rhetorical being would provide a more complete understanding of the ontology of rhetoric. Once again, these rhetorical problems would also benefit from hearing about philosophical literature on time, more work that simply hasn’t been done.

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64 White surely acknowledges that some opportunities may seem more scare, more important, than others. His point is only that the present is always an opportunity because it is always a confrontation with the unfamiliar future.
8. An Aside on the Three Remaining Constraints

After materiality and temporality, three obstructions to action—Necessity, stability, and agency—were suggested by Hannah Arendt’s book, *The Human Condition*. Only Necessity could be called an absolute ontological concern, but stability and agency will nevertheless be treated here as ontological dimensions of rhetorical being. Necessities are ontological constraints on being alive that are identifiable by their complete refusal to negotiate so as to allow other possibilities. Necessity was juxtaposed, in Arendt’s work, with freedom or leisure—terms not to be capitalized because they are not transcendent in the sense of being non-negotiable. In fact, freedom may be called the negotiability of a life, leisure to act to the degree that one is free from Necessity. Of course, one cannot be free from ontologically essential Necessities, but Arendt focused on freedom from the need to act so as to meet Needs. Hence Arendt’s division of the human condition into three types of activity: labor (activity that meets Necessities), work (activity that creates lasting artifacts for use, what I will call stability), and action (activity that is political, attends to civic virtue, deliberates, negotiates, and compromises, all made possible by agency). My dissertation will not go into greater detail on *The Human Condition* (except for some truncated thoughts offered in my concluding chapter), but should be understood as assuming Arendt’s thinking about these ontological categories since they will pop up again and again throughout (Hansen).
9. Preview

The most important condition for the possibility, and by extension probability, of action is habituation. In habit, human beings are situated in the world. They learn to use materiality and ideality together, and they learn good timing—so much so that their habits often go unnoticed. When not encumbered by Necessity, habit provides the necessary stability for agency to make a change. The conditions for the possibility of persuading people to take action are, thus, dependent on habit-formation. My dissertation will build an ontology for persuasion that describes the metaphysical conditions which make habit-formation possible, even probable. Not only must one practice as one preaches, but preaching without reinforcing practices as habits makes us rhetorical scholars instead of rhetoricians. Too often I have heard rhetorical scholars argue that rhetoric need not be “mere talk” and then proceed merely talking. Rhetoric does not have to be irrelevant, but rhetorical scholars do not always make something actual of this possibility.

My dissertation has seven chapters. The second chapter takes up the question of epistemological knowing and sight—sight was a privileged metaphor, figuring prominently in Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric. Analysis of sight-as-knowledge is therefore necessary for understanding the phenomenological interpretation of rhetoric I wish to advance (“phenomenological” meaning that the experience of rhetoric will be ontologically understood with respect to the experience of seeing among other

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65 The habituation piece is almost wholly creditable to a course I took from Penn State Professor of Philosophy Mitchell Aboulafia. However, I have since learned much about habitude as the ancient Greek concept of hexis from Christopher P. Long, but each of those observations will be cited as I come to them.
experiences). The third and fourth chapters are modeled on the first two conditions for the possibility and probability of persuading people to act: materiality and ideality, and temporality. Each of those two chapters seeks to: (1) breathe philosophical insight back into the work rhetorical scholars have already done on being and ontology; (2) strategize means for meeting the subject ontological condition so as to create possibility and then probability; and (3) politicize the ontological by reflecting on the civic meaning of ontological conditions for persuasion, looking at the political meaning of the rhetorical situations imposed upon human beings in their struggles with being. The third chapter, on materiality and ideality, will be the most expansive. The rhetorical work discussed above will be infused with insights from Aristotle (the *Metaphysics*, *Rhetoric*, and *On the Soul*) with supporting commentary by philosophers Joe Sachs and Christopher P. Long (*The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*), Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*), Dewey (*Art as Experience*), Heidegger (*Being and Time* and *The Question Concerning Technology*), Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media* and *The Gutenberg Galaxy*), Scarry (*The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*), Kaufman-Osborne (*Creatures of Prometheus*), and Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*). Chapter four, on temporality, will take up the work of Giambattista Vico (*The Art of Rhetoric*), Friedrich Nietzsche’s discussions of tropes, Heidegger (*Being and Time*, but also work by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*), Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Truth and Method*, especially with attention to the “hermeneutic circle” also found in Heidegger’s work), and Arendt (*Between Past and Future*). Chapter five will concern itself with “aesthetic” practice or, specifically, “exercise” within the limits of materiality and ideality, and temporality—all towards the cultivation of habits.
In exercise, the work of the two previous chapters will be unified and directed toward an approach to rhetoric’s ontology. Chapter six, then, will attempt to follow through on the promise of chapter five’s exercise by using rhetoric as a theory of aesthetics that performs itself. The chapter, “Rhetoricians in Hell,” will be a performance, practicing the theory commitments articulated by the previous chapters in a prose-poem that analyzes the writing styles of some rhetorical scholars. The finishing touch will be of greatest importance because it will be my attempt to merge theory and practice—writing poetry, committing whatever rhetorical skill I have to an aesthetic venture that is certainly very new to me, may not seem like much of an “action.” But if action depends on habit formation, even the most gradual steps toward transformation cannot be dismissed. And poetry is, anyway, not so distant from a question of habit because poetry is habit performed, played with, reveled in, reflected and deflected. Chapter seven concludes the dissertation with some self-reflexive assessments, discussion of theoretical implications, and the chapter envisions future avenues for research in an ontology of rhetoric, including exploration of the ontological “constraints” on persuasion that I must put off for now.
CHAPTER 2

PHENOMENOLOGICALLY SEEING THE AVAILABLE MEANS

The purpose of this chapter is to set up the meaning of several terms—rhetoric, sight, phenomenology, and imagination—for their later “methodological” application in coming chapters. I have called attention to “methodology” here because I do not mean to be setting up a method, *per se*; certainly not a method in the sense of a series of steps or a “lens” one might use to look at something.66 Rather, this chapter attempts to define terms with special attention to Aristotle’s work so that later examples of ontology can be understood on grounding analogous to what is set up here. The differences I have referred to are like those of following directions, looking through a telescope at a far off place, and, finally as the approach I will take, looking around at the place—the clearing? the *topos*?—that one already occupies. I will explain phenomenological “methodology,” and then turn to a series of Aristotelian phenomenological considerations of sight and seeing. But, first, I must make an apology for what is to come.

1. Mea Culpa

One morning near the completion of this dissertation, I was reading from Frances A. Yates’ book, *The Art of Memory*, and came across this passage:

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66 Since sight is going to be important in this chapter, I could imagine someone quibbling with my assertion that I am not, methodologically speaking, providing a lens. Such a quibbling person needs to clean her or his glasses: phenomenology is not a series of directions (as, certainly, experience is not), but it is also far more than a “way of seeing” since it engages with experiences of all the senses and more.
In his commentary on the *De memoria et reminiscentia*, Albertus Magnus goes through his ‘faculty psychology’ (more fully described in his *De anima* and developed, of course, out of Aristotle and Avicenna) by which sense impressions pass by various stages from *sensus communis* to *memoria* being gradually dematerialized in the process. (Yates 67-68)

Alburtus Magnus was one of the founders, with Thomas Aquinas, of the scholastic school of medieval thinkers. The scholastics were Christian Platonists who had just rediscovered—from Arabia—the works of Aristotle, and so it was the scholastic movement that reintegrated Aristotle back into the Western canon (with dialectic as the chief method among the liberal arts). Think about Aristotle, and just how many scholars’ hands Aristotle’s many works have passed through, how many of his many ideas have been handled in different languages in different settings (and, thus, with different rhetorics, hermeneutics). Yates was focused on the concept of memory alone, and, following the history of memory’s art closely, in just this one sentence she invoked Aristotle (and a work by him that I, who read a lot of Aristotle, had never heard of), Avicenna’s commentaries on Aristotle, Alburtus’ commentaries on Aristotle and Avicenna, and the later-populized idea of the *sensus communis* (a term of some importance for Kant and Arendt and scholars of their work). I mention this episode to set up some questions about the justice of the crude scholarly approach I have taken up in this dissertation. Can I do Aristotle justice? Can I do a single idea from Aristotle justice? Alburtus, according to Yates, had quite a lot to say about “imagination,” an idea very important in Aristotle’s *On the Soul*—but had I not been reading Yates I would not have known I needed to look also in “*De memoria et reminiscentia.*” And surely I cannot do
justice to Aristotle or an Aristotelian idea if I do not manage to dip into the commentary, the work already done on Aristotle—but that work spans thousands of years, dozens of languages, and perhaps thousands of scholars. Perhaps worst of all, I have aimed to perform my work not just with Aristotle, but with a list of thinkers so long that a member of my committee—rightly—laughed at me. Being and Time? Truth and Method? Ha! One might spend one’s whole life and scholarly career on one of these books, but all of them?

Justice is not precisely my goal yet, though injustice certainly is contrary to my desires. I believe that I see something, something thematic, a trace running through a tradition with thinkers and commentators who fill libraries that one could drown in. To communicate and make plain the appearance of the trace that I believe I have seen also required that I gloss. I oversimplify. I by-pass many very worthy commentaries performed on the thinkers invoked here. Why have I done this? Because care can be zero-sum in its attentiveness to particular appearances: to make my sight something others might see, I had to push it into the spotlight and simultaneously push many other very worthy sights into the background. This is not careless or reckless scholarship—at least not any more so than any other scholarship insofar as all scholarship must choose a focus and in so doing shoves other topics away. On the other hand, my focus is a unique kind of limiting in that it risks running over work already-done, missing contexts eminently influential in the proper understanding of the texts at work, and all this is, perhaps, what Heidegger meant when he discussed doing “violence” to a text. I accept these risks and, humbly, offer my arguments up for correction, for there is nothing else I can do. I should not be understood as saying that taking the risk is “admirable” or that I
take comfort in “having started a conversation,” because those are weak excuses for “violence” that are in no way characterized by humility. Real humility will lay low. All I am saying is: one either speaks of Aristotle and risks offending a tradition so huge that one cannot do it justice, or one remains silent. Surely silence was not what Aristotle hoped his work would achieve (it is not what I hope for my own work, humbly speaking).

2. Phenomenology as “Method”

With the *mea culpa* completed (but not to be forgotten), I now move to the central task of this chapter: the understanding of phenomenology within the corpus of rhetoric so as to be able in following chapters to communicate what the trace is that I claim to see. Phenomenology was a philosophical method begun by Edmund Husserl, Heidegger’s teacher. If ontology is “the study of being,” then phenomenology is “the study of phenomenon,” but more specifically phenomenology for Husserl was a *descriptive* method of understanding the experience of being (and remember: this was all happening before LSD was big!). Maybe that does not sound exciting, but it is said that the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (who was exciting) was first drawn to study philosophy when a friend explained to him that he could do a phenomenological description of a glass of beer and *that* would be philosophy (Palmer). Though phenomenological method is not the same as the philosophy of “existentialism,” users of the phenomenological method who came to non-descriptive conclusions have tended to find themselves grouped in the existentialist camp (as Heidegger and Sartre have). So: phenomenology is the
study of the experience of being, it is the attempt to understand the experience of understanding itself.

Gadamer described phenomenology as “bracketing all positing out of being and investigating the subjective modes of givenness” (Truth and Method 244). But, Gadamer cautioned, phenomenology’s “exploration of the ‘I’ as phenomenon is not exploring the ‘inner perception’ of a real ‘I,’ nor is it the mere reconstruction of ‘consciousness’” (Truth and Method 244). Well, what is it then? Gadamer claimed, the discreteness of experience… is not an ultimate phenomenological datum. Rather, every such intentional experience always implies a twofold empty horizon of what is not actually meant in it, but toward which an actual meaning can, of its nature, be directed; and the unity of the flow of experience obviously includes the whole of all experiences that can be thematized in this way. Hence the constitution of the temporality of consciousness underlies all the problems of constitution. The flow of experience has the character of a universal horizon consciousness, and only from it is the discrete experience given as an experience at all (Truth and Method 245).

That was a tough paragraph, so allow me to interpret it. Experience has the temporal quality of flowing: human beings do not feel any jump from one moment to the next (not unless there is a sudden change in their experience, but even human beings flow into the jolt). Moments or periods or eras are constructions made on reflection about the past.

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67 “Bracketing” is a key feature of the work of many phenomenologists, but Heidegger is a notable exception. I have not yet come across a reference by Heidegger to any kind of bracketing, and no such reference is to be found anywhere in Being and Time. Were “horizons” brackets enough for Heidegger?
(which may then be projected, as interpretations, onto the present and future). “Every experience has implicit horizons of before and after, and finally fuses with the continuum of experiences present,” Gadamer wrote (Truth and Method 245). The “horizon” is the metaphor chosen to denote those understandings which are beyond a person given that person’s present location. A person can move, of course, and the horizon will move, too, carrying a “twofold empty” limit around the intentional experience, the before and the after. Meaning (through reflective thinking that makes interpretations) can “be directed” toward those empty horizons (though never completely or conclusively), and the flow of experience fuses human beings in the unity of time, but still the horizons maintain a certain emptiness in the sense that they are always present such that some other meaning might be attributed to them. The key to the above difficult paragraph is not to confuse “intentional experience” with the object of phenomenological analysis, but rather to look for the temporal and empty “bookends” suggested by an intentional experience. Experience is not the fundamental “datum” of phenomenology, but the constitution of experience in temporality as it encounters “phenomena” between the horizons of “before” and “after” might be the “understanding of understanding.”

Heidegger became the “great philosopher” by arguing that the available means of phenomenology were wider in scope than Husserl had articulated. Heidegger saw that phenomenological description was necessarily tied to the situatedness of its experience, so much so that Heidegger was able to say that “being” was always “being-in-the-world,” that historicity and facticity were elements of being-there (Da-sein), and that, for the most part, being-there is being-with (Mit-sein) others (and, for the reader’s information, the capitalization of these German words should not be understood as requiring requisite
English capitalizations—many German words get capitalization that would not in English, and some have mistranslated the German by mistaking capitalizations for signaling “transcendent” or at least different kinds of “Beings”). The significance of these insights for Heidegger will be dealt with in due time, but for the moment what is important is that one understand that Heidegger’s definition of phenomenology uniquely transforms the study of Aristotle’s texts and that Heidegger considered Aristotle’s work crucial to the study of phenomenology.

Why so? Because Heidegger thought he had discovered, in Aristotle’s work, the use of a phenomenological approach to the study of being. Aristotle was not only among the first “metaphysicians,” but he was also among the first phenomenologists because he approaching being through the study of experience. In the strictest Greek terms, one could not say that Aristotle studied being (ousia) through any overt and “theorized” privileging of experience (emperia). But Aristotle’s practice proved otherwise: Aristotle studied nature by going out to nature and getting his hands dirty, as he did with most all things that he studied. Aristotle was not merely contemplative in his study, though contemplation was certainly not absent. Aristotle engaged with the phenomenon, the “showing off of self” (a middle or passive voice participle in the Greek). That was how Aristotle gathered knowledge.

3. Phenomenology and Epistemeology

Phenomenology is, thus, related to the problem of defining knowledge. Why is that a problem? Because most debates over ontological matters are confounded by the
available means of epistemology: regardless of the attempt to describe the experience of understanding, the questions remain \textit{how} does one know what is real and \textit{how} can one know that what one knows is not an illusion? Rhetoric, embracing contingency and particularity, should offer means that easily work around this defining problem: to the degree that language is convention, knowledge is whatever it is valued to be as currency.

Wittgenstein wrote “the meaning of a word is its use in language” (43). So “knowledge” would mean whatever people used it to mean. Unfortunately, that is more of a problem than a solution: people should not be entirely discounted as sources of knowledge, and yet one should “trust, but verify,” and in this case the verification of the “common” use of the term knowledge fails to verify a satisfactory meaning. “Knowledge” can mean too many different possibilities in English to be a useful term—the meaning of “knowledge” is unraveled by its vague, worn out, and abused use in language. A Wittgensteinian scholar might say “knowledge” is about as meaningful as the word “being” is meaningful, given the overuse of each in language.

The ancient Greeks, though they had a catch-all term for knowledge (\textit{sophia}—wisdom), were far more likely to specify the type of knowledge they were talking about: \textit{technē} (skill, craft), \textit{epistēmē} (scientific, theoretical, contemplative, philosophical knowing), \textit{nous} (thought, thinking), \textit{phronēsis} (practical wisdom), \textit{empeiria} (experience, reflex-like habit—knowing from memory), \textit{mnēmē} (memory proper), \textit{aesthēsis} (perception), \textit{gnosis} (belief, opinion), \textit{doxa} (belief, opinion), and \textit{hexis} (habit as an “active condition,” according to Dr. Long\textsuperscript{68}). In contrast, check out the list of synonyms

\textsuperscript{68} See the next chapter on Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics}. 
for “knowledge” offered by the thesaurus at Dictionary.com ("Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus"):  

Main Entry: knowledge  
Part of Speech: noun  
Definition: understanding  


* = informal or slang  

“Dirt,” “dope,” “goods,” “poop”: yeah, those are a little informal. I cannot say that I know the dope. You can’t handle the poop! “Ability” or “know-how” may, indeed, be thought of as knowledge, but do any people hear the word knowledge and think it means “ability” or “know-how”? John Dewey might have had it that way, but I do not believe it stuck. “Expertise,” in distinction to “ability” or “know-how” might be able to pull off the definitional reversal (when asking someone what knowledge is, we might indeed expect an answer like “expertise” among others). “Understanding,” “apprehension,” “awareness,” “cognition,” “comprehension,” “discernment,” and “wisdom” are all good synonyms, but they all have the same problem as the original term: vagueness. One may
have a general idea of what they mean, but usually with recourse to the other synonyms or reduction to sensation (and maybe that reduction is not a bad idea, but that is a question to take up later). “Doctrine,” “dogma,” and “facts” are laughable translations, each representing knowledge-as-power in the scary Foucaultian sense. The same may be said of “instruction,” “education,” “philosophy,” and “scholarship” or “schooling,” which are also merely means by which human beings often are said to obtain knowledge, not themselves the knowledge.

What is left? “Expertise” was approvable, as would be “proficiency.” “Grasp” sounds like the ontological danger one might fret over, worrying that one grasps while not letting the grasped be as it is or was. Maybe that is unavoidable. “Judgment” is solid for knowledge, but it also could never encompass all meanings of the term because judgment is typically the kind of thing that happens once knowledge is already in place, or else it is a means of deciding that data is knowledge, that some apprehension is to be called knowledge, so one might hold judgment to the side while thinking through the rest of these definitions. Judgment feels like something one does, while knowledge feels like something one has.69 “Enlightenment,” “insight,” “light,” “observation,” and recognition are sound metaphors for knowing—are they not? Or one might reverse the question and ask why these metaphors are used to explain the meaning of knowledge. If the meaning of a word is its use in language, what does it mean that knowledge is used with metaphors of seeing? And, I should ask just as a reminder, where does rhetoric fit in this mess?

69 Be patient, Isocratians: I will return to this contrast in Chapter 4.
Rhetoric actualizes possibilities. Aristotle defined rhetoric, in John Henry Freese’s translation, as “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever,” or “Estō dē rhētorikē dunamis peri hekaston tou theōrēsai to endechomenon pithanon” (The Art of Rhetoric 14-15).

Taking this statement a piece at a time:

- *Estō dē rhētorikē*—“Rhetoric, then, is.”
- *dunamis*—“a faculty” (or “power” or “ability” or “potency”; notice the indefinite article “a” instead of “the”—when an indefinite article was needed, the Greeks just dropped the definite article, so the absence of *hē* or *ho* before *dunamis* I take to be a sign that an indefinite article may be applied).
- *peri hekaston*—“with regard to every sort” (or “each” sort; *hekaston* is accusative case meaning that it will cluster with the other accusative case words *to endechomenon pithanon*).
- *tou theōrēsai*—“of seeing” (*theōrēsai* is the active aorist [a past tense] infinitive of *theōreō*; it means “to look, observe, consider” as though a spectator; it is obviously an ancestor of the modern English word “theory”)
- *to endechomenon*—“the available means” (middle voice participle—so a truer translation would be “those means being
available between speakers and auditors” or “those means being available to the speakers themselves”.

- *pithanon*—“persuasion” (accusative of *pithanos* from the verb *peithō*).

Rhetoric may be a kind of action insofar as it was identified by Aristotle as a *technē* (a set of skills that can be taught and learned), a way of actualizing possibilities or an actualization of certain sorts of possibilities or both. But rhetoric is also “a way of seeing” (*theorēsai*): it not only actualizes possibilities, but it discovers them in sight.

Why *theorēsai* instead of some other word? Perhaps because of the middle voice of the “available means,” “to *endechomenon*”: neither fully “active,” nor “passive,” but both are available to the speaker insofar as the speaker sees available means as though a spectator. The rhetorician can speak *and* deliberate, while speaking, about the available means of persuasion—and so can adapt to an audience.

The above explanation was neat—too neat for me. I cannot say as an experienced performer of oratory that I was able to “step back” and do much deliberating with myself as I was speaking. I could make some adaptive changes, but “deliberate” is too strong a word for my phenomenological description of the experience of oration (remembering, of course, that my experience and expertise are neither universal nor a fitting representative case since I might just be a poor orator—but I doubt that).

To muddy things up a bit—so as to double-check the analysis of Aristotle’s meaning in his definition of rhetoric—one can look at alternatives to the word for seeing. The opening lines of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, for example, also mention a way of seeing possibilities, though in different words:
All human beings by nature [phusei] stretch themselves out toward [oregontai] knowing. A sign of this is our love [agapēsis] of the senses [aisthēseōn]; for even apart from their use, they are loved on their own account, and above all the rest, the one through the eyes [ommatōn] (Aristotle Metaphysics 1, brackets mine).

Ommatoō, a verb, means “to furnish with eyes… a mind furnished with eyes, quick of sight,” and the noun form, omma, can mean “the eye… to look straight… eyes or expression… before one’s eyes… eye-sight… that which one sees, a sight, vision… light, that which brings light… [and] anything dear or precious” (Liddell and Scott 555).

Knowing, as we do from the Rhetoric, that theorēsai was also an option, why did Aristotle choose ommatōn in the opening to the Metaphysics? The topic of Aristotle’s opening passage to the Metaphysics was how human beings naturally stretch themselves toward knowing, toward different ways of knowing. After the opening sentence, Aristotle went on to write about the “faculties” of memory, experience, and science and art, prioritizing sense-perception as our foremost means of knowing the world, but not our only method or necessarily our best. Ommatōn worked best with Aristotle’s opening topic because the senses (aisthēseōn) are one of the many ways knowledge is taken up. The various means of sophos, wisdom, were his true aim: eidos (form, shape—ancestor

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70 Long offered, in his course on Aristotle’s Metaphysics, a discussion of the meaning of oregontai as “stretching out.” Oregontai is a third person middle/passive plural form, as opposed to an active voice verb, meaning that oregontai may carry the middle voice connotation of one doing something to or for oneself, a returning to oneself somehow. Further, the reference to “knowing” is rendered tou eidenai, an article with a perfect active infinitive that would translate roughly as “the to-know.” Long argued that middle voice versions of these verbs imply that knowledge is not sought as an object, but the knowing, the stretching toward knowing are what Aristotle was seeking. Christopher P. Long, "Lecture on Aristotle's Metaphysics,” (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2005), vol.
of our English word “idea”), *epistēmē, technē, empeiria*, and, not yet making an appearance, *phronesis.*

Returning, then, to the *Rhetoric*, what later avenues are opened by Aristotle’s choice of *theorēsai*? What distinctions might one draw from Aristotle’s differing word choices? *Omma* can denote embodiment at least in the eyes, while *theorēsai* may not convey embodiment quite as strongly. *Theorēsai*, the active aorist infinitive of the verb *theōreō*, can mean “to look at, behold… to inspect or review soldiers… of the mind, to contemplate, consider, observe… to view the public games, of spectators” (Liddell and Scott 364). Two noun forms of the same word, *theōrēma* and *theōria*, refer to “that which is looked at, a sight, a spectacle” and “a looking at, viewing, beholding… to go abroad to see the world… of the mind, contemplation, speculation” (Liddell and Scott 364). Not only does *theorēsai* avoid mention of embodiment as an “eye” (except the “mind,” remembering that the ancient Greeks did not necessarily distinguish a mind or a soul sharply from the body—this is not a Cartesian dualism, but a Venn diagram with

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71 See also Hans Jonas, “The Nobility of Sight,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14.4 (1954). Long’s course on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* made reference to Jonas’ rendering of reasons sight has taken on a privileged status compared with other senses, such as hearing. Jonas cited three reasons. First, sight offers simultaneity: things are seen instantly and offer the illusion of a constant (or at least more stable) presence, whereas with data from hearing is temporal—a hearing happens and then ceases. Second, sight makes relationships between beings seem causally neutral: things that are seen are radically independent of us, and the speed of sight prevents us from thinking of what is seen as dependent upon other beings, especially our subjective selves, as causes. Jonas wrote, “The gain is the concept of objectivity, of the thing as it is in itself as distinct from the thing as it affects me, and from this distinction arises the whole idea of *theoria* and theoretical truth. Furthermore, the image is handed over to imagination, which can deal with it in complete detachment from the actual presence of the original object: this detachability of the image, i.e., of “form” from its “matter,” of “essence” from “existence,” is at the bottom of abstraction and therefore of all free thought. In imagination the image can be varied at will” (515). Hearing can be a party to the imagination, too, but the temporality again makes it impervious to capture. Third, sight “requires” and “thrive on” distance: one “needs proper distance for a proper view, which allows adaptive behavior by surveying it and then deliberating” (Long). Hearing improves as one gets closer. Touch requires close proximity. But sight has the distance, and hence the objectivity, required for appropriate disengagement or “passive detachment.”
completely overlapping fields), theorēsai may refer to what is seen and not just the act of seeing.

Now consider the kind of knowledge resulting from this seeing-as-theorēsai. Rhetoric was identified in Aristotle’s title (Aristotelous Technēs Rheorikēs, though that title is almost certainly posthumous) and throughout the Rhetoric’s Book I, part 1, as a technē, a skill. Aristotle wrote that people use rhetoric “at random or with a familiarity arising from habit,” and therefore rhetoric must be a sort of knowledge that can be “reduced to a system,” hodopoiein—to make a path (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 3).

Why do randomness and habit permit systematization? Because “it is possible to examine [theōrein, an active infinitive instead of a middle this time] the reason why some attain their end by familiarity and others by chance” (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 3, brackets mine). The translator Freese also commented in a footnote in this section that Aristotle’s reasoning directly contrasted with Plato’s assertion, in the Gorgias, that rhetoric was mere empeiria (experience, reflex-like habit, knack) because the distinction between the two is that the capacity for hodopoiein allows us to strategize situations, to have technē. How shall this strategizing come about? Through theōrein, active examination—but one ought not forget also that rhetoric, by definition, used that middle infinitive theorēsai to indicate that what is being seen is also showing itself in cooperation with human sight. The examination of rhetoric (theōrein) may be active, but rhetoric itself will involve cooperation between spectator and spectacle (theorēsai).

Aristotle’s descriptions of rhetoric at work throughout the rest of the book show that rhetoric is also something that is practiced, but Aristotle twice emphasized the examining function of rhetoric: in the Book I, part 1 introduction to the topic, and in the Book I, part
2 definition, “the faculty of seeing, in any given situation, the available means of persuasion.” Rhetoric’s theorēsai surely stretches human beings out toward knowing; rhetoric searches for and names possibilities, and thereby tries to make possibilities more apparent. But rhetoric’s stretching is partially of a practice and partially of an examination, spectating and speculating, interpreting. The potential for rhetoric’s hermeneutic powers should therefore be plain; rhetoric’s hermeneutics were significant enough to attract the attention of a young Martin Heidegger.

5. Heidegger Makes an Appearance

One wild hypothesis, advanced by William McNeill in The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory, suggested that Heidegger traced three different meanings of the “desire to see”: everyday curiosity, a philosophical desire to see which has built our traditional “history of ontology or metaphysics” (which produced epistēmē) and a “more primordial” kind of seeing (McNeill 4, 10). This third kind of desire to see merits attention because Heidegger opposed it to traditional metaphysical theorizing by connecting it with technē, the kind of knowledge that rhetoric was said by Aristotle to be. According to McNeill, Heidegger believed that technē meant a kind of seeing much wider in scope than the “craft” it had been reduced to by Plato and Aristotle, and that reduction is also the source of our modern crisis in being dominated by science and technology (McNeill 7). Epistēmē was understood as a seeing, a pure theōrein of the nonsensible eidos [form] in the soul…. Because the artisan’s sighting of the nonsensible eidos (which
is already a theōrein, although not yet ‘pure’ or disinterested, since it is part and parcel of the productive activity) governs in advance the being of the eventual product, the vision that truly sees this eidos will know in advance what governs the order of being (McNeill 8, brackets mine).

Notice the difference articulated with respect to the eidos: some knowledge may see it in its purity, while some other knowledge would be about how to actualize that form in material—how to craft it. While McNeill warned that Heidegger’s arguments about technē should not be read as “claiming that the technē pertaining to productive comportment is the ultimate ground of philosophical knowledge,” the information McNeill presented about Heidegger’s views did argue for a “primordial” desire to see, meaning that Heidegger was at least claiming that technē represented a way of seeing that was existent prior to the reduction of technē and epistēmē to the terms modern rhetoricians understand as “artistic skill” and “theoretical knowledge” (9). And here is the brutal conclusion to everything a rhetorical scholar might have thought was known about classical rhetoric: Heidegger said technē,

as a kind of knowing experienced by the Greeks, is a bringing-forth [Hervorbringen] of beings in that it brings forth [her] what is present as such out of concealment expressly before [vor] us and into the unconcealment of its outward appearance [Aussehen]; technē never means the activity of making (Heidegger in McNeill 10).

72. The true citation is Martin Heidegger, Holzwege (Frankfurt, Germany: Klostermann, 1950). I went with McNeill’s block quotation since I do not have sufficient German to translate the original.
Technē is not just making! Technē is a “‘letting come before us,’ which is to say: to a coming, a future, an arrival that has somehow already occurred ‘in advance.’ The outward appearance of the work, the presencing of its ‘look’ which arouses our desire, would thus also have to be understood in terms of this letting” (McNeill 11). Does not the middle infinitive theōrēsai, from Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric, now come to suggest far greater hermeneutic possibilities for rhetoric as an “art,” as technē? Because the seeing is also, through technē, cooperating with that which is being seen or being allowed to come to light? Well, not if Aristotle was responsible for the reduction of technē to “craft,” as McNeill argues with Heidegger. Heidegger wrote a lot about Aristotle—maybe further interpretations are possible that would bolster support for the view of rhetoric-as-hermeneutics, as a way of being that sees cooperatively with what is being unconcealed.

6. Concealment and Truth

The Greek word for truth is strange (and made only stranger by Heidegger’s interpretation of it); they definitely had a word for false, pseudeōs, but their word for truth was closer to meaning “not missed.” Alēthēia is a compound word: a- is a negation added to lēthō (like our English word “lethargic”), a short form of lanthanō, “to escape notice, to be unknown, unseen, unnoticed” (Liddell and Scott 464-65). The compound alēthēia thus means “not to escape notice, not to be unknown, unseen, unnoticed.” There is an “active” quality of this version of truth, as opposed to activity on the part of an investigative mind: while else one might fail to notice some being, this truth might not
escape notice—might not allow one to fail to notice it (which is not to say that people do not try hard to fail). Hence Heidegger’s definition of truth was inspired by the Greek *alēthēia*: unconcealment. Truth unconceals itself—not necessarily always or in its entirety, maybe not even to the same people. Since it is truth that reveals or does not reveal itself, the best human beings can do is be prepared: they have to be open in just the right way to notice the unconcealment, and there are certainly ways that human beings can mess this up even if the truth being unconcealed is of the kind that refuses to escape notice. The potential for escaping notice is why the infinitive *theorēsai* is important in the pursuit of an ontology of rhetoric: since rhetoric involves seeing available means and available means showing themselves, rhetoric too must involve some kind of preparation for the chance of an unconcealment. Rhetoricians since Gorgias, at least, have known about the importance of *kairos*, “opportune timing,” and certainly *kairos* may be read into Aristotle’s mention of “situation” and “available means.” But the important turn in my argument to notice here is that the *kairos* of rhetoric may be an ontological expression of rhetoric’s ontology as well as a practical expression of rhetoric’s potential (and maybe the difference between those two expressions should not be presumed—but I wish to momentarily avoid that digression).

An example might help demonstrate the meaning of these Heideggerian Aristotelianisms—why not go with the broken hammer? When one uses the hammer, one “uses” it as a tool: it is merely a thing that drives nails into wood. The hammer was created and given a purpose, an intended meaning called a “use.” But sometimes “things” like hammers can “break,” they can refuse to do the work they were “meant” to
be doing. One too many pounds of the hammer and the wooden shaft snaps into a twig of potential slivers, the head of the hammer rolling, perhaps, but not flying given its metallic heaviness. *My* reaction would be to curse the object, but even that reaction comes just after the unconcealment of being—a moment, maybe less than a moment, when the “tool” revealed its “use” to be only a convention, the demand that it “work” as “intended” covering over the hammer’s own being as a thing with properties not given it by intention, and covering over also the full meanings of the hammer is a chain of “works” to be done in the hammering of many boards to make houses where people would live and dwell, covering over the relationships with other meaningful “things” and non-things in the universe surrounding, but also being, the hammer. But I was not open to unconcealment: I just wanted to get the damn thing nailed in place. The moment revealed being to me, but I immediately steered clear of taking notice, anxious as I was to satisfy the capitalist-utilitarian’s one true god, Efficiency.

The hammer “works” well as a material example (and notice that its “work” is yet another expression of its powers beyond human intentionality since the context this work is an argumentative display and interpretation of its meanings). But can rhetoric “break” in ways that are revealing? A break would require some “intended use” against which the “break” could be measured as broken. Rhetoric has been articulated in many ways that would seem to account for these breaks: not all persuasion is successful, not all arguments avoid fallacious reasoning, not all metaphors clearly express intended meaning instead of leading astray. *Probability*, in particular, as a property of rhetoric necessarily

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73 Clearly this section models itself on Timothy Kaufman-Osborn’s toothbrush example, an example which had modeled itself, though unstated, on Heidegger’s hammer. See Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, *Creatures of Prometheus: Gender and the Politics of Technology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997). 81.
looks forward to the possibility of a failure. May one say, then, that rhetoric is especially well attuned, “well-prepared” for unconcealment precisely because rhetoric so often involves the study of unavailable or corrupted means of persuasion? Or would one be moving too quickly to presume that attentiveness to the possibilities of failure necessarily prepare one for the unconcealment of being? Failure is not the only possible kind of unconcealment, is it? Surely rhetoric’s theorēsai does not reduce the rhetorician to a mere insurance company investigator, does it!?

7. Logos and Apophainō

All of those questions turn on how unconcealment may be perceived. How can unconcealment be grasped, if it can be grasped, without simply passing by it? Using the logos, of course, of course. And no one can talk to a logos, of course, like Heidegger for whom the logos is “a type of saying that is also a showing… caught between intuitive knowing and knowing by pointing toward”—all of which means that this digging through ancient Greek terms is going to get worse, and even German, before it gets better (Long "Lecture on Aristotle's Metaphysics"). If one goes right to the source and asks, logos is a familiar enough term in scholarship as are its myriad of meanings—reasoning, word, language, reputation, meaning, narrative, prose, subject-matter, definition, speech, and so on (Liddell and Scott 476-77). Heidegger’s Introduction to Phenomenological Research

74 By “corrupted” I mean to be inclusive of the types of rhetoric that are said to be ethically unsound: purposeful use of fallacies because they work, propagandizing, and so on. I am not ready at this stage of the argument to grapple with ethics, but I wished to remind readers of “bad” rhetoric’s existence so that I might not be accused of ignoring or hiding that real and troublesome approach to my argument.
and Being and Time came to this logos argument through Aristotle’s On Interpretation Book IV, an analysis of Greek grammar and its means. He wrote:

A sentence [Logos] is significant speech [phōnē sēmantikē], of which this or that part may have meaning—as something, that is, that is uttered [phasis] but not as expressing a judgment of a positive [kataphasis] or negative [apophasis] character. Let me explain this more fully. Take ‘mortal.’ This, doubtless, has meaning but neither affirms nor denies; some addition [prostethē] or other is needed before it can affirm or deny (Aristotle "On Interpretation" 121, brackets mine). 75

The most important words to take from this passage are phasis and prostethē. For phasis, Liddell and Scott glossed three possible root words from which phasis may have come, The first root possibility was phainō (―to bring to light‖), the second was phēmi (a common word for “say” or “speak,” but in this context it means “an assertion”), and the third, a verb, was phaskō, “to say, affirm, assert, often with a notion of alleging or pretending… to think, deem, expect” (856). Sight (phainō) and speech (phēmi, phaskō) are thus confused (or confusable) in phasis because either of them could be the possible etymological root of phasis.

The second important word from the passage, prostethē, related to our word “prosthesis,” is the “addition” that phasis needs if it is to go beyond an expression and become a proposition. Heidegger seized on prostethē as a “concrete” kind of addition (Long "Lecture on Aristotle's Metaphysics"). Prostethē comes from the verb prostithēmi, 75

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75 I did, of course, notice that “The present investigation deals with the statement making-sentence; the others we can dismiss, since consideration of them belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or poetry” (Book IV, 17a5)
meaning “to put to… to hand over or deliver… to give, bestow… to attribute or impute to… to make additions, to augment… esp. of adding articles to documents” (Liddell and Scott 698). The “addition” to an utterance so as to express a judgment, a “proposition,” Aristotle called *logos apophantikos* ("On Interpretation" 121). “Not all talking is of the sort that manages to *Ostend* or *point out*… something in the manner of meaning something,” Heidegger explained; “The only sort of talking that is *apophantikos* is that in which something like an *alētheuein* [a revealing] occurs: presenting an entity as not concealed or presenting an entity in such a way that, in this ostension, something is ‘feigned’ (*pseudesthai*)” (Introduction to Phenomenological Research 14).

*Apophainō* means “to shew forth, display, produce… to make known, declare… to give evidence of a thing… to shew by reasoning” or, in the middle voice, “to display something of one’s own… to make a display of oneself, shew off… to produce evidence… to declare one’s opinion” (Liddell and Scott 110). *Apophainō* is clearly rooted in the verb *phainō*, “to bring to light, make to appear,” the etymological ancestor of our word “phenomenon,” a word the Greeks themselves would have recognized (Liddell and Scott 854).

Returning, then, to the questions I posed concerning rhetoric’s potential attunement to unconcealment (especially given rhetoric’s awareness of its own limits in persuasion, fallacy, metaphor, and probability), rhetoricians have good reasons for being both optimistic and skeptical. Rhetoric is not inconsistent in any significant ways with Heidegger’s *logos apophantikos*; rhetoricians may indeed see their work as the phenomenological investigation of the truth of being as it unconceals itself. Rhetorical theory—like philosophy generally—might also be optimistically interpreted as “speech
that shows.” But theory also approaches unconcealment with “violence,” Heidegger’s word for interpretations of being that “impose” on letting being show itself as it is being. Philosophy, in its Platonic quest for certainty, may be said to have done a certain “violence” to being because its static metaphysics calcifies, “nails down things” in their “proper places.” Not all philosophy has ontologized that way, of course, but my point here is to set up a comparison with rhetoric’s approach to being by means of probabilistic propositions instead of certain propositions. However, let one not think that this comparison sets up philosophy as the straw figure to be out-danced by a more free-wheeling, less static rhetoric. Quite the contrary: probability, too, must approach the truth of being in its unconcealment, meaning that probabilistic rhetoric’s access to truth is not necessarily any better than static philosophy’s means. Worse yet—at least for Heidegger and possibly Levinas—rhetoric’s probabilistic approach to truth may “fall prey” to the “thrownness” of being-in-the-world, meaning that the mysteries of being into which we have been “thrown” necessarily, because we are beings who wonder about being, so overwhelm us that we are suckers for whatever may make us feel more in control. Heidegger may have given up on rhetoric, in favor of aesthetics and specifically poetry, because he saw how rhetoric too easily dwelt in the “inauthentic” modes of being—“idle talk,” “publicness,” “common sense,” the various means of concealing those existentially absurd truths that are too much for a fragile mortal to bear.76

76 Hence the concern in communication-rhetoric with “cynicism,” either in the sense of being too jaded by “inauthentic” being to act “authentically,” or in the sense of too easily giving in to “inauthentic” being in such a way that one “sells out,” as in Public Relations, often in practicing Law, and definitively in conducting research on behalf of Advertising. Perhaps no one has disgraced our scholarship more than Dr. Judee Burgoon, of Arizona State University, who has accepted a grant from the “Department of Homeland Security” for research on detecting deception among potential terrorist threats. Herr Doktor, will you need
Heidegger’s attitude toward “people” seemed more optimistic when he was young (before *Being and Time*), more ambivalent and contradictory though active in mid-life (between *Being and Time* and his disillusionment with the Nazi party), and almost fully cocooned in privacy in his later years (after the public humiliation of his temporary suspension from teaching after the Second World War ended). From the beginning to the ending of Heidegger’s life, his being-toward-death was coincidentally characterized by a becoming-away-from-publicness (and, hence, rhetoric).

But all is not lost in rhetoric just as it was not all lost in philosophy for Heidegger. Perhaps all that is necessary is a “preparation” for the inevitability of thrownness. The “truthing” of being is in its occasional unconcealment—and attentiveness is necessary if one is to be ready to receive what is un Concealed. Heidegger’s ontology professed a kind of humility: being presents itself, not at our urging, and attentiveness to those times of unconcealment is imperative (because being is *speaking* to us, giving us the opportunity to learn or become). Importantly, the *logos apophantikos* does not entirely show itself—one cannot have access to all of the possibilities shining forth in a moment of unconcealment. The *logos apophantikos* can even deceive—as judgments or propositions may be wrong, so may being that is showing itself be a showing that points away from itself. For Dr. Long, and possibly Heidegger, the *logos apophantikos* breaks open the Metaphysics by allowing a reinterpretation of its meaning of speech. At the beginning of Book IV, Chapter 2 of the Metaphysics, Aristotle claimed that “being is said in many ways” (“*To de on legetai men pollachōs*”). If unconcealment by *logos* to know anything about truth to know anything about deception? Will waterboarding be involved? The *logos hy drophobou*?
apophantikos can both mislead from and show off truth, in what ways might one imagine that “being” could be said?

8. Sight as Phantasia

Heidegger considered another possibility for phainō, one that was meant to distinguish between mere sound and a sound with meaning:

...not every noise emitted by something alive is, by that fact, already a voice... one can also produce mere sounds with the tongue, such as coughing. The difference consists then in the fact that fantasy is contained in the sound, in the very middle of it (alla dei empsuchon te einai to tuplon kai meta phantasias tinos [but it is necessary that the one knocking be alive and have some fantasy])--then it is a voice. Now, in ordinary language, "fantasy" means splendor, spectacle, appearing like something, thus, a completely objective meaning. Phantasia--that something shows itself. The sound of a voice (the sound of speech) if, by means of it, something is to be perceived (seen). On the basis of the phantasia one designates the sound sēmantikē (Introduction to Phenomenological Research 10-11, brackets in text).

The quoted Aristotle is from On the Soul ("On the Soul" 119). Phantasia is not as well-known as logos, but much of its meaning is easily guessed. We derive the English words “fantasy” and “phantom” from it. The ancient Greeks meant “imagination, the power by

77 Oddly, the Heidegger quotation above seems to partially follow Aristotle’s text, word for word, without quotation marks or other signs of attribution to Aristotle.
which an object is presented... to the mind (the object presented was also called
phantasma)” (Liddell and Scott 855). Phantasia was also related to the verb phainō, “to
bring to light, make to appear,” discussed above (Liddell and Scott 854).78

A number of other words stand out in the On the Soul passage that Heidegger
followed. Here is another translation of that section without Heidegger’s commentary:

Voice (phonē) is the sound (psophos) produced by a creature possessing a
soul (empsuchou); for inanimate things never have a voice; they can only
metaphorically be said to give voice, e.g., a flute or a lyre.... Voice, then,
is a sound made by a living animal, and that not with any part of it
indiscriminately.... For, as we have said, not every sound made by a
living creature is a voice (for one can make a sound even with the tongue,
or as in coughing), but that which even causes the impact (tupton, “beat,
strike”), must have a soul (empsuchon), and use some imagination
(phantasias); for the voice is a sound which means something
(sēmantikos), and is not merely indicative of air inhaled, as a cough is
(Aristotle, On the Soul 115-119, 420b6-421a1).

I first went with the translation and tried to argue that the distinguishing characteristic
between sound and voice, via phantasia, was meaningfulness as intention, but Dr. Long
has pointed out to me that such an interpretation would be anachronistic, and that coughs,
while lacking intent, do have meaning at the very least as symptoms or as when one
audience member to my presentation of this material coughed in a way that sounded

78 Liddell and Scott also noted a second meaning for phantasma, “in Philosophy... A mere image,
unreality, Plat.” (855).
suspiciously like the word “bullshit.” Dr. Long has also pointed out that the spelling difference between *phantasia* and *apophantikos* is meaningful: *apophantikos* is its own word and a genitive case adjective (meaning that it communicates a “belonging to” *logos*). *Phantasia* would have been communicated differently, as *logos apo phantasias*. Even the passage in *On the Soul* surrounding the part Heidegger was quoting refers to *phantasia’s* difference-making in *phonē*, not *logos*. But the possibility of an interpretation of *logos apophantikos* as “speech from imagination” remains intriguing.79

Where, when, and how did *apophantikos* came to mean "proposition" if not through reference to “the mind's eye.” A culture with high literacy rates could perceive a proposition to be "from that which shows itself" because such a culture often writes propositions down, but most of the people of Aristotle's time who were going to "see" what the proposition showed were only going to see it by demonstration or by imagination. And the vast majority of our speech is not demonstrative, but representative (or else I would need to have a horse handy every time I wished to talk about one). One might still object that Heidegger had called the “addition” to *logos apophantikos* a concretion—but that need not rule out imagination for the ancient Greeks, remembering that their sense of the metaphysics of the body was very different from our own and did not necessarily expel the ideal from the material.

Heidegger did not follow through with his *On the Soul* reference to *phantasia* in the rest of the *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (written from lectures given between 1923-1924), failing to make any connection with "apophantikos." But then, in 1927, Heidegger wrote *Being and Time*. He stuck with much of what he had written

79 The possibility remains intriguing? Catch me before I employ my sophistry again!
previously about the *logos apophantikos* and he did not, again, carry on a lengthy discussion of its phenomenological meaning throughout the rest of the book. But a significant “addition” was made, only this time by Heidegger himself:

*Logos* does not mean judgment, in any case not primarily, if by judgment we understand “connecting two things” or “taking a position” either by endorsing or rejecting. Rather, *logos* as speech really means *dēloun*, to make manifest “what is being talked about” in speech. Aristotle explicates this function of speech more precisely as *apophainesthai* [the middle voice infinitive of the verb *apophainō*]. *Logos* lets something be seen (*phainesthai*), namely what is being talked about, and indeed *for* the speaker (who serves as the medium) or for those who speak with each other. Speech “lets us see,” from itself, *apo*…, what is being talked about. In speech (*apophansis*), insofar as it is genuine, *what* is said should be derived *from* what is being talked about. In this way spoken communication, in what it says, makes manifest what it is talking about and thus makes it accessible to another. Such is the structure of *logos* as *apophansis*. Not every “speech” suits *this* mode of making manifest, in the sense of letting something be seen by indicating it. For example, requesting (*euchē*) also makes something manifest, but in a different way. When fully concrete, speech (letting something be seen) has the character of speaking or vocalization in words. *Logos* is *phonē* [“voice”], indeed *phonē meta phantasias*—vocalization in which something always is
sighted (Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 28-29, brackets mine, all other marks in text).

“Logos is phonē, indeed phonē meta phantasias”; were it only that Aristotle had written it! Readers will just have to content themselves with the authoritative weight of Heidegger’s name instead. How shall the phrase be translated? Phantasias is in the genitive case, meaning that meta must be translated as “with” or “among” (instead of the translations rhetoricians most commonly associate with metaphor as implying an “after” or “beyond”). Logos is phonē, and phonē meta phantasias: speech is vocalization, and vocalization is with imagination. Whatever power imagination has it appears to have by virtue of coming along with the voice or with some other kind of being.

Aristotle implied, seemingly everywhere, that imagination “came along with” dozens of faculties or sensations. For example, Ned O’Gorman recently compared the Rhetoric with On the Soul in Aristotle’s Phantasia in the Rhetoric: Lexis, Appearance, and the Epideictic Function of Discourse. O’Gorman claimed to “find in Aristotle’s phantasia a tie between his art of rhetoric and his psychology and phenomenology” (16). That “tie” is that phantasia “implicates” itself “in the full range of cognitive and perceptive activities of humans” (19-20).

I advise caution because Aristotle says some unflattering things about phantasia too. On the Soul said more about what imagination is not than what it is. Aristotle,

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80 I find fault with O’Gorman only when he tried to translate one of Aristotle’s lines in the Rhetoric as not quite as damaging as it in fact was. The Greek, “all’ apanta phantasia taut’ esti kai pros ton akroatēn,” from the Rhetoric’s Book III, Chapter 1, O’Gorman argues should be translated (“to be consistent with the predominant denotation of phantasy and its cognates in Aristotle”) as, “but all this is appearance and is for the audience” Ned O’Gorman, "Aristotle's Phantasia in the Rhetoric: Lexis, Appearance, and the Epideictic Function of Discourse," Philosophy & Rhetoric 38.1 (2005): 23. O’Gorman was, however, overlooking the tauta, the “this” that is “appearance. What is “this”? Having opened Book III with the intention of
devoting much of Book III, chapter 3 to this problem, was first explicit that imagination was not thought, perception, or judgment (though perception and judgment may “imply” imagination). Aristotle wrote that imagination is “an affectation which lies in our power whenever we chose” (*On the Soul* 157, 427b18-19). Thus, imagination cannot be opinion, either, because one does not chose whether an opinion is true or false (whereas one may choose to imagine that which is false). Imagination is not sensation (*aisthēsis*) because sensations are either potential or actual—one either could see or is seeing, he wrote. Imagination cannot be sensation, also, because sensation never leaves us, but we can choose to stop imagining for a time. On the issue of truth, Aristotle wrote “all sensations are true, but most imaginations are false [the word here is *pseudeis*, not just *mimesis*]…. Nor is imagination any one of the faculties which are always right, such as knowledge [*epistêmê*] or intelligence [*nous*]; for imagination may be false” (*On the Soul* 158-59, 428a12-18). Returning to opinion (*doxa*) again, Aristotle argued that animals

addressing style, Aristotle was briefly sidetracked by a discussion of delivery. Delivery was said to be “a matter of voice… volume, harmony, rhythm” and no treatise has yet been composed on delivery, since the matter of style itself only lately came into notice; and rightly considered it is thought vulgar [*phortikon*]. But since the whole business of Rhetoric is to influence opinion, we must pay attention to it…. it is of great importance owing to the corruption [*mochthēria*，“badness, wickedness, depravity” say Liddell and Scott (520)] of the hearer. However, in every system of instruction there is some slight necessity to pay attention to style; for it does make a difference, for the purpose of making a thing clear, to speak in this or that manner; still, the difference is not so very great, but all these things are mere outward show [*phantasia*] for pleasing the hearer Aristotle. *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) 346-47., 1403b-1404a10. The last line of the block quotation is the one for which O’Gorman offered a different translation, a translation that might be “consistent with the predominant denotation of phantasia and its cognates in Aristotle,” but sadly is not consistent with the predominant denotation of *phantasia* and its cognates in that book and chapter of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. Just how vulgar are “these things,” style and delivery? Delivery, the “art” of it, is translated from Aristotle’s word *hypokritikê*, from which we derive our word “hypocrite.” Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* 348., 1404a12. My point is not just to slash at O’Gorman; only to advise the exercise of caution in our “liberatory” re-readings of Aristotle’s texts.

81 Catch that? “All sensations are true…”? Both Dr. Long has argued that two different types of truth exist for Aristotle; parallel to Dr. Long’s argument, Walter A. Brogan has noticed the same difference in types of
have imagination, but not belief because belief requires reasoning power (logos). So what is imagination? On the Soul’s Book III, Chapter 3 repeatedly points to imagination’s appearances alongside sensations. Although imagination is not equitable with a sensation, Aristotle nevertheless saw imagination tagging along after sensations (just as Heidegger had expressed imagination coming “along with” vocalization) as though they were powerful albeit false echoes of true sensations. Aristotle “concluded” that imagination is “a movement produced by sensation actively operating,” hē phantasia an eiē kinēsis hupo tēs aisthēseōs tēs kat’ energeian gignomenēs (Aristotle On the Soul 162-63, 429a3-5). Aristotle immediately followed by pointing to the association of phantasia with paos, “light.” Aristotle then wrote, in Book III, Chapter 10 (Aristotle On the Soul 187, 433a12-14), that animals differed from human beings in that they have imagination, but not thought (noēsis) or calculation (logismos). Still, imagination matters because Aristotle argued that human movement in space is the product of appetite (orexis, “desire, appetite… a longing or yearning after a thing,” Liddell and Scott 566), which may be produced by or come with practical thought or imagination, and the end of practical movement is action (Aristotle On the Soul 187, 433a16-21).

Imagination’s relation to movement now seems circular or in need of distinction.

On the one hand imagination is movement, and on the other imagination produces logos. The first type of truth is that of a predication, the logos apophantikos, which affirms or denies something to be the case. Affirmation and denial are consistent with what philosophers call the “correspondence theory of truth,” the measure of truth according to how accurately it is adhered to by a statement. The second type of truth, expressed here in Aristotle’s assertion “All sensations are true” is a truth without phasis, without an expression. One could express about it, but that expression would still differ from the phenomenological sense in which a perception is true as it is experienced. The chair I sit on as I type this is a truth, the softness of its fabric and shape of its contours are “in the true” and no “correspondence theory of truth” would be able to make sense of this truth-by-sensation. See Walter Brogan, Heidegger and Aristotle : The Twofoldness of Being, Suny Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).
movement in space that can be action. What is this movement that begets a movement in space? *Kinēsis* relates to the soul’s movement in connection with two important motives according to the Rhetoric: “Let it be assumed by us that pleasure is a certain movement (*kinēsis*) of the soul, a sudden and perceptible settling down into its natural state, and pain the opposite” (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 115). But those sound like appetites, not *phantasiai*. For imagination, one might look into the Rhetoric’s mention of *energeia* (Book III, Chapter 11, a passage O’Gorman also called attention to):

We have said that smart sayings are derived from proportional metaphor and expressions which set things before the eyes [*pro ommatōn*]. We must now explain the meaning of “before the eyes,” and what must be done to produce this [*poiousi gignetai*]. I mean that things are set before the eyes by words that signify actuality [*energounta semainei*]. For instance, to say that a good man is “four-square” is a metaphor, for both these are complete, but the phrase does not express actuality, whereas “of one having the prime of his life in full bloom” does; similarly, “thee, like a sacred animal ranging at will” expresses actuality, and in “Thereupon the Greeks shooting forward with their feet,” the word “shooting” contains both actuality and metaphor. And as Homer often, by making use of metaphor, speaks of inanimate things as if they were animate [*tō ta apsycha empsycha legein dia metaphoras*]; and it is to creating actuality in all such cases that his popularity is due… For in all these examples there is appearance [*phainetai*] of actuality… *he gives movement and life to all, and actuality is movement* [*kinoumena gar zōnta poiei panta, hē de*}
energeia kinēsis] (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 405-07, italics and parentheticals mine).

Movement of the soul and actualization of a potency are mentioned in this passage; so too is phainetai, but phantasia did not appear. But what else could this movement be if not phantasia? Sensation is surely implied, but would Aristotle have excluded the sensation produced by Homer from carrying any imagination with it? Metaphor carries beyond; Aristotle was careful to write that Homer’s metaphor makes the inanimate seem animate—one might say, “inanimate things are made falsely to seem otherwise.” But this power of provoking the imagination is not derided in the Rhetoric; Aristotle gave Homer two thumbs up. Perhaps, being is said in many ways, and imagination (as energeian gignomenēs, sensation “actively operating”) happens to be the kind of being that is not said, but rather performed as Homer (in actuality) gave movement and life to all.

In Dr. Long’s account of phronesis and ontology, in The Ethics of Ontology, phronetic knowing had access to the world through two different types of nous (intuitive knowing). First, nous allowed human beings to directly intuit the materials available in their singularity through sensation (aisthesis); second, nous gave human beings access to the universal through concepts, the generalized categorization and classification of different appearances of eidos (which Dr. Long called “phronetic perception”). Dr. Long explicitly acknowledged the Kantian flavor of this interpretation, invoking Kant’s statement from the first critique, “concepts without intuition are empty, intuition without concepts are blind.” But I believe that Dr. Long’s later moves might have allowed him to push the Kantian analogy even farther: Dr. Long mentioned the work of Martha Nussbaum, who suggested that phantasia (imagination) had a unifying function. When
Dr. Long discussed the relation of the two types of *nous*, he said that deliberation is the “operating” mechanism between them—but farther down the same page he qualified deliberation as “deliberative *phantasia*” (*The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy* 146). Long’s interpretation of Aristotelian ontology is, thus, a *phronetic* version of Kant’s three-fold synthesis. Kant had tried, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to establish grounds for the certainty of (*some*) knowledge, and he accomplished this by arguing that human beings have *synthetic a priori* knowledge from three simultaneously operating faculties: intuition (our sensible and direct knowledge of the material world), understanding (our general concepts which form the world in a way fit for understanding), and a mediating piece between the first two, imagination. Perhaps Kant saw the three-fold synthesis in Aristotle all along.

But I must reaffirm an important distinction between Kant’s three-fold synthesis and Dr. Long’s characterization of Aristotelian ontology: Kant’s model was *not* *phronetic*—Kant’s grounding for certainty came at a cost, namely *limits* on what can be certain knowledge. Kant’s first critique was a surprising text to me because I did not expect Kant to be so adamant about the limits of his own system and of *reason*. Kant’s opening sentence declared that reason poses us questions that reason can never answer. Although he hinted late in the book that he needed to deal with contingent knowing on some level and that reason was useful for contingent knowing, Kant waited for later works to get around to *phronesis*-like ideas. Dr. Long’s three *phronetic* pieces (which I

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82 I’ve been made to understand that Kant’s second critique, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, is not meant to refer to the “practical” in the sense of expediency. Kant (or German idealists generally?) took the practical to be a question of *freedom* as opposed to determinism. Although I think the freedom and determinism question makes the focus of Kant’s work more specific, I do not understand how this formulation is *exclusive* with understanding practical reason as expediency—I take the “practical” as
hold back on calling a synthesis, though deliberative imagination is connecting the two senses of *nous* somehow) parallels the composite being that one may find in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

9. What It All Means

What have these syntheses to do with the *Rhetoric*? And why all the hubbub about imagination? To establish the *Rhetoric*’s importance with *phantasia*, I want to look at some passages from the *Rhetoric* that give it the treatment—not unlike in O’Gorman’s work—as a component that comes “along with” some capacities. I have found (with search programs that may be imperfect for failure to recognize cognates) only four passages with explicit mentions of *phantasia* in the *Rhetoric*. Instead of trailing through all of them, I will single out and analyze just two. First, in Book I, Chapter 6, Aristotle described deliberative rhetoric’s relationship with the good, defining along the way several types of goods and ills including pleasure:

> And if pleasure (*hēdesthai*) consists in the sensation (*aisthanesthai*) of a certain emotion (*pathous*), and imagination is a weakened sensation, then both the man who remembers and the man who hopes will be attended by an imagination of what he remembers or hopes (*The Art of Rhetoric* 116-17, 1370a28-33).

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having something to do with *practice*, by which I mean to say that freedom is necessarily a question of expediency because freedom is the condition for and the power of expedient practice.
The “weakened” sensation matches Aristotle’s description of imagination in On the Soul, but specifies the manifestation of different kinds of weak sensations. Remembrance represents the past to oneself through the imagination of already experienced realizations; as a “re-presentation,” the imagination uses whatever its powers are to “re-live” the past, to make it feel present, to play it again. Hermann Frankel, commentating on the works of the Roman poet Ovid, once described epistles from the broken-hearted as written accounts of the continuous re-presentations of the past in which one is always practicing, perfecting one’s arguments. The broken-hearted relive their arguments over and over, pretending to be in some High Tribunal of Love and Justice, where one could finally “have one’s day in court.” Aristotle’s description of imagination-as-memory was introduced as pleasure, but Aristotle held onto the possibility of experiencing a certain pleasure in pain by writing that the sensation was of pathous, emotions certainly but more often than not painful feelings. Hope, in contrast, presents the future to oneself through imagination of possibilities. Memories are precisely impossible works of the imagination, both because they are temporally locked and because our imaginations give us the power to wonder about what might have been but now cannot be. Of course, those memories could be good memories, re-presentations of good times—but even that feels melancholic, distanced as it is infinitely between past and present. Hope is little better. The ancient Greeks often exhibited a forlorn attitude that life was a misery—the best possible life would be to have never been born in the first place, for life is toil ended only in death. Hesiod put the exclamation point on this pessimism by spinning hope itself as a

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83 See Nicholas A. Thomas, "In the Timing: Foucaultian Archeology and Feminine Rhetoric," Honors, Whitman College, 2002. Frankel’s reference is to Ovid’s Heroides, a lovely set of letters from women in Greek mythology and tragedy to the men who have wronged them.
reason life was miserable: Pandora, the first woman and the one who opened the jar releasing all of the aches and pains of men, managed to close the jar just in time to keep “hope” from escaping, but the keeping of hope was itself a plague on men (that’s right: men) because it suckers them into suffering through their pathos.

The second passage I wish to analyze from the *Rhetoric*, is in Book II, Chapter 5, which defines fear as “a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression (*phantasias*) of an imminent evil that causes destruction or pain” (*The Art of Rhetoric* 200-01, 1382a21). *Phantasia* is mentioned a second time in this chapter, a lengthy and detailed description of fear, that again sounds like perception: “confidence is the contrary of fear and that which gives confidence of that which causes fear, so that the hope of what is salutary is accompanied by an impression (*phantasias*) that it is quite near at hand, while the things to be feared are either non-existent or far off” (*The Art of Rhetoric* 206-07a17-22). Aristotle’s articulations of fear and imminence were important influences on the philosophical development of Heidegger (important to remember for later—what is fear compared with Angst?).

Whatever a human being is to be called—whatever all the stuff in that “mind” or “soul” is—*phantasia* appears to be its glue, its central nervous system, its web of (inner) relations. Whatever else human beings are, imagination is at the center of their phenomenological being, at the center of their experience of themselves as being-there. Aristotle wrote that “it belongs to Rhetoric to discover the real [*pithanon*] and apparent [*phainomenon... pithanon*] means of persuasion” (*The Art of Rhetoric* 12-13, brackets mine). Wherever one finds the “real” things about human beings, one must also be on the lookout for the “apparent” things, and—this being a rhetorical study after all—one must
not give in too easily to the temptation to dismiss the “apparent” in favor of the “real” because our experiences of the apparent can be more real to us than some of the real can be to some others.
CHAPTER 3

MATERIALITY AND IDEALITY

I initially thought rhetoric was “obviously” on the side of the “ideal” because it is, in language, in abstract conception, and in strategy a conduit of idealism. But I should have known better: the idea of a “conduit” should have tipped me off, as well as Marshall McLuhan’s most materialistic definition of communication: “the medium is the message.” Rhetoric is always performed, and in the sense that it is performed it must embody ideality in materiality.

This chapter approaches the question of rhetoric’s ontology from the long-standing clash between materialists and idealists. That debate might be considered passé by some—surely many a philosopher has “solved” the problem to his or her own satisfaction, or given up, and moved on—but the tension has a certain insistence for itself that continuously drags theorists back to making a judgment call (as with Andrea Yates) or explaining why they get to avoid doing so. Though pure idealism and pure materialism may remain possible standpoints for defense, each extreme has the disadvantage of feeling overwhelmingly unpersuasive. Materiality is real: jump out a 30th story window and tell me that it is not. Ideality is real: I can imagine “things” without them being physically present, and I can know other “things” like the Eiffel Tower are physically present somewhere though I have never seen them with my own eyes. And I know that the glasses slipping off my nose prove ideality can have some kind of material reality because these glasses are an invention, an idea someone had that
was then “realized” in materiality regardless of whatever source or whatever “being” may first have been responsible for the idea, the urge to invent, and the act of invention.

Materialists, try as they may to reduce “imagination” and “thought” to simply the material electronics of a body, cannot escape the truth that human beings have created meaning and have thus furnished a world of ideas beyond the material “objective presence.” And idealists—especially postmodern dogmatists who privilege “discourse” as conditioning all beings in the world—may try to reduce all materiality to simple orientations toward an idea of materiality, but they have yet to defy gravity as far as I know.

My goal in this chapter is the collection and explanation of the “conclusions” (be they contingent or otherwise) of several thinkers across philosophy, politics, and rhetoric about the relational character of idealism and materialism. The collection of these ideas and discussion of their implications should allow the formation of a model of rhetoric’s ontology in terms of ideality and materiality—such a model should describe the generation of meaning (as meaning is the “relationality” of any relation), the available means of interpretation (hermeneutic enterprises that may have suasive effects), potential

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84 Some materialists resort to fallacious reasoning that I would like to pre-empt. The most common fallacy is the “appeal to the future,” as when scientific types assert that it (“it”) is only a matter of time before they are able to explain ideal phenomena with materialist logical positivism. I do not share their faith in “progress,” nor do I find any reason to believe that such a discovery is inevitable (that is, materialists who are asserting the inevitability of materialist explanations have the burden of proof, and they do not meet it simply by reasserting a supposedly inevitable progress). Nor are explanations of agency forthcoming: social scientists may adequately use statistics to predict much of the way humans behave—but not all. What could these outliers mean? A wrong measure somewhere? Simply a different type of material that can be predicted in some other fashion not yet considered? Might I, fallaciously, assert instead that a screw will always be loose, a 2 will always fail to be carried over, “things” will “go wrong.” The social sciences are looked upon with suspicion by the natural sciences for good reason: the statistics offer, at best, measures of probabilistic trends, not scientific laws. Social science is superior to the natural sciences in acknowledging the slippage that the natural sciences (save quantum mechanics) cannot yet see in their materials. Social scientists never claim to tell me the truth, only the odds.
ambiguities (where slippage opens the text to possibilities not found in objectively-present materials alone), and the limits imposed on meaning and interpretation (variously called “situation” or “scene” or “context”—but I will choose the term “event” to stress its necessarily transitive character). Agency, too, would be useful to watch out for, but the course of this analysis is focused on the building of a model of materialism and idealism, so references to agency that make themselves apparent will be noted, but not yet allowed to take over the spotlight. Continued repetition of a caveat remains important: this model seeks to describe a number of possibilities, even probabilities, but it is neither the only possible description of ontology nor are the possibilities pointed out by this model the only courses. Claims and warrants remain the structure of the analysis, but only of its pieces and its eventual cohesion. A supreme claim for grand theorizing would ignore the “dramatistic” character of the conjuring of an interpretation: such a claim might be conceivable, but more as a summary of narrative events than a single trunk around which all branches must stem. I examine wholes, but strive to avoid trivializing their parts, and I examine parts, but strive to avoid reducing wholes to them—and even with such great care, I cannot avoid trivialization or reduction because representation is necessarily both. My care can be applied with humility, especially as I stand on the (cold) shoulders of giants. The arrangement of this chapter is that of a snowballing: like a snowball gathering additional snow as it rolls down a hill so that it grows larger and into a boulder, I will raid one theorist’s work for ideas and then, with those ideas in mind, another theorist’s work will be considered. The collection will build and build and finally gather as a model for considering rhetoric’s ontology.
Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Kenneth Burke and Bryan Crable, Hannah Arendt, and Elaine Scarry and Timothy Kaufman-Osborn—they all argue for an understanding of form and matter that places the two in combination or dialectic. They may have all done this in very different language, but the combined relation is visible in their theories. Aristotle called human beings “compounds” of matter and form that are characterized by a relation of potency and activation (form activates the potency of matter). Kant argued that knowledge (with certainty) of the world was possible because human beings have a “three-fold synthesis” of a priori concepts (form), imagination (form connected with matter), and a posteriori intuition (material sensation). Dewey argued that living was being part of a material environment, and that learning and behaving, form-laden activities, were experiences that occurred in combination with that environment. Burke, according to Bryan Crable, understood “ideology” as “metabiological”: the symbols (forms) used to interpret the world (of materials) can encounter “recalcitrance” to acting as symbols may demand. Arendt expressed admiration for lifestyles that moved beyond (material) Necessities to act in polities of (formal) freedom. Scarry, and then Kaufman-Osborn, described beings as dialectically-constituted (formal) projections and (material) reciprocations of meaning. These theories, and other pieces that I will introduce, are commensurable: they may have tensions between them, but fruitful ones, and what they have in common points toward a deeper understanding of what rhetoric is as it is ontologically. That is, rhetoric as a way of seeing is an ontological approach to being on the basis of possibilities and, especially, probabilities, meaning that rhetoric can offer metaphysics a phenomenology that is necessarily unobstructed by totality. Just as much has been argued for already, as for
example in D. Diane Davis’ *Breaking (Up) the Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*.希望自己，我能把西方哲学的传统重量加到摧毁球。其中这些理论中的紧张关系，对修辞学的立场是最不一致的。伯克喜欢修辞学——这个领域实际上被他所接受。修辞学家在亚里士多德学说的影子下工作，但在亚里士多德学说的世界观中，修辞学是否对研究或生活有贡献是值得怀疑的。康德明确指出修辞学是不好的：“欺骗手段是美丽的幻觉…是一种辩证法，它从诗歌艺术中借来的东西只要能说服听众的判断和剥夺他们的自由”（《判断力批判》204，5:327）。杜威和阿伦特都喜欢沟通，尤其是关于一个政治体的商议，但对修辞学本身没有什么可说的。“语言”和“话语”对斯卡里和考夫曼-奥斯本同样重要，但他们写的东西没有关于修辞学的内容，要讨论在此。幸运的是，我敢接受。1. 柏拉图主义物理学

**The Rhetoric** 是一个不寻常的亚里士多德著作，因为它不是对知识的探讨。兰格博士准确地描述了亚里士多德通常的方法是“漂移”的，围绕着其他人关于一个话题所说的，然后移动到分析、比较和理论-建设。

但**Rhetoric**没有得到这种待遇：没有找到修辞学的定义或证明，没有统一的修辞学历史记录，亚里士多德首先
described and then argued about. Rather, rhetoric’s history is strewn throughout the text, a mention of Gorgias here, Homer there, and so on. Rhetoric was, after all, a technē, not an epistêmē; it was a skill in which one could train, but not a field of knowledge for contemplation. Speculation for sure, but not contemplation.

Dr. Long has argued that Aristotle’s Metaphysics contends that human being (ousia) is action (praxis) ("Lecture on Aristotle's Metaphysics"). That formulation sounds closest to what one may think rhetoric is being: rhetoric is a practice, a type of action. In the Metaphysics, Aristotle identified matter (hule) as having the character of potency (dunamis), contingency, possibility. He also identified form (eidos, sometimes morphē) as having the character of activation or actualization (energeia), “being-at-work” in Joe Sachs’ translation (Aristotle Metaphysics). Hence, a human being, as a compound of matter and form, is a being that formatively activates some of its material potencies. The formal actualization of a material possibility is, indeed, an action. Is that equation reversible? Might one define action as the formal-actualization of a material-possibility?

My opening description oversimplifies the Metaphysics. To (usefully) complicate matters a bit, I turn to another important state of being in Aristotle’s Metaphysics, argued for in Dr. Long’s course on the Metaphysics and in his book, The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy(The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy). Aristotle had argued that human being-as-praxis was a compound of formal-

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85 Grimaldi, who gets more thorough treatment in the next chapter, suggested that Aristotle’s Rhetoric attended to enthymeme-as-reasoning with such great attention because Aristotle was responding to the rhetoricians of his time, some of whom were not stressing reason with such respect. Perhaps Aristotle’s attention to the present state of affairs in the art of rhetoric diverted him from his usual peripatetic approach. See Grimaldi, Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric.
actualization of material-potencies. Long argued for an interpretation of Aristotle that suggests that potencies may come in two sorts: passive and active. Aristotle’s example of the building of a house will make Long’s meaning clearer. One may wish to build a house (actualize the material-potential for a house), but one needs more than just material—one needs knowledge. For someone who does not know how to build a house, the possibility of building a house is a passive potency: the possibility of building a house is retained by someone as long as the possibility of learning to build houses remains open. For one who knows how to build houses, possibilities for house-building are active potencies: these are possibilities that are closer to being actualized by someone, but are not always in the state of being actualized since knowing how to build a house is not the same as building a house. Like carpentry, the knowledge of rhetoric may not always actively address being (as rhetoric’s addresses are contingencies), but knowledge of rhetoric might move one closer to being able to actively address being. If one agrees that rhetoric is a kind of knowledge, especially as theorēsai, as discovery in seeing—of how to persuade, how to make arguments, how to generate meaning, how to address an

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86 Houses, hammers, and snub noses make plenty of appearances in metaphysics literature. Hannah Arendt, a fan of Aristotle, also references a “house” example in her essay “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” but Arendt cited the example at cross-purposes with Long’s argument. A “house” is a mere “frozen” word without careful thought, but its meaning begins to melt as one analyzes and critiques the word. What is a house? What things get to “count” as houses? Is a house a “home”? And so on with questions, perhaps endlessly. Whereas Long argued from Aristotle that a house-builder, who has knowledge, but is not currently working is in a state of “active potency,” Arendt argued that the same house-builder who engages in critique of his or her knowledge of house-building just might manage to convince him or herself that he or she is not in fact a house-builder at all! Long and Aristotle were likely thinking of a different type of knowledge (techne or phronesis) than Arendt was. Arendt was not very specific: her case was about what “thinking” does, which might sound like epistēmē given that she otherwise insisted that thought was impractical (and even useful for its spontaneous impracticality).
other—rhetoric must be an active potency that allows one to better actualize possibilities or to actualize more possibilities or both.\textsuperscript{87}

But now potencies and activations can be seen chasing each other: one may actualize a house from materials, the material house may actualize shelter from the elements, shelter may actualize a number of possible actions that would otherwise have been blocked by the need to find a way to survive in an environment. But is that what Aristotle really meant by actualization? Did he not merely mean coming-to-be in the sense of a transformation of matter (because the potency actualized is a formation of material)? Maybe, but Aristotle concludes that human being is action, and a house certainly enables all kinds of actions that would not be possible without the house (because one would still be struggling to meet the needs that a house provides—a house is providing greater leisure).\textsuperscript{88} Aristotle’s distinction of potency and activation is useful for analysis of single possibilities and their chances for realization, but an expansive “big picture” analysis shows that there are no sets of possibilities from which one is not being

\textsuperscript{87} But even as rhetoric is theorēsai, and even though I have made this connection to later emphasize a rhetorical connection to theoretical knowledge, one ought not forget that many ancient Western rhetoricians felt differently. The philosophers, Plato and Aristotle (and Socrates?), explicitly denied that rhetoric was epistēmē, and Isocrates was equally explicit that speakers needed a natural talent (phusei) for speaking or else they were beyond a teacher’s abilities to train them. See Isocrates, "Antidosis," trans. George Norlin, \textit{Isocrates,} vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). 291. The “natural” talent for speech is, like the “natural” ability of human beings to see, the foremost reason that a theoretical pursuit of rhetorical study may be too monolithic to take seriously. Speech saturates life and human beings get a good deal of practice at speaking—suggesting that rhetoric is so widely practiced, that the skill (technē) is so pervasive, that theoretical study of rhetoric cannot add much to an academic conversation outside of aesthetics, philosophy, or history. At the same time, speech is so thoroughly entwined in the various disciplines that the study of rhetorical theory threatens to reduce philosophy, politics, psychology, anthropology, and so on, to “rhetorical” scholarship. I have not yet answered, to my own satisfaction, the dilemma outlined here, but the problem is regardless a healthy humility to keep in mind as a problematization of (if not yet a damning argument against) academic work. Also on the issue of rhetorical study’s utility see George Edwards, III, "Presidential Rhetoric: What Difference Does It Make?,” \textit{Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency,} ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996).

\textsuperscript{88} Something enables acts that would be impossible without that something, huh? Amazing.
actualized, nor are there actualizations that do not themselves ground new sets of possibilities. Thus, the idea of an in-between stage called “active potency” makes sense if one looks at one set of possibilities and one actualization from among them and one path between possibility and actualization. But what if a path between passive potency and actualization includes many steps, each one furthering the active potency toward some end? And would not a whole universe of potencies that become actualizations that then become new potencies suggest that Aristotle’s middle-stage misunderstood a certain generalizable relativity among endings and beginnings? Knowledge, for example, is not only a potency, but also the actualization of the potency for being able to obtain knowledge.\textsuperscript{89} Aristotle’s argument otherwise bears the marks of instrumentality: if a tool is not an actualization of a potency, it is not so only because a relative point of view has not been adopted and, instead, one insists on seeing the tool only for what it can help one actualize. Is knowledge a house or is it a hammer or can it be either or both (or, Dr. Eberly asked me, is knowledge a place to live, a dwelling place)?\textsuperscript{90} An instrumental approach is problematic because it would reduce most endings to conditions that might seem purely formal: a house is not simply an end in itself, but gives shelter which gives security which gives freedom which might allow happiness.

\textsuperscript{89} I fought with myself over this sentence, over whether I needed to be specific about the type of knowledge I mean—as \textit{epistēmē}, \textit{technē}, or \textit{phronēsis}—but I shunned specificity for fear of diverting attention from my point that knowledge is “gatherable,” and therefore a potency. Later discussions of knowledge will make finer distinctions between types of knowing, so a reader ought not work up a tempest as I, Teapot, see the inconsistency.

\textsuperscript{90} See Michael J. Hyde, "Introduction: Rhetorically We Dwell," \textit{The Ethos of Rhetoric}, ed. Michael J. Hyde (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004). Readers not familiar with the work of Martin Heidegger should also know that he once called language “the house of being” (in his \textit{Letter on Humanism}) and in his later years he studied poetry and an orientation toward being-in-the-world that is commonly translated into English as “dwelling.” See Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," \textit{Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)}, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993).
By the spring of 2008, if not sooner, Dr. Long had completed work that I see as having fixed the instrumentality problem by looking to Aristotle’s Physics. In Book VIII, Chapter 4, Aristotle addressed the movement of fire and earth with recourse to potency: some things are moved by nature (physis) and others by force, by something contrary to nature (though not “super-natural,” but “contrary” to nature in a sense that is not outside nature’s possibilities). Fire, for example, does its work “naturally,” on its own, continuously unless something stops it. Fire’s work is “effortless.” Work that is “contrary” to nature, however is work that requires effort. Hexis, according to Dr. Long, is Aristotle’s articulation of the effort exerted by a being-at-work that is “contrary” to nature (Long "Lecture on Truth in Aristotle"). Hexis is defined by Liddell and Scott as “(trans.) a having, possession… (intr.) a habit of body, esp. a good habit… a habit of mind” (274). Hexis comes from the word hexō, the future form of echō, which means “to have or possess” but is frequently used to denote a mood, having a “state of mind.” Next, Dr. Long turned back to the Physics, Book VII, Chapter 3, where the capacity for a human being to “calm down into knowing” is mentioned. Children cannot have knowledge in this way because they are too chaotic as yet, and so they do not have hexis. Finally, invoking the Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Dr. Long came to this argument: fire works “naturally” without effort, but it also burns through its potency as it works, while the cultivation of any hexis functions differently by virtue of not burning through its potency as it works. My ability to see, for example, does not use up a reserve of seeing, but can continue to work as long as it is not damaged by injury or age. The “instrumentality” problem is thus solved by the recovery of being as not just a “function” of potencies and activations, but as a capacity that works while continuing to be a
capacity for being-at-work. Some beings lose potency as they are activated, as fire burns through its fuel or as wood is added to the building of a house (losing potency because the wood cannot be “used” again without tearing up the house). But human beings (at least) continue to have potencies even as they actualize themselves as beings-at-work, as actors.

My example above of sight is actually not a good example of hexis: sight is a sense that I have “naturally” without cultivation. What is it, then, that is cultivated as hexis? What can one cultivate that can then require effort for working and yet not “burn” through any of the potency that is put at work? I have quizzed Dr. Long on this question before and I am not yet satisfied as to hexis’ meaning: by “active condition” Dr. Long meant to assert that hexis is not a dormant capacity, but that dunamis is already “at the ready” so much as to be called energeia (meaning that potencies and activations are not clearly distinct states, but can be thought of as various points on a sliding scale between passive potency and full activation). But, on questioning, Dr. Long denied that hexis is “consciousness” (an anachronistic term, maybe, but Dr. Long denied its meaning for hexis as an “overt self-awareness” or “thought”), but also he denied that it was “reflex” (a “thoughtless” kind of habit). An illuminating example of hexis might be capacity for speech (logos)—human beings even sometimes acknowledge that their active readiness to speak jumps passed their capacity for deliberation so that they “speak before thinking”—but aside from possible examples of hexis I am not sure yet that we have a good grasp on its meaning.

What, then, is the Aristotelian metaphysical status of rhetoric? Surely rhetorical training is a “cultivation,” but Dr. Long resisted my attempts to connect hexis with technē
because technē is typically thought to be a craft that is productive, that has an end, whereas hexis has no such end by virtue of not “burning through” its potency. But, I confess, I am cheating on Dr. Long a bit right here: when he answered my questions we were considering the production of houses, carpentry as a kind of technē. I did not ask him directly about the art of rhetoric (I had already taken far too many liberties in diverting his philosophy class toward the discussion of my studies). Recall Aristotle’s definition, “the faculty (dunamis), of discovering (theorēsai—more literally “to look, observe, consider”) the possible means of persuasion (pithanon) in reference to any subject whatever” (The Art of Rhetoric 14-15). What is pithanos? What is pithanos in a metaphysical sense? Before my speech a person may not agree with me, but after my speech a person may have changed. What explains this change? What kind of a change is it? Has my audience seen something that amounted to a change or cause of a change? Aristotle wrote that “in all cases persuasion is the result either of the judges themselves being affected in a certain manner, or because they consider the speakers to be of a certain character, or because something has been demonstrated” (The Art of Rhetoric 345). What does it mean that judges are “being affected in a certain manner”? Emotion is an obvious answer, given the references to character and reasoning that follow it, but this answer may be pushed further. The “being affected” is a personal, even bodily being that is not simply assessing character or demonstration; additional analysis of the text will demonstrate this.

The most frequent word Aristotle used for “change,” in the Rhetoric, was metaboulos, “to change one’s mind” (Liddell and Scott 501). Two other words important to the idea of contingency also make appearances: dunamis, the aforementioned potency,
and *kinesis*, motion. The topic of possibility and impossibility in Book II, Chapter 19 is one place in the *Rhetoric* that Aristotle refers directly to *ousia*, to “being”:

Let us first speak of the possible (*dunatou*) and the impossible (*adunatou*).

If of two contrary things it is possible that one should exist or come into existence, then it would seem that the other is equally possible; for instance, if a man can be cured, he can also be ill; for the potentiality of contraries, *qua* contraries, is the same… if the beginning is possible, so also is the end; for no impossible thing comes, or begins to come, into existence; for instance, that the diameter of a square should be commensurable with the side of a square is neither possible nor could be possible. And when the end is possible, so also is the beginning; for all things arise from a beginning. And if that which is subsequent in being (*ousia*) or generation (*genesei*) can come into being (*dunaton*), so then can that which is antecedent; for instance if a man can come into being, so can a child, for the child is antecedent… And so with all those things, the productive principles (*hē archē tēs geneseōs*) of which reside in those things which we can control by force or persuasion, when they depend upon those whose superiors, masters, or friends we are (*The Art of Rhetoric* 265-67).

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91 *Anagkasaimen* is an optative form (from *anagkazō*) which may mean “to force, compel,” “to constrain by argument,” “to carry through by force,” or “to prove that a thing is necessarily so and so” (Liddell and Scott 53). Even though “persuasion” would seem to be a synonym here, Aristotle’s wording here, “control by force or persuasion,” took care to specify persuasion as something else (*anagkasaimen an ē peisaimen*).
The potency or lack thereof, mediating the difference between being and nonbeing, is ultimately a topic about beginnings, which are engineered by productive (*genesis*) principles (*archē*), and endings (*telos*). In the *Metaphysics*, transformation from nonbeing into a being-at-work and, finally, into a once-was-at-work nonbeing is the domain of *hyle*, matter—“it will be the material that is capable of being otherwise than it is for the most part, that is the cause of what is incidental” (*Metaphysics* 113). The forms are constant. Also noteworthy in the above passage is the potential for a discussion of time; Aristotle makes no mention of it here, but change of a kind is his measure of time: “In his account of time in the *Physics*, Book IV, Aristotle exploited the idea that time is a kind of number. His more careful statement is that time is the number of motion, and when he is being really careful he gives the full definition: “time is the number of motion in respect of before and after” (Annas 97). In the next chapter, a great deal will be made of the effect of time on being and persuading. For the moment, my purpose is served by attending merely to the passage of time being measurable only in change—the movement of the sun across the sky, the return of the stars to the pattern they were in one year ago—and among the means of describing change, which is fundamentally material, is the mention of *kinesis*.

*Kinēsis* makes a few significant appearances in the *Rhetoric*. *Kinēsis* is the word used to describe the “movement” of the soul one takes up a topic (Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 311). *Kinēsis* is also important to Aristotle’s discussions of poetry. Poets were the classic foes of Plato: worse than any of the Sophisticated rhetoricians (except Gorgias, who favored use of poetics in oratory), poetry was feared by Plato because it is hypnotic in its rhythm—it is the song one has had stuck in one’s head since the beginning
of the day whether one likes it or not. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle wrote, “The poets, as was natural, were the first to give an impulse (kinēsai) to style” (The Art of Rhetoric 349).

The motion found in a poet’s style is so powerful that, as the reader may recall, it even reaches into energeia according to the Rhetoric’s Book III, Chapter 11:

We have said that smart sayings are derived from proportional metaphor and expressions which set things before the eyes (pro ommatōn). We must now explain the meaning of “before the eyes,” and what must be done to produce this [poiousi gignetai—“gignetai” is another form of the word genesis, “becoming”]. I mean that things are set before the eyes by words that signify actuality [energounta sēmainet]. For instance, to say that a good man is “four-square” is a metaphor, for both these are complete, but the phrase does not express actuality, whereas “of one having the prime of his life in full bloom” does; similarly, “thee, like a sacred animal ranging at will” expresses actuality, and in “Thereupon the Greeks shooting forward with their feet,” the word “shooting” contains both actuality and metaphor. And as Homer often, by making use of metaphor, speaks of inanimate things as if they were animate [tō ta apsycha empsycha legein dia metaphoras]; and it is to creating actuality in all such cases that his popularity is due… For in all these examples there is appearance [phainetai] of actuality… he gives movement and life to all, and actuality is movement [kinoumena gar zōnta poiei panta, he de energeia kinēsis].

(Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 405-07, italics and brackets mine)
The poet’s powers are merely *mimetic*, of course. “Things” (a word that may not be true to the translation) that are set before the eyes are said to be “produced,” brought into being (*genesis*) “by words that signify actuality.” The notion of signification is important: sometimes Aristotle slipped and wrote, for instance, that Homer was “creating actuality,” but throughout most of this passage Aristotle was clear that what was being created were “words that signify” or just the “appearance of actuality.” On the other hand, Aristotle did reference the earlier mentioned word for seeing, *ommatōn*, the word that might have stood as an alternative to *theōresai* (suggesting that Aristotle did mean, in this later case, to invoke a more bodily sense of the real). Also related to appearance is the word *empsycha*, which may mean “having life in one, alive, living” or “of a speech, animated,” and in verb form “to animate” (Liddell and Scott 257). The contrasting term, *apsyche*, may mean “lifeless, inanimate” or “spiritless, faint-hearted,” and the closely related *apsychia* means “want of life: want of spirit, faint-hearted” (Liddell and Scott 143). The metaphors of poets create a kind of movement that makes the inanimate appear animate, producing the appearance of actualization or life. What was only a potency is moved to actualization at least as far as the eyes, the literal embodied eyes, are concerned.

Here is the payoff: if Dr. Long is correct about *hexis* being an “active condition” that is “cultivated,” and if he is also correct that *hexis* represents *dunamis* and *energeia* on a scale of degrees between passive potency and one’s fullest activation of being-at-work, then *hexis* fits perfectly into the *technē* of rhetoric because rhetorically-cultivated beings are capable of moving the soul and having their own souls moved so that what is inanimate is made (*poiesis*) to appear (*phainetai*) as though living. Using “the mind’s
eye,” cannot one picture standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door? Is there a small mailbox there?

But there is more: the psychologia of Aristotle can be found in the Rhetoric should one only think to look for his discussion of the metaphysical meaning of characteristics that are contingent. Recall that rhetoric can be an art, but not an epistēmē, because it is contingent but still has patterns instead of being purely chaotic. What is the “soul” as regards rhetoric? Psyche is defined variously as “breath… esp. as the sign of life, spirit… the soul, heart… the soul, mind, understanding” (Liddell and Scott 903). A Cartesian understanding of the soul as distinct from the body would be a reasonable possibility if one divided them between form and material, and, indeed, Aristotle does identify the soul with form and dissociates it from mere material in Book II, Chapter 1 ("On the Soul" 656). But the Cartesian formulation would oversimplify an understanding of Aristotle’s ancient worldview, which can be well enough seen if one takes seriously that the soul is, among other things, “breath” and “heart.” “Function,” or even “work” (ergon in the Greek, part of the word en-ergeia), might capture the meaning best:

What is the soul? It is substance in the sense which corresponds to the account of a thing. That means that is is what it is to be for a body of the character just assigned… Suppose that the eye were an animal—sight would have been its soul, for sight is the substance of the eye which corresponds to the account, the eye being merely the matter of seeing; when seeing is removed the eye is no longer an eye, except in name… We must now extend our consideration from the parts to the whole living body… while waking is actuality in a sense corresponding to the cutting
and the seeing, the soul is actuality in the sense corresponding to sigh and
the power in the tool; the body corresponds to what is in potentiality; as the
pupil plus the power of sight constitutes the eye, so the soul plus the body
constitutes the animal. From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable
from its body (Aristotle "On the Soul" 657)

“Heart” in the literal sense doesn’t articulate what the soul is because it is material.
“Breath” is but one activity of a being with a soul, just as seeing is the activity of an eye
but only if the eye is part of a complete being with a soul. If soul is a form that is
actualized in the material body, the best one might be able to say of it is that it is what the
body does when it is alive. Hence, the “animation” (empsycha) of what is inanimate is a
movement (kinesis) that makes the inanimate seem to have a soul-as-work (or soul-as-
function). What, then, can it mean for a soul to be moved? Kinesis relates to the soul’s
movement in connection with two important motives: “Let it be assumed by us that
pleasure is a certain movement (kinēsin) of the soul, a sudden and perceptible settling
down into its natural state, and pain the opposite” (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 115).

The body can and often does resist intentions. The body gets sick, is injured, and
ages regardless of what the soul wants. Aristotle was not surprised by the body’s
sometimes radical otherness from its own soul because, unlike the soul, the body is
material and, thus, open to change and to persuasion. Material is the stuff of change, the
stuff of motion, but its causes are indeterminate—its causes are as accidental in origin as
the unexpected movement of the material itself. The soul cannot overwhelm an
incidental/accidental movement of the body—could a movement of the body also move
the soul? And if the body can move the soul, can that not be called *energeia*, a kind of actualization?

Aristotle—or perhaps Plato through his influence on Aristotle—has been interpreted historically as a proponent of “essence”-centered metaphysics. An “essence” was a stable, even static, underlying being (*hypokeimenon*) that defines who and what a human being is said to be. Recall that the essence was called a “primary” quality of being in its stability; “secondary” qualities were merely those characteristics of a human being that may change, but are said never to change the underlying reality of the human being. A rose by any other name is just as sweet. Socrates would remain the person he was even if he received some cosmetic surgery for his snub-nose.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the question as to whether beings really do have essences, the idea of secondary qualities should pique one’s attention because it is in these qualities that one would expect to find rhetoric in its concern with contingency. Aristotle thought secondary qualities included qualities that people of our time would consider contingent: the shape of a house, and so forth. But not all secondary qualities for Aristotle would have been what people in our time might consider contingency. For example, Aristotle thought that a horse was still essentially a horse whether it had a light or dark coat, and in that sense Aristotle thought that color was a contingent, secondary quality. Changing my own color of skin, however, is not thought of as contingent in our time—I might be able to get a tan, or bleach my skin, or maybe something more radical, but for most of us most of the time skin color is considered a static, not contingent quality. The distinction between these two views of secondary qualities is important
because Aristotle characterized secondary qualities by calling them “incidental,” sometimes translated as “accidental”:

*Incidental* (sumbebēkos) means what belongs to something and is true (alēthes) to say of it, but is not so either necessarily or for the most part, such as if someone who dug a hole for a plant found a treasure… since there is something that belongs and something it belongs to, and some of these are present at a certain place and time, whatever belongs to something, but not because it is this thing or at this time or in this place, will be incidental. And so there is not any definite cause of what is incidental, but a chance cause, and this is indeterminate… The incidental thing is indeed something that has happened or *is*, but by virtue not of itself but of something else… But incidental is also meant in another way, as of all those things that do belong to each thing in virtue of itself but are not present in the thinghood [ousia] of them (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 107, brackets mine).  

Now look at an additional definition from Book V of the *Metaphysics*, this time of the term “attribute,” a word one might expect to refer directly to a secondary characteristic by virtue of “being attributed” to something else essential:

An *attribute* means in one sense a quality in respect to which something is capable of being altered, such as white and black, or sweet and bitter, or

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92 Coincidentally, the incidental as *kata sumbebēkos* was one of the three types of perception Heidegger identified as he approached the topic of phenomenology, the other two being “special” (*idia*) and “common” (*koina*). See Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005) 5.
heaviness and lightness, or whatever else is of this sort. But in a sense it is used of these when they are at work (energeiai) and have already been altered. But more than these, it implies harmful alterations and motions (kinēseis), and especially painful harm. Also, great misfortunes are called suffering (Aristotle Metaphysics 101, brackets mine).

Without the Greek, one might have rightly wondered if the “attribute” being written about here was kata sumbebēkos, what Sachs has translated as the “incidental.” Like the incidental, the attribute is capable of change and capable of motions. But the final lines of the definition are strange: “attributes,” if they are incidental or accidental, would not necessarily be indications of suffering, would they? Do not people have happy accidents? And do not some incidental characteristics, like Socrates’ snub nose, rather become endearing? The explanation for this strange picture is found in the Greek: the word translated here as “attribute” is none other than pathos (Aristotle Metaphysics: Books X-Xiv 273). One may, thus, reread the statement as follows: “Pathos means… something is capable of being altered… but in a sense it is used when they are at work and have already been altered. But more than these, it implies harmful alterations and motions…”

Allow me to summarize. In answer to the question “What, ontologically, is the change made by persuasion that transforms a person from holding one opinion to holding another?” I have argued that it must be something that moves the soul but also necessarily is a movement of the body. Aristotle’s passage about poets suggests, further, that such movement of the soul may be regarded as an appearance of actualization, energounta phainetai, because it “set[s] things before the eyes.” The soul is form: the
soul is what the body does, just as seeing is what the eyes do. The soul exists only as the body of a living being and, thus, is related to the motions that a body inevitably makes because the body, in its materiality, is incidental or accident prone. Among the possible means of moving the soul with the body (for I do not claim to have uncovered an exclusive mean) is an appeal to pathos because the later is described as changeable, like material, but also actualizable (from the scale of passive and active potencies and actualization as being-at-work) like form. The impulse given by poets actualizes bodily potencies: absent things appear to be ‘before one’s eyes’ because the pathetic appeal moves the body to feel for what is not present and, thus, resonates with the imagination (phantasia) of the soul. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle writes that “The emotions (pathē) are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments (kriseis), and are accompanied by pleasure (hēdone) and pain (lupe)” (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 173). My contention is that Aristotle was being literal in this statement: rhetoric arouses the body to imagine before itself the feelings of pleasure or pain, and that the imagined appearance—the actualization of the potencies of the material body—is both a movement of the soul and a direction in which the soul reactively may seek to move. I will come to some good reasons that pain cannot, in fact, be imagined with any accuracy, but that may not matter for the moment since persuasion can certainly work off of whatever one can imagine about pain. As with phenomenology, the significance of Aristotle’s regard for the pathē was a subject championed by Heidegger.
2. A Heideggerian Interlude on the Pathē

The Heidegger of *Being and Time* made only a few mentions of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, but in a seminar conducted by him in 1924, Heidegger said “Rhetoric is nothing less than the discipline in which the self-elaboration of *Dasein* is expressly executed. *Rhetoric is no less than the elaboration of Dasein in its concreteness, the hermeneutic of Dasein itself*” (Heidegger in Gross 1, italics in original). 93 *Da-sein* in its concreteness—materiality, *phronētic* engagements with the world, being-as-*praxis*—is interpreted (hermeneutically) by rhetoric. 94 Heidegger’s dramatic implication ran thus: “That we have the Aristotelian *Rhetoric* is better than if we had a philosophy of language” (Heidegger in Gross 11).

What is so special about Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* that it would take away the necessity for a philosophy of language? I can think of several of my own reasons. First, “the use of persuasion is directed to a judgment” (Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* 172). Judgment provides the grounding for action and for communion among others because its *phronētic* practice aims to acknowledge, negotiate, and deliberate with the other. Second, and following the concern for others, the *Rhetoric* is a work of psychology: beyond mere reasoning, *logos*-as-speech is supported by lengthy discussions of the *pathe* and is bound

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93 I am relying on Gross’ translations, published in *Heidegger and Rhetoric*, because Indiana University Press’ promised translation of Hedegger’s work on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* has consistently failed to meet its deadlines (when finished the book is to be titled *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, not to be confused with *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, which has already been translated into English and covered work from just slightly after Heidegger’s lectures on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*). The proper citation in German is Heidegger, Martin. *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie: Marburger Vorlesung Sommersemester 1924*, Gesamtausgabe vol. 18, ed. Mark Michalski (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002)—cited sometimes as GA 18.

94 I have no expertise in German, so I have followed the most recent translation of *Being and Time* by Joan Stambaugh, in spelling Heidegger’s key term as “Da-sein.” Secondary literature may vary in translation, as in Gross’ spelling “Dasein.”
up in \textit{ethos} or \textit{character}—“character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion” (Aristotle Aristotle's "On Rhetoric" 38). As social and political beings, human being is \textit{performance} as well as \textit{praxis}, acting and not just action. None of which is to say, of course, that there is something fake about performing—rather, that human being has an aesthetic side to it that prefers \textit{logos} with style as opposed to \textit{logos} pretending to stand outside the situatedness of human being. Character is the style of being, the aesthetic of its drama, and Aristotle accounted for character, and our joys and sorrows in mingling among other characters, when he dealt with \textit{pathos} and \textit{ethos}. One last, but not least, reason I would like to stress for the importance of the \textit{Rhetoric} is its usefulness for \textit{contingency}—which is the way we live—and its consequent and rather empowering view of human being as a great cluster of possibilities. Rhetoricians know by heart, and I have already repeated \textit{ad nauseum}, Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric opening the second chapter of Book I: “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle Aristotle's "On Rhetoric" 36, brackets not mine). “Ability,” in this definition, is \textit{dunamis}, and “to see” is \textit{theorein}. Our “potency” (and remember that this is linked with material being) is to see, in given contexts, \textit{how to be-with others}, a position that is supported by Heidegger.

Gross mentioned several reasons for Heidegger’s focus on rhetoric. First, rhetoric explains the \textit{inventiveness} of human beings along the same lines as Dr. Eberly’s attentiveness to \textit{tropos}: “Troping appears as poetic logos; it provides the nontheoretical

\footnote{Ethos may also be defined as “habit,” a concept that becomes important in the work of John Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu, and possibly Hannah Arendt in her interpretation of Kant. Arendt distinguishes between doing and deliberating, and she argues that one cannot do both at once. Dewey and Bourdieu agree with Arendt on this point, and so argue that what determines our actions or doings is not thought, but habit—one major reason why development of strong character is necessary for a person and a community. What habits are today’s youth picking up? And how will that affect their willingness to act?}
distance necessary to see how we are in our everyday situations and how we are moved” (Gross 3). Like in Eric Charles White’s *Kaironomia*, our making sense of the world depends upon bending the old into the new, making the *logos* of tradition useful in developing a *logos* for the present and near-future. Second, Heidegger made pathos a necessary condition for the “rational discourse” of logos: “Without affect our disembodied minds would have no heart, and no legs to stand on. We would have no grounds for concern, no time and place for judging, no motivation to discourse at all” (Gross 4). The literal Greek meaning of *enthymeme* is “straight to the heart,” something routinely forgotten among my graduate student peers who see enthymeme as merely another model of argument, like the syllogism. Third, he made his ontology rhetorically-centered by considering human being as communal in its concerns (Gross 4). The metaphysics of human being was therefore relational (and those relations were dialectical). Finally, and returning to the issue of community, Heidegger “describes rhetoric as the art of listening… Heidegger describes instead a being who, insofar as that being can hear, is constituted as someone among others, someone in a particular situation that demands action” (Gross 3). Heidegger placed *Mitsein*—“being-with”—at the center of his rhetorical ontology because, as Aristotle pointed out in the *Politics*, humans are “by nature” social creatures. Both Gadamer and Levinas valued rhetoric (whether or not they admitted it was rhetoric or called it that) for its value in socializing.96 No one is an

96 See my discussion in the first chapter about scholars who contemplate “discourse,” “language,” or “dialogue”: I have interpreted these as “rhetoric” (as Gadamer also did according to Gross and Kemmann’s book), but acknowledge the risks of “imposing” my theoretical worldview on the scholarship of others. This risk is especially concerning in the case of Levinas since he, in *Totality and Infinity*, directly attacked rhetoric for manipulating others.
island: our understandings of the world and our actions in it all take place in communities and in communion with others and otherness.

In the early 1920s, Martin Heidegger roamed Germany in search of a permanent job while studying Aristotle for a book he hoped to publish (which never came about). At Freiburg in 1921-1922, the 31-year-old Heidegger taught his first course on Aristotle (translated into a book, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* by Richard Rojcewicz—the book is frustratingly incomplete with regard to Aristotle by Heidegger’s own admission). The winter of 1923 to 1924 produced lectures now collected in *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, an important book with some more Aristotle references, but still lacking a complete treatment. In the summer of 1924, he was in Marburg teaching “Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy” (awaiting translation), also called, according to Karl Löwith, “Aristoteles: Rhetorik II” (Gross 2).

Not just *being* was Heidegger’s foremost concern in these early years, but *being-with* others. The Heidegger generally known is barely recognizable in these early years: “Heidegger’s unique spin on the rhetorical tradition lies at the heart of a political philosophy articulated in the shared spaces and common concern of the body politic. But this is no static analysis of how things are. A true political philosophy must also analyze change. Hence the central role Heidegger gives pathos in his political philosophy—key to the art of moving people” (Gross 5). The body politic, common concern, change—not the ideas that most often come to mind when thinking about Heidegger’s contributions to academic thought. “Publicness,” for example, was sarcastically identified in *Being and Time* as “always right… because it does not get to ‘the heart of the matter,’” because it is insensitive to every difference of level and genuineness. Publicness obscures everything,
and then claims that what has been thus covered over is what is familiar and accessible to
everybody” (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 119). Sounds
like a mean Sorority sister. In contrast to that statement, look at Hyde’s rosier view of
publicness in Being and Time:

publicness “belongs to Dasein’s positive constitution” (BT 167). That is,
owing to the traditions, customs, rules, and norms that inform its way of
being, publicness provides a sense of order to what would otherwise be a
state of chaos and confusion. In his much-acclaimed reading of
Heidegger’s Being and Time, Hubert Dreyfus emphasizes this very point
when he notes that, for Heidegger, “the source of the intelligibility of the
world is the average public practices through which alone there can be any
understanding at all.” Although such practices and the rhetoric that
informs them can and oftentimes do provide a breeding ground for the
evils of conformism, they nevertheless also provide the necessary
background for coming to terms with who we are first and foremost as
social beings and for determining whether or not our extant ways of
seeing, interpreting, and becomes involved with things and with others
might be changed for the better. Heidegger’s positive take on the
workings of this entire process is suggested when he notes how the
understanding constituting the received opinion (doxa) of a given public
“reveals authentic being-with-another in the world” (Hyde 85). 97

97 The edition of Being and Time that Hyde cites here is Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John
Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Hyde was also citing Hubert L.
Hyde was doing a lot of stretching in this passage. That publicness is “positively”
constitutive of Da-sein only means that publicness is not a privation of Da-sein
(“positively” in the sense of “positing”). While Hyde was correct about Heidegger’s
claimed scope of publicness, that it is what Da-sein is “first and foremost,” Heidegger did
not celebrate that arrangement in Being and Time. Nor did he celebrate, necessarily, the
intelligibility to which Dreyfus pointed (and in Heidegger’s discussion of the “project” he
may even have come out against intelligibility that seizes and thematizes, thereby
leveling being to an understandable conformity).

So instead of focusing on Being and Time, as there will be plenty of time for that
later, I would now like to examine Heidegger’s time as a rhetorical scholar, the time
before he published his master work. Like with Aristotle, Heidegger’s rhetoric may be
interpreted as responding to Plato. As is often the situation for rhetoric contra Platonist
philosophy, the problem dealt with was the division of epistēmē from phronēsis, but in
the case of the young Heidegger the problem came with a political implication.
According to Gross, “Heidegger is insistent: Socrates put physis in the background when
treating social phenomena, and Aristotle saw this as a fundamental mistake. Physis and
polis are in fact essentially bound because we are there concretely for each other—
simultaneously subject and object” (14). Subjects and objects were, of course, not
familiar in the language of the ancient Greeks; at best, active and passive (not forgetting
the middle) states would be apparent:

———. Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time, Division I’ (Cambridge,
Anticipating rhetorically minded theorists of the constructed subject, Heidegger shows how human beings simultaneously compose discursive institutions and are composed by them. *Heidegger thus relocates rhetoric as the heart of his fundamental ontology*. We are human insofar as we can generate shared contexts, articulate our fears and desires, deliberate and judge in the appropriate terms of our day, and act meaningfully in a world of common concern. Moreover, in all such activities we are simultaneously agent and patient, mover and moved (Gross 4).

Perhaps a more appropriately Greek analysis would claim that, being for each other in our concreteness, we are simultaneously active and passive—we are always, while alive, activating specific potencies while the rest remain present but unrealized, available but not “burned through.” *Physis* and *polis* are inseparable because both are expressions of the human being’s simultaneous activity and passivity—praxis. Being-with-others-in-nature and being-with-others-in-politics fall under the umbrella of Aristotle’s notion of praxis, and surely both are still ways of being-in-the-world. The simultaneity of “agent and patient, mover and moved” is also noteworthy: performances are not one-way since we are always performing for ourselves as well as others. All doing and making is also being and becoming because the human being-as-praxis is always an audience to itself on the way somewhere else. We are always hermeneutically circling ourselves (and others).

The symbiotic praxis of physical-being-with and political-being-with is most apparent in language. Heidegger thus claimed that rhetoric made a “philosophy of language” unnecessary, inferior even, perhaps because the *pisteis* provide a more fitting discourse than could be provided by another –ology: “Heidegger famously proclaims that
‘language is the house of Being,’ simultaneously identifying language as a more essential ethical medium (ethos, means ‘abode’ or ‘dwelling place’…) and describing how man ‘is’ only in being called to language, in being beside himself [sic] in ecstasy, in being Other” (Gross 19). The sexist pronoun is always a bit of a slap in the face, making, at least, my experience as a reader step back and wonder about the gendered implications of the relations spoken of in the province of the pronoun given.98 A being’s place is in the home; language is the house of being. Might rhetoric be called a relation with being(s) that Aristotle calls praxis? Though it houses being, language seems a strange thing to compare to a house: language is ever-changing, growing while dying, active and passive. Can such things be said of a “house”? Or a “place” (topos)?

The answers are both “yes,” but I will need a few more pieces to explain how this is so. Heidegger’s course made direct use of the Aristotelian language of the Metaphysics in more than a few places. For example, Heidegger argued that “The concepts of Being-in-the-polis also have their foundation in the concepts of nature… The Being of this living nature is determined in its eidos [form] as the dynamis [potency] of Being-in-the-world—that is to say it is determined in the first instance as eidos, as the determination of the Being of Beings (quoted in Gross 15). Heidegger was making the same cross-application of form and matter (of which potency is a characteristic) that was

98 I have previously wondered and written about the gendering of ethos, but my Greek was considerably worse at the time and I presumed ethos would be biased in favor of “masculinity” because of the masculinity of the public sphere and public address. My opening words were, “Could women have ethos? Ever?” See Nicholas A. Thomas, “In the Timing: Foucaultian Archeology and Feminine Rhetoric,” Honors, Whitman College, 2002, 3. Knowing so much more about the rhetorical tradition now, I might wonder if the reverse could be asked, if men could ever have ethos. The “dwelling place” may be identified with the “feminine” and the so-called “domestic sphere.” The Greek deity of persuasion, Peithō, was a goddess (though that hardly mattered to them since goddesses were not “feminine” in any sense of our modern notions of gender roles). Rhetoric, like the other six classical liberal arts, has been personified as a woman, as “Dame Rhetoric,” and she makes appearances in such famous works as Raphael’s “The School of Athens” (front, just right of center, with her back to the viewer).
found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Living is formed by the potency of worldliness; the formation is the determination of “the first instance” of that which is making being what it is (*ousia?). Or perhaps, to put Heidegger’s words in even more plainly Aristotelian language, to live is to be activated from the potency found in *ousia*. One should not, however, confuse Heidegger’s message as implying that form precedes matter or matter precedes form—actualization and potency are simultaneous, and even the activation of a specific potency may imply the simultaneous fall of formerly present actualizations back into potencies. Now I will return to the house and see if I can make the explanation make sense:

Material is construed in terms of its realization of a thing (for example, not merely “wood” but a “wooden chair” or “wooden door”) and human intention is construed only as it moves into concrete form. In short, we don’t envision an abstract house as such, but rather some wooden or brick house, say, in some particular place. Material is realized as it takes shape (pathētikos) and the realization takes place in becoming concrete (poiētikos). (Gross 25)

Gross’ explanation makes sense, but it has a flaw—what does one call something before its wood becomes a chair? A tree perhaps? Gross risks being misleading on this point because his examples involve activated potencies, but *without recognizing passive potency*, or the degrees of potency and actualization found in Dr. Long’s work. A tree is more potent than the 4x4s that will go into the construction of a house, but the 4x4s are more actualized: they are both potent and actualized simultaneously to varying degrees. To say, then, that language is the house of being is to say that the dwelling place of being
is an actualized formation of potent matter, but almost certainly during its time only (this is Heidegger, after all). The language in which I dwell, like my house, has its time of activation; it has possibilities that are actualized just as others are near actualizations of potency (discourse that I am capable of actualizing) and still others are potencies that are passive (discourse that I am not capable of actualizing because I do not have access to it yet). I think Gross temporarily lost his wits when he claimed that Heidegger summarized Aristotelian physics by writing “The Being of nature as it presents itself to us is not determined solely in material, but rather in its Being-moved” (25). Gross’ argument should be that Heidegger’s summary is one of metaphysics as beyond physics, including physics but still more than it—i.e., physics and politics in rhetoric.

Aristotle did not restrict pathos as a quality to human beings alone—it was the “incidental” or “accidental” affect that made something “capable of being altered… but in a sense it is used when they are at work and have already been altered. But more than these, it implies harmful alterations and motions” (Aristotle Metaphysics 101). Pathos was described in the language of potency, but is also said to be “at work” (energeia—activated) in some sense. This level of activation is active potency—the pathē signal a high potential for activation, not the slowness of a passive potency that is still lacking in any material for a possibility of activation. The pathē rest in active potency as does most of the language in which we live. Thus, one should not be surprised to discover that invention and imagination play roles in the space between activity and active potency:

Unique to human pathos is a dependence on nous poiētikos: the human faculty that allows us to extend into every domain of being and be moved even by things that are not there in body. Thinking allows us to be with
others in a manner unattainable for other animals… Though only human being is moved to discourse, or logos, Being-moved is essential to all (Sein-in-Bewegung). What we share with things of all sorts is body-in-movement, a movement characterized by pathos. Heidegger sees this as one of Aristotle’s most profound insights into the nature of rhetoric: Being-moved—the heart of rhetorical thought—necessarily exceeds the rational psyche because people have bodies of a certain sort. We are there, we grow and decompose, we can be damaged or excited, mobilized or dispersed. (Gross 13)

All beings have *pathos* allowing movement (*kinesis*), but the human being, in a supposedly unique way, has the active potency of language—and the human being has language as an active rather than passive potency because the human being has *other human beings*. But to activate language—to make it *logos*-as-speech—presumes the *pathe* because our embodiment means that *kinesis* “exceeds the rational psyche.”

Finally, Heidegger characterizes pathos… as the very condition for the possibility of rational discourse, or logos. No cynical and crowd-pleasing logos, pathos is the very substance in which propositional thought finds its objects and its motivation. Without affect our disembodied minds would have no heart, and no legs to stand on. We would have no grounds for concern, no time and place for judging, no motivation to discourse at all… What Heidegger emphasizes in the tradition like none before is the fact that without others, pathos would remain unarticulated (as it does in
nonhuman life) and rational discourse would never get off the ground…the passions are actually phenomena constitutive of social life. (Gross 4)

Heidegger realizes that this general description of nature in motion has radical consequences for any discussion of moving people—a traditional goal of rhetoric, along with pleasing and teaching… If one wishes to know what means of persuasion are available to us as rhētor poiētikos, the pathē must be considered in a human context. And pathē are not merely psychological emotions that unhappily rule those animal-like individuals who suffer from insufficiently trained minds… Rather the pathē indicate possible ways of being-moved that tie humans in a unique way to their embodiment. They do so not by providing a definite material body upon which to work, but rather by determining the possibilities for moving about a shared world (Gross 25-26).

The body in action—praxis—is clearly an activation, but the body is simultaneously filled with a world of active potencies—pains, pleasures, discomforts, moods, the active conditions that Dr. Long identified as hexeis. The activation of language into logos-as-speech is impossible without the pathē for the simple reason that there would be nothing else to talk about. When asked what “rhetorical dynamis” meant for “the human ability to understand,” Gadamer replied “It is the same dynamis! We consider what speaks for a thing. But if one does not know that one only says the half of it, then the other can also not understand you. The other needs exactly what one has not said. In this way I would in principle understand every type of education; it is the unexpected reception of what one alone had not even said” (Gadamer "Heidegger as Rhetor: Hans-Georg Gadamer
Interviewed by Ansgar Kemmann" 60). That which “speaks for a thing” is dynamic potency, expressed by Gadamer as neither fully actualized nor absent, but somewhere between—active potency both discloses being and hides possibilities yet to be actualized, crucial for contingency. Our language as active potency is active only because we are embodied beings in the world (beings-in-the-world) with reactions to it and each other. The necessities (a key Arendtian concept) of the human condition call out for deliverance from bodily pains, and without such a necessity there would be no need to call. According to Gross, Heidegger was explicit that logos for its own rational sake would be neither possible nor interesting:

it is pathos that provides doxa [opinion] with dynamism… the Roman compromise assumes that enlightened humanity would communicate via pure logos, in a perfect world, leaving behind the pathē for good.

Heidegger sees this fantasy as wildly misguided. If we could imagine living in a world without pathos, that world would leave anything but pure reason behind. Without human emotion what we would be left with is apathy and unexamined belief. And without the dynamism that only pathos can provide, doxa would remain frozen and inarticulate. It is pathos and pathos alone that draws logos out of doxa. (31).

Arendt went on to make “words and deeds” (from Homer’s Iliad) the central figurations of her notion of action, a formulation that she took from Aristotle through Heidegger. Aristotle unified potencies and activations as praxis, and Heidegger demonstrated that the pathē in the praxis is the hinge on which logos-as-speech turns (tropes!). Since language is the house of being—since the active potency of discursive inventiveness and
imagination is the formative power of activation and, simultaneously, pacification—
rhetoric is the strategic hermeneutic that guides action while binding ontology and
politics together. I wish Heidegger had stuck with these political views and argued that
language was the “dwelling place” of being, not just the house—because then one could
argue from Heidegger that the dwelling place had a less stable character. Instead, I will
have to capitalize on the house’s notion of stability (which I will do in the next chapter
when I discuss the work of Eric Charles White).

And what does rhetorical praxis—the activation of potencies by means of
persuasion—look like? To begin with, an actor must shut up:

Reversing the traditional “art of speaking,” Heidegger describes rhetoric as
the art of listening… Heidegger describes… a being who, insofar as that
being can hear, is constituted as someone among others, someone in a
particular situation that demands action. In his later essays, Heidegger
describes the art of listening to language constitutive of Gelassenheit, the
attitude of “releasement” that accepts the contingency and partiality of our
understanding of Being and just lets “things be” (Gross 3)99

Like the rhetorical critic, and like Socrates, wise praxis begins with examining life, with
making life worth living. No doubt this imperative of listening was the escape hatch
Heidegger used to move into the depoliticized hermeneutics. But the early Heidegger
saw “contingency and partiality” in being, and, thus, adopted rhetoric’s phronetic

99 A rhetoric premised on silence is not all that new. The ancient Egyptians, for example, centered their
canon on silence—the silent made lemonade from lemons and were wise for it, while those who spoke
made fools of themselves. The greater the talk, the greater the fool. See Michael Fox, "Ancient Egyptian
approach in favor of *kairotic* (opportune) adaptation. Significantly, Heidegger’s rhetoric as politicized hermeneutics foresaw the difficulties with the approaches of the later Heidegger and Habermas:

fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception—the famous SS 1924 triad of the hermeneutic situation—establish the horizon in which our everyday doings and saying can make sense. But once realized, “sense” tends to crystallize into concept, superimposing a theoretical *telos* upon the world of multiform activity. Words would be used as simple indicators of things or fixed concepts, and human behavior would be rationalized. This is what Gadamer calls the “Enlightenment slogan,” perpetuated by the likes of Habermas: “to dissolve obsolete prejudices and overcome social privileges through thought and reflection.” But in Gadamer’s view, the Enlightenment thinking that still dominates our technological age underestimates the “affections” that motivate the human mind, as well as the historical contingency of ideas… To think in terms of “organizing a perfect and perfectly manipulated information” is to pave over the immediacy of discourse—its affective context most of all. And as Gadamer sees it, this is a turn that modern rhetoric seems to have taken, Jürgen Habermas leading the charge. (Gross 7-8)

Rational deliberation is not all bad, but the *imperative* for it should be questioned. The whine, for example, that listening to emotional testimony in Congress upsets the deliberative body’s need to be free of the passions would be perfect nonsense. No one contends that the *ideal speech situation* is actualizable, but no ideal speech situation
could be ideal—no situation allows rationality free of the pathē, free of the fact of human embodiment in a world, and we’d never want that. Though “Aristotle condemns in the strongest possible terms an art of speaking that would neglect logical argument—the “body of persuasion—in favor of ‘matters external to the subject’ such as human emotion… Heidegger finds a very different Aristotle in book 2, where pathos provides the very condition for the possibility of judgment, or krisis. In fact pathos is a critical concern for nearly a month of Heidegger’s lecture course… The pathē are no mere afterthought. They are, one could say, before-thought” (Gross 30). The importance of “fore-thought” is a helpful idea in understanding what Immanuel Kant meant in insisting that what is thought “prior” must be simultaneous with what is sensed “posterior,” afterward.

3. Kant’s Synthesis of Understanding, Imagination, and Intuition

Kant wrote his dissertation—after he had already passed the age of 50—about the incommensurable divide between his version of form and matter. The understanding refers to our faculty for formal knowing—mathematical reasoning and conceptualization. Intuition is perception, a sense of appearances. Because of the familiar form / matter division, Kant concluded that understanding—which must be knowledge, as everyone agrees that mathematical reasoning or logic must be knowing—cannot gain access to perception and so intuition (perception) is not knowledge. Kant won his doctorate and sent copies of his dissertation on to two thinkers he admired. One person, L. H. Lambert, replied laconically: the dissertation was a clever argument, but it was wrong because
Kant’s respondent knew his intuitions were often right and, in fact, useful for gaining information since he had been using his perceptions effectively over his entire life. Kant, a little deflated, returned to the drawing-board for almost ten years.

Science (in our modern sense of the term), meanwhile, was haunted by a problem of knowing truth with certainty. When philosophy, a la Plato, based itself in deductive reasoning, establishing truth was no problem because the syllogism identified particular truths from general ones—deduction is true because it is definitively true. Socrates was a person; people are mortal; therefore Socrates died. But Galileo and company changed the rules of the game by looking at the behavior of the things themselves (which is not to say that Aristotle would not have gone that way, had he been so interpreted). Basing truth on observations was dicey because observations were attempting to build knowledge inductively—instead of beginning from the general law that “people are mortal,” they were observing that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all died and, therefore, people must be mortal. Must they? Simply because human beings have not yet observed something does not mean it is impossible, right? Would that not mean that the inductive rules produced by science were always probabilistic? That observation, in fact, gave nothing to human knowing but some gambling odds?

In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant sought to fix his dissertation’s errors and to provide grounding for scientific knowledge—for knowledge that is certain. He kept much of the same terminology, but accepted Lambert’s challenge: understanding (also called “concepts”) and intuition (also called “senses” or “perceptions,” even “experiences”) are both bases of knowledge. The question then was about how these faculties functioned together. The key problem in the question of functioning together
was temporality: do human beings begin with *a priori* concepts and then use those concepts to understand experiences, or do human beings begin with *a posteriori* experiences that imprint concepts onto the mind thereby allowing understanding? Was the human mind an essentially deductive or inductive machine? Egg or chicken.\(^{100}\)

Kant saw flaws in the metaphysical work of Descartes, Wolff, Leibniz, and Hume. Kant was especially eager to escape the charge of “being too idealist.” Like Lambert, the philosophers *knew* they had experiences and that those perceptions were knowledge. One can watch a chicken come from an egg and *know* from that observation that chickens can come from eggs, but if knowing with certainty depends upon “thinking and, therefore, being” (a la Descartes), how can one be scientifically certain that one’s experiential observations rest on more than eggshells? How can inductive reasoning be justified if one has seen many chickens come from many eggs, but cannot verify that all appropriately-functioning chicken eggs will result in chickens? Inductive reasoning required a jump between many examples and knowing with certainty—and this jump was the piece that was rankling everyone, a jump that seemed necessarily idealist in extrapolating a probability from observation rather than a certainty from definition or material causality.

Kant solved the idealism problem by redefining the meaning of idealism—he cheated, sort of, by redefining the principle elements of the game and then closing the system so that certainty was possible, but on a *contingent* basis (i.e., on the basis of adhering to Kant’s system). In the system, Kant’s work would qualify as “transcendental idealism” (as opposed to “empirical idealism,” also to be called “skeptical idealism”).

\(^{100}\) Or Corax and Tisias.
Transcendental idealism, Kant claimed, would result in “empirical realism” (the place where science wanted to be to have inductive knowledge with certainty). Ouch: that was some harsh vocabulary. Perhaps it can be clarified with the addition of Kant’s evaluation of the doctrines.

Transcendental realism is Cartesianism (and Kant said that is no good): human beings would have immediate access to the real based upon “innate ideas” (I think, therefore I am; I apprehend eggs that produce chickens, therefore they are; eggs must come from somewhere, therefore the chicken came first). The world’s pieces would then be divided into objects (which are dead materials) and subjects (which are objects enlivened by a mind that has access to innate ideas). Subjects and objects are divided by the “epistemic gap” created by the ability of subjects alone to know the world. The epistemic gap refers to an Aristotelian
distinction between primary qualities (the “essence” of a being, what it must be to continue being what it is) and secondary qualities (qualities of a being that may change without altering the underlying structure of what the being is—size, color, etc.). Only secondary qualities could be known, however, because they are sensibly intuited (hence, I can know what a baseball looks like and feels like, but I cannot be the baseball). The division of primary and secondary qualities is, thus, a division of being and knowing—or a division, respectively, of form (the constancy of a thing that allows it to go on being what it is) and matter (the secondary qualities that are known through perceptions like sight, feeling, etc.). Because knowledge of the

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101 The distinction, in Aristotle’s Metaphysics, is said to be that of “essence” as opposed to qualities that are “incidental,” or contingent and, thus, may be changed without changing the “underlying” essence of a being. Essence is the constancy of a being, that which allows a being to go on being what it is. Whether this distinction is tenable will be taken up in the next chapter; whether it is really what Aristotle meant is debatable (like all the rest of Aristotle and philosophy).
“external” world comes to depend upon the Cartesian’s transcendental realism (innate ideas are real, and the reality of other things depends upon innate ideas), transcendental realism results in empirical idealism (meaning that empirical data is considered real only by virtue of its being idealistically inferred from innate ideas—when one sees the chicken laying the egg, one understands that this happened only because one knew that eggs must come from somewhere). Kant rejected empirical idealism (induction as scientific probability, not certainty) because Kant believed, following Lambert, that sensible intuition gives human beings an “immediately perceived” access to material appearances instead of requiring that human beings infer those appearances from the innate ideas of the mind (one can see the chicken hatch, damn it—one did not need to wait for the concept of chickenness to catch up with one’s intuitive perceptions). If material appearances were merely inferred—as they would be by materialists—epistemology would be dependent on a “correspondence” theory of truth, in which the true is determined by agreement with its object (therefore, chickens that did not come from eggs would not be chickens—the existing “chicken” would not be in agreement with a simple truth of chickenness, that they come from eggs). Materialism would insist on the independence of things in the world—that they in no way would be affected by human perception of them. But human perceptions cannot be relied on alone for truth—perceptions can differ from person to person, each person corresponding with a different truth.

Kant agreed, however, that the correspondence theory of truth was fine so long as it rested upon a coherence theory of truth, in which the agreement of the true with its object is guaranteed by the transcendental ideality of the system (correspondence is truth
when it is consistent with the principles created from the necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge). Whereas Descartes began with what he did not know (cogito ergo sum is a mere tautology that Descartes nevertheless insisted is a transcendental reality) and tried to use it to discover what he did know (the empirical world, which falls into idealism because its “truth” is merely inferred correspondence with perceptions taken in by the innate ideas of the mind), Kant began with what he knew (experience as a synthesis of sensible content and concepts of the understanding) and used the transcendentally idealist method to discover what he did not know (empirical realism which is real by virtue of a correspondence theory guaranteed by coherency in Kant’s system of necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge). Kant verified induction as a method for gathering knowledge by deducing it from the fact that we know through perception as well as understanding.

Why is transcendental idealism be a condition for the possibility of empirical realism? Without the presence of an a priori concept, there would be no way for a human being to know anything about an a posteriori external object. Perhaps an empiricist or a materialist could answer that the external objects themselves imprint concepts of understanding onto the mind—but Kant insisted that objects could do no imprinting unless there was something prior that allowed the mind to make sense of the object. Seeing causality happen, for example, could not possibly imprint causality onto the mind because causality presumes time, an element of Kant’s “schematism” that could never be seen with empiricism alone.\footnote{Kant believed that external objects were not} Kant used a sort of “reverse Zeno’s paradox” to justify his argument that time must be an a priori concept of the human mind. We know time exists because we observe change, but how does that change
independent—objects could not be the deciders of truth as agreement with the object because concepts are *a priori*. Only the productivity of the mind’s faculties for knowledge could *agree* by corresponding to appearance and, thus, determine truth (if the faculties for knowledge did not agree with the object, the problem lay in the application of the faculties and, probably, in their lack of coherence with the system, not in the object). Kant wrote that since “we have to deal only with appearances [as opposed to deriving concepts from the object or the self], it is not merely possible, but necessary, that certain *a priori* concepts should precede empirical knowledge of objects. For such a mere modification of our sensibility can never be met with outside us, the objects, as appearances, constitute an object which is merely in us” ([*Critique of Pure Reason*](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/324/324-h/324-h.htm) 149, A29, brackets mine). Empirical realism is, therefore, possible only on the condition that one works within a system of transcendental idealism.

Kant refused chicken-and-egg arguments over the timing of the three-fold synthesis: we are always inhabiting, being a three-fold synthesis, always apprehending the present moment with the synthesis of these faculties. Human knowing as a three-fold synthesis of faculties gives us access to knowledge instantaneously. Human beings have *a priori* concepts (time, space) that are unified with *a posteriori* intuitive perceptions (sensory information of experiences) within a third, linking piece: imagination. But the idealism charge still dogged Kant—he even rewrote the [*Critique of Pure Reason*](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/324/324-h/324-h.htm) to try to satisfy critics, creating a second edition that philosophers today mash up with the first.

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happen from moment to moment from the standpoint of our minds? Kant argued that cognizance of any one moment presumed also an idea of a moment prior and a moment coming, past and future. Empiricism (or empirical idealism) would have nowhere to look for such an idea as time because the change happening in the world would not imprint memory of moments past or anticipation of moments coming onto our minds; rather, time would flow ceaselessly without our ever having noticed that a moment had just passed by.
The *a priori* concepts are, regardless of their participation in the three-fold synthesis, *still a priori*, still prior to experience. Experience may, therefore, still be conditioned on *a priori* concepts, making Kant an idealist since the material world is fashioned from or after the mind’s idealism. Kant is, nevertheless, forgivable because he fought hard to avoid reducing materiality to ideality by making them work together in imagination. In Kant’s version of imagination one may find his attempt to describe agency, but the attempt was crude (just as all attempts to describe paradoxically a principle of freedom from description must be).

Kant’s synthetic protagonist-agent, the alter ego to like Descartes’ “ego” or “thinking thing,” was called the “transcendental unity of apperception” (“transcendental” because it related to the conditions for the possibility of knowing, “unity” as an expression of the three-fold synthesis, and “apperception” as a description of the knowing that was happening on behalf of the human being). And buried in the imagination of the transcendental unity of apperception is *spontaneity*. According to Kant, knowledge is the product of imaginative synthesis from two sources: “receptivity for impressions” (intuition’s means of stretching toward knowing) and “spontaneity [in the production] of concepts” (92, A50=B74, brackets translator’s). The three-fold synthesis uses imagination as a bridge between understanding and intuition, but understanding and intuition each furnish their own parts of the bridge, spontaneity from understanding and receptivity for impressions from intuition. Spontaneity was not identified by Kant as a reasoning faculty; but as “the mind’s power of producing representations from itself” (93, A51=B75). Kant also twice identified spontaneity as a determining faculty, not as a faculty that can be determined as one would expect if reason governed it (169, B158 and
If there is agency to be found in human being, Kant would have to find it in spontaneity.

Spontaneity, despite its lack of star power in the organization of the first Critique, was crucial to the whole enterprise. Kant derived his concepts of the understanding from it. The discovery of the concepts was accomplished through “transcendental logic”—the deduction Kant used to discover understanding’s most basic concepts by asking what concepts were necessary for the possibility of the understanding human beings already had. But Kant’s derivation of concepts may not have been exclusive, and that means that an opening for freedom may be found here. The transcendental logic is the place for departure for a theory of agency because it successfully told what is in the understanding, but did not (nor claimed to) encompass all of the possibilities for the understanding’s concepts. Kant discovered the concepts that he did because they were necessary for the possibility of the understanding that human beings had—but that did not mean that Kant had eliminated possible concepts for understanding that human beings did not yet have, nor would Kant’s transcendental logic explain, of all of the possible concepts that spontaneity might have generated a priori, why the mind’s spontaneity coincidentally happened to pick the right concepts, concepts in conformity with the truth of their objects (and guaranteed by a theory of coherent truth). Kant may well have agreed that the mind may spontaneously develop other concepts, but they remained mere “ideas” (concepts without content) in the play of the imagination because they would not be confirmed by pure intuition, as representations they would not find corresponding truths for which to stand. I do not mean that truth emanates from an empirically independent object—transcendental idealism is still the necessary grounding for the possibility of empirical
realism because *a priori* concepts must exist prior to content (otherwise objects would be responsible for creating concepts through sense impressions, and that creation cannot be trusted because sense impressions differ between people and allow disagreement over objectively valid truths). Rather, the *a priori* concepts born of spontaneity may be divided into two camps: those concepts that find intuitive content and those concepts that do not. Concepts are already present, but as they stretch out toward knowing the world, to find content with which to fill themselves, only some of them come away with content supplied by intuition’s receptivity. For example, humans know of such a thing as causality, but we can imagine a reversal by which effects resisted causation and reverted to their states prior to their causes, like spilled water picking itself up and flowing back into the glass it came from. No human being begins *knowing* that causality is true and reverse causality is false, but neither are humans deprived of the spontaneity generating these concepts that would go on to seek content in the world of sensibility. Synthetic *a priori* knowledge is prior to experience in the sense that concepts come before experience, but many possible concepts *die off or retire to the imagination* (which is driven by spontaneity) because they are not given content by sensible intuition.

And what of a concept that is not confirmed immediately or in the near future? Kant’s method discovered concepts necessary for the possibility of the understandings that may be had in the present, but his method did not necessarily foreclose the possibility of other, later, valid concepts. Kant himself admitted this, but only with the requirement that other valid concepts be premised on the categories he deduced: “the categories, as the true primary concepts of the pure understanding, have also their pure derivative concepts” (114, A81=B107). Kant called pure derivative concepts “predicables,” of
which he gave some examples: “under the category of causality the predicables of force, action, passion; under the category community the predicables of presence, resistance; under… modality the predicables of coming to be, ceasing to be, change, etc.” (115, A82=B108). Were he challenged concerning the completeness of his “table of categories,” Kant might have sought to defend his categories as fundamental by seeking to derive any new or competing concepts from his categories as predicables. But the derivation strategy would presume that other concepts are necessarily the products of reason (the productivity of the mind in using its concepts of understanding) instead of spontaneity (the productivity of the mind that creates concepts that may or may not be verified by intuition’s bridge across the imagination)—a presumption that one should not make if one takes seriously the capacity of the mind’s spontaneity to create the categories to begin with. Reason, indeed, might generate concepts, but if spontaneity generates the a priori categories of the understanding, could it not also generate predicable concepts?

If my position holds up to this point, what are the “new” categories that would be created by spontaneity? What freedom or agency would be found? Materiality still oversees action because concepts generated by spontaneity through imagination would still need to meet with intuition’s receptivity to perceivable material. The remained, “immaterial” ideas of spontaneity could only build on themselves, wait for a later possibility of a material handshake with intuition, or disappear. Does that sound like freedom or agency? If spontaneity is only “the mind’s power of producing representations from itself,” does that articulate any kind of choice or deliberation? If the Cartesian subject was just a tiny person (the mind) pulling strings within a complex machine (the body), is not Kant’s version of human being simply a machine controlled by
whatever concepts can meet intuitive fulfillment in addition to… Daffy Duck, a Dodo bird going Cuckoo in spontaneity? The mind does not have a “mind of its own”: it is “scatter-brained,” randomly moving from idea to idea, not even in any pattern except that it may be mostly patternless. When the mind’s wanderings are patterned, these thoughts are called “reason.” But reason is actually rare compared to the usual zigzagging of the mind. One need not wonder, then, why Kant nearly gave up the entire game in the very first sentence of the first preface to his first Critique: “Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer” (Critique of Pure Reason 7, Avii).

To summarize, and draw conclusions from this portion of my argument: spontaneity’s apparent independence from determination and its power to generate the categories of the understanding both suggest that spontaneity may be capable of generating a cornucopia of other concepts (through imagination). When practice through experience creates habits, the condition for the possibility of habit-formation may still be the spontaneous generation of concepts by which to understand what is intuited in practice. I would come to learn to be a gymnast only with synthetic a priori knowledge (or belief, since this knowledge cannot be communicated) because spontaneity’s generation of subjectively sufficient concepts would be a necessary condition for the reception and productive understanding of what is intuited during the action of practice (action assuming a relation to materiality). Habits, as the practical beliefs Kant called “skills,” could still be produced a priori if spontaneity creates potentialities that are actualized in practice, receptive but productive concepts that come before experience and
wait only for intuitive content that would realize them. Though it appears a posteriori, habit is gleaned from spontaneity. Kant favored transcendental idealism because the discovery of a priori concepts would otherwise “be dependent in these matters on our own discretionary judgment or merely on chance” (104, A67=B92). But chance is precisely the kind of element Kant’s theory needed because chance is the appearance of the material where causality-attuned-beings did not expect it before. Intuitive-perception of materiality strikes and demands that spontaneity produce a concept that would “make sense” of the material event. Accidents or technology failures are consistent reminders of the precariousness of human existence—but transcendental idealism can still account for chance happenings by opening itself to the formation of new categories that are produced a priori, but only moved to center stage due to the intervention of the material. Habit gives greater accommodation to material interventions because it aligns Kant’s transcendental idealism with Kaufman-Osborn’s critique of Cartesianism (as we shall see shortly): instead of being reduced to form or dismissed outright, matter refashions the Kantian unity of apperception by reawakening or demanding anew (natality) a category produced by spontaneity. Matter-as-objects may depend on form-as-apperception for recognition of any kind, but without matter’s interruption of apperception with unusual practices forming habit most all of the potentialities offered to human beings by spontaneity would be forgotten as mere dreams. In Dewey’s language of the organism, the outstanding power of the environment to allow human expansion or force human retreat actualize beliefs foreseen as possibilities in spontaneity.
4. Dewey’s “Experiences” of Organistic Being

My goal in this section and the two after it is really to get at the work of Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, but two theorists that influenced his work must first be dealt with.

John Dewey began as a Hegelian. The German idealism does appear here and there in his work, but Dewey mostly renounced Hegel to adopt the American “pragmatism” of Charles Peirce and William James. In a life spanning nearly a century, he wrote about almost everything. His oeuvre spans nearly 40 volumes of work, no single volume being anything less than a brick. Communication, education, ethics, aesthetics—it’s all there. But ontology? Yes, even ontology is present in Dewey’s work, but only of the most pragmatic variety of course.

Pragmatism sought to sweep away the “minutia” of Continental philosophy’s metaphysical questions—Must history progress? Can the “thing-in-itself” be known?—with the utilitarian orientation toward solving problems. But solving problems, or any other kind of philosophy, probably does not sweep metaphysical questions away so much as presume provisional answers to those questions so as to be able to move on to more pressing concerns. Dewey must have recognized that metaphysical assumptions were underwriting his thinking because, eventually, he needed to solve a problem by making some of his metaphysical presuppositions clear.

The problem Dewey addressed was the nature of aesthetics (“esthetics,” in Dewey’s writing). The central term of Dewey’s approach to being was probably “experience,” a word with a number of meanings for Dewey. Experience is a state of being, but Dewey argues that “experiences” are cohesive blocks of time that are
conceived of after the event has taken place—experiences are unified narratives of one’s history. Esthetic experiences, however, are a bit different. First, art is an anticipatory experiencing: “The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that its qualities as perceived have controlled the question of production. The act of producing that is directed by intent to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have” (The Philosophy of John Dewey 566). As will be shown shortly, the creation Dewey refers to as artistic is not necessarily art in the sense of a grand painting. Rather, Dewey is concerned with pragmatic creations that are anticipatory as works of artistic skill: “experience in its vital form is experimental, an effort to change the given; it is characterized by projection, by reading forward into the unknown; connection with a future is its salient trait” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 61). Second, art may have a unity, but the value perceived from art’s unity actually comes from the parts, not the whole: “In a distinctively esthetic experience, characteristics that are subordinate are controlling—namely, the characteristics in virtue of which the experience is an integrated complete experience on its own account” (The Philosophy of John Dewey 572). Dewey also offered a good example of this valuing of parts over their unified relations: “A drama or novel is not the final sentence, even if the characters are disposed of as living happily ever after” (The Philosophy of John Dewey 572). Third, Dewey wrote of a kind of experience that builds as a guide for future action, what he called “funded experience.” This last sort of experience is especially noteworthy for its importance to decision-making: most often we act without the deep thought or the careful deliberation that is expected of moral agents, but instead are inclined to act in a way
consistent with the shaped experiences of our pasts. Funded experience—that is, experience that backed or reinforced or made habitual—is what guides our actions when the game is being played and there is no time for deliberation.

Dewey’s experiences take place in a naturalistic world-stage. The ontology Dewey had therefore adopted, in “Experience as Aesthetic,” was organistic. Beings live in an environment, but they are one with the environment, not separate from it:

life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defense but also by conquest. At every moment, the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 535).

To the degree that environments determine the conditions in which beings live, environments are beings and beings are environments—their dialectical relations make them as inseparable as arteries and veins. Beings and environments are, together, an organism. Being part of an organism is a kind of being that fluctuates with its status in the environment: a being thrives when it can expand and thrive in its environment, when the environment cooperates with the being as in the harmonious functioning of parts of an organism. But, when the environment blocks growth or reverses development’s
direction, the being dies as its relation to the rest of the organism no longer is sustaining or empowering. Hence, human beings developed art: of the antiques in an art museum, Dewey wrote, “in their own time and place, such things were enhancements of the processes of everyday life…. The arts of drama, music, painting, and architecture… had no peculiar connection with theaters, galleries, museums. They were part of the significant life of an organized community” (The Philosophy of John Dewey 529).

People have always developed tools to help them thrive in environments and survive when environments turn hostile. Over centuries, the precise meaning of some arts may be lost—when human beings stop believing in deities, they no longer need to make works of art that would appease those divine powers, and so those works which formerly had uses with which to thrive in environments are reduced to pretty things to look at and collect.

5. Scarry’s “Dialectic of Projection and Reciprocation”

Among the thinkers considered in this work, Scarry is probably the one closest to being an existentialist in the sense of being a builder of one’s own world in a semi-subjective way (Heidegger eschewed categorization of himself as an existentialist). She jumped up to several opening assumptions (not from carelessness, but because she is on the way to a different argument) about human beings. Humans make their own worlds; worlds are composed by language, uses, or meaning. But human subjectivities are not all powerful according to Scarry’s arguments: we remain embodied creatures and if hostility is turned against our bodies we may find them inescapable even in dreams. Pain is unlike
the other sensations in that it bullies consciousness; character and thought are interrupted, rudely pushed to the side by pain. Levinas’ description of pain phenomenologically sounds most appropriate:

It is as if suffering were not just a datum… but the way in which the refusal, opposing the assemblage of data into a meaningful whole, rejects it; at once what disturbs order and this disturbance itself. It is not only the consciousness of rejection or a symptom of rejection, but this rejection itself, a backward consciousness, “operating” not as “grasp” but as revulsion. A modality. The categorial ambiguity of quality and modality. The denial, the refusal of meaning, thrusting itself forward as a sensible quality: that is, in the guise of “experienced” content, the way in which, within a consciousness, the unbearable is precisely not borne, the manner of this not-being-borne; which, paradoxically, is itself a sensation or a datum. A quasi-contradictory structure, but a contradiction that is not formal, like that of the dialectic tension between the affirmative and the negative that occurs for the intellect. Contradiction qua sensation: the ache of pain-woe. (Levinas "Useless Suffering" 91-92)

Bad stuff. Probably worse: pain forces one to bear great suffering while being itself unbearable. Identity is crushed in the moment of pain, replaced entirely by the “ache of pain-woe.” Pain reduces a character to a body. Scarry called pain a pure dehumanization: one’s humanity is annihilated because “Intense pain is world-destroying” (29), and because “Intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of
one’s world disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject” (Scarry 35).

A body in pain is not an agent if the pain is bad enough, consistent enough, and thorough enough. A minor toothache can be endured, but it is annoying and there may be moments when the pain is just acute enough to completely interrupt what one is doing. Pains that are spread throughout the body can also be fought through with some agency intact—as when one has the flu and retains enough consciousness to watch television or read as a distraction. But, once again, flues will have their moments when they overwhelm thinking things so as to reduce them to mere thingliness. Pains that are consistent are bearable only to the degree that they occasionally subside; with a really bad flu the best one may hope for is sleep (which is not among the more empowering sorts of agency, though it may at least provide some freedom from some pain). Consistently thorough pain annihilates the human qualities of a body, not necessarily forever but from the vantage of the body in pain the suffering must have a certain timelessness to it—time no longer passes because the faculty for perceiving time’s progress is knocked out. That time seems to go slower is not “merely” imagined (because time itself is “merely” the idealized measure of the change human beings see in the world); time “really” does go slower in any sense that would call time “real.”

Dehumanization is, then, a fairly simple accomplishment. Keep someone in pain long enough and its entirely possible that once they “return to themselves” they will find that parts of their world have been lost altogether. Hence Scarry’s twin concerns are torture and warfare—the same thing for Scarry, just on different scales with different rhetorical characterizations. In each case, the goal is to “out-hurt” the enemy, to inflict
more suffering on others than one’s own side can bear having inflicted on themselves. Torture has been argumentatively justified for the “gaining of information” but Scarry explained why that was both empirically false and phenomenologically impossible.

Collecting the records of countless shutdown prisons from Central and South America, Scarry looked for evidence that torture ever found useful information or specific information sought from any prisoner. The results were one-sided: absolutely no evidence exists that suggests empirically that torture works to gain information. The phenomenological explanation tells why empirical data will not be forthcoming: since pain bullies consciousness and disables deliberative thinking, no ability to cognitively respond to questions is possible. People in pain just say anything—they are not strategic, neither honest nor dishonest per se. Why, then, would so much torture be practiced? For the dehumanizing value, of course—Scarry argued that the denial of a world to a body in pain is also a creation of a world for the torturer (the torturer “thrives” in Dewey’s sense of the term; torture expands the scope of a torturer’s environment into the being of other human bodies in pain). She did not claim that torturers obtained some kind of sadistic pleasure from inflicting pain so much as creating for themselves a need to go on inflicting it (human beings do not treat each other like this ethically speaking, so a torturer must go on torturing because that assertion of power alone is what denies the body in pain its humanity). War follows the same process, just on a grand, nationalistic scale. Oddly, war is seen as far more appropriate than torture, though it inflicts pain, seeks to inflict it on as many people as will force a population to surrender (as a body in pain is surrendered to a torturer), and is thus accompanied by dehumanization.
What should be done about torture and war? Scarry begins her conclusive chapter by arguing that “achieving an understanding of political justice may require that we first arrive at an understanding of making and unmaking” (279). The move Scarry made here is of outstanding importance to the structure of my work here: Scarry politicized ontology by pointing to being’s integral relation to the making and unmaking which necessarily affects the political standing—the justice—accorded to others. Scarry described making and unmaking in terms that will, from here on in, get referenced for their importance *ad nauseum*: “the phenomenon of creating resides in and arises out of the framing intentional relation between physical pain on the one hand and imagined objects on the other…. the now freestanding made object is a *projection* of the live body that itself *reciprocates* the live body” (280, emphasis mine). Just as Dewey had argued for seeing human beings as parts of their environment that thrive with objects of their own making, Scarry argued that most artifacts produced by human beings to thrive in their environments are, in fact, identified with the body. Human beings reproduce their skin (bandages and clothing), the phallus and the womb (skyscrapers and shelters), the heart (engines), the blood stream (pumps), and the brain and nervous system (computers and their networks) (Scarry 282). Scarry also pointed to examples of technology that met needs, not just mimicking the functions of body parts. “Projection,” thus, becomes identified with idealistic work, which may be projected onto material things (as when one invents or crafts a tool or a cake) but also onto ideal forms (as when one contemplates or strategizes meaning, especially of language). Scarry contended that projections very

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103 Dr. Long, I know, has struggled against the notion that human theorizing about the world represents some kind of “imposition” on it, that our thinking is somehow an “unnatural” interruption. He is, perhaps,
literally breathe life into creations. Here she is at her most explicit, answering the so-called “pathetic fallacy”:

to dismiss this phenomenon as mistake or fallacy is very possibly to miss the important revelation about creation exposed there. The habit of poets and ancient dreamers to project their own aliveness onto nonalive things itself suggests that it is the basic work of creation to bring about this very projection of aliveness; in other words, while the poet pretends or wishes that the inert external world had his or her own capacity for sentient awareness, civilization works to make this so. What in the poet is recognizable as a fiction is in civilization unrecognizable because it has come true (286).

Scarry should have read Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*—projection and reciprocation are *energeia*, being-at-work, actualization, activation. She should have read Aristotle’s *On the Soul* too—if the psyche of the human being can be equated with the functional purpose of the eye, Scarry’s argument for the liveliness of objects can be thought of as expressing the object’s psyche in its *dunamis*, in its capacity to be activated for a function. The only liveliness an object cannot experience is pain, though Scarry pointed out that “its design, its structure, is the *structure of a perception*” for possible discomfort (289).
Reciprocation, an almost necessary movement consistent with any and every projection, refers to the fact that “the object is only a fulcrum or lever across which the force of creation moves back onto the human site and remakes the makers” (Scarry 307, italics in original). Reciprocation is the capacity of a material or ideal to “pay back” a projector with some kind of effect. In Scarry’s analysis, reciprocation is what makes materials meet needs or improve the functioning of human abilities (as sight is improved by a telescope). The payoff is often greater than the initial investment: if one spends five hours making a sweater, one can generally count on the sweater to provide warmth for more than just five hours. Reciprocation is excessive of projection in many senses: it last longer (provides stability), it meets needs that projection alone could not, it improves senses that projection alone could not reach, it gives human beings powers that they ordinarily do not have, or it simply makes difficult tasks easier. Of course, reciprocation can go wrong too, an important point to be returned to in the discussion of Kenneth Burke and Bryan Crable.

Projection and reciprocation are related dialectically, and their dialectic goes on endlessly so long as there is a human being to be continually refashioned (but whether even a human being is required is a question I will leave open). One reason the dialectic is continuous is that a whole world of meanings exists for projection and reciprocation to refashion—no change taking place in a vacuum, the dialectic’s work modifies not just a single being, but many of that being’s relationships with all other being. Kaufman-

\[104\] Scarry even managed to fit in an “ontological” argument for existence of a god, a point of which St. Anselm would have been proud: “human beings are themselves the creators of the Artifact (God), God now comes to be perceived as the creator of human beings; and, of course, the Object is their creator, for by making this Artifact they have recreated themselves, altered themselves profoundly and drastically. There would be no point in inventing a god if it did not in turn reinvent its makers” (311).
Osborn, borrowing a term from Hannah Arendt, called this great network of dialectics the “web of relations.” Spinning meanings out through and across the web demonstrates the political import of ontology, which will be made clear in the following section.

6. Kaufman-Osborn on the “Cartesian Paradigm of Use” and Butler’s Gender Trouble

Timothy Kaufman-Osborn took up the use of Scarry’s dialectic of projection and reciprocation in *Creatures of Prometheus: Gender and the Politics of Technology*. The book was informed by Kaufman-Osborn’s previous scholarship on Dewey and feminist theories. Heidegger’s work was mentioned only twice, both times in passing, but a familiarity with Heidegger still seems apparent: Kaufman-Osborn had a suspicious attitude toward “technology,” he frequently used a hammer as an example, and he critiqued Descartes. In *Being and Time*, Descartes got some rough treatment from Heidegger, who took the “father of modern philosophy” to task for various attempts at ontology that ended up being only assertions of presumably sound ontology. Heidegger wrote that “Descartes does not allow the kind of being of innerworldly beings to present itself, but rather prescribes to the world, so to speak, its ‘true’ being on the basis of an idea of being (being = constant objective presence) the source of which has not been revealed and the justification of which has not been demonstrated” (“Rhetoric, Civility, and Community: Political Debate on Computer Bulletin Boards.” 89). Kaufman-Osborn’s critique of Descartes is not meant to be an explicitly ontological critique—if it is ontological, that is purely incidental. Rather, as a Dewey-influenced pragmatist, Kaufman-Osborn critiqued Cartesian ontology for its effects which just happen to come
out like Heidegger’s writings about things and technology or *enframing*. Kaufman-Osborn attacked what he called the “Cartesian paradigm of use,” a critique that ran like this: the Cartesian mind / body dualism is also a division of subjects (bodies with minds) and objects (bodies without minds), meaning that Cartesianism’s objectification of the world has already enframed most of being and transformed it into what Heidegger called standing-reserve (objects are present for human beings to use by virtue of their dumbness).

The Cartesian paradigm of use has a number of nefarious consequences. First, as with *enframing*, it is a technology that reduces otherness to supply (the trouble with this reduction is most clear in Kaufman-Osborn’s interpretation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: the treatment of our creations as mere tools always runs the risk of mistreating others). Second, and also very Heideggerian, the paradigm is dangerously hubristic: subjects in a world of objects are gods in their powers to create and use. But our faith in technology—which is really just an over-confidence in our own capacities to manipulate a world put to our uses—can get us into big trouble (as with another of Kaufman-Osborn’s examples, Chernobyl). Kaufman-Osborn attempts to begin the procedure of de-Cartesianizing ourselves by dropping the language of subjects and objects for “artisanal artifacts” and “artifactual artisans” (language that he conceded was imperfect—Kaufman-Osborn had Heidegger’s “gift” for poetics, too). Third, and a crucial point for understanding the power of the dialectic of projection and reciprocation, “objects” are far from dumb. In fact, their reciprocating powers are constitutive of the meaning of our lives along with our idealist projections. Further, their reciprocating powers are always more powerful than our powers to project, both because materiality
can thwart our imaginations by refusing to play along and also because the reciprocational powers outlast our projections (Achilles’ shield, another of Kaufman-Osborn’s examples, would be of little use if it were good for only a single blow—but the shield, especially in the case of Hephaestus’ crafting, has a power to withstand continuous attacks). Were reciprocational powers not in excess over projection’s potentials, technology would not “put out” enough to be worth the trouble. As is, technology is so powerfully excessive that it enables us to live where we otherwise could not (due to cold or heat), go where we otherwise could not (the depths of oceans and shallow forays into outer space), and more.

All of this sounds pretty Heideggerian so far, but Kaufman-Osborn has at least one bad thing to say about technology that one might not expect coming from the Dark Forest: technology genders us. Applying some of the ideas from Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble—that gender is a performance, a notion of performativity that Butler crafted from Austin’s speech-act theory—Kaufman-Osborn argued that the excessive reciprocational powers of technology lead to performances that, in cooperation with our projections, characterize us as gendered beings:

If what one does is what one becomes, and if what one does is largely a matter of how artisanal artifacts articulate such conduct, and if all such conduct is a matter of teasing form from matter, and if different ways of teasing form from matter inculcate different ways of making sense of what appears in experience, then each time Venus flips Vulcan’s flapjacks with a stainless steel spatula, she is engaged in making herself (and being made) into the sort of being we recognize as a woman” (Kaufman-Osborn 182).
In Dewey’s lingo, actions are funding experiences: they build habits. Habitual use of a technology that is associated with a specific gender performance will, thus, build gender into one’s habitual self. And since we live in a world of technology and meaning, Arendt’s “web of relations” as the universe of meanings refashioned with dialectics of projection and reciprocation is now revealed at its most powerfully political. Our ideas are not politically innocent; why would our “uses” of “things” be any different? The reciprocations of any dialectic cannot help but reorient political meanings in the web of relations so long as projection, too, carries politics (and the creation of gender roles, of femininity and masculinity, make one hell of a politically-charged projection). And there is no reason, of course, to stop at the politics of gender—class, race or ethnicity, and so on involve performances that twist and tug the web of relations.

One may be well-served to consider the following questions in context of the web of relations: What is not politics? And what is not rhetoric? Kaufman-Osborn distrusted a sort of reverse Cartesianism as much as the traditional kind—postmodernism has problematically leveled Cartesian dualism in favor of a highly idealized theory of discourse. Instead of being the traditional Cartesian ego lording it over a kingdom of objects, the postmodern discoursers is some matrix of forces that still acts magisterial over the world because discourse is thought to fund experience so powerfully that one might almost be in The Matrix. Admittedly they do not think they can fly (yet), but they do think the Gulf War did not happen (Baudrillard) or that changing our language is the key to changing our society (Rorty, who receives his share of criticism in Creatures of Prometheus). Kaufman-Osborn resisted diving into ontology in the main because he did not want to try to resolve the standoff of ideality and materiality; the pragmatic option
was to leave them in a useful juxtaposition to one another. Venus may, as Kaufman-Osborn put it, file for divorce, but the gendered meanings of the web of relations may prevent her, materially, from having sufficient resources for surviving while breaking away (a point often made by materialist rhetoricians). Politics and rhetoric may be the web of relations, but those relations are always in dialectic with materiality and so are not to be taken as the divine spark of postmodern Titan-hood.

But I have a caveat and two troublesome questions as I move into the next section. First, the caveat, which concerns agency and coming to be. One of Kaufman-Osborn’s goals in Creatures of Prometheus was to deny the likelihood of ex nihilo appearances of inventive agency. He believed that one way to go about dethroning the Cartesian ego-god was to deny its self-affirming genius: what is invented is taken from engagement with the world and the agency is a rare and “fragile” possibility. That agency might be rare because the web of relations seldom permits human beings to be in charge of their own habituation is an acceptable conclusion—but the ex nihilo appearances have never sat well with me in reading this text. Whether invention appears only through reciprocation and projection is surely unfalsifiable: the reason human beings posited ex nihilo appearances in the first place was because they did not know how else to account for them. Kaufman-Osborn might be right, but he might not; and if he were right, he could never know it or communicate its truth. The world and the web of relations it presents human beings with are too complex for us to map out every possibility to as to isolate the true source of an idea. In fact, Kaufman-Osborn’s dismissal of ex nihilo appearances is as close as he comes to a hubristic move: that his hammer or toothbrush could break on him ought to have told him not only that we share
constitution of our meanings and freedoms with our material being, but also that our abilities to name a thing or situation do not, as Crable will put it below, exhaust the possibilities for things and situations. Since these possibilities cannot be exhausted many appearances will seem to be from nothing, and since human beings will not always have sufficient evidence or inertia for tracking down the source of an idea, the *ex nihilo* appearance is often going to seem just as good as reality.

Second, I have a question that reverses the worry about the dialectic’s ability to account for all possibilities. All of this dialectic is useful and accurate in its way, but not precise. Materiality and ideality do have dialectical relationships with each other—but saying that is far from untangling what those relationships are and what a relationship is in the first place. Do contributors to a relationship fuse like an alloy? Or do they just shake hands? And might these metaphorically “materializing” hypotheticals stack the deck in favor of thinking about ontology in a certain way? Just what is to be made of a “relation”?

Finally, I have a question concerning a worry about the centrality of the thinking thing. If a Cartesian ego is not the center of its universe, why is the “reflected” meaning of material called “reciprocation”? Some reciprocation assuredly happens (human beings do project and often receive a payoff for it), but reciprocation does not express all of the possibilities of materiality. The next section introduces a group of characters around whom this problem can be thought. But first, I want to share my favorite piece from Kaufman-Osborn’s book, a description of the literal “shrinking” from an environment as a meaning for dying:
When aging takes shape as a protracted slide into decrepitude, the world opened up by artisanal artifacts shrivels long before the body dies. As cancer took its toll on my grandmother, only occasionally did my father take her for their once customary Sunday drives through the cheerless suburbs of central New Jersey. In time, these ventures proved too taxing, and so Phoebe retreated within Norman’s home, rarely leaving that awful pale green bedroom hidden at the far end of a darkened hallway. Still later, and only for the sake of holiday appearances, she permitted Marjorie, my mother to life her body out of bed and into the liver-colored recliner we grandchildren occupied during our mandatory weekly visits. When even that become too much to bear, a rented hospital bed became Phoebe’s world, as she was consumed by the imperatives of eating, sleeping, and excreting. Of the many artifacts sustaining her world, this was the last she let go. To die is to relinquish the artifacts that otherwise incorporate us within a world extending far beyond our arms’ reach. To be wracked by acute pain is to find that world closing in on all sides. (Kaufman-Osborn 38)

In context of this “shrinking” from the world, and in context of the meaning of the “body in pain,” consider again the meaning of an ontology of rhetoric. If all things are said to “have meaning,” they are meaningful only within a “web of relations” (Arendt's term) wherein meanings connect, intersect, contradict, and so on. When lightning struck, some people thought Zeus was angry, some other people thought electricity was attracted to a metallic rod, and some others—dramatically—say that no occurrence of lightning can
be free from either of those meanings (and several others) so long as one is aware of them. Any of those meanings can wrap themselves up in the other interpretations so that a scientist may call lightning the "symbol of Zeus" and still be said to "make sense." If the *logos*, speech, is most apparent in its relationality (things speaking with other things and by virtue of that being related), then all action is potentially symbolic action, all things are potentially rhetorical in the sense that they have meaning ascribed to them. And if living is expanding one's domain and dying is shrinking away (as Dewey argued), the ontological significance of rhetoric and the rhetorical significance of ontology are both made clear: living is actualizing and expanding one's "available means"; dying is seeing possibilities closing up as the once available means gradually wither to only a few or none at all.

7. McLuhan, Burke, and Heidegger on “Extension” and “Recalcitrance”

This section focuses on the possibilities for reciprocation understood to come from material’s dialectic with form. From the standpoint of a Cartesian ego, material technology can do only three things, though not necessarily exclusive with one another: technology advances one’s goals, fails to advance them, or backfires (and when the lack of exclusivity comes into play one may see “side effects” and so forth). These three possibilities will figure prominently in this analysis, but one must keep in the mind the habituation produced by the Cartesian paradigm of use: the possibilities for “reciprocation” are not only or merely “reciprocal,” meaning that an anthropocentric
habit risks distracting one from materiality’s profane refusal to see human beings as subject-agents.

The reciprocation that human beings most like to see is what Marshall McLuhan has called “extension” (when technology advances one’s goals). In Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (what might one suppose McLuhan would have called the extensions of women?), an extension refers to technology’s additions to the lives of human beings, additions in the same way one might imagine adding on a third foot. Car technology extends the legs and feet: insofar as our feet are used instrumentally to go from one place to another, cars extend from the feet and increase their speed and endurance. McLuhan, like Scarry, viewed all technology as working by extension: forks extend the fingers, houses extend the skin, computers extend the brain, and so forth. Media technology extends the senses: telephones extend the ears, television extends the eyes. But McLuhan was not simply a swooner for technology: he was critical of the ways it could make us lazy and thoughtless (especially television).

Extensions acquire a certain status if they are sufficiently consistent and complete in advancing one’s goals: they are taken for granted. A Cartesian ego that sees technology or material as merely “extension” takes for granted the dumb character of inert material. In fact, they must be taken for granted if one is to continue “thriving” in an environment since one cannot continuously reach out for more if one is so consumed with appreciation for all that one already has. Thomas Hobbes calls this state “felicity,” which is “a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of

\[105\] Scarry’s view is similar, but has an especially noteworthy difference in her recognition that some technology cannot be adequately described by metaphor off of the human body. She pointed, for example, to the wheel as being especially wondrous to human beings because they cannot recognize it in themselves.
the former, being still but the way to the later” (“Rhetoric, Civility, and Community: Political Debate on Computer Bulletin Boards.” 70). Are human beings, ontologically, capitalists? Enthralled with greater and greater acquisitions? The existence of asceticism is a possible refutation of this charge, but it is not entirely convincing: ascetics merely claim to be making greater spiritual (formal?) gains than materialism could offer.

Whether human beings need to flourish materially (extend and extend) to live is questionable, but that they must find more means of sustenance from time to time is unquestionable even if that nourishment is only a formal conviction that one’s coming state of being is greater than the state of being that is left behind.106 Unfortunately this answer to asceticism is not satisfactory either because it is unfalsifiable: if one can explain any loss as a gain, proving conclusively that something is a gain or a loss becomes impossible to test for and one is left with at least a semi-relativistic subjectivism. Perhaps the claim that asceticism makes gains of another kind will suffice as merely a possible interpretation: felicity may sometimes mean that apparent losses are in fact rationalized as different kinds of gains, be they spiritual rewards or only senses that one now claims the “moral high ground” so to speak. In still allowing for this interpretation, one may continue to see how felicity might achieve a payoff through “self-denial” while not demanding a complete proof of that possibility’s likelihood.

Regardless, apparently formal reasons for abandoning interest in materialistic felicity should not be trivialized: rhetoric certainly has a stake in the “rationalizations” or

106 “Rapture” Christians even fantasize about this: their fantasies are filled with schadenfreude, however, since the fetish is specific to dreaming about all the silly things that happen among the materialists that are “left behind.”
“delusions” for resisting materialism even as it has a stake in the rationalizations and delusions for not resisting.

Two major consequences of reciprocation—from the standpoint of a Cartesian ego—remain to be considered: material does nothing that is desired or it reverses course and acts against one’s desires. Material that “does nothing” is important, but should be considered after material that backfires for reasons that will become clear. Material that is backfiring was said, by Kenneth Burke, to be “recalcitrant.” Rhetoric scholar Bryan Crable has made an important work of Burke’s ontology in “Ideology as ‘Metabiology’: Rereading Burke’s Permanence and Change.” Taking up the issue of Burke’s ideology debates with Fredric Jameson, Crable defended Burke’s view for refusing “to reduce ideas to matter or matter to ideas” (307). In refusing reductionism either direction, “Burke wants to lay emphasis both upon the realm of the symbolic and upon the conditions of embodiment that shape the symbolic. With the introduction of ‘metabiology’ as a stance on mind-and-body, we are no longer concerned with either the material or the ideal (either mind or body), but with the human—which necessarily involves both (mind-body)” (Crable 307). Recalcitrance, according to Crable, “is the resistance we experience as a result of our actions” (311). This definition may not yet be expansive enough, anthropocentric as it appears. Recalcitrance may also refer to the capacity of the signified to resist its own signification, a material to resist its representation in discourse, or a form to resist the metaphor assigned to describe it. Resistance is necessary in a certain sense since its appearance is the only measurable characteristic we have for being able to tell that an actualization has not already taken place (just as a chemical reaction without an energy barrier—a reaction with excess
energy—necessarily reacts to completion or equilibrium, to whenever the energy is spent). In that sense, recalcitrance can also be viewed as the “effort” a human being must expend, the “work” a human being must put in, for the payoff to be granted.

The scope of recalcitrance is huge: instead of or in addition to doing what we want it to do, materials may only comply partially, comply little or none, spin out of control, have side effects, refashion their users without the provoking any user-awareness, or just sit there. A car is a particularly complex example. A vehicle may get me where I wanted to go—but not always in the greatest comfort. In the summer, the first several minutes of time in a car are unbearable as one delicately touches a hot steering wheel and sweats against the seats until the air conditioning gets going. One’s posture must adjust to the seats. Wheel, pedals, shift sticks, and more must be properly calculated for effective safety and transport—and all of this assumes that nothing goes terribly “wrong.” The car can thus refashion its user and especially its user’s body (the heat, the posture, the trade-off with exercise or some other mean of transporting oneself). Refashionings can have physical effects through psychology also, as when the perceived toughness of one’s vehicle leads one to drive less carefully (an especially clear example of this effect is with the technology of American football padding: injuries are worse and more frequent in football than in the non-padded rugby because the skeletal extension of the padding leads football players to believe they can hit harder without consequence).

One is unlikely to come away from a dialectic including reciprocation without some kind of refashioning, even if only in experience. Crable even went on to refer to the metabiological composite as a “dialectical reciprocity between embodiment and symbolic
action, one whereby these two aspects are interrelated and whereby each ultimately is not reducible to the other” (308). The fit with Scarry and Kaufman-Osborn is perfect.

But why all this “resistance”? Our designated “uses” for materials are specific potencies, but not exhaustive recognitions of the myriad of potencies latent to our perceptions. Crable wrote, “our naming of a situation does not exhaust the possibilities of the situation itself” (310). Talking about anything isn’t the same as talk being everything, which is why Crable sees Burke’s recalcitrance as a kind of “check” on the rhetorical powers of human invention:

As Burke wryly says in the foreword to *The Philosophy of Literary Form*: "one cannot live by the word for bread alone" (xvi)…. our symbolic abilities are limited—our situation can confront us with the unexpected, our efforts to solve problems can reveal problems we had never before noticed, and some of our symbolic efforts meet with considerable resistance. Our situation is not, then, shaped and reshaped at will by our symbolic efforts. An extreme example: we cannot create an opening in a wall by declaring that one exists. If we try, and then attempt to walk through it, we will get a nasty knock on the head. This example points to the presence and importance of the nonsymbolic realm in human existence (310).

Crable acknowledges a sort of vagueness in the concept of recalcitrance since “it is the name Burke gives to the unnameable (or, at least, to the potentially nameable) elements of a situation” (Crable 311). On the other hand, the inability of human beings to name, define, or map recalcitrance would also appear to be *the point*: to presume otherwise
would be to reintroduce an anthropocentric Cartesianism condemning “objects” to a “dumbness” incapable of resistance to human order. It is true that recalcitrance can, as Crable points out, force human beings to adapt their projective interpretations to better account for potentially recalcitrant factors, but such an admission guarantees that human beings will be forced, ultimately, to admit that they share control of the universe and themselves with an other who must be negotiated with.

But human beings are not easily convinced that they are not divinities. Human beings will sometimes continue to insist that they have a special “subjective” nature even in the face of overwhelming recalcitrance. Those situations are the times for which Burke found himself needing to theorize about Dewey’s “occupational psychosis”:

Dewey's concept is based upon the idea that one's vocation can take over one's life. The particular interests and habits that have been acquired through practicing a particular vocation may become preoccupational; they may become extended to cover all aspects of that person's life. An occupational psychosis thus causes us to generalize patterns applicable to the work situation to all encountered situations…. an orientation can come to be seen as unserviceable or inappropriate for successfully resolving and acting in situations. This unserviceability of an orientation appears in the way it guides our selection of problem-solving means…. we may note that the recalcitrance of a changing situation may indicate the psychotic nature of our occupation—recalcitrance alerts us that our occupation has taken over too much of our life (Crable 312).
When human beings persevere in the face of overwhelming recalcitrance, they exhibit occupational psychosis, an inability to open themselves to the reality that the world will not allow itself to be turned in the direction human beings might wish it to go. Occupational psychosis is overreaching an extension.

I had, above, delayed the discussion of technology that “does nothing,” but mentioning this “nothing-doing” was important in context of recalcitrance because these consequences are of interest to Heideggerian critiques of technology. Often our technology does the work we want it to do, and we take no notice because we have habituated ourselves to its use. Hence the strangely explosive outrage human beings sometimes feel when their technology simply refuses to act. Human beings will hit their tools, yell and curse at them, abuse them in ways we would find completely inappropriate if performed on an agent. But Scarry, who argued that our materials have that agency, pointed out that we would have to be silly not so see these events as real abuse because one would have no reason to hit and scream at something unless some kind of agency were being attributed to it. The abuse metaphor may get more uncomfortable still if the “interruption” presented by doing nothing is considered in terms of invisibility or voicelessness: we want our technology to be used and not heard.

From the idea of interruption comes the Heideggerian hammer: when the hammer breaks, it sends out its call (and down will come Burke, Crable and all). The call is the only event that can make human beings take notice:

artisanal artifacts customarily acquire a taken-for-granted status analogous to the “things” of nature, and so appear to invite their own construction in the terms furnished by the Cartesian paradigm of use.... To be taken in by
that appearance of facticity… is to fall prey to a sort of optical illusion….

Every once in a while, however, artisanal artifacts proclaim their fictionality, their status as so many made-up things. Sometimes, like Cartesian egos no longer able to sustain their clear and distinct identities, *they do so by falling apart*. When the stem of the toothbrush I have been using for months snaps in half, it announces its status as a made thing…. By violating my familiar routine, it has told me more about itself than I knew when it habitually disappeared within experience. (Kaufman-Osborn 81, emphasis mine)

A “technological attitude” gets disrupted by the falling apart. The calculation performed by a being at work with the hammer has been forcibly detoured and, if one is thoughtful in just the right way to see it, the “fictionality” (or, at least, “conventionality”) of not just the hammer but the whole of calculated enterprise makes itself uncovered: “The broken hammer reveals the boards and nails, which are now simply there, and the organization of the shop, in which it is now impossible for the work to proceed” (Macomber 44). The web of relations is suspended in just the right way that one may see its whole and total arbitrariness of meaning: why the hammer? And why the nails? And so forth. Such a sight—of the potentially infinite meaninglessness of being—is so frightening for some that they may find it easier to rationalize (“the Lisbon earthquake was just God’s, er, mysterious ways”), quickly reassert the stability of the web of relations (simply looking for another hammer, adding as it were just another step in one’s calculative processing), or just get mad (at the all-too-true agency exerted by all beings, human or not).
The potential for material to “break,” to reject the purpose for which it was supposedly “created,” was a preoccupation of Heidegger. The capacity (potency?) for a break was revealing of the whole structure of relations in which the tool had once functioned. The experience that human beings confront when a tool breaks is a non-calculative awareness of the fictionality of the status of objects. But the confrontation lasts for only a moment, at which point human beings “return to their senses”:

With the broken instrument the workshop first appears, opening out upon the environment and the world. And now for the first time Dasein becomes explicitly aware of itself, being forced to confront itself in the question, “What do I do now?”…. All the references implicit in the work—necessarily implicit as long as work was in progress—now become explicit. And only now do beings manifest themselves in their simple presence, as the proper objects of theoretical knowledge. This revelation of the defective instrument is a vanishing moment. Only for a moment is the broken tool merely present, revealing itself and the complex of which it is a part. For it at once becomes material for repair and so once again instrumental…. the broken instrument, which for a moment is simply on hand, is *drawn into a new project* and once more becomes available to human design, withdrawing once again from awareness. The revelation of the defective instrument can only be fleeting and transitory. In this fleeting moment, however, the referential structure of the workshop is broken, there occurs what Heidegger calls a rupture of reference, and Dasein stumbles upon a void which forces it to become aware of the world
in a way which was not possible so long as work was in progress….
through this gap Dasein first attains the awareness which is an
indispensable condition of truth. Subject and object, intellect and thing,
here emerge out of a living context which cannot properly be
characterized in terms of subject and object or as a relation of intellect
and thing. This is the openness of being which Heidegger argues is
presupposed by the traditional notion of truth and by all human experience
(Macomber 44, emphasis mine).

That was a mouth-full, so allow me a redirect: the Cartesian paradigm of use is an
understanding with a kind of completeness that is broken by the breaking of the tool, but
cognizance of the tool’s revelation of itself in its being is only momentary before human
being seeks to re-technologize it, making it “drawn into a new project.” The new project
is the appropriation of the tool for an understanding. Could such a project bear any
relation to the projection posited by Scarry and Kaufman-Osborn? To see if so, we must
turn to Being and Time.

Understanding, for Heidegger, was thought to be the potentiality-for-being of Da-
sein. Why so? “Because,” Heidegger wrote, “understanding in itself has the existential
structure which we call project” (“Rhetoric, Civility, and Community: Political Debate on
Computer Bulletin Boards.” 145). The project (Entwurf), or projecting, was
characterized as follows: the project is the “character of understanding” that “constitutes
being-in-the-world with regard to the disclosedness of its there as the there of a
potentiality of being”; projecting is a “mode of being” into which “Da-sein is thrown”;
projecting is not “being related to a plan thought out, according to which Da-sein
arranges its being”; Da-sein “has always already projected itself and is, as long as it is, projecting”; and the projecting of understanding “does not thematically grasp that upon which it projects, the possibilities themselves” because that “degrades it to the level of a given, intended content” instead of allowing that the project throws possibility before itself as possibility, and as such lets it be “ (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 145). Heideggerian “projecting” (which is not meant to refer to his oeuvre) is characteristic of understanding, constitutes being-in-the-world as potentiality, and has always already been projected by Da-sein because Da-sein is its possibilities—all of which fit dunamis quite well, as dunamis is potency and a “faculty” or “power.” But there is a problem with understanding projecting as a faculty: the thematization of possibility is what denies possibility its possibility by grasping it as taken for granted. Heidegger’s projecting understanding, if a common understanding of understanding is taken up, must fail to grasp its possibilities so as not to degrade them, so as not to “intend” them. Heidegger’s projecting could, thus, only be a “faculty” if one were to allow that the dunamis does not order the projecting understanding. What in the world is understanding that does not order itself? Letting be? If so, why isn’t the understanding of letting be as project also an ordering and, thus, degrading of possibility?

Here is where I am: reciprocation (be it an anthropocentric concept) may have three possibilities. Understood in the language of project—which fits, in this instance, with Scarry and Kaufman-Osborn because the Cartesian paradigm of use is the projection of a proper project—reciprocation can be appropriated for understanding as extension, or it may resist appropriation (even if only temporarily) by doing nothing or doing worse
Understanding is the last piece to be put in place for this chapter, and a bridge between Heidegger and Gadamer will be used to explain it.

8. Heidegger, Gadamer, and the “Hermeneutic Circle”

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had suggested a “circular” understanding of understanding. This “hermeneutic circle” then became an important part of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s description of the process of understanding in *Truth and Method*. Heidegger had suggested the hermeneutic circle merely as an aside or a small piece devoted to the understanding of understanding; it was not a central part of Heidegger’s argument or else its place in key Heideggerian ideas was merely that of a cog in a more brilliant machine. The phrase itself, “hermeneutic circle,” did not appear in *Being and Time*; rather, Heidegger wrote about means of understanding and happened to describe understanding in terms of metaphors of circularity. Here, for example, is an early part of *Being and Time* that discussed the understandings created by “sciences” (as “fields” or “disciplines”) about themselves:

> The elaboration of the area in its fundamental structures is in a way already accomplished by prescientific experience and interpretation of the domain of being to which the area of knowledge is itself confined…. Whether or not the importance of the research always lies in such establishment of concepts, its true progress comes about not so much in collecting results and storing them in “handbooks” as in being forced to ask questions about the basic constitution of each area, these questions being chiefly a reaction
to increasing knowledge in each area. The real “movement of the sciences takes place in the revision of these basic concepts, a revision which is more or less radical and lucid with regard to itself. [Indentation] A science’s level of development is determined by the extent to which it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts. (Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 7-8)

The “crisis” Heidegger referred to is more than just a “scientific revolution” of the sort discussed by Thomas Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Before a field can even get to the stage of having a tradition to revolt against, it must theorize itself. Theorizing may involve basic questions about atomic components, but Heidegger argued that those questions work by circularity in the sense that questions must already have presuppositions about what would make a question pressing or important. Take, for example, the question, “What is rhetoric?” First, some kind of existence is assumed by an “is”; whether temporary or lasting, an existing content is posited, or else the question would have been “Is there rhetoric?” (and already one may run into a circularity of understanding since knowing whether there was rhetoric or not might require some knowledge about what rhetoric is, or else an identification would never be possible so as to affirm rhetoric’s existence). The “is” even denotes time: the question does not ask about “what was” or “what will be.” And, on second, just what is a “what”? A “what” may assume an object or, at least, a treatment of rhetoric as though it is an object. Rhetoric is not considered as a “who”—not unless one presumes a Muse of Rhetoric or, perhaps, an understanding of the foregrounding of “ethos” in such a way that rhetoric as a “field” could be considered centrally to be argumentum ad hominem. The “what,” in
fact, has already presumed a specific characterization of knowledge: though many interrogatives are used for acquiring knowledge, as “who” or as “what,” when we speak of the knowledge gained we presume it to be a “what.” The understanding of knowledge as a “what” coincidentally parallels a Cartesian-dualistic way of understanding ideas, in the same way that distinguishing a “what” from a “how” would allow one to separate the lightening from the flash, or the performer from the performance. To ask “What is rhetoric?” has already asserted a distance between performer and performance. Rhetoric is just a hat that one may sometimes put on, when one is “using” rhetoric or “performing rhetorically.” The field that reflects on itself with questions is projecting as it is reflecting; one gets the answers that one asks for.

None of the above discussion means that questions cannot be fruitful, only that they cannot help but stack the deck in favor of some understandings over others.

“Crises,” then, determine the field’s “level of development” by signifying a field’s self-reflexivity, the willingness of people in the field to ask questions in different ways that might alter the most basic understandings of what a field is about. Self-reflexivity may not result in any really radical changes, but the mere fact of its being practiced necessarily alters the field because the field’s “identity” moves with each new moment of understanding—and that movement is what one may have come to know as the “hermeneutic circle.”

A little more Heidegger should help clarify the connection of the hermeneutic circle to the previously discussed metaphysicians. “Existentialist” that he is sometimes said to have been, Heidegger addressed nothingness, meaninglessness, Angst, and fear. The “moods” of Da-sein were called “attunements” that involved understanding
(Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 134). Understanding can be temporally affected through mood. Take, for example, fear: “The specific, ecstatic unity that makes fearing for oneself existentially possible, temporalizes itself primarily out of the forgetting we described that, as a mode of having-been, modifies its present and its future in their temporalizing. The temporality of fear is a forgetting that awaits and makes present” (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 314). Fear is forgetting in the sense that the confusion of the fearful leads to a “backing away from one’s own factical potentiality-for-being” (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 314). The potentiality-for-being is forgotten: thought of risk gives way to over-cautiousness. Forgetting is a temporal event because fear modifies its present and future being while awaiting what is feared. Angst has temporality is a way similar to fear, but Angst is different from fear in that “the threat does not come from something at hand and objectively present, but rather from the fact that everything at hand and objectively present absolutely has nothing more to ‘say’ to us…. The nothingness of the world in the face of which Angst is anxious does not mean that an absence of innerworldly things objectively present is experienced in Angst. They must be encountered in just such a way that they are of no relevance at all, but can show themselves in a barren mercilessness” (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 315). Angst is an anxiousness—and that means it is temporal because anxiousness is an anxiousness about—but Heidegger insisted that Angst is “authentic” in some way that fear is not. He wrote, “The insignificance of the world disclosed in Angst reveals the nullity of what can be taken care of, that is, the impossibility of projecting oneself upon a potentiality-of-being primarily based upon what is taken care of. But the revelation of this impossibility
means to let the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being shine forth” (italics mine, "Rhetoric, Civility, and Community: Political Debate on Computer Bulletin Boards.” 315). Angst, as a showing in “barren mercilessness” impresses upon one the impossibility of impressing oneself back, the emptiness of the projection in meaning. Heidegger’s authentic hermeneutic circle does not work; in fact, it can only be said to “work” in the sense that it breaks, in the sense that the authenticity that allows itself to be shown does so only on unconditional meaninglessness. The anxiousness for which Angst can be an understanding is a being troubled by being, and that trouble is temporally anxious even though anxiousness is not “awaiting” or “expecting” in the way that fear is. Rather, Angst “brings one back to thrownness as something to be possibly retrieved,” though Heidegger was also careful to point out that such a possibility of retrieval should not yet be taken as a actualization or a kind of reclaiming of oneself in any Freudian sense or otherwise (Heidegger Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit 315).

Gadamer wanted his hermeneutic circle to work. To see how, one must first look to Gadamer’s view of the hermeneutic circle as a continuous adjustment of understanding, and notice how the notion of “projection” recurs throughout his discussion of the circle’s work:

A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is
there…. The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; rival projects can emerge side by side until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is; interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation. A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings that are not borne out by the things themselves. Working out appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature to be confirmed “by the things” themselves, is the constant task of understanding. (Gadamer Truth and Method 267)

The sexist language appears here again (and is a worthy “aside” to be pointed out for a reader’s own hermeneutic circle as a movement in the understanding of the text).

Rhetorical critics and Arendtian judges should identify with Gadamer’s above claim that fore-conceptions “are replaced by more suitable” understandings of the text as the circular movement continues. What is “suitable” is also a nod to the notion of recalcitrance because understandings that encounter recalcitrance will find themselves further studied until an understanding may be found that does not provoke such resistance. The “progressive” understanding of the text may be the case and often “should” be, but Gadamer ought to have known better than to claim that the movement in understanding was a “more suitable” kind of movement. Since so many projections happen side-by-side and with such complexity as to be able to “rival” one another ought to suggest a more genealogical approach to the understanding of the hermeneutic circle.
Michel Foucault looked for gaps, discontinuities, errors, and so forth in historical understandings—projections can be “devolutions” as well as evolutions, and even those understandings of projection aim at an unbroken interpretation of the circle’s work.

But Gadamer needed to ignore or answer the possibility of a break—that’s where Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle came to a halt above. Aside from the pragmatic benefits that one might accrue from a “more suitable” understanding, Gadamer did recognize one constraint that compelled increasingly suitable interpretations: the futility of avoiding suitable interpretations. Gadamer wrote, “not everything is possible; and if a person fails to hear what the other person is really saying, he will not be able to fit what he has misunderstood into the range of his own various expectations of meaning” (Gadamer Truth and Method 268). And so what is “fitting” becomes important in terms of Gadamer’s “fore-conception of completeness,” an “implication” that “states that only what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible” (Gadamer Truth and Method 294). Foucault could have been right about the discontinuities of history, but even then Gadamer would have been able to point, as a limitation, to the hermeneutic circle’s progressive movement away from the “impossible” and toward the “complete”—which is to say: our world may indeed be incomplete, but the structure of our means of understanding that world must move toward assuming greater and greater completeness. Such an implication is true even if one adopts Foucault’s view because the incompleteness of history matters only insofar as Foucault can be present to tell one that a “more complete” interpretation of history would include the genealogical dead-ends and gaps, roads not taken. Devolution is the element of recalcitrance in Gadamer’s study of hermeneutics; the task of understanding is the continual attempt to appropriate order
from the jaws of chaos. If there is a discordant note to be found here, it might only be
that these hermeneutic circlings assume increasing completeness-building on the basis of
intelligibility even though plenty of processes are influential in understanding that may
have no intelligence to them at all. Is not the whole point of historicity that one’s
situatedness is going to have its say and not necessarily by informing its situated
“subject” of what is going on? The order brought forth by completeness may be a
Cartesian paradigm of use, it may be enframing, but it nevertheless compels human being
toward progressive interpretation, and against breaks and discontinuities, by insisting on
the necessity of its own fulfillment. We end up being creatures of totality wrought with
perfection after all, seeking what fits, ignoring (even at our peril) what does not.
Aristotle claimed, in the *Metaphysics*, that all human being stretches itself out toward
knowing, and the way we understand our stretching as completeness or incompleteness is
what human being is so long as the truth of incompleteness does not catch up with us.

Human beings perform, and prefer to do so in the direction of completeness. One
more observation from Gadamer seems appropriate:

performative interpretation… is scarcely an independent mode of
interpretation. In it too there is a split between the cognitive and the
normative function. No one can stage a play, read a poem, or perform a
piece of music without understanding the original meaning of the text and
presenting it in his reproduction and interpretation. But, similarly, no one
will be able to make a performative interpretation without taking account
of that other normative element—the stylistic values one’s own day—
which, whenever a text is brought to sensory appearance, sets limits to the
demand for a stylistically correct reproduction. (Gadamer Truth and Method 310)

Interpretations are meetings of past and present: there is a past that is interpreted and a present orientation that meets it. To see how that meeting interacts with the dialectic of projection and reciprocation will be the focus of the next chapter.

9. Conclusion

Having now raided the work of so many thinkers for a combined explication—unfolding—of an ontology of rhetorical materialism and rhetorical idealism, the following is a summary of the pieces so gleaned. Idealist being stands in dialectic with material being: the dialectic of projection and reciprocation, in which ideas or forms are projected onto material and material reciprocates, excessively, projection’s generation of meaning. Projection entails a number of possible processes: invention, imagination, thought, deliberation, “willing” and “judging” (both in Arendt’s senses of the terms), and other processes as yet unconsidered. Reciprocation also entails a number of possible processes, many with material “effects” or “consequences.” Projections onto material may lead, first, to no response at all—a failure to activate a potency for lack of “active” as opposed to “passive” potency. Projections onto material may, second, lead to a desired or expected response, what McLuhan called “extension” in a sense possibly related to Dewey’s organistic worldview. Extensions allow human beings to thrive “in” their environments, to expand into them and use them so as to free themselves from some ontological Necessities (creating leisure). But these extensions also necessarily come
with risks, especially that of Heideggerian “ges-stell,” enframing, misunderstanding of a world of being as mere standing reserve that is there for the explicit use of human beings (human beings both use and are used by enframing as a habitual attitude toward beings). Projections onto material may, third, meet with recalcitrance, when materials unexpectedly refuse to conform to a proper “use” or behavior (recalcitrance may occur because of a clear lack of potency or especially “active” potency, but recalcitrance is also an otherness that may not be fully known and so may hide its possibilities). When enframing has taken strong root—as “occupational psychosis,” or “trained incapacity”—the wager a projecting being has placed on the likelihood of successful extension will be thrown back into the projecting being’s face and the precarious state of any being’s continued being will unfold. A continued set of projections following on recalcitrance then become crucial: a being will either discover a band-aid (perhaps by using perspective by incongruity—or questioning presumptions about what being is), recover the stability of the extension (through “work” or “labor” in Arendt’s senses of those terms), or the recalcitrant breach of enframing will slash away at some or all of a being’s capacity to be (as, for example, the body’s recalcitrance to one’s desire to live and thrive will gradually intrude on the size of a being’s worldliness until too little of the world is left with which a being may breathe). The dialectic’s “end” (which is not really an end because the process never stops, because a dialectic of being is always a dialectic of becoming until one finally becomes a corpse) is the “refashioning” of a being. Just as with the other parts of the dialectic, a number of possible refashionings may be seen the dialectic’s “end” process: non-activations, extensions, and recalcitrancies may “fund” experience or give a being a better “feel for the game” or build habits through
performativity, appropriation, didactic discipline, gendering, and other possibilities as yet unconsidered. When a being acts, projections and reciprocations are happening. Thus, a being is always becoming, always refashioning being, being is (re)doing is (re)making.

This formulation is not without its problems. First, it may oversimplify refashioning by failing to account for the countless refashionings (the countless projections and reciprocations) happening at once and affecting each other in even a single instance of action. Probably no complete model of an action is producible—Kaufman-Osborn must run into Gorgias’ challenge to ontology in his insistence that meaning does not produce itself ex nihilo because we cannot know all being at once in even a single instant and even if we could we would not be able to communicate it all at once in a single instant. Burke’s recalcitrance and Levinas’ infinite are guarantees that some being will appear to come ex nihilo simply because our capacities for thinking and representing being cannot fully consume all of being’s possibilities. Some if not most being will remain overflowing of thought, just beyond reach. Further adding to the complexity is the realization that the dialectic can refashion human beings, occasionally, without true blue material—our language, our ideas, and so forth can also reflect projection of meaning in a reciprocating fashion. We live in our language, after all.

A second problem with my formulation of an ontology of rhetoric for idealism and materialism is the complete absence of an explanation for what a “relation” is in its being. To place two dimensions of being together and then call their togetherness a “relation” or a “dialectic” is cheating at ontology because the meaning of these terms is just presumed. Where is the meeting place of idealism and materialism? What does this meeting mean? What is it precisely? Kant’s formulation, “Thoughts without content are
empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (Critique of Pure Reason 93, A51), might suggest that idealism and materialism are together simply because they cannot be apart. Even if that were true, ideality and materiality might still appear to be isolated sometimes: we do have thoughts empty of content (abstract ideas, like the number one), we do have intuitions without concepts (feelings we cannot identify in conceptual terms, especially of an aesthetic variety like an affinity for certain rhythms of poetry or music). Kant accepted that concepts and intuitions were not the same, but still insisted that the two together were necessary for the composition of knowledge. Aristotle’s On the Soul (or by its Latin name On the Soul) took an approach that was similar to Kant’s position but also added a dimension of functionality:

What is the soul? It is substance in the sense which corresponds to the account of a thing. That means that it? is what it is to be for a body of the character just assigned… Suppose that the eye were an animal—sight would have been its soul, for sight is the substance of the eye which corresponds to the account, the eye being merely the matter of seeing; when seeing is removed the eye is no longer an eye, except in name… We must now extend our consideration from the parts to the whole living body… while waking is actuality in a sense corresponding to the cutting and the seeing, the soul is actuality in the sense corresponding to sight and the power in the tool; the body corresponds to what is in potentiality; as the pupil plus the power of sight constitutes the eye, so the soul plus the body constitutes the animal. From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable from its body ("On the Soul" 657).
The formal identity of a material is its function; ideality is the activation of a potency that belongs to materiality, just as seeing is the activation of an eye’s abilities and a soul is the activation of a body’s abilities (soul, ψυχή or psyche, in the Greek sense means something closer to “breath of life” than to a Christian conception of a disembodied spirit). Aristotle, like Kant, was explicit that missing either the form or the material denies being to being in question: an eye that does not see is not an eye at all, nor would sight without an eye be sight. And Kant’s and Aristotle’s formulations also are echoed by Friedrich Nietzsche’s admonition, in The Genealogy of Morals, that one cannot separate the lightning from the flash (On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo)—happenings and doings are their materials and their functions (not necessarily “uses”) simultaneously and unalterably. Materiality and ideality are not, then, “things” that “touch” and are therefore together. Rather, materiality is the what and where of a doing or happening, and ideality is the how and when (and why?) of a doing or happening. There are no whats without hows; there are no whens without wheres. And what of our empty thoughts and blind intuitions? Thoughts still do not happen without brain material; intuitions still do not happen outside consciousness.

But this interpretation suffers from a huge difficulty: it is a metaphysics of presence. The “reality” of being is being said to cohere completely to what can be present. The metaphysics of presence is problematic for several reasons. The need for a material presence for the performance of any ideality rigs the game in favor of materialism and does so without a justification beyond generalization from empirical observation. Most all being can be aligned (reduced) to a material presence that embodies some ideality, but this observation does not negate the possibility or even the
probability of being that would escape materiality. One may even grant that ideality—as
discursive structures, imagination, or consciousness of some kind—seems to need a
particular material presence in the form of a human being, but even this would be
insufficient for explaining the fact of otherness. The problem of other minds establishes
that a metaphysics of presence necessarily denies difference, reduces otherness to
sameness via hasty generalization. The problem of other minds is a subjective horizon—
perhaps I cannot guarantee to myself that an other has a mind in the way that I
subjectively conceive of my mind, but that inability is beside the point as goes the fact
that an other appears present in its performance of escape from my capacity to measure a
presence. Whether otherness is other beings like me, a demon tricking me, a divine
power, a figment of my imagination, or an other as yet unconceivable to me, beings still
remain other in my inability to calculate them and reduce them to dolls in a playhouse.
The infinity of otherness is good enough for me to accept that the other is other even
though I cannot measure any consciousness or agency from the other. In terms of the
problem of a “meeting” of materiality and ideality, one may only say that the dialectic is
only a possible and sometimes, even often, probable characterization of a non-exclusive
metaphysics of presence. Matter often does form itself as ideal; the ideal often does fill
itself with matter; performance is an embodiment of form. That exceptions exist which
are not describable by the dialectic in these ways must be remembered, but those
exceptions do not mean that a contingent metaphysics of presence must be entirely left
behind.

A final set of difficulties with the model I’ve drudged up is the absence of
analyses of time and Arendt’s “human conditions” of labor, work, and action. Time, in
particular, feels like an oversight having already noted the impossible complexity of a complete model and its importance for interpretation (which is uniquely a temporal problem because of historical situatedness). But these difficulties will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER 4

TEMPORALITY

Heidegger characterized time as the strongest determinant of human being-as-being because our moods and attunements are rooted in the fact of mortality. One may even say that mortality is the reason that human beings are unique in being troubled by their own being: immortals would not have our problems, they would not worry and, so, would not obsess over our plans, our risks, “life-changing events,” etc. One might even have trouble imagining that a hypothetical breed of immortals would succeed in evolution: certainly no need for the “fittest” to survive would endanger them, but neither would any incentives compel them to act on anything at any time. Time must, therefore, be close to the “essence” of what we are, even if only in the sense that we are compelled by it to “make something” of our lives. Hence one may hear phrases about time without feeling that they are unfitting, phrases like “making use of the limited time one has,” countless judgments of “wastes of time,” and so on. If only one being—the human being—can be troubled by its own being, the desire to make the best use of the time of being follows. But the usefulness of time should be understood in its historical and cultural particularity: not all nations of people wear time’s chains on their wrists, schedule their entire days (even if only around television), assess productivity and procure goods for those who are most efficient. Capitalist-utilitarians that Americans are, we have framed ourselves in time and somehow managed to pity those who have not been so ensnared. American lives are being commodified by the techno-strategic attitude
toward being that Heidegger called *Gestell*, commonly translated in English as *enframing*.

Rhetoric is, thus, confronted with a basic ontological-ethical problem that threatens to delegitimize it. Rhetoric is necessarily a strategizing project, be it for deliberative or argumentative purposes or simply the purpose of interpretation—motives always play a role, and so too must the deployment of means that serve those motives. Motiveless communication, as in Kenneth Burke’s work, is probably impossible: in part, this is so because meaning is attributed by audiences regardless of any intention to perform, but also because even the most “useless” communication is appropriated back into the web of relations by attempts to place and understand what is said. Even if one is reduced to the interpretation that speech is spoken “for kicks,” a purpose is inevitably found. Finally, motiveless communication may be impossible because the realization of specific types of communication as opposed to other possibilities is suggestive of inclination, intended or not. But strategizing is not accepted by all people as an acceptable pursuit. Plato, of course, rejected rhetoric that manipulated the truth for strategic reasons. The defense brought forth by rhetorical scholars against Plato is a familiar enough case: truth is unlikely or impossible, interpretations are more useful, the best cure for misuse of rhetoric is familiarity with rhetoric’s means, and so on. But this defense may not be sufficient to answer the objections of Heidegger and Levinas. Heidegger could have rejected rhetoric because its strategy makes rhetoric unable to avoid enframing: rhetoric oversimplifies the world, glosses over differences, reduces the

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world’s mystery to manageable entities waiting to be used. “Strategy” itself may be, necessarily, an attitude of use. Levinas rejected rhetoric’s strategy for similar reasons, but focused on how strategy affected the ethical relation to the other. Levinas demanded an attitude toward the other that was over-responsible, accepting the infinite (unreachable, indefinable, unlimited) character of otherness that did not attempt to swindle the other.  

But is rhetoric merely a question of use? Might it also be a question of artistic or aesthetic pleasure? Or some other pursuit entirely? The following analysis of time will show that, right as Heidegger and Levinas might have been, there’s no way around rhetoric. Techno-strategic reduction is inevitable, unstoppable, even necessary—*we have motives, we care*—so the corrective one must seek should aim to reduce the damage of rhetoric’s inability to avert strategy. This chapter, like the previous one on materiality and ideality, seeks to collect a number of “conclusions” from previous theorists that will then be spliced together into a rhetorical ontology of time, but only the first half of this chapter will run chronologically. This first half of the chapter will describe the historical development of the idea of the trope, running from the ancient Greeks, through Vico and Nietzsche, an aside about Arendt and Kaufman-Osborn, and finally wrapping up with Eric Charles White’s *Kaironomia: On the Will-to-Invent*. The significance of the trope for temporality will not be clear until White’s model is appropriated for this work. Then, using White’s work as the central piece of this rhetorical ontology of time, the second

108 Levinas demanded this ethical imperative—but only of himself. Though he was clearly trying to persuade others to follow his lead on ethics, he rejected “ethical reciprocity” as an imperative because demanding that of the Other was also an unethical move. The Other must be permitted Otherness, and demanding that the Other adapt to one’s own ethical code is just another attempt to reduce the Other to the Same. See also D. Diane Davis, *Breaking up (at) Totality : A Rhetoric of Laughter*, Rhetorical Philosophy and Theory (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000).
half of the chapter will swing through developments of troping and timing. The second half will begin with reflection back on the Aristotelian tradition in the work of Eugene Garver and William M.A. Grimaldi, and the Isocratean tradition in Rosa Eberly’s work on troping-as-character and Jeffery Walker on epideictic rhetoric and poetics. I then continue with theoretical pieces from Dewey, his friend George Herbert Mead, Gadamer, and Bourdieu. The chapter’s conclusion will bridge between the temporal model and the imperative of aesthetics as a corrective to the consequences of rhetoric’s strategy. We understand the world through use of tropes—the bending of the old to meet the new. Tradition provides human beings with topoi, places for invention from which they may exercise troping. People do not invent ex nihilo exactly, but are inspired by necessity, circumstance, trial and error, and aesthetics (of course). The danger to be averted in the understanding of troping is enframing or totalization, but especially through discipline. Discipline is often inflicted upon oneself with a theodical intent: one seeks to maximize the “brighter side” of some inefficiency or suffering. Without, as yet, delineating a distinction between habituation and discipline, this chapter will argue for time as part of the “salvation” or “solution” to totalizing ills in part because it is ripe with opportunity for covering over old habits and forming new ones.

1. Ancient Greek Rhetoric on Kairos and Tropos

Rhetoric is circumscribed by time, obsessed with it to the core. Kairos, opportune timing, is classic, but it could be understood by modernity as a statement of efficiency in seeking right or proper timing, presumably so as to avoid needing repetition, continuance,
or going wrong altogether. *Chronos*, historical or “chronological” time, concerns itself with questions of order and arrangement. *Chronos*-as-order is the kind of time that capitalist-utilitarians are hooked on: it is efficiency. *Chronos*-as-history is more inquiring: its goal is the reconstruction and description of an arrangement of causality. Rhetoric is further “timed” in its attention to time’s scope (eras, hours, moments, etc.), change (contingency) as transformation or adaptation (or lack thereof), repetition as rhythm or theme, aging, experiencing or forming experiences, and by attitudes like patience or impatience, conciseness or longevity, attentiveness or boredom, anticipation or dread, readiness or panic “as time runs out,” or frustration that suffers a burden by “waiting out” a time. Explicit persuasion often is conditioned, for capitalist-utilitarians, on a belief that persuasion’s timing is appropriate: that one “has time” to listen, that the time is “time well spent” or that the spending is good because one was otherwise merely “killing time.”

The ancient Greeks, without watches or hourglasses (though they did get sundials in the 5th or 6th Century BC), tried to define time with respect to what they observed around them—change, in wind and water, in spring and winter, in planets and stars, in youth and aging. Plato defined time, in the *Timaeus*, as “an eternal image, moving according to number, of eternity remaining in unity” (Plato in Twelve Volumes: Timaeus 37d). For Aristotle, time was a measure of the change seen in the material world (“Physics” 372, 219a30-b9). Antiphon had a similar definition: “Time is not a reality [hupostasis], but a concept [noēma] or a measure [metron]” (Antiphon in Moulton, brackets mine). Parmenides called time an illusion: “there is not, and never shall be, any time other, than that which is present, since fate has chained it so as to be whole and
immovable” (fragment 35), and he appears to have been agreed with to the degree that Plato called time an “image,” Aristotle called it a “measure,” and Antiphon called it a “concept or a measure.” That time is a convention (even if a convention made by a supreme deity), not transcendent truth, appears to have been held in agreement. The definitions of Plato and Aristotle also agreed that time is related to “motion” or “change,” some kind of transformation.

Their lingo was much more specific. The ancient Greek kairos refers to “opportune timing” and acquires its meaning, according to White, from two sources. First, archery’s kairos was the “opening or ‘opportunity’ or, more precisely, a long tunnel-like aperture through which the archers arrow has to pass. Successful passage of a kairos requires, therefore, that the archer’s arrow be fired not only accurately but with enough power for it to penetrate” (13). Second, kairos was an element of weaving, as “the ‘critical time’ when the weaver must draw the yarn through a gap that momentarily opens in the warp of the cloth being woven” (13). Archery may remind one of the more literal Greek meaning of enthymeme (“straight to the heart”). Weaving was considered a woman’s activity, but was also symbolic of the poetry of a bard, weaving words with rhythm that is seductive to the senses. The rhythmic association with weaving would be most appropriate for a question of temporality because the right note at the right moment in music is the difference between sublimity and noise. Carolyn R. Miller, in the foreword for the Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin collection Rhetoric & Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis, argued that kairos can be taken in two different

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109 I understand that quibbling over Plato’s meaning may happen here, but he did call time a “number,” and if numbers are not conventions—if they too are “forms”—I can only say in my defense that Plato did not believe anything was human convention.
senses: one is as a sense of ‘propriety or decorum,’ and the other, perhaps more exciting, sense of ‘the uniquely timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular’ (xii-xiii). Miller called these two senses of *kairos* ‘different, and not fully compatible,’ even aligning *kairos*-as-propriety with philosophical rhetoric and *kairos*-as-particularity with sophistic rhetoric. Sipiora gave a laundry list of possible definitions for *kairos*:

A fundamental notion in ancient Greece, *kairos* carried a number of meanings in classical rhetorical theory and history, including ‘symmetry,’” "propriety,” “occasion,” “due measure,” “fitness,” “tact,” “decorum,” “convenience,” “proportion,” “fruit,” “profit,” and “wise moderation,” to mention some of the common uses. (Sipiora 1)

Fruit? Do not bother with explaining that one to your audience, Phil. You are getting a kairoscake for Christmas. Sipiora additionally offered this tidbit: “*kairos* first appeared in the *Iliad*, where it denotes a *vital* or *lethal* place in the body, one that is particularly susceptible to injury and therefore necessitates special protection” (Sipiora 2). Ever seen a baseball player get hit with a ball right in the *kairos*? Ouch.

*Kairos* was an especially important concept for the Sophists. Gorgias wrote a treatise, *Peri Kairou*, that is sadly lost (28). But that a text is lost would not stop good scholars from making educated guesses about its meanings using context! White offered such a conjecture: “For Gorgias, *kairos* stands for a radical principle of occasionality which implies a conception of the production of meaning in language as a process of continuous adjustment to and creation of the present occasion, or a process of continuous interpretation in which the speaker seeks to inflect the given ‘text’ to his or her own ends
at the same time that the speaker’s text is ‘interpreted’ in turn by the context surrounding it” (14-15). That sounds like a hermeneutic circle, does it not?

Additionally, a piece of a work by one of Gorgias’ students, Antisthenes’ *On Speech, or On Characters* (*Peri lexeos ē peri charakteron*), has apparently survived (though no English translation is to be found outside the meager quotations offered by Diogenes Laertius). Antisthenes’ character analysis concerns Odysseus and one of Homer’s epithets for him, *polutropos*, “shrewd, deceiving” according to Augusto Rostagni (25). Protagoras was also called *polutropos*, so an exploration of its meaning for a rhetorician seems important (Sipiora 4). Rostagni and the chunk of Antisthenes he interpreted do not set out to condemn rhetoric. Rather, Antisthenes “says that Homer neither praises nor blames Ulysses by calling him *polutropos*” (Rostagni 25). Though Homer’s Achilles makes a disparaging reference to one who is *polutropos*, Antisthenes refused to accept that Homer would think so little of his second epic’s protagonist. Antisthenes rejected the blameworthy interpretation of Odysseus’ epithet for several reasons. First, Homer called Odysseus wise (*sophos*) in other portions of the text, making it possible that *polutropos* was one of the qualities that signified Odysseus’ smarts. Second, Homer might have been using *tropos* not as it “applied to moral character (*ethos*), as much as to his skill in speaking (*logou khresis*),” an especially strong possibility since “in discourse *tropoi* are called diverse styles (*hai poiai plaseis*)” and because “Homer has also adopted the word *tropos* with regard to the voice and variety of melodies, as in the case of the nightingale” (Antisthenes in Rostagni 25). Antisthenes, 110

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110 The precise location of this quotation is clear, but the attribution is not. Rostagni places this section in quotation marks, but it also includes a third-person reference to Antisthenes, so it is probably another commentator in the Homeric *scholium* that has come down to us from Porphyry.
third, drew a conclusion from his first two reasons: “Therefore, if wise men are skilled in speaking and know how to express the same thought in many ways (kata pollous tropous), those who know many ways of expression concerning the same thing can rightly be called polutropoi” (in Rostagni 26). Polutropos is, thus, an expression of the particularity to which rhetors adapt. Antisthenes was referring to adaptation to different audiences, but that adaptation was necessarily a temporal expression because rhetorical adaptation is the state of having different presentations at different times. Perhaps even different character?

For it is a mark of wisdom to discover a form of wisdom appropriate to each person, and a mark of ignorance to use only one form (monotropo) of speech with dissimilar people. This is a specialty which also belongs to medicine, in a case that is well treated. For the care of the ill ought to be polutropos, because of the various predispositions of the cured. Tropos is therefore that which changes, that which is variable in the human spirit.

(Antisthenes in Rostagni 26)

Compare tropos, as Dr. Rosa Eberly has, with ethos, habit or character ("From Writers, Audiences, and Communities to Publics: Writing Classrooms As. Protopenal Spaces" fn 5). Tropos also means character, but also “bends” or “turns.” How then would one compare “character that bends” with “character that is habit”? Ethos has the additional meaning of a “dwelling place,” and though a dwelling place may certainly change, it seems considerably more stable than Odysseus’ adaptations and disguises. Perhaps the comparison is ludicrous and would not seem meaningful to the ancient Greeks, but it is also possible that this linguistic difference is a basic component of the feud between the
Sophists and the Philosophers. *Tropos* was obviously very meaningful to Antisthenes, but was not one of Aristotle’s “artistic proofs.” Why would Aristotle choose *ethos* if not because, implicitly, the stability of character as habit is taken as preferable? Not that this question should be taken as proof—there is only evidence enough for conjecturing with educated guesses pulled from context—but the possibility is an intriguing one to remember for later on in this chapter. Or perhaps the best course for theorizing would be to avoid choosing between these expressions of character: good adaptation means knowing when to bend, but also when to stand firm. Rather than opposing *tropos* and *ethos*, one might consider pairing them as “counterparts” to one-another among the available means of persuasion.

Compared with the ancient Greek understandings I have just dealt with, timing is little understood in our own era. Comedians have a sense of it, and perhaps all people do in very limited situations (when they ask themselves about the right time for approaching another, for broaching a subject, etc.). But the idea of *kairos* is mostly lost because technology has helped “save” too many moments for timelessness. Every politician’s gaffe becomes a “Youtube.com” favorite, births are video recorded, and security cameras saturate our cities such that we are guaranteed spectacular footage of any urban disaster. The timelessness of it all has a certain way of trivializing the times, as though each moment really were just like the last (because I can see them both on TV and compare them over and over again, like the video-recording boy from *American Beauty*). Except that “time is money” and that we only “get one life,”—both of which are to say that with the exception of the need for *efficiency*—time is as trivial to people as are the number of...
feet in a mile. The ancient Greeks, on the other hand, may have seen *kairos* as a central problem of epistemology:

For Pythagoras, as well as Gorgias, *kairos* touches upon the problematic issue of knowledge. To frail human perceptions, things exist in an uncertain, ultimately unknowable way; a veil of sense separates them, indeed, hides them from us. In accordance with *kairos*, therefore, we are compelled to maintain contrary perceptions, interpretations, and arguments—the *dissoi logoi* of sophistic rhetoric—remain equally probable, and yet the mystery of *kairos* enables rhetors to choose one *logos* over another, making one and the same thing seem great or small, beautiful or ugly, new or old. (Sipiora 4)

That our points of view are situated is a very familiar idea; familiar also is the idea of historical situatedness, as there are “no atheists in foxholes” though there atheists are at other times. But our “scientific” view of truth has blinded us to the likelihood that types of knowledge are only possible at certain times, and then may be lost as the opportunity passes. The theory of gravity, for instance, is not something a person of our time would think could be “lost” except with an overturning of “nature.” A conception of truth, on the other hand, premised not on correspondence (the theory of gravity corresponds to gravity’s effects), but on discovery would better accommodate the *kairotic* problem of epistemology. Heidegger made just such an attack on the “correspondance theory of truth,” arguing that the ancient Greek word for truth, *aletheia* (*a-letheia*, “not” + “escaping notice”), meant that truth was a “discovery from unconcealment,” meaning that
truth sort of “chose” to appear or disappear, to be concealed or unconcealed to someone's view.\footnote{By “chose” I mean only to communicate the arbitrariness of these appearances from the standpoint of a Cartesian ego, a standpoint which has real difficulty conceiving of objects “doing” without adding some kind of personification, divine intervention, or “freak” accident or chance. “Chance” is perhaps closest to what is meant by being’s “choice” to unconceal portions of itself, but even “chance” is problematically anthropocentric to the degree that it reduces the otherness of an object to radically accidental stupidity. Chapter one may give one good reasons for thinking of an “object’s” actions as having “agency” through reciprocation, but all of these terms—agency, choice, action—require interrogation.}

\textit{Kairos} is precisely the unconcealment of a truth that is interpreted as opportunity. Certainly such an opportunity might be seen as efficiency in using the breaks that one gets, but \textit{kairos} is not reducible to efficiency because its appearance is necessarily the negation of rules prior that would seek to make efficient use of time. \textit{Kairos} is interruptive, so much so that understanding \textit{kairos} before the \textit{kairotic} moment may be impossible:

The challenge is to invent, within a set of unfolding and unprecedented circumstances, an action (rhetorical or otherwise) that will be understood as uniquely meaningful within those circumstances. The timely action will be understood as adaptive, as appropriate, only in retrospect; it cannot be discovered within the decorum of past actions. As such, it resists method, making rhetoric unteachable….

It is a conception of indigenous to relativist or process philosophies, to a philosophy of Becoming. (Miller xiii)

If true, Miller’s viewpoint affirms the decidedly unhelpful position that human beings are supposed to behave in the presence of the new in such a way that could be seen as appropriate only after the opportunity has passed. She even debunks herself (and the rest
of we rhetoricians) in writing that rhetoric cannot be taught in the sense that it “resists method.” ¹¹² That makes a “challenge” all right. I prefer Dewey’s sober assessment: “detached and impartial study of the past is the only alternative to luck in assuring success to passion” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 65). I could do without the detachment and impartiality, but otherwise I will follow Dewey to see just how much insight might yet be squeezed from the past. Orators train for a reason, after all.¹¹³

The “training” discussion needs, for now, to be placed to the side. I will return to it after I pick up the continuing turns of the “trope” as it was developed across centuries of rhetorical theory. Having begun with a dead language, I will now turn to a language that was dying at the time it was brought into rhetorical investigation. As Latin faded away and the Romantic languages replaced it, one scholar had to wonder why—the trend? Why was French stylish last year? What made Italian the “in” language for 1708?

¹¹² The question of rhetoric being “teachable” is no small point in rhetoric’s ancient history, so I feel I need to quibble over Miller’s nuanced wording. Plato’s Gorgias and Aristotle’s Rhetoric clash over this question, and the stakes are huge for rhetoric. Plato argued that rhetoric was only a knack, “experience” (empeiria) at best, suggesting that rhetoric was merely learned in doing the way one might learn to juggle. There is no “knowledge” involved in juggling: one merely practices over and over until one’s reflexes match the necessary performance. Aristotle, however, insisted that rhetoric was technē, meaning that rhetoric as “art” or “skill” could be “knowledgeable” to the degree that patterns for success and failure can be discovered and taught. The first half of Miller’s statement, that rhetoric “resists method” is fine: patterns are probabilistic, they chance over long periods of time, and in very quick moments when a situation radically shifts the circumstances of the available means of persuasion. I also agree with Miller that the propriety of an action is best judged in retrospect. But the predicate of Miller’s sentence, “making rhetoric unteachable,” gave away far too much by suggesting that kairos is always beyond probabilistic analyses. Rhetoric can judge propriety retrospectively, but rhetoric is far more than retrospective judgment of propriety—unless one is a “Neo-Aristotelian.”

2. Vico on Living and Dying Languages

Much of the work found in this section should be considered, in the main, work done by Dr. Eberly. I have done all the writing here, of course, but my exposure to Giambattista Vico and his implications for rhetoric and ontology are principally due to Dr. Eberly’s seminar in *Ethos and Tropos* (to which I will return later). Vico collected tropes in *The Art of Rhetoric (Institutiones Oratoriae)*. Vico was interested in why Latin was dying as a language, and he hypothesized that tropes were responsible. Tropes were “derived not from the ingenuity (ingenium) of the writers but rather, contrary to the thinking of the philosophers and the philologists, from the necessary nature of nations which we have demonstrated to have been of a poetic nature in their beginning” (Vico xx).114 The “poetic” and “necessary” nature Vico described is, though he did not realize it, the nature of time—the new. Consider for example the assessment of Italian scholar Giuliano Crifò:

Vico’s important discovery of the pre-logical nature of language makes a careful study of the *Institutiones*, in addition to *On the Study Methods* and the inaugural orations, necessary…. The tropes which Vico discovered among the poetic nations, the “master key,” were created out of necessity, that is, due to “the poverty of language and the need to explain and be understood.” As language developed in step with man’s development, *the tropes, no longer an indication of the poverty of language, now become the*

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114 The passage I have quoted from is a revised portion of a later manuscript written by Vico. This section is provided in part of the introduction.
means by which language is ornamented. Now, among the tropes, metaphor becomes preeminent (Crifo xxiii, italics mine).

Conceding that tropes are ornamental\(^{115}\)—which is to say, they are artistic and show the work of inventiveness—I wish to contest only that tropes somehow pass from being necessary to being “merely” ornamental in the sense of expendability. A language that is “impoverished” assuredly needs new words, but no language is rich enough to keep pace with time. The new introduces situations and objects and so on that will always require the ingenuity of those confronting a need (I interpret Vico’s rejection of the ingenuity of writers as merely an assertion that “pure” ingenuity is not involved—a point important in my discussion of *inventio ex nihilo*).

How, then, do tropes invent new language? Tropes are semantic enunciations which represent the world by bending language to attempt to stand in for what is being represented. And to stand in the place that you work could only be *topoi*, places for arguments, places that provide an opportunity for bending by virtue of giving one a place to stand. Metaphor is the most easily grasped example of language’s dependence on tropes: we come to understand a new quality of the world through a pre-existent understanding of some other quality of the world. For example, students of chemistry are often exposed to models of the atom that look like models of the astronomical solar system—there are many important differences between those two things, but there are enough similarities to make the metaphor of the solar system useful in bringing students

\(^{115}\) Dr. Eberly has rightly pointed out to me the Greek origin of the word “ornament.” It comes from the verb *ornumi*, “to stir up, urge on, incite, call up, make arise, awaken, excite” (Liddell and Scott 570). The Greek *kosmos*, which is more commonly thought of as meaning “universe,” also had ancient Greek meanings including “order, decency, form, fashion; ornament, embellishment, dress esp. of women; honor, credit” (Liddell and Scott 446).
to an understanding of the workings of the atom. Further, every meaning is a new one; each assertion of meaning bends the old to fit the circumstances of the situation forming an entirely new blend. Vico wrote, “there is no word whatsoever that means exactly the same as another, or at least means it in the same way, or finally, is of the same period of time” (Vico 116). Might he also have added that no single word confronts the same situation twice? No word confronts the same audience (which also has an unstable character) twice? No word comes from the same character-being-rhetor (because of the instability of identity) twice? Words are like Heraclitus’ river: their characters are in constant flux with the situatedness of the world. But Heraclitus is often misunderstood as arguing that everything is always in flux; a more accurate account would read him as arguing that everything moves between fluctuation and stability, permanence and change. Language, the “dwelling place of being,” is always presently the dialectic between a stable and “present” tradition and a unique “present” circumstance toward which the tradition must be bent. That dialectic also validates my hypothesis from the end of the last section on character: character, too, is a dialectic of tropos and ethos, of adaptation and consistency in identity. Vico argued that new words were invented “because the proper ones failed” (116), because “there are many more things in nature than words for them and since every language lacks its own proper words for many things, other words must be found, and this is termed necessity” (Vico 137). Tropes meet the need when they “turn a word from its proper and native meaning to an improper and strange one” (Vico 137). Could not Vico have gone one step farther? Arguing not only that words and phrases are tropic, but that all meanings themselves are? And was not representation already a turning?—turning away from the “real presence” it was supposed to represent?
There is no such thing as language that fails to trope itself: no word is bound to its own meaning alone. Words necessarily do not avoid becoming a springboard for an imagination that is free to turn spontaneously as it wishes. For example, some may speak of “glasses” as mere tools that they are pleased never to have been burdened with, but a person wearing glasses may be unable to think only of frames and lenses—one may think of the accident or aging that required one to get glasses, how they altered one’s face and along with it the presentation of one’s character to other people, and of the minor scars and calluses imprinted on one’s ears and nose. If any word can be open to a world of subjective interpretations and remembrances, any word can be bent from its “proper” meaning and made metaphorical, made to carry meaning beyond its “literal” self.

3. Nietzsche and Rhetoric

In 1872, Friedrich Nietzsche offered a course at the University of Basil on classical rhetoric; only two students took the course (Cate 165). His reputation as a philologist was already so odious that students avoided association with him; one might say he was in “rhetorical hell.” But he pressed on and, possibly having a familiarity with Vico, Nietzsche came to many of the same conclusions Vico had about tropes—though, being Nietzsche, he would have some other interesting things to say as well:

In fact, Nietzsche actually went a great deal further than contemporary rhetoricians have been willing to go. He not only placed language at the

116 I have looked and found no evidence that Nietzsche was familiar with Vico’s work, but he certainly had the time, the ability, and the access. Many of his later years (before going mad) were spent traveling around between Southern Germany, Switzerland, and Northern Italy.
forefront of his rhetorical theory, but used its enhanced philosophical position to launch a full-scale attack on logic and rationality, a step rhetoricians apparently have been loath to take, despite their current fascination with the world of symbols, sometimes at the expense of considering reasoning or strategies of argumentation (Gilman, Blair and Parent xvii).

By 2007, rhetorical scholars have gotten much better actually. Besides Gilman, Blair, and Parent, the work of Steve Whitson and John Poulakos has amplified the implications of Nietzsche’s work for rhetoric. In Nietzsche, all truth, epistemology, ethics, and social convention were unmasked for being rhetorics-as-aesthetics.117

According to Nietzsche, rhetoric “is an essentially republican art one must be accustomed to tolerating the most unusual opinions and points of view and even to taking a certain pleasure in their counterplay; one must be just as willing to listen as to speak; and as a listener one must be able more or less to appreciate the art being applied” (Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 3). From nearly the beginning of his study, Nietzsche had identified rhetoric as political (“republican”) and aesthetic (pleasurable in counterplay, as speaker or auditor in the appreciation of applying rhetoric’s principles). Nietzsche even went as far as identifying rhetoric as an “art of

117 Is that claim too expansive? Gilman, Blair, and Parent open their introduction with an epigram by Hans Blumenberg: “For rhetoric is the essence of Nietzsche’s philosophy.” Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair and David J. Parent, “Introduction: Nietzsche’s Lectures on Rhetoric: Reading a Rhetoric Rhetorically,” Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989). p. ix. If Blumenberg is correct, I do not think it shows: references to rhetoric are few and far between in Walter Kaufman’s English translations of Nietzsche’s other works, and though a rhetorical eye could read rhetoric back into much of Nietzsche’s work, I have found generally that rhetorical eyes manage that feat unjustly with most everything.
character,” as Eugene Garver has (though Garver’s meaning with that phrase was far less robust than Nietzsche’s articulation):

The true orator speaks forth from the ethos of the persons or things represented by him… what is remarkable about him is that, through art, through an interchange of persons, and through a prudence which hovers over them, he finds and turns to his advantage what the most eloquent lawyer of each person and each party, namely egoism, only is able to discover. It is an exchange of egos, as with the dramatist (Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 35).

Kenneth Burke could not have put it better (except by correcting the gendered language, which Burke likely would not have done): the drama is an exchange of egos, of ethos, and the grounding of persuasion is in peoples’ interests in the dramatic presentation of characters. Our inter-est is fundamentally an inter-social preference for the new and different that is most often provided by the other.118 Rhetoric is an art of otherness in presentation.

And how does this presentation work? To begin with, all rhetorical formations are composed of the troping relations of meaning. Just as Vico identified troping with meeting language’s needs for new words, Nietzsche identified troping as the most atomic formation of language:

He argued that all words or signs are tropes, and because of their tropic nature as partial, transferable, and reversible they present an imperfect

118 I got that characterization, inter-est, from somewhere… I need to remember to track it down and cite it. Levinas maybe?
knowledge. First, because “language never expresses something completely but displays only a characteristic which appears prominent,” language is a synecdochic or partial representation of things. Second, because words can be assigned new meanings metaphorically, they demonstrate a transferability that is not true of the things represented. Furthermore, since signs can substitute cause and effect metonymically, language reverses the nature of the things or procedures as they actually exist. (Gilman, Blair and Parent xiii)\textsuperscript{119}

The “partial,” “transferable,” and “reversible,” characteristics of rhetorical knowing bear resemblance to Heidegger’s \textit{logos apophantikos}, described in Chapter 1 as relating to the Greek word for truth, \textit{alētheia}. \textit{Logos apophantikos}, “speech from showing,” refers to the openness with which one is attuned to being: if one is open, the unconcealment of being may present truth to someone as a “discovery.” But the whole truth is never unconcealed, and most often one is not open to the unconcealment. Nietzsche did not appear to want to attribute the depth to meaning that Heidegger attributed to truth-as-unconcealment, but he did conclude in a way similar to Heidegger as will shortly be demonstrated. Nietzsche’s approach did, however, resemble that of Burke: “language never expresses something completely but displays only a characteristic which appears to be prominent to it [language]” (Nietzsche \textit{Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language} 23, brackets not mine). For Burke, representation was selection, a selection of a most

\textsuperscript{119} Notice, again, that I am citing Gilman, Blair, and Parent who are giving their interpretation of Nietzsche. Why not cite Nietzsche directly? Because I suspect that Gilman, Blair, and Parent are doing violence to the text unless they are neatly summarizing huge swaths of the text that could not be quoted all together without a far more awkward weaving of the paragraph. I do not think the characterizations of Gilman, Blair, and Parent ring untrue, but I do think they ring, unseemly, as too good to be true.
“prominent” piece that then came to “stand in”—to find a place, a topos—for that which is represented (Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method 45).

Language is aesthetic “because it desires to convey only a doxa [opinion], not an epistēmē [knowledge]” (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 23, brackets not mine). Language is aesthetic because it functions through rhetorical tropes: it is not difficult to prove that what is called “rhetorical,” as a means of conscious art, had been active as a means of unconscious art in language and its development [Werden], indeed, that the rhetorical is a further development, guided by the clear light of the understanding, of the artistic means which are already found in language. There is obviously no unrhetorical “naturalness” of language to which one could appeal; language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts. The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power which Aristotle calls rhetoric, is, at the same time, the essence of language; the latter is based just as little as rhetoric is upon that which is true, upon the essence of things. Language does not desire to instruct, but to convey to others a subjective impulse and its acceptance. Man, how forms language, does not perceive things or events, but impulses: he does not communicate sensations, but merely copies of sensations. The sensation, evoked through a nerve impulse, does not take in the thing itself: this sensation is presented externally through an image.
Note, once again, the sexist language, though Curtis Cate’s biography of Nietzsche gave plenty of reasons for suspecting that Nietzsche was not so sexist as his writing can make him appear to have been. The point of my citation of Nietzsche in this section is to call attention to the truth he saw in appearances. Human beings can and must “approach and understand the world aesthetically” because understanding functions through tropes, and the understandings and deliberations that prevail in any given instance will be those that best bend prior means of knowing but remain true to the aesthetic presumptions of intelligibility governing the space of discourse (Whitson and Poulakos 138). Aesthetics-as-perception and the following interpretations become the currency of language:

Insofar as all perceptions yield aesthetic stances, that perception prevails among many which proves to be most appealing at a given time. In this light, what is said to constitute knowledge is the result of sensorial aestheticism, and to say that something is true is to pay a compliment to aesthetically successful, not epistemologically valid, discourse (Whitson and Poulakos 138).

There is no reasoning free of the (e)motive. There is no deliberation free of the bodily. There are no ethics or politics free of the aesthetic. Thomas B. Farrell, in Norms of Rhetorical Culture, wrote that “much of our civic life is still absorbed with projects, rituals of affiliation, and speech performances that ultimately turn on the mysteries of trust and fellow feeling… In every such matter of public choice, we must grapple with issues at once ethical and aesthetic” (2-3). But even as one might bemoan the supposed
relativism emanating from the absence of Truth, one must not forget that one still has
authoritative aesthetics, those arts that gain the power of social agreement, scientific
“consensus,” and pragmatic utility. The essence of the aesthetic is probably not
pragmatism, but that does not mean that aesthetics are not pragmatic:

“Truths,” it bears repeating, function aesthetically to render people's lives
stable; they are but artistic products that breathe form into the chaos of
existence. If this is so, the whole province of epistemology consists of the
aesthetic surface of an infinite number of particular claims. When this
surface becomes part of people's consciousness, it does so by virtue of
aesthetic appeal and chance, not epistemic correctness or necessity
(Whitson and Poulakos 138).

A theory of aesthetics, any one theory among many, may serve at root as semantic sonar,
a way of making sense of the world, voicing imaginatively and waiting for an echo or a
reply. Though I am tempted to believe there are good reasons for reducing all discourse
and theorizing to placement within the aesthetic (the tropic nature of discourse, the
artistic nature of narrative construction be those narratives of poets or scientists, the
aesthetic magnetism that brings an audience to agree with a view such that it can be
called a “truth”), I would prefer not to make such a move because the risk involved in
reduction is displacement of an otherness that resists or refuses to be explained by
homogenizing theory (an argument that will become even clearer as my critique of ethics
moves forward).
To see the art at work in any trope’s arrangement of meaning, let us return to the example of the atom as a tiny solar system. Another metaphor might have been chosen; following the theories of quantum mechanics, a more accurate depiction of the atom’s inner-workings might be conveyed by a cloud metaphor in which the atom’s nucleus is a cloud of various particles and the electrons on the outside exist in zones of probability instead of the “orbits” suggested by a solar system. But the reasons for choosing to teach students using the solar system model become clear in this comparison with alternatives: although many metaphors could be used to bend prior understanding into formation of new understanding, some metaphors are aesthetically superior to others. Metaphors are not all equal. They may be more or less accurate (i.e., face more or less recalcitrance). They may convey more or less “truth” and “falsehood.” They may make understanding swift or difficult. They may be elegant in the presentation of a bending, or they may be hopelessly complex. One point that should be made before I continue much farther concerns the utility of the trope: one should not understand my argument as reduction of the aesthetic to the useful—an important subject to which I will return later. For my present purposes, pointing out that aesthetic pleasure both may and may not be coincidental with the useful will be sufficient—I do not wish to limit its possibilities.

Nietzsche was not, however, interested in finding metaphors that had more or less truth to them. In his 1873 essay, On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense, Nietzsche argued that the importance of the trope meant that all truths were lies:

See also Michael Leff, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius," Rhetorica 1.1 (1983).
What is truth? a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which were poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation. Truths are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they are illusions, worn-out metaphors without sensory impact, coins which have lost their image and now can be used only as metal, and no longer as coins. (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 250)

Does this mean that Nietzsche would reject even the recalcitrance of material to idealized representation? No: he warns against the difficulties of idealism as well, but he is explicitly unwilling to reject fantasies that are dangerous to oneself so long as one somehow manages with them. Moreover, that which is being represented is not the truth, but only a designated meaning: the “thing-in-itself” (which would be pure, disinterested truth) is also absolutely incomprehensible to the creator of language and not worth seeking. [Kant] designates only the relations of things to men, and to express these relations he uses the boldest metaphors” (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 248). Even when a truth “unconceals” itself to someone, the best one could do is represent the particular relation of unconcealment because one cannot be the unconcealed truth any more than one could be the “thing-in-itself,” the rock, the ball, the egg, and so forth. Ontology’s best work is still done in the house of being, in the language that is always a pack of (sometimes useful) lies! And because language is
confronting a relation, it always faces the prior restraint\textsuperscript{121} of generalization, gloss, reduction:

Let us think in particular of the formation of concepts. Every word becomes a concept as soon as it is supposed to serve not merely as a reminder of the unique, absolutely individualized original experience, to which it owes its origin, but at the same time to fit countless, more or less similar cases, which, strictly speaking, are never identical, and hence absolutely dissimilar. Every concept originates by the equation of the dissimilar. (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 249)

The “genre” is a direct consequence of troping: not only are old meanings bent to understand unknowns, but meanings that may be perceptively distinct are bent to fit within categories that can be synthesized and accessed as language. If language did not condense particularity for us, we would never find a way to talk about it or anything else—our words would refer to matters too specific, too idiosyncratic to be collectively perceived and used as currency. All our “knowledge” of the world is reducible to rhetorical convention in Nietzsche’s eyes.

The rhetorical status of knowledge has a nefarious implication that Nietzsche hinted at in 1873, but did not quite come around to making explicit: the “lie” that is knowledge parallels the “lie” that is morality. For example, Nietzsche described, in On

\textsuperscript{121} Just like First Amendment law, a “prior restraint,” which prohibits speaking before it is spoken, may result from generalization, gloss, or reduction because those rhetorical actions involve situations in which the new prohibits the speaking of the old before it is spoken. When a new word steps forward and selects a sliver to communicate in representation of a larger being, the representation necessarily moves one into “trained incapacity,” “occupational psychosis,” the applications of a “terministic screen.”
Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense, the painful meaning of the convention called truth:

until now we have heard only of the obligation which society, in order to exist, imposes: to be truthful, i.e., to use the customary metaphors, or in moral terms, the obligation to lie according to an established convention, to lie collectively in a style that is mandatory for everyone…. The sense of being obliged to call one thing “red,” another “cold,” a third one “mute,” gives rise to a moral feeling with respect to truth (Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 250).

Nietzsche found curious the moral insistence on truth-telling given the larger reality that truth was merely convention. He reasoned that human beings accept the convention of truth for the same reasons they accept a kind of “social contract,” to prevent others from doing each other harm by misapplying the convention or ignoring the need for it.

Nietzsche’s argument in 1873 already showed a hint of its later evolution into his critique, in The Genealogy of Morals, of morality’s use of convention to hinder the strong from dominating the weak. The Genealogy of Morals identified the “ascetic ideal” as that principle which sought the destruction of humanity through annihilation, the dwarfing of all human beings to the status of subjected automatons.

Nietzsche held Christianity most responsible for this “dwarfing,” though he also attacked socialism and rule-based ethics generally. The ancient Greeks, Nietzsche claimed, did not ascribe to what we call morality per se, but oriented themselves around greatness and strength. The “weak” did not, however, like that arrangement, and so they invented morality as a coup against the strong (and, though he detested them, Nietzsche
was not completely unsympathetic—he thought inventing morality was a clever thing for the weak to do and he even liked some of their art). Morality eventually entwined itself with Christianity and has since gone on to becoming a trained incapacity: its sense of ethics as *universal* in application and *rule-or-prohibition-oriented* in governing practice have so dominated Western thinking about ethics that systems without such elements might not be recognized, at first, as ethics. What, then, could ethics be, if not universal rules? This question motivated Michel Foucault to turn his *History of Sexuality* toward antiquity. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault identified Greek ethics with respect to *practice*:

moral conceptions in Greek and Greco-Roman antiquity were much more oriented toward practices of the self and the question of *askesis* than toward codifications of conducts and the strict definition of what is permitted and what is forbidden. If exception is made of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, one finds very few references to the principle of a code that would define in detail the right conduct to maintain, few references to the need for an authority charged with seeing to its application, few references to the possibility of punishments that would sanction infractions. Although the necessity of respecting the law and the customs—the *nomoi*—was very often underscored, more important than the content of the law and its conditions of application was the attitude that caused one to respect them. The accent was placed on the relationship with the self that enabled a person to keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and superiority over them, to keep his
senses in a state of tranquility, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions, and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, or the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself (Foucault The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality 30-31).

Ancient Greek ethics might have required a struggle with one’s own passions or appetites, and such a struggle “required training…. Exercise was no less indispensable in this order of things than in the case of other techniques one acquired: mathesis [“calculation”] alone was not sufficient; it had to be backed up by a training, an askesis” (Foucault The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality 72). In askesis one should recognize the etymological ancestor of asceticism—but the terms bear only a little meaningful resemblance. The asceticism of the Christians maintained itself as a prohibition of all that was not ethically justified—opposing itself directly to the pleasures and “excesses” of the aesthetic. The askesis of the Greeks had involved an ethical practice with respect to the self, but, unlike Christian asceticism, askesis allowed and even required some pleasure because its exercise aimed at moderation (sophrosunē, “self-control”—an ethical being sought to swing his (!) conduct within a particular zone, developing moral habits unified as an ethos, without crossing over into deficiency or excess, extremities demonstrating a lack of self-control as might be expected from a woman (!!). In ancient Greece, ethics were just as conventional (in the sense of

122 I have addressed, elsewhere, the possibility that ethos is gendered, as it almost certainly was for the ancient Greeks. According to Foucault’s Use of Pleasure, absent categories of gender like “feminine” or “masculine,” the Greeks thought of personalities as active or passive—activity referred to mastery of one’s own appetites and passivity referred to subservience to those same appetites. Women were stereotypically
negotiation) in structure as were aesthetics and, in their respective ambiguities, ethics and aesthetics overlapped each other. I do not mean to imply that ethics and aesthetics each lacked strategy—rather, that such strategizing was far more rhetorically open than in the present time. Both fields were stylistic—in the modern sense of the term—and the stylistic, artful, approach to ethics was seen as perfectly legitimate if not necessary.

Nietzsche’s “revaluation of all values” turned against the “slave morality” of the ascetic ideal with “an aesthetics of appearance… explicit preferences are for sensual surfaces, not abstract depth… he makes epistemology a sub-category of art… he argues that no epistemic project can denounce its artistic origins” (Whitson and Poulakos 135-36). Ethics, too, may fall within that world of epistemic theories that cannot be freed from art. Certainly the same may be said for politics, but ethics is unlike politics in that the ethical claims dominion over the aesthetic as though free from its import. Ethics judges the aesthetic: that judgment is the source of “guilty pleasures,” or forbidden vices—activities that may not be strictly illegal, but which are nevertheless thought to be suppressed by moral people. And moral people are also on the lookout for the immoral folks that should be publicly shamed, stigmatized, scapegoated. Politics, on the other hand, may judge the aesthetic, but differs from ethics in two important ways. First, politics rejects a legally-enforced program of discipline against personal activities and aesthetics that do not harm others—it explicitly adopts the stance of amorality with regard to the use of freedoms it creates so long as those freedoms do not damage the freedoms of others. Politics is, thus, freedom for “an art of character” as opposed to the derided as wild with passions, and those men who were overwhelmed by such passions were thought to be womanly.
asceticism of ethics which would demand specific practices for producing a disciplined character. Let me be clear: the argument is not that politics is “neutral” with respect to aesthetics, only that politics resists invading the personal so long as it understands itself as amoral with respect to harmless freedom. The second distinction between ethics and politics with regard to the aesthetic is that politics, rather than rejecting art and attempting to judge it as though from an alterior standpoint, embraces its drama and puts its theatrics to use. Though true that politicians are inclined to use “political theatrics” as a charge against their opponents—that their opponents are merely engaged in “rhetoric”—no spectator doubts that the accuser is also a practitioner of the rhetorical arts. Even as politicians cry that some apply rhetoric, no one fails to see that the same is true of every politician. Politics judges the aesthetic, but not under the illusion that freedom from its applications to politics are possible. In fact, the drama of politics can be credited with moving the *agon* of the battlefield to the rhetoric of the *agora*: competitive arts were substituted for competitive violence (*bia*), an immeasurable accomplishment never addressed by so-called “invitational rhetoricians.”

Inevitably, however, rules cover over the world so that worldliness no longer has the same emotive strength, “straight to the heart,” when it swirls threateningly around the cynic. Instability is uncomfortable—dogmatism is its comforting opposite. The cynic (“by the dog”) is a believer, one for whom human conventions are so obviously true that being does not impress; average everydayness is the banal comfort of a cynic who sees nonsense in art, order in nature, reason in argument, and “common sense” in meaning. The cynic is called the “rational being”: 
As a “rational” being, he now puts his actions under the rule of abstractions; he no longer lets himself be carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions; he first universalizes these impressions into less colorful, cooler concepts, in order to hitch the wagon of his life and actions to them. Everything that sets man off from the animal depends upon this capacity to dilute the concrete metaphors into a schema; for in the realm of such schemata, something is possible that might never succeed under the intuited first impressions: to build up a pyramidal order according to castes and classes, a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, boundary determinations, which now stands opposite the other, concrete world of primary impressions, as the more solid, more universal, more familiar, more human, and therefore as the regulatory and imperative world (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 250).

Notice the word “regulatory” in the last line—already Nietzsche has come across a line of argument to be taken up by Hannah Arendt. But one otherwise ought not mistake Nietzsche for condemning the rational being as pitiful. Nietzsche understood that wishful thinking had its use: “only insofar as man forgets himself as a subject, indeed as an artistically creative subject, does he live with some calm, security, and consistency. If he could even for one moment escape from the prison walls of this belief, then his high opinion of himself would be dashed immediately” (Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 252). Hence the problem of the knowing artist. Nietzsche concluded On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense with a parable comparing the lives of two people: the “rational man” and the “intuitive man.” The rational are stoic, which is advantageous
since the appearance of misery is expected and prepared for. Perhaps a rational person’s delusions extend so far as to dream of an afterlife, a dream that provides one with the most resilient delusion of all because no suffering could be so great that one would not eventually find compensation and then some. But stoics are also far less likely to experience great joy: “the man guided by concepts and abstractions merely wards off misfortune by means of them, without extracting happiness for himself from them as he seeks the greatest freedom from pain” (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 257). Intuitive beings, on the other hand, can experience far greater joys because they live for the moment and take happiness where they may find it regardless of convention because they see convention for the fiction that it is. But intuitive beings suffer from a significant disadvantage: when they suffer, their suffering is far more painful. They, after all, have no useful delusions to fall back on: when their doctors tell them that they have six months to live, they are left alone with their certain extinction, with their pain, without hope. Nietzsche’s concluding sentences in this passage make quite clear that he envies the art of the delusion very much:

How differently stands the stoic person who has learned from experience and controls himself by reason! He who otherwise seeks only honest, truth, freedom from delusions, and protection from enthralling seizures, now, in misfortune, produces a masterpiece of dissimulation, as the former did in happiness; he does not wear a quivering and mobile human face but, as it were, a mask with dignified harmony of features, he does not scream and does not even raise his voice. When a real storm cloud pours down upon him, he wraps himself in his overcoat and walks away under the rain
with slow strides. (Nietzsche Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 257)

Both of these states together or some kind of moderate path between them would be impossible because each one turns on whether or not one has forgotten the falsity of one’s knowledge—the stoic, who has forgotten that truth is only a fiction, can look forward to a corrective “afterlife” or “revolution” that will cure what ails (unless one has been disciplined to expect the worst), but the intuitive person enduring suffering knows that recompense is impossible and all justifications and uses for pain are absurd. One either makes one’s peace with the fictionality of reality or one fights it, neither to any complete advantage over the other.

Here, then, is Nietzsche’s proto-Heideggerian conclusion: though Nietzsche would not give Heidegger credit for having discovered an unconcealed truth, the two might agree that openness to the unconcealment of troping meaning could be empowering—a point that Nietzsche acknowledged in remarking on Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric with its use of the word *dunamis*, as faculty, potency, possibility, power (Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language 9). But that power will depend in some measure on one’s ability to engage others in troping, and that means that politics will come into play. Since rhetoric is an essentially “republican” art, the ethical is out: we will find no principles, no deliberation, no imperatives within the “self” alone. Even the “conscience” is just the treatment of oneself as though it were an other—a habit picked up from deliberating so well with others. Nietzsche rejected “moral slavery” for its asceticism, its hostility to the principle of life, but would he have thought the same of politics? Specifically, of the art of republican politics?
4. Arendt on Tradition and “Natality”

Arendt, despite protestations to the contrary, was a metaphysician of the political (Hansen). She theorized the political in ways that made the meaning of being manifest for consideration. Her metaphysics were clearest in two works: The Human Condition articulated three conditions under which humans live (labor, work, and action) and described the web of relations, and Between Past and Future described the relevance of time in terms of action.

Between Past and Future begins with René Char’s 1946 description of the situation the French were left in after the collapse of their republic under the Nazi blitzkrieg: “Notre héritage n’est précédé d’aucun testament,” “our inheritance was left to us by no testament” (Arendt Between Past and Future 3). And then, when the war was over and the republic was brought back, the French once again lost and even rejected the inheritance that the war had thrust upon them. “Relieved” of the “burden” of the inheritance, Arendt sarcastically jeered, they were “thrown back into what they now knew to be the weightless irrelevance of their personal affairs” (Between Past and Future 4).

To make a long story short: the inheritance was the tradition of civic politics and “public freedom” constituted by words and deeds. The testament was lacking because one can will a remembrance to future generations, but not a performance of words and deeds themselves. The inheritance was lost again because the functionality of public freedom is dependent not only on the reclamation of an inheritance from generation to generation, but also from one day to the next. No wonder teen rebellion is cliché: new
generations cannot do anything that their parents approve of because no such path for approval exists. The past cannot be simply repeated; a new trail must always be blazed. All politics must be reformed, reclaimed for new times. Civic duties are not fulfillable; public freedom is never finally secured. Like a tub with many holes in it, the people must continuously replenish it with new waters or let it run dry. For Arendt, the political is always an interruption from being-as-usual (as is continuously filling a tub of water), meaning that the loss of the political was “not because of historical circumstances and the adversity of reality but because no tradition had foreseen its appearance or its reality, because no testament had willed it for the future” (Between Past and Future 5-6). How could tradition will itself into the future? Remembrance, though important to Arendt, was insufficient because it was “helpless outside a pre-established framework of reference, and the human mind is only on the rarest occasions capable of retaining something which is altogether unconnected” (Between Past and Future 6). Tradition cannot, thus, be inherited: “each new generation, indeed every new human being as he [or she] inserts himself [or herself] between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave it anew” (Arendt Between Past and Future 13).

Arendt wrote, just before the quotation I have footnoted here, “Only insofar as he thinks, that is insofar as he is ageless—a ‘he’ as Kafka so rightly calls him, and not a ‘somebody’—does man in the full actuality of his concrete being live in this gap of time between past and future” (13). I think Arendt’s intent was to call attention to an individual in the individual’s sense of unique identity and self-determination as opposed to the interchangeability of a “somebody,” but the inadvertent reinforcement, and reminder, of Arendt’s lack of sympathy for feminism is nonetheless significant. Surely Arendt was not blind to the meanings of “man” and “he” as universals for all human beings—implying that she had some reason for accepting and applying the masculine hubris of this language. Might she have been so interested in the debates over political theory that she wanted to avoid a feminist corrective for fear of being diverted into defending feminism at length? While believable, that interpretation is also very charitable because it denies she was responsible for her sexist choice, implying instead that her choice was between serious engagement with political theory beyond feminism or getting side-tracked entirely. Feminism ought not, of course, be a “side-track,” but academics must defend their arguments and the rhetorically strategic choice is to give critics as little ground as possible from which to reject one’s warrants. Arendt may be rightly blamed for
Arendt’s temporal problem was thus rendered like Socrates’ difficulty with virtue: civics cannot be remembered and reproduced, and they may not even be teachable in the sense of disciplinary pedagogy. She described the problem with a parable from Franz Kafka:

He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some time in an unguarded moment—and this would require a night darker than any night has ever been yet—he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other. (Kafka in Arendt Between Past and Future 7)\(^{124}\)

\(^{124}\) Jumping outside the fight sounds much like Levinas’ description of totalization: pretending that one stands above the gameboard and places its pieces in their appropriate squares with appropriate moves. All theory may ascribe to this pretension, a necessary condition for understanding and communication (as was covered in my first chapter).
How can human beings continue to use what they know in the face of the new? The new is precisely that which makes the old obsolete. And how can human beings adapt to the new under the crushing influence of the old? Tradition commands an authority that tells us not to adapt, but to reject the new as unproven. What can reconcile past and future? And, to the extent that a human being’s very presence is what ignites the forces of past and future, how can humanity be reconciled with the present’s never-ending unsettledness?

Before getting to the answers to those questions, Arendt felt the need to remind readers that her concerns were not “merely” metaphysical. In Arendt’s view, existentialism had exposed the political impoverishment of philosophy, its inability to be politically relevant:

The situation, however, became desperate when the old metaphysical questions were shown to be meaningless; that is, when it began to dawn upon modern man [and woman?] that he had come to live in a world in which his mind and his tradition of thought were not even capable of asking adequate, meaningful questions, let alone of giving answers to its own perplexities. In this predicament action, with its involvement and commitment, its being engagée, seemed to hold out the hope, not of solving any problems, but of making its possible to live with them without becoming, as Sartre once put it, a salaud, a hypocrite. (Arendt Between Past and Future 8-9, brackets mine)

This is the hilarious predicament of the modern left: to see evil, to be able to “protest” against it, and then to be better able to sleep at night knowing that a voice dissented. The
Democratic Party is criticized for being lily-livered, but its foremost supporters are little better. One might also be reminded of “the New Left's conflation of ‘guerrilla theater’ with politics”: “confrontation is very often not political but emotional or melodramatic, inviting opponents to scoff at legitimate concerns. It rarely produces deliberation or reform” and it “doesn't shake things up so much as symbolize powerlessness” (Mattson). These conditions are the result of a generation’s ability to remember what politics was for people long ago, but no more than that. Arendt wrote that the “insertion” of people between past and future “cannot but cause the forces to deflect, however lightly, from their original direction… they would no longer clash head on but meet at an angle” because time had not been left to inertia but instead redirected. However, looking on from the vantage of today’s politics should compel a reassessment: the deflection is not an inevitability because the “insertion” is no small feat. Words and deeds must change the direction of time, or else they are not entering the “space of appearances” of politics at all, but only making a token appearance on behalf of the “actors” themselves, like a swimmer who has “made waves” by sticking only a toe in the water.

Time was not Arendt’s central concern in writing Between Past and Future. Time helped her explain why continuous refashioning of politics was necessary, but her real problem was that no means existed for leaving a lasting politics. She knew that she could not count on education, theory, or thought. During the Nazi years, the intelligentsia, teachers and preachers, proved useless: “There stand… on the other side of the fence, all those who were fully qualified in matters of morality and held them in the highest esteem. These people proved not only to be incapable of learning anything; but worse, yielding easily to temptation, they most convincingly demonstrated through their application of
traditional concepts and yardsticks during and after the fact, how inadequate these had become, how little, as we shall see, they had been framed or intended to be applied to conditions as they actually arose” (Arendt "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship" 25). In the presence of the new, an inheritance turned out to be useless not only because its treasures needed to be rediscovered, but also because the keepers of the old showed how easily—and willingly—the tradition may be bent to justify new atrocities. Michel Foucault, too, had this problem, and it made a cowardly theorist of him:

people have asked me to tell them what will happen and to give them a program for the future. We know very well that, even with the best intentions, those programs become a tool, an instrument of oppression. Rousseau, a lover of freedom, was used in the French Revolution to build up a model of social oppression. Marx would be horrified by Stalinism and Leninism. (Foucault "Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault" 10)

The inherited tradition, a power poorly understood in the hands of its childish beneficiaries, will shoot your eye out. What could Arendt leave behind that would help future generations without giving them justification for more terrors? Foucault’s answer was critique, but Arendt knew that criticism was not good enough because its elementary activity was thinking. Thought is an essentially paralyzing activity; its “chief characteristic is that it interrupts all doing, all ordinary activities no matter what they happen to be” (Arendt "Thinking and Moral Considerations" 164). The paralysis happens for at least two instances because “it is inherent in the stop and think, the interruption of all other activities, and it may have a paralyzing effect when you come out
of it, no longer sure of what had seemed to you beyond doubt while you were
unthinkingly engaged in whatever you were doing” of the inheritance (Arendt "Thinking
and Moral Considerations" 176). Thought is “self-reflective,” and “takes place in
solitude” as opposed to action which takes place in the space of appearances and is
necessarily presentational for others because appearances can be interpreted (Kohn xxi).

One might be reminded of the Greek idios, “privacy,” in which the idiot is the one who
isolates himself (not herself) from community affairs. Arendt loved Greek thought and
Aristotelian politics in particular—surely, idiocy would have been known to her as the
characteristic of thought that rejected the political. The problem of time is a problem of
privacy: if experiences were transferable across time, no such need for continuous
renewal of the political would be necessary.

But I should not leave one with the impression that thought was all bad for
Arendt. Thought is “spontaneity” in Kant’s sense of the word as that spark within
human beings that makes them free.126 The mind is a meandering river—it’s “train of
thought” has no tracks, but often zips from an idea to another apparently random idea to
yet another. Arendt wrote that thought could not often be pragmatic or useful, but,
instead, “every reflection that does not serve knowledge and is not guided by practical
purposes… is, as Heidegger once remarked, ‘out of order’” (Arendt "Thinking and Moral
Considerations" 165-66). In its lack of order, thought’s spontaneity becomes an essential
principle of being human because beings that could be fully calculated, fully ordered,

125 Is thought spontaneity for Arendt? Arendt argued that thought destroyed and problematized what it
analyzed, whereas action was the realm of natality. Perhaps work on what Arendt thought about
"imagination" should be on my list of things to do.
126 From the standpoint of science, does freedom not appear to be merely the accidental nature of human
beings, a nature that would then be mistaken for agency?
completely techno-strategized, would then only be standing reserve. Further, the untimeliness of meditations, while being “good for nothing,” may also be “somehow self-destructive…. the business of thinking is like the veil of Penelope: it undoes every morning what it had finished the night before” (Arendt "Thinking and Moral Considerations" 166). The Penelope example suggests one reason that thought is not transferable across time is that it is so unstable even across moments. Thoughts that have “settled” some issues may revisit them only to put them out of order again. But Arendt was also explicit that thought’s critiquing was “useful” on one occasion: when civilization as we know it is falling down around us.

At these moments, thinking ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters. When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action. The purging element in thinking… that brings out the implications of unexamined opinions and thereby destroys them—values, doctrines, theories, and even convictions—is political by implication. For this destruction has a liberating effect on another human faculty, the faculty of judgment, which one may call, with some justification, the most political of man's mental abilities. It is the faculty to judge particulars without subsuming them under those general rules which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules. (Arendt "Thinking and Moral Considerations" 188-89)
This paragraph was nothing less than Arendt’s explanation for how 60 million Germans were swept up into Nazism, and it was Arendt’s explanation for how a handful of people managed not to be swept up into Nazism.\footnote{The first suggestion made in this sentence is supportable by Arendt’s texts; in \textit{Eichmann in Jerusalem} she directly blamed “60 million” Germans for participation in Nazism and, so as not to be misinterpreted, she insisted that all 60 million were overwhelmingly culpable. [Citation]} What these few Germans kept was a capacity for judgment, which is distinct in that thinking relates only to “invisibles” while “judging, the by-product of the liberating effect of thinking, realizes thinking, makes it manifest in the world of appearances, where I am never alone and always much too busy to be able to think” (Arendt "Thinking and Moral Considerations" 189). Judgment relates to abstract decision-making, but only as it is manifest in the world. More often, Arendt meant judgment in a very literal and immediate sense as “the ability to say, ‘this is wrong,’ ‘this is beautiful,’ etc.” (Arendt "Thinking and Moral Considerations" 189).

But did not Nazis and their sympathizers engage in this judgment as well? Arendt did not accept all judgments as legitimate necessarily, but even if she had done so the primary distinction she made between Nazis and resisters was banality (thoughtlessness, bureaucratic thinking) and judgment (which depends on thought by making it realized in the space of appearances). Returning, then, to the original problem—how can politics be transferred and renewed across time?—Arendt’s best bet was in \textit{Between Past and Future}’s subtitle, “Eight Exercises in Political Thought.” Like Foucault, she assured her readers that her book did “not contain prescriptions on what to think or which truths to hold,” but unlike Foucault she did give people a way to figure politics out for themselves: experience “can be won, like all experience in doing something, only through practice, through exercises” (Arendt \textit{Between Past and Future} 14).
5. White’s *Kaironomia*

Eric Charles White’s amazing *Kaironomia: On the Will-to-Invent* is a masterpiece of theory. Unfortunately, the book was also grounded in a psychoanalytic approach to the middle voice, and its case study was on a James Joyce book, *Finnegan’s Wake*. Skipping his Freudian turn (I choose not to inherit it), my discussion of White’s work will focus on his theorizing of the temporal dimension of invention. The problem he addressed, familiar enough by now, concerned the same trap as Kafka’s protagonist between past and future.

For the ancient Greeks, *kaironomia* would have been an oxymoronic term. *Kairos* was opportune (or fruity!) timing. *Nomos* was custom, law, or “norm.” Opportunities do not have norms—their very presence is abnormal and that is what gives them their potency. *Tropos* does not, to the best of my observational powers, make an appearance in White’s book—a pity because White’s theory squares opportunity with norms with a jump that is none other than the trope. Like Nietzsche, White appealed to the conventional nature of language: language definitively must engage in a fiction because it is a reductive structure that “continually obscures the specific character of the present” (69). A reductive shared history is necessary for some kind of communication because “the historical specificity of the present must momentarily be overlooked so that the fiction of a stable world beyond appearances, accessible to thought, and able to be communicated” may drive the communion between beings (White 39). The fact of communication, then, can be explained as follows: when confronting the new—the future or present implications for a future—we invent means to meet the new, but always by
making use of what we have already got, namely tradition. Tradition-as-nomos should be “understood not as a repository of privileged meanings but as a reservoir of topoi or points of departure for an endless process of improvisation and experiment” (White 86).

The present, on the other hand, is always kairotic (though perhaps opportunities may not all be equal) because the present always confronts us with a need to invent—to reinvent—what tradition has prepared us to act with. This is true especially of identity. The instability of identity means that, more than just forming a character with a pattern of repeated behaviors, identity is at every moment re-inventing itself as something bending the old into the new. White characterized this way of being as “hermeneutical hopscotch”:\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{quote}
The ideal activity of rhetorical invention would thus continually renew the meaning of the world in an endlessly different translation of difference into sameness. Successful adaptation to the mutability of Being depends precisely, Geoffrey Hartman [cite] suggests, on an interminable process of “incorporating what continues to violate one’s identity.” The progress of knowledge can therefore be characterized as a sort of hermeneutical hopscotch in which the interpreter’s own tradition of meanings is repeatedly juxtaposed with alien traditions. Even as it gestures toward a timeless space of enduring truth, speculative thought would constantly reopen its investigation of the world, dramatizing the historical character
\end{quote}

of understanding in an activity of invention that continually disrupts its own attempts at self-enclosure (85).

White’s theory almost sounds like Levinas’ nightmare: a constant need to translate “difference into sameness” would suggest precisely the totalizing reductivism that Levinas rejected. But White also wanted his audience to understand that the task of incorporation is unending and, thus, never forms more than a contingent and invented stability of character that is always potentially undone by the next moment’s newness. Reduction remains an ideologically dangerous turn if calcified, but true totality was only ever a hubristic and impossible aim. If White’s positing of rhetorical-being-as-time escapes Levinas’ fear, it does so because the fiction of selfhood is too fictional—too broken, too incredible—from moment to moment to serve any totalitarian feat. Even in the present one cannot do more than claim an identity because the moment that “the ‘present occasion’ becomes an object of consciousness, it has already been replaced by an idea, or metaphorically equated with the past. The present that can be known is a construct. Inflected from a relative point of view, it is infused with the speaker’s desire for permanent equilibrium” (White 62). So broken is the present that it cannot offer a shelter for consciousness. Heidegger wrote the same idea when he argued that being is always “ahead of itself,” and that in the moment that one reflects on oneself one has already passed into the next moment and can reflect only on present that just passed by (Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit). One may view identity only as a third person (another idea that would sound alarms for Levinas)—the most painful part of losing subject- hood is accepting that one will never possess one’s own image reflected from a pool of water, only the memory of it and the temptation to convince oneself that it
is actually possessed. Without real form, the self leads “a fugitive existence, always on the move from one newly constituted version of itself to another…. not a fixed and abiding selfhood but a sequence of discontinuous partial selves, or the self as a historical process. Transformed even as it transforms the world, the self would continually improve a response to its experience on the basis of fresh intrusions of desire from outside itself” (italics mine, White 52). Human beings need not fear Levinas’ transformation of difference into the same because “the same” is so unstable across time, so fictional, that it never succeeds at transforming the difference of its own temporal movement into a realizable unity. Nomads from moment to moment, we cannot hope to contain the infinite difference of ourselves that overflows conscious grasping. The infinite within ourselves that overflows conceptualization might be identified with what Kant had called “spontaneity,” the placeholder symbolizing our freedom.

But none of the above should be read as completely discounting Levinas, either. Levinas can work with the kaironomic principle of hermeneutical hopscotch so long as one remembers both that there is an “infinite” beyond the momentarily-stabilizing fiction, and that our relation must allow the other enough openness to make changes in the fiction. In theory, White was correct to characterize identity as nomadic, but in “fact” many people find themselves painfully, hopelessly fixed by conventions (racism, sexism, heterosexism) and the lottery of birth (classism, “natural” conditions from birth).

Kantian spontaneity made an appearance as White’s “ideal emblem,” and it was much like the Arendtian notion of free, creative natality except that the inventiveness implicit in it was a condition of the exterior as opposed to a simple act of willing centered within the subject. Because his argument is, in part, a defense of Gorgias and the
Sophists, White articulated his view of spontaneity through the idea of seduction, but he rightly resisted limiting seductive powers to those beings otherwise known as subjects. One who acts “is not simply a seder who imposes subjective will by means of deception, for the ‘logic of seduction,’ as it were, imposes itself equally on the seder and the seduced. That is, in order to achieve success, the orator as seder must be ‘seded’ in turn by the occasion of speech” (White 38). The seder who is also seduced by her or his own performance is a familiar idea: Nietzsche called attention to it in treating rhetoric’s aesthetic craft, and Burke might rightly have called it “pure” persuasion (pure because the seder and the seduced truly are of “one mind” in an instant when the seder seduces herself or himself). The seduced seder, an actor by virtue of the exercise of judgment while also acknowledging limiting recalcitrance, is thus “the emblem for an ideal dynamic between a principle of intentionality (or self that would repeat itself in the world) and a principle of spontaneity (or the unforeseen opportunity of the immediate occasion)” (White 38–39, italics mine). Kant had placed spontaneity within one’s self as the placeholder for whatever it is in human beings that appears to give them freedom, but White seemed to place spontaneity outside of the self in the “immediate occasion.” I see no reason why either of those locations should be impossible; the principle of freedom in a person is as recalcitrant to calculation as is the principle of freedom of the rest of the world in its infiniteness.

Invention, as subject-hood, is dissolved within the web of relationships, the situation, creating it. Rhetorically speaking, the human being trapped on the temporally broken battlefield of the present must always be “ready to revise the meaning it attributes to the world” with “an activity of invention that continually recurs to its own occasion, a
practice of speculative thought in which subject and object are engaged in an endless process of mutual transformation” (White 54). These revisions are not only an aspect of being, but an ontologically unavoidable process for a being that worries about its own being. One cannot “remain free from attachment to a partial truth. The euphoric prospect of endless interpretation in fact depends on continuous involvement in relative historical situation. A speculatively mobile form of invention would thus delude itself even as it remains skeptically alert” (72). That is, the “hermeneutical hopscotch” one plays will necessarily withdraw into the fiction of stable identity as a stable time in which one is in control even as one knows in one’s bones that stability is fictional: “At the same time that it programmatically denies the possibility of definitive truth, it will nevertheless dream of once and for all deciphering the meaning of the world” (White 72). The activity of invention does not transform otherness into sameness so long as the inventor understands that the identity with which sameness would apply is merely a utilitarian fantasy.

Like Nietzsche, White also came to an “aesthetic” conclusion about rhetoric, truth, and ethics. Ornamentation was revealed to be more than the surface of a performance:

The “flowers of rhetoric” are not simply stylistic adornment but comprise the substance of argumentation itself. “Truth” is a rhetorical effect, a product of the eloquence of the individual speaker. Persuasion depends as much on the pathetic force of speech—on the ability to evoke an aesthetic and ethical response in an audience—as it does on scientific correspondence with a reality external to language. The meaning of Being
is always inflected, finally, by a self-pleasuring desire to interpret the world as a repetition of personal tradition. (White 88-89)

By now the theme must be getting old, so turning to an assessment would be prudent.

This chapter’s investigation has, so far, traced the temporality of rhetoric from the Greek *kairos* and *tropos*, explained its aesthetic role in “truth” or knowledge creation as convention, and shown how troping in a *kaironomic* sense bridges Arendt’s gap between past and future. From here on in, this chapter will branch out, taking *tropos* as its locus and detailing its features as they relate to character in Aristotle (Garver and Grimaldi), character in Isocrates (Eberly and Walker), habit (Mead, Dewey, and Bourdieu), and the exercise of invention in the face of discipline (Heidegger and Foucault).

### 6. Garver and Grimaldi on Character Inside the Aristotelian Tradition of Rhetoric

*This work is the first half-sub-chapter length rhetorical treatment of Eugene Garver’s Aristotles ‘Rhetoric’: An Art of Character in English in this century. I know that the claim sounds immodest, but I mean something quite precise by it. To call it rhetorical is to insist, first of all, that Garver’s book be read as a piece of rhetorical inquiry, and judged by rhetorical standards. Certainly, many others have used Garver to illuminate Aristotle’s philosophic writings, but no one has yet presented a reading of Garver as a rhetorical work with its own integrity, and its own rhetorical interest.*

*If Garver’s book on the Rhetoric did not exist, philosophy might be different, but it is worth noting that the history of rhetoric would not have been much different without Garver since his influence there has been marginal. While Garver has become a more*
respectable and even popular figure, his book remains relatively untouched by rhetoricians, despite its potential value to discussions concerning such subjects as hermeneutics, phronesis, and practical reason—do not ask me the difference between phronesis and practical reason. I was parroting Garver making that distinction and I have no idea how he came to it.

In fact, I cannot see how Garver arrived at work that he did and garnered any praise from any respectable associate of the study of rhetoric. Eugene Garver’s book Aristotle’s “Rhetoric”: An Art of Character begins thus: “This work is the first book-length philosophic treatment of Aristotle’s Rhetoric in English in this century.” Maybe I could name some other books, but none of them would be able to contest, according to Garver, the philosophic treatment claim. Good thing Garver came along to save we, the rhetoricians, from ourselves and our not-so-philosophical treatments of Aristotle. Hold on, it gets worse. His introduction rattled off a list of some reasonable slights (I come not only to praise rhetoric, but to bury it in some ways, too). But Garver also reasserts some of the consistent, though contestable, relegations of Aristotle’s Rhetoric to the dustbin of history: the Rhetoric along with the Poetics are not treated alongside Aristotle’s other works (Garver 3).

If Aristotle’s Rhetoric did not exist, it would be hard to argue that the history of philosophy would be any different, since it has not figured in that history. The subject is outside the scope of my project, but it is worth noting that the history of rhetoric would not have been much different.

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129 Or maybe they could… How about Grimaldi, Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle’s Rhetoric? Yes, it was published in Wiesbaden, but it was published there in English. Garver even put it in his bibliography.
without Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* either, since its influence even there has been marginal—though if a classic can be considered an object of worship, the *Rhetoric* certainly has a place in the pantheon. Its impact, however, has been negligible. (Garver 3-4)

Garver’s book was written and published in 1994. I began studying rhetoric in the spring of 1999 with a seminar on Kenneth Burke. In the nine years since I began studying rhetoric (during which I have been assigned to read Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in class no less than four times), I have learned that rhetoric has been almost wholly centered on Aristotle: those who came before him, those contemporary with him, those after him, the modern bastardization of his “functionality,” the retrieval of his work from that bastardization, and almost no original work on rhetoric until the time of Kenneth Burke and Chaim Perelman and Luce Olbrechts-Tyteca. And even the works of Burke and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca took on the Aristotelian tradition, rebuked it, refined it, transformed it. All of the most basic rhetorical concepts, except those coming from the *Rhetorica Ad Herenium*, come from Aristotle: *logos, ethos, pathos*, enthymeme, probability, deliberative rhetoric, forensic rhetoric, epideictic rhetoric, the most universally renowned definition of rhetoric, the placement of rhetoric as a counterpart to dialectic, and the *topoi* as the places for arguments. And all those nine years I have studied rhetoric, while I was hearing Aristotle, Aristotle, and more Aristotle, I had never heard of Eugene Garver until directed to his work by Dr. Long in just the last two years. Did Garver begin some odd kind of revolution that came and went in the four years between his book’s publication and the beginning of my studies? Did Garver appear, remind rhetoric about the *Rhetoric*, and then disappear from the minds of all those who
taught me about Aristotle? When I read the Rhetoric four times over, did each of my four teachers just forget to mention that Garver had brought Aristotle’s Rhetoric back to prominence? Or was Garver just wrong in his assertion that Aristotle’s Rhetoric “has not figured in that history” of rhetorical study?

Garver’s book got good reviews. Ken Casey, a philosopher, gushed in the pages of Philosophy & Rhetoric that “Garver’s work stands as an important correction to those who would treat the Rhetoric as an appendage to Aristotle’s thought as a whole or who treat it as divorced from Aristotle’s larger philosophical purposes. In recovering and restoring the Rhetoric to a prominent place in the corpus, Garver has done an important service, but he has also given an explication of the Rhetoric in such a way as to show its importance to contemporary rhetorical practices” (Casey 436). Just who are these people who would treat the Rhetoric as “an appendage”130 that is “divorced” from Aristotle’s other work? And how has Garver “recovered and restored” the Rhetoric to prominence? And how has he shown—in contrast to whatever other scholars might be studying the Rhetoric with the cobwebs and all—that the Rhetoric is important to “contemporary rhetorical practices”? I do not think Casey answers any of these questions, almost certainly because the Rhetoric to be “recovered and restored” was not in any dire need of recovery or restoration.

James Jasinski, too, liked the book, though he was sober enough to point out that “rhetoricians may quibble with Garver’s claim that ‘Aristotle’s Rhetoric remains

130 One might recall, from the first chapter’s discussion of Aristotle and Heidegger, the assertion of Heidegger that the logos apophantikos differed from usual speech by virtue of having prostethe, “something extra” that he said was concrete. If rhetoric were said to be that kind of appendage, it would be a most significant one, but that is not a possibility that Casey explores since he uses the “appendage” term as a derogation against which Garver has come to the rescue.
relatively untouched’ (4) as a source upon which to draw for insights into contemporary theoretical and conceptual problems. Scholars in rhetoric and argumentation have been engaging the Rhetoric for roughly seventy years” (Jasinski). Only quibble, huh? But Casey was more insistant: “If Garver is right about persuasiveness, reasoning persuades because it embodies character, shows choice (prohairesis) and produces trust. Garver’s work embodies character, shows choice, and produces trust” (Casey 437). Does it? And do these stakes sound like mere quibbles? Did Garver and his character just miss those 70 years of work that rhetoricians had done on the Rhetoric. If so, his character would not seem so trustworthy. But things are worse still: Garver’s acknowledgements in the book thanked Wayne Booth, Richard McKeon, John Campbell, Alasdair MacIntyre, Ken Casey, Michael Leff, and Wendy Olmsted for comments on drafts, conversations on the topics, and help with research. He also acknowledged the influence of Kenneth Burke’s work on this thinking. Garver definitely had access to the work of rhetoricians on the Rhetoric; does having that access and not using it imply choice? Garver did not see the “rhetorical tradition” and then diabolically choose to cover it up or some absurd scenario like that. Garver was adamant that the uniqueness of his contribution was philosophical, so his opening claim that his book “is the first book-length philosophic treatment” of the Rhetoric rested on his choice of the philosophical lens. He cheated. His cheating applied the traditional nonsense: philosophy is serious (it must be since it is what performs the “recovering and restoring”) and rhetoric is not worth seeing

131 I understand that philosophy has a tradition of this sort of sophistry: Immanuel Kant’s foremost reviewers were philosophers friendly to him, as were some of Friedrich Nietzsche’s reviewers. But I have personally found today’s rhetoricians to be far too interested in dreams of “objectivity” (or at least “disinterestedness”) to allow someone thanked in the acknowledgements of a book to then publish a review of that same book.
Can one say, then, that Garver’s work “embodies character, shows choice” and “produces trust”? I judge Garver’s character to be hubristic (about philosophy’s status), his choices to be insulting (with regard to the Rhetoric’s status versus philosophy), and his trustworthiness to be completely baseless. Philosophy & Rhetoric should change its title to Philosophy & Other Lesser Studies to be Considered Philosophically. “Such a philosophic examination of the Rhetoric seems to me so timely,” Garver wrote, “that I am surprised it has not been done before” (Garver 4). Even if one were to live in this bizzaro Garver-world where no one had done this work, Garver went on to give a reason for his surprise: “My examination of the Rhetoric looks very different from the Rhetoric itself. I find the Rhetoric a strikingly unreflective work” (Garver 8). Jesus Fucking Christ. Allow me to summarize: Garver’s book about Aristotle’s Rhetoric arrogantly overlooks the work of rhetorical scholars on the Rhetoric using “philosophical” justifications, yet finds the Rhetoric too unreflective to actually “restore to prominence” philosophically, so Garver’s supposedly “recovering and restoring” version of the Rhetoric will actually write over Aristotle’s version. All interpreters bring violence to a text, but Garver’s approach is more violence than

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132 I am, myself, a “lover of wisdom” and apply philosophy and study philosophers without thinking or worrying about the divided traditions of philosophy and rhetoric. And, until reading Garver’s work, I have always regarded with contempt those rhetorical scholars who fought philosophy or sought yet again to bring philosophy and rhetoric back together. I always thought that they were redundant, their task irrelevant, the difference easily transcended and ignored. But Garver has made me a believer: philosophers treat rhetoric as though they were in an abusive relationship: rhetoric praises philosophy, shows care for its works, and is treated with distain and sometimes aggression. I have spent much time around philosophy graduate students who, delving into Aristotle, slash at “Sophistry” without a thought for what “Sophistry” might be. I asked Dr. Long if any of those graduate students had ever actually read work by any of the Sophists (who cannot so cleanly be classified together by the label “Sophists”) and he conceded that they probably had not. I do not wish to add yet another plea on behalf of rhetoric that philosophy show us some love, but I am no longer opposed to or confused about why these pleading epistles are published again and again in our rhetoric journals. Get thee to a nunnery, Dame Rhetoric!
interpretation. “We can rebuild it. We have the technology. We have the capability to build the world’s first bionic Rhetoric.”

But still one must try to give him “the benefit of the doubt” if only to gain whatever useful insights might be found among his otherwise pompous pronouncements. But even that attempt at charity runs into trouble. The “big news” of Garver’s work is… the Rhetoric is a theory of prudence and publicness! What awaits readers around the next corner? Water is wet!? Fire is hot!? Socrates was framed!?\(^{133}\)

I think I am most vitriolic about Garver’s book because I first judged the book by its cover. The title excited me because I had hoped that his subtitle reflected an interpretation of rhetoric as an “art of character” that meant the aesthetic crafting of the performance of an identity. Had Garver been pursuing that meaning, I imagined him picking up where Foucault had stopped in the second volume of The History of Sexuality, where Foucault turned back to Western antiquity to unearth how ethos had become ethics (Foucault The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality). Once upon a time, contended Foucault, the orientation toward oneself that we moderns think of as “ethical” was not a strict set of prohibitions, but instead a set of practices or exercises (askesis) that sought moderation. Foucault knew he could not turn back the clock, but he thought that the exploration of different types of “subjectivity” might break open the possibility of playing with subjectivity and making something else of it, what Foucault called an “aesthetics of existence.” But all of these Foucaultian ideas are to be reserved for the next chapter. For the moment, one need only remember that Garver

\(^{133}\) Opening the file placed at the center of the gameboard, you will find that the murderer was Dame Rhetoric, in the Conservatory, with the Candlestick.
might have been open to such a possibility, might even have extended it, but instead so completely reduced the *Rhetoric* to “publics theory” that scarcely any “art” can be thought to come out of his project. Eugene Garver’s book *Aristotle’s “Rhetoric”: An Art of Character* should have instead been called *Aristotle’s “Rhetoric”: A Technē of Ethos* because those terms were the real objects of his analysis (and not even necessarily in terms of the *Rhetoric* itself, recalling Garver’s position that it was a “strikingly unreflective work.” The problem is made most manifest with regard to Garver’s emphasis of rhetoric as an *ethical* enterprise, that “rhetorical argument is argument that is ethical throughout… because if it isn’t, the rhetorical power will be quite dangerous” (Garver 172).134

The larger part of my critique of ethics must also wait for the next chapter, but another part of it addresses Garver’s problem—a generally Sophist-icated problem—and can be rendered here. Stephen H. Browne has related, in a course he taught on the work of Hannah Arendt, the question-problem of whether rhetoric is capable of creating for itself an ethics (Browne). My answer is no: rhetoric is a political art and must negotiate its propriety, appropriateness, and legality within various communities assembled (or contingently homogenized) into a “public.” Rhetorical scholars will never come to a rhetorical ethics, only ever a rhetorical politics. Certainly people may publicly debate ethical principles, but when they do so they have left the realm of the ethical and are considering “ethics” as an object from a *political-rhetorical* standpoint precisely because

134 Garver’s warning is an *ad baculum* fallacy: scare tactics. I read the words quoted here and think, “You’d better eat your peas or you’ll have to go to bed without any dessert.” Or else the fallacy in the reasoning is a simple lack of causality from wishful thinking: one cannot say “x must be true because x would be quite dangerous if it was not.” Am I misinterpreting Garver? I don’t think so: he did not write that rhetorical argument *should* be ethical because of its dangerous implications, he wrote “rhetorical argument is argument that is ethical throughout.”
they make an appearance in a community and discourse with others. Moving rhetoric into the political and away from the ethical is a radical move philosophically speaking because it at once sweeps away thousands of years of nonsense over philosophy’s claim that rhetoric can be demagogic. How so? By granting the point and moving beyond it: of course rhetoric can be demagogic (not unlike philosophy, politics, and anything else), but politics is the space not only where demagoguery occurs but also the only space where demagoguery can be meaningfully, actively challenged. That rhetoric can be used “unethically” or even “anti-politically” is beyond question. That rhetoric might create for itself an ethics that would ward off demagoguery is entirely irrelevant because—and I think Garver advances this point without realizing its implications—rhetoric as the political art of public deliberation and civics only needs an open space for appearances to challenge demagoguery. Ethics is entirely besides the point; space for action is the only thing rhetoric needs so that responsible citizens may check “bad” rhetoric.

I also believe that the above problem is another manifestation of the wholly unnecessary breach between philosophy and rhetoric. I have taken many courses with philosophy graduate students, and both they and their professors will occasionally make reference to the vagaries of the Sophists without any specification whatsoever. Not a single Sophist is named. Not any action, not any text, not anything really is mentioned as blameworthy. Perhaps only the complaint that Sophists might “make the weaker case the stronger,” but philosophers I have witnessed are otherwise very weak on what is so troublesome about Sophistry. I concede that some references to the Sophists have been made just to joke with me in a friendly way, but I have also seen them presume the dangerousness of the Sophists without evidence. And that philosophers generally are
very nitpicky about such things, to their credit, tells me that their presumptions about the
Sophists must be very natural to them indeed.

What I most want to assert against Garver is the “Long treatment”: break the
“systematizing” view of traditional Aristotelian scholarship and look phenomenologically
at the text for means of opening it up.135 What would happen if one read Aristotle’s
Rhetoric phenomenologically? Phenomenological analysis would not bring one to
Garver’s reckless claims about the Rhetoric and its philosophical meaning: Garver made
no bones about opening up the Rhetoric for interpretation, but he began with so little to
work with—or so he thought—that his account can be thought of as little more than a
mapping over of the Rhetoric, ultimately a closed reading. Consider, for an example of
an open reading, William M. A. Grimaldi’s Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle’s
Rhetoric: while traditional interpretations of the Rhetoric (even up to the present day I am
ashamed to report) insist on the centrality of Aristotle’s “three artistic proofs,” ethos,
pathos, and logos, Grimaldi dynamited most everything modern teachers of public
speaking think they know about Aristotle. For Grimaldi, enthymeme was the Rhetoric’s
truly central concern; the artistic proofs, while relevant for reasons that will be shown,
have wrongly taken the spotlight.

First, Grimaldi reminded readers that logos was never identified as one of the
three artistic proofs (pisteis entechnoi), but enthymeme was and it was presumed to be the
“logical” sort of persuasion, hence the derivation of logos as the third of the pisteis

135 Using phenomenology to open a text is certainly not new, going back at least as far as Heidegger, and
many other scholars have since examined Aristotle in the dimensions of Heidegger and phenomenology.
But I have been fortunate to witness Dr. Long doing such work in person, so my reference to
phenomenological examination of Aristotle as the “Long treatment” should not be considered a generalized
claim, but a “treatment” I reference owing to the particular experience of witnessing Dr. Long applying
phenomenology to Aristotle.
(Grimaldi 56, 57 fn 7). But there were other candidates for that third term. Freese’s translation of the Rhetoric footnoted the first reference to the entechnōn pisteōn (which he translated as “artificial proofs”), writing that they referred to “Systematic logical proofs (enthymeme, example), including testimony as to character and appeals to the emotions (2, 3), which the rhetorician has to invent (eupein, invention) for use in particular cases” (Freese in Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 6-7, fn "a"). But Grimaldi wanted to keep even this interpretation open: “Nowhere does Aristotle explicitly identify enthymeme with the pisteis entechnoi…. there is no clear evidence that the third of the three pisteis entechnoi is the enthymeme” (Grimaldi 57).

Second, Grimaldi attacked the traditional interpretation of pisteis as meaning “proofs”: In reality the word pisteis has a number of meanings in the text, and it is necessary to discriminate among them for an understanding of the text and the meaning of enthymeme” (Grimaldi 57). Grimaldi found three important, but distinct, meanings for pisteis: (1.) “a state of mind, i.e. belief or conviction” resulting from acceptance “of a proof or demonstration,” (2.) “the logical instrument of the reasoning process in deduction or induction,” and (3.) the “source material which comes from the logical analysis of the subject, from the study of the character of the speaker or audience, and from the study of the emotional context potentially present for this audience in this subject and situation” (Grimaldi 58-59). Then Grimaldi dropped his bomb: “As the source of conviction pisteis in each meaning—which is ethos, pathos, and not enthymeme but what I call pragma, the logical aspect of the subject—carries probative force either in itself, or most effectively when it is organized in a form of deductive or inductive inference” (Grimaldi 59). Allow me to summarize: logos is not the third
artistic proof. The artistic proofs are not to be taken as the whole meaning of pisteis even if one includes the “inartistic” proofs as well because pisteis can have several different meanings. Among the meanings of the pisteis are both enthymeme and paradeigmata (example), but those are meanings of pisteis to the degree that the proofs can be made through inferential reasoning—deduction and induction, respectively. All of the artistic proofs, whatever they are, are accessible through reasoning (which Grimaldi was calling “logical,” but I want to change to the word “reasoning” so as to avoid confusion with logos, especially as it can mean “speech,” and to avoid confusion with the field of “logic” in philosophy).

Third, Grimaldi tackled one of the potential flaws in his argument that logos was not one of the artistic proofs: Aristotle had said otherwise in Book I, Chapter 2, 3-7 (1356a). Aristotle wrote, in the Freese translation, “Now the proofs [pisteōn] furnished by the speech [logou] are of three kinds. The first depends upon the moral character [ēthei] of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind [diatheinai, a “disposition” or “arrangement”], the third upon the speech [logōi] itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove” (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 16-17, brackets mine). In the following section, Aristotle was more specific, directly mentioning “ēthos,” “pathos,” and “Lastly, persuasion is produced by the speech [logōn] itself, when we establish the true [alēthes] or apparently true [phainomenon] from the means of persuasion applicable to each individual subject” (Aristotle The Art of Rhetoric 16-17, brackets mine). But in the last section of Aristotle I quote here, logos drops out unless one counts the reference to syllogism: “a man must be capable [dunamenou] of logical reasoning [sullogisasthai], of studying characters [ēthē] and the virtues, and thirdly the
emotions \([pathē]\)—the nature and character of each, its origin, and the manner in which it is produced‖ (Aristotle \textit{The Art of Rhetoric} 16-19, brackets mine). From the first two quotations of Aristotle in this paragraph, it seems clear that he meant \textit{logos}—whatever that might be—to be counted among the artistic proofs. But remember that Grimaldi cautioned readers against interpreting the \textit{pisteis} as simply “proofs.” In fact, Grimaldi argued that they are \textit{pisteis} in the third sense he had outlined: as source material (Grimaldi 61-62). Such an interpretation ventures far away from the traditional view that, being called \textit{technē}, the three artistic proofs were meant as oratorical \textit{skills}—the projection of character for an audience, the presentation of emotion for audiences to identify with, the articulation of reasoning that an audience would agree with and follow to a conclusion. But if one instead sees the artistic proofs as artistic \textit{source materials} from which proofs may be invented, one can easily see how the \textit{Rhetoric} concerned itself with “the whole complex of \textit{psychagogia}” such that the \textit{Rhetoric} might well have been called the \textit{Psychology} instead. Garver could never have seen this; he wondered at how “Aristotle excludes passion from the art of rhetoric, yet without explanation returns to devote extended consideration to the emotions” (Garver 14). Garver was further confused over how the \textit{Rhetoric} devoted “two large sections” to \textit{logos}, and “one large section” to \textit{pathos}, while “there is no parallel section that treats ē\textit{thos} on its own” (Garver 14). If Garver had followed Grimaldi’s track, he might have been able to see that Aristotle’s analysis of virtues and emotions also serve as his analysis of character. While Garver took the artistic proofs to be elements divisible from each other for the purpose of analysis, Grimaldi showed their unity as source materials under the scope of \textit{enthymeme}, some kind of reasoning that accesses as one entity character, emotion, and the speech
itself. Do I take that last claim a bridge too far? I do not think so: the expectation that Aristotle would split the *pisteis entechnoi* and devote different chapters to their consideration would oversimplify the relationships between each of the three elements while also ignoring the role that all three, together, play in the discovery of them in source materials. The division of the three into separate sections would also ride roughshod over Grimaldi’s analysis concerning the different meanings of *pisteis.*

Aristotle did, in one place early in the *Rhetoric,* identify a triad of *pisteis* as *entechnoi,* but there are no good reasons to assume that Aristotle’s single reference to the triad was meant to be definitive. Nothing indicates that the triad was a preview to coming divided sections of his text, or even that the three *pisteis entechnoi* are separable at all (though Grimaldi also pointed out that Aristotle did not say they were inseparable either—which is no surprise since Aristotle did not mention them together again, not dwelling on them as other scholars have since Aristotle’s time).

But could Grimaldi justify renaming the third of the triad (with *ethos* and *pathos* being agreed upon) *pragma*? Aristotle certainly did not use that term in the parts of the *Rhetoric* Grimaldi had considered. Grimaldi had two justifications for his interpretation. First, *logos* might appear to have “correlation… with the other two *pisteis,*** but the text refers to *logos* in such a general way—twice this one of the *pisteis* was “from the speech (*tou logou),” but once it was simply *sullogisasthai dunamenou,* a “capacity for reasoning”—that Aristotle might have been saying that the third of the *pisteis* was *of logos,* but not necessarily *logos* itself. Second, two other ancient sources refer to *pragma:* “I discovered that in the *Rhetores Graeci* Minucianus calls the three *pisteis* (*pisteōn tria eidē* A 2, 56a 19-20): *ēthikai, pathētikai, logikai hai autai kai pragmatikai,*
and that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who appears to have discerned something of the
color of the Aristotelian enthymeme, speaks of the three *pisteis as pragma, pathos, ἑθος*” (Grimaldi 63). Minucianus’ triad seems particularly persuasive, interpreting as it
did the *logos* as “*logikai hai autai kai pragmatikai*” (which I translate as “logical [speech-
related or otherwise] and the same being action-related”).\(^\text{136}\)

Doth I protest too much? Grimaldi still meant “logical reasoning” when he
referred to *pragma*. Who cares if we call the third of the *pisteis* the “*logos*” if it has the
same meaning? My answer: these terms do not have the same meanings, especially once
one returns to Grimaldi’s insistence that the *enthymeme* is the center of Aristotle’s
*Rhetoric*. Grimaldi, who may have written the first book length philosophical treatment
of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in the twentieth century, wrote:

> Obviously, if rhetoric concentrates its effort on logical demonstration, or
demonstration by the enthymeme which is *pistis par excellence*,
Aristotle’s extensive treatment in the *Rhetoric* of *ethos* and *pathos* is
meaningless. Not only have we no grounds whatsoever for accepting his
critique as in any way different from that of his predecessors, but there is
no reason why it can’t be as readily dismissed as Aristotle’s own dismissal
of his predecessors’ work on the psychology of the person as an improper
extension of the rhetorical endeavor: *ēchō tou pragmatos* [“I am my
action”]\(^\text{137}\)] (Grimaldi 65, brackets mine).

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\(^{136}\) Thanks to Dr. Benjamin G. Sammons for helping me with this translation.

\(^{137}\) My Greek translations remain spotty, so one may not want to trust my brackets here. *Ēchō* means “I have,” but can also refer to being of a certain a state of mind. *Tou pragmatos* is a genitive, singular article
and noun; among the possible meanings of the genitive are those of ownership or possession, or authorship.
Grimaldi’s solution to the problem was so simple, and yet so far from being realized in the tradition, “that I am surprised it has not been done before”: Aristotle was not so stupid as to make an argument at the beginning of his treatise that dismissed all of the rest of that same treatise (Grimaldi 19-20). “To accuse him of contradicting himself and thus compromising his presumed intention to present a theory grounded exclusively in the intellect and reason is to give too much weight to a brief passage of arms in the opening chapter and to ignore the rest of his study. The opening remarks are obviously directed against an existing situation,” namely that of the Sophists’ overemphasis of emotion-based proof (Grimaldi 21). Rather, Aristotle’s argument about the meaning of reasonable proof, enthymeme, was taken—mistranslated—in a way that was too limiting. “The enthymeme now ceases to be the instrument of reason alone, or ‘rational proof’ as it has been so consistently interpreted by commentators who strictly separate it from proof by ethos, and proof by pathos. On the contrary enthymeme is the syllogism of rhetoric precisely because, as the form of deductive demonstration, it incorporates in its argument all of the elements demanded by language as the vehicle of discourse with another:

reason, ethos, pathos”¹³⁸ (Grimaldi 16-17).

With Grimaldi’s interpretation of Aristotle’s Rhetoric, the whole of Aristotle’s text may be summarized as follows. The technē rhētorikē, the “skillful art” of (public) speech, is a counterpart to dialectic in that both are “architectonic,” both are cross-

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¹³⁸ Pragma may have many meanings, but the most common meaning is “that which has been done, a deed, act” Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001) 665. Perhaps the redundancy of the ēchō and the genitive, each meaning “have,” suggests that the most literal interpretation should be “I have my action.”

After giving his two reasons for taking the third of the pisteis (of subject-matter) to be pragma, Grimaldi reverts to treating pragma as though it were translatable as “reason.” Why Grimaldi did this is a mystery to me: no definition or idiom I can find suggests that pragma means reason, but rather “action,” “deed,” or “the business at hand.”
disciplinary means, “for both have to do with matters that are in a manner [tropon] within the cognizance [gnōrizein] of all men [koina]” (The Art of Rhetoric 2-3, 1354a1, brackets mine). All men and women! Most people “do this at random or with a familiarity arising from habit [hexis]” (The Art of Rhetoric 2-3, 1354a2, brackets mine). As many rhetorical scholars know, Aristotle’s title grants rhetoric the status of technē that Plato’s Gorgias had very flatly denied to rhetoric. Plato’s Gorgias said that rhetoric was mere emperia (“experience”) and could not be theorized any more than we, today, could create a discipline for the study of “Happenings.” But since both the random and the habituated applications of rhetoric are possible, “it is clear that matters can be reduced to a system, for it is possible to examine [theōrein] the reason why some attain their end by familiarity and others by chance; and such an examination would at once admit to be the function of an art” (The Art of Rhetoric 2-3, 1354a2, brackets mine). Proofs (pisteis) are the artistic (entechnon) elements of rhetoric, but it is especially enthymemes which are “the body of proof [esti sōma tēs pisteōs]” (The Art of Rhetoric 4-5, 1354a3, brackets mine). Rhetoric is defined as “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever” (The Art of Rhetoric 15, 1355b1). “Rhetoric is as it were an offshoot of Dialectic and of the science [pragmateias] of Ethics, which may be reasonably called Politics. That is why Rhetoric assumes the character [schēma] of Politics” (The Art of Rhetoric 2-3, 1356a7, brackets mine). Like dialectic, rhetoric has two ways of arguing: induction and deduction. Induction is the use of examples [paradeigma], and deduction (in contrast to dialectic’s syllogism) is enthymeme. “Accordingly I call an enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism, and an example rhetorical induction” (The Art of Rhetoric 18-19, 1356b1). There are three “rhetorics,” each
contextualized by situation: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. Book II of the Rhetoric is the “psychology,” and it concerns itself with persuasion in the context of audiences, their emotions and, by extension, characters. Book II also names and addresses a number of “fallacies” in argument. Book III addresses style, delivery, and arrangement of the speech. “The function [ergon] of Rhetoric, then, is to deal with things about which we deliberate [bouleuometha], but for which we have no systematic rules [technas mē echomen]” (The Art of Rhetoric 22-23, 13557a12, brackets mine).

Sounds like anarchy. Rhetoric’s “work” is to deliberate about that for which there is no technē? Worse than anarchy, it sounds impossible: was it not Plato’s charge that rhetoric was one of those things that was not a technē and on that basis could not be examined as having any rules? How is it better that rhetoric, says Aristotle, is a technē, but it is a technē of the technas mē echomen, of that for which we have no rules? How can we have rules for those which have no rules? Aristotle clarified that no one deliberates over that which cannot be otherwise since there is nothing to deliberate, adunatōn (The Art of Rhetoric 22-23, 13557a12, brackets mine). Rather, “the enthymeme and the example are concerned with things which may, generally speaking, be other than they are” (The Art of Rhetoric 24-25, 13557a13, brackets mine). And what are those things which may be other than they are? Grimaldi summarized:

To say that there is only knowledge of the universal surely has as its corollary that there is only episteme of the necessary. Granted that the only true episteme for Aristotle is knowledge of the cause, the universal, and the necessary, he could then ask himself just as well as we ask ourselves: what knowledge do we have of the world of things as we
apprehend them (An. Post. 88b30-89b6). His response was direct: that which we find in reality which is constant, but not necessary, can be the object of a kind of knowledge, and it also leads one to seek out the cause, the universal, and the necessary, or truly legitimate episteme. Doxa, as this knowledge is called, is, in the last analysis, the only valid way to know things which come to be and cease to be, and which, as a consequence, are contingent by the very fact that they are. Indeed it would be otherwise difficult to understand Aristotle’s efforts in ethics, poetics, rhetoric (all called technai by him) and politics, as well as the object of his inductive methodology. Doxa is the manner of knowing in which sensible reality presents itself authentically to man. (Grimaldi 22-23, fn 8)

Doxa, “opinion,” is the type of knowledge to which the Rhetoric addresses itself. Much of the world may be contingent, but the contingency of opinion is what allows rhetoric to do its “work,” to deliberate on those things that do not have systematic rules. So important was doxa to Aristotle that he began almost all of his works with the opinions of others, examining them, criticizing them, taking the pieces he agreed with, and so on—a method that Dr. Long calls “peripatetic,” walking around and looking at what is said of a subject, just as Aristotle and his pupils were called the “peripatetics” for strolling around as they discussed philosophy. One might well wonder why he did not use that same method with the Rhetoric; in fact, that wondering is precisely what gave rise to Garver’s
sort of thinking, that the Rhetoric is an unreflective work. The situation of Aristotle’s time may have had something to do with the unusual method; the Rhetoric is certainly not a work that avoids confrontation, but it oddly addresses its opponents anonymously. Could competition for students have played a role? Isocrates was a contemporary of Aristotle and the Rhetoric may have been written specifically to compete with Isocrates because Isocrates was teaching rhetoric (at least, he was teaching what we today call rhetoric). Few Sophists were mentioned, and they were not mentioned as a homogenized group as the word “Sophist” typically implies. The architectonic nature of rhetoric as a method could also explain Aristotle’s unusual approach: he references his other works so often, like the Topics, that he may have understood his peripatetic work to have already been completed with regard to the Rhetoric’s subjects.

139 I have been taught to think of Peter Ramus as the “villain” of the rhetorical tradition, second only to Plato, because his organization of the Parisian University system in the Middle Ages divided rhetoric’s five canons. Invention, arrangement, and memory were moved to philosophy, and style and delivery were left to rhetoric. A question I have not thought to ask until now is what Ramus must have done with Aristotle’s Rhetoric given his division of the canons. Aristotle pre-dated the canons of Quintilian by almost 400 years, so most of the Rhetoric is devoted to what would come to be called the canons of invention, arrangement, memory, and style. Delivery was mentioned once in Aristotle’s Rhetoric but was more or less called unworthy of being part of rhetoric’s art. Ramus was a controversial figure in making his reforms, but how he managed to defeat the Aristotelians in carving rhetoric up remains a mystery to me. Would Garver argue that Ramus’ ability to divide the canons proves that Aristotle’s Rhetoric has figured little in the tradition? Such an argument would be true of the Ramian tradition—but there is a good reason no such rhetorical scholars from that tradition exist, namely that the Ramian tradition is vilified for belittling rhetoric just as Garver, ever so subtly, has done.

140 According to the accomplished classicist W.K.C. Guthrie, the group of thinkers that are today known as “The Sophists” had almost nothing in common ideologically. What they did have in common was time, place, social status (foreigners or metics, mostly, who had traveled to Athens), and many took money for educating pupils or writing speeches. The closest thing to an idea that they shared in common was some concern over the roles of phusis and nomos in human living, nature and custom, the necessity and convention W.K.C. Guthrie, The Sophists, A History of Greek Philosophy, vol. 3, Part 1 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The Sophists did not agree about phusis and nomos: in fact, few of the Sophists could be said to agree with each other on most issues. Only their availability for caricature by Plato made a unity of them (though it is also possible that the Athenian public shared Plato’s view of them as a group, but one should also remember that the Athenians put to death only one thinker of this time and he was not called, subsequently, a “Sophist”).
Recall that Nietzsche, and later Kenneth Burke, had identified rhetoric with the “exchange of egos” that suggest rhetoric is, as Eugene Garver called it, an “art of character.” Also recall that I had been disappointed that Garver’s true meaning with that phrase was probably a “technē of ethos.” Discard that probability for the moment, and consider instead the fullest possibilities of meaning of an “art of character.” What is art? What is character? And what have art and character to do with one another that one could say that one has, in rhetorical being, an art of character? Think of these questions, let them linger on in the approach to the fourth chapter where their meanings will be made most explicit. But before the new chapter, I must introduce a few detours that develop “tropos” of tradition and future so that temporality’s meaning is set forth for an introduction to the meaning of habit.

7. Eberly, Isocrates, and Walker on Character Outside the Aristotelian Tradition of Rhetoric

Next I will consider a turn outside Aristotelian rhetoric and toward Isocrates. I should confess that I make this turn partially blinded: Isocrates never impressed me much, even despite the use to which I put him in this chapter. Whatever insights he had to offer were sandwiched in between gross lengths of text that would cost any modern editor several red pens. Like any public speaking textbook, what Isocrates wrote in 500 pages I am confident I could cut to only 50 pages. Isocrates loved long sentences and academics across time, liking to give legitimacy to their idols even when recognizing gross incompetence, have labeled Isocrates’ sentences “periodic” as though the long
sentence were an artistic choice worthy of praise. But Dr. Eberly loves Isocrates, and Dr. Eberly is an honorable man, so I will investigate the turn and pull from Isocrates as much as possible, at least so long as I do not find him dismissing Eugene Garver.

Dr. Eberly’s entrance into the question of rhetoric and character has rested on three bases: her care for Isocrates’ work, the graduate seminar on “Ethos and Tropos” she developed from that, and a footnote in one of her publications: “Isocrates’ understanding of character as tropos is more helpful than Aristotelian ethos in discussions of multiple subjectivities; there is not room in this essay to support such a claim” (Eberly "From Writers, Audiences, and Communities to Publics: Writing Classrooms as Protopublic Spaces" 176, fn 5). Fortunately, the graduate seminar and our study of Isocrates did offer a case for her footnote’s claim. That seminar read some of Dr. Eberly’s protopublic sphere work, Isocrates’ “Against the Sophists” and “Antidosis,” Giambattista Vico’s The Art of Rhetoric, Michael J. Hyde’s collection The Ethos of Rhetoric, and a work of fiction by Peter Dimock called A Short Rhetoric for Leaving the Family. Having introduced Dr. Eberly’s tropos-as-character through Vico, and reinforced the ontological-rhetorical significance of tropos with work by Nietzsche, Arendt, and White, I now return to Isocrates as the origin of Dr. Eberly’s thoughts on tropos.

Ethos is well-known to rhetoricians, known even beyond rhetoric. Heraclitus used ethos to refer to a “dwelling place.” By the time of Aristotle and Isocrates, ethos had taken on the meanings of “habit” and “character,” the intersection of these definitions being the location of an identity in its repetition of certain virtues or vices or other

141 Do not think that I do not see my own glass house.
142 See the last note.
personal quirks. Recall from the earlier sections on Vico and Nietzsche that *tropos*, too, has been well-known to rhetoricians, but most often it is arrived at by means of “tropes,” the poetic arrangements of words to bend meaning in various directions. Indeed, the ancient Greeks defined *tropos* as a “bend” or “turn” as well as “character.” Four tropes are said to stand out from the rest, making them the “master tropes” under which most other tropes could be sub-categorized: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. Important as those senses of tropes are, one must hold them aside momentarily to see what Dr. Eberly was looking for in the juxtaposition of *ethos* with *tropos*, a juxtaposition, too, of Aristotelian and Isocratean rhetorical traditions.

What is the Isocratean rhetoric? To begin with, Isocrates strongly emphasized contingency: the human being looks into the future, but sight is clouded by chance (*tuchē*) and accidents or coincidences (*sumbebēkos*).

There is, according to Isocrates, no “science” which can teach us to do under all circumstances the things which will insure our happiness and success. Life is too complicated for that, and no man can forsee exactly the consequences of his acts—“the future is a thing unseen.” All that education can do is develop a sound judgment (as opposed to knowledge) which will meet the contingencies of life with resourcefulness and, in most cases, with success. (Norlin in Isocrates "Against the Sophists" 162-63, fn "d")

Catch that? Education about *knowledge* is pointless as compared with education that aims for developing *judgment*. Were it only that George Norlin, the translator, had cited specific parts of the text so that readers could see which words he was translating for
knowledge and judgment. I conjecture here, but perhaps Norlin was thinking of the part early on in “Against the Sophists,” when Isocrates wrote “those who follow their judgments [doxais] are more consistent and more successful than those who profess to have exact knowledge [epistēmēn]” (“Against the Sophists” 166-67, brackets mine). 

Epistēmē is well known through philosophy since Plato as “scientific knowledge” or “knowledge of that which cannot be otherwise, of the necessary.”

No ancient thinker, to my knowledge, gave doxa a thorough treatment: Liddell and Scott related it to the verb dokeō and gave its primary definitions as “a notion, true or false… expectation… an opinion, judgment… mere opinion, conjecture… to imagine, suppose (but wrongly)… a fancy, vision, dream” (209). Translating doxa as an “opinion-judgment” feels about right: opinion, like doxa, has the reputation of being potentially very wrong, but is also capable of being well-informed (with more doxa?) and, thus, well adjudicated. But one ought not forget that Isocrates was being read, in Norlin’s translation, as advocating not for a judgment exactly, not in the sense that judgments are often assumed to be conclusive. Rather, doxa allows its user greater consistency and success than epistēmē because doxa is not an end so much as a contingently-held judgment that may be later altered as needed for new situations. Doxa is, therefore, always a project: judgments are not final, but continue to be made and even used to reassess old judgments as the contingencies of new situations demand.

I fear that I might be accused of cheating here: the above paragraph sounds like I am smuggling in Arendtian terms when there is no justification for connecting Arendt’s

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143 Recall, from the introduction, “Necessity’s” meaning: that which cannot be otherwise, ontologically speaking.
conception of judgment with that of Isocrates. Arendt took much of her Greek wisdom from Aristotle; if there is a connection to be made between Isocrates and Arendt, it is a connection of coincidence in arguments (and not a reason to fault Arendt since much less was known about Isocrates during her lifetime). I will therefore attempt to justify the above interpretation of Isocrates by continuing to detail the rhetoric he espoused.

The first and most important principle of Isocrates has been dealt with: contingency so clouds the future that epistēmē does little good as compared with doxa. Second, Isocrates saw himself as an educator and commented on educational programs from the standpoint of one working through a confrontation with contingency. He chided some, for example, for rule-making: “I marvel when I observe these men setting themselves up as instructors of youth who cannot see that they are applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process.” (Isocrates "Against the Sophists" 170-71).

Isocrates was insistent that education could not work miracles. He wrote that “the kind of art which can implant honesty and justice in depraved natures has never existed and does not now exist, and that people who profess that power will grow weary and cease from their vain pretensions before such an education is ever found,” but still insisted that his educational program—especially in its emphasis of public speaking—might make people “become

144 A minor note: he did not call his art or his educational program “rhetoric,” the word “rhetoric” being an invention of Plato (as Dr. Eberly has pointed out). Isocrates always called his work “philosophy,” but was somehow not taken up by philosophers as being anything more than a Sophist. Isocrates himself did grant that he could be called a “Sophist,” but he was also very clearly a critic of other Sophists and their practices, reinforcing the point Guthrie argued, that the “Sophists” ought not be grouped together so carelessly given their great differences from one another ideologically. The term “Sophist” is about as descriptive of its particular members as the term “continental philosopher.”

145 I have no doubt that Isocrates would disapprove of today’s public speaking textbooks and pedagogical moves toward “standardized” education. Life’s contingencies have no standards: a standardized education necessarily sets up its students for failure. A teacher does good work only when preparing a student to be surprised.

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better and worthier if they conceive an ambition to speak well, if they become possessed of the desire to be able to persuade their hearers” (Isocrates "Antidosis" 336-37). Why would an education in rhetoric improve the chances of making a person “better and worthier”?

the man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character [aretēs]; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow-citizens [sumpoliteuomenois]; for who does not know that words carry greater conviction [tous logous alēthesterous dokountas] when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that the argument [pisteis] which is made by a man’s life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words [tou logou peporismenas]?

(Isocrates "Antidosis" 338-39, brackets mine)

Good rhetoricians must attend to their audiences, they will care what their audiences think about their respective characters, and will adjust accordingly. And, knowing that living well is the best example—the most powerful of proofs—the good rhetorician will try to be a model citizen. One might say that Isocrates was making a most “utilitarian” case for a rhetoric education, that “effectiveness” is best guaranteed through application of what society considers good and worthy. But a less cynical, less thoroughly disciplined interpretation of Isocrates’ approach to education might suggest instead that he grounded his education in a practice of caring for others as audiences and, further,

146 Poreuō means “to carry across or convey, furnish.”
recognized that contingency still played a role and could not guarantee that all students
would become good citizens despite practicing care for others. Isocrates is credited, by
Dr. Eberly among others, with having been a champion of the “liberal arts” education, the
education that would make “Renaissance men” and women of it students. But I think I
see something even more powerful, a subtly, but one that might be exploited to great
effect. Isocrates’ education was a pre-“disciplinary” approach to learning because the
centrality of contingency makes the education open to creative innovations and breaking
rules, emphasizes care for others, but still recognizes that educational practices can fail
and does not, therefore, take the additional “disciplinary” step of intervening (which is
the step taken by the “human sciences” in all of Foucault’s analyses of modern
economies of normality and deviancy, including populations like “troubled students”).
Just as Foucault looked back on the ancients to see if an alternative to ascetic-ethical
subjectivity was possible, rhetorical scholars today might look back on Isocrates to
inquire into the possibilities for a non-disciplinary education, a possibility that sounds
oxymoronic right now but should be remembered for later.

Third, Isocrates’ rhetoric justifies itself with (“lower case-r”) republican civics.
Isocrates’ “Areopagiticus” took the opportunity of a festival to speak to the Athenians
about the virtues their city needed to cultivate so as to be strong: “The strength of a state,
he warns them, consists, not in the walls which gird a city, but in the quality of its
citizenship and in the spirit which animates its polity” (Norlin in Isocrates
"Areopagiticus" 100). This was a message Isocrates repeated in the “Antidosis”: “as is the education of our youth so from generation to generation will be the fortune of the state” (Isocrates "Antidosis" 284-85). Isocrates also suggested that a well-ordered community could expect dialectical benefits for citizenship in the influence of citizens on the state and vice-versa: “for when people have laid sound foundations for the conduct of the whole state it follows that in the details of their lives they must reflect the character [tropon] of their government” (Isocrates "Areopagiticus" 120-21, brackets mine). That last step probably went too far: as one may recall from Arendt’s analysis, the civic republicanism of a state must be sort of “re-founded” by each generation for newer generations to really appreciate their stake in the community of citizens. Perhaps Isocrates’ context led him to believe that the state, the polis, could positively affect the virtues of citizenship held by the people: the polis had all the qualities Machiavelli later said were necessary for the health of a republic—small, little luxury due to size, closeness to the decision-makers—only Machiavelli’s prime mover, Fortuna, might have been missing from the Isocratean ideal (Machiavelli). Some states have all the luck, as the Greek coalition against the Persians had. Some states could do nothing but complain, as states of the failed coalition against Philip and Alexander of Macedonia were brought under an imperial yoke.

Fourth, Isocratean rhetoric embraced the aesthetics of speech, understanding that what is beautiful is not necessarily corrupt. In fact, Isocrates charged impiety against those who condemned orators for their supposed corruption: “Persuasion [Peithō] is one

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147 Such a principle—that citizens of a certain character are stronger than walls—would have been well-known to the Spartans since they both rigorously trained their citizens to be true Spartans and they had a city without walls.
of the gods, and they observe that the city makes sacrifices to her every year, but when men aspire to share the power which the goddess possesses, they claim that such aspirants are being corrupted, as though their desire were for some evil thing” (Isocrates "Antidosis" 322-23, brackets mine). Far more to Isocrates’ liking were those who showed their art and won over audiences with sublimity:

“There are men who…have chosen to write discourses… which, as everyone will agree, are more akin to works composed in rhythm and set to music than to the speeches which are made in court. For they set forth facts in a style more imaginative [poiētikōtera] and more ornate [poikilōtera]; they employ thoughts which are more lofty and more original, and, besides, they use throughout figures of speech in greater number and of more striking character.” (Isocrates "Antidosis" 212-13, brackets mine)

Isocrates approved of those men. And why should he not? To set forth facts in ways that are more imaginative, more ornate, more lofty, and more original would surely make those facts more memorable, no? The “everyday” (which I do not wish to trivialize) typically floats by human beings, but present them with speech of a “more striking character” and their paths may be diverted from the everyday, the inertia of history, so that the future does meet the past at an angle as Arendt had argued.

Despite the Enlightenment’s ascension of Reason to the top of the hierarchy of thought, the power of the aesthetic lives on. But human beings are always given reason to worry about what or how the power of aesthetics is being marginalized or subtly deployed. Foucault argued, in *Madness and Civilization*, that after the “great
confinement” of the mad, the only safe place remaining for “crazy” people was in literature (which fits nicely). That arrangement might have worked out well (for those in literature), but the human sciences have left their mark on each of the academic disciplines, even in the arts. And so even in the humanities there are classes of “priestly” experts, dangerous for the reasons one might expect: “political and social questions that should be subject to public debate in a democracy are very often decided by experts in aesthetics or law” (Eberly Citizen Critics: Literary Public Spheres 3). How so? By determining “artistic merit” or “literary worth,” experts in the arts come to regulate and discipline their respective fields into disciplines (no longer merely topos of the academy, but institutional bureaucracies mixed in managerial orientations toward both subject-matter and subjectification of students). Hence Dr. Eberly’s concern with what she called “literary public spheres,” the places where readers might dialogue over literature (among other things) and then deliberate in ways that made them agents not unlike the priestly class of experts (which is a good thing, democratically speaking):

Rhetoric’s role in literary public spheres is to help readers become rhetors…. Rhetoric’s role as a productive and a practical art as well as an analytical and a theoretical art puts it at the center of the activities of literary public spheres; without the ability to produce discourses, readers would never become rhetors; individual readers would never have to leave the consolation of the vita contemplativa and come out into the realm of rhetoric (Eberly Citizen Critics: Literary Public Spheres 9-10).

Even this vision—readers conversing about their books—sounded too elitist for me to believe in for a model of citizenship. The readers might not be priestly academics, but
they might as well be. Having met such people—book club members, literary societies, members of online communities that discuss fiction—I have to say that an aesthetics of the public is not forthcoming from their literary public spheres. Where is the aesthetic of the populist? Of the *hoi polloi*? Is it not in “everyday” speech? Could we not find civics and art in the public spheres of everyday conversation and being-in-the-world? Perhaps in “epideictic” rhetoric?

I confess (I seem to be doing a lot of that around this section) that I have never taken the study of epideictic rhetoric seriously. Epideictic rhetoric always seemed to me to be the “depoliticized” rhetoric, the rhetoric of religion or ritual (which an existential atheist might be expected to abhor). That contemporary treatments of epideictic rhetoric, particularly in public speaking textbooks, characterize the genre with banalities like “eulogy” or “wedding toasts” seemed to make epideictic rhetoric less worthy of being looking into. In fact, our textbooks by and large translate “epideictic” as “ceremonial” speech, a translation that may have some truth, yet leaves much to be desired.

But I overlooked at least three important qualities of epideictic rhetoric, all argued for by Jeffrey Walker’s excellent book, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. First, Walker pointed out that epideictic rhetoric’s reputation has suffered for the same reasons rhetoric’s aesthetic status has suffered:

> What we might call the received, standard history of rhetoric typically presumes that “rhetoric” is and was originally, essentially, an art of practical civic oratory that emerged in the law courts and political

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148 My aunt, Lynn Perednia, is one of these types of people, one who frequents literary public spheres and even proctors a discussion board online for mystery fiction. She is a fascinating person with many intelligent things to say, but none of them are remotely of the *vita active* (said the pot to the kettle).
assemblies of ancient Greece and Rome, while defining epideictic, literary, and poetic manifestations of this art as “secondary,” derivative, and inferior. (This opposition often takes on a gendered tone as well: practical rhetoric is more manly.)... epideictic, poetic, or literary rhetoric is understood as a “display” (or “mere display”) of formal eloquence serving chiefly to provide aesthetic pleasure or diversion, or to provide occasions for elegant consumption and displays of high-class taste, or to rehearse, reconfirm, and intensify dominant ideologies…. [moving from practical to epideictic] is often seen as a step toward decadence (Walker vii)

Of course, deliberative or forensic rhetorics should not be considered “inartistic,” but Walker’s characterizations of the reasons for epideictic rhetoric’s dismissal have torn the mask off of my older prejudices. What I formerly dismissed in the “ceremonial” was precisely its lack of pragmatic relevance. Walker even went on to characterize two kinds of rhetoric that developed out of antiquity as the “Pragmatikon,” concerned with actionable matters, as the deliberative and forensic rhetorics concern themselves, and the “Epideiktikon,” concerned with “more amorphous and inclusive” speaking (Walker 7). If philosophical approaches to rhetoric across the ages can be said to have emphasized reasoning at the costs of emotion and aesthetics, epideictic rhetoric alone managed to retain those sacrificed elements.

A second and most surprising and refreshing justification for attending to epideictic rhetoric is that most of the speeches dealt with by rhetorical scholars are epideictic speeches. This claim is demonstrated with a subtle change of perspective. If
pragmatic works—those that are deliberative or forensic—are linked to their pragmatic situations, that means that after those situations are past, all recordings of those works pass over into epideictic discourse since they are no longer before legislatures or juries (Walker 7-10). No one reads Plato’s “Apology of Socrates” because that speech is key to a current and pragmatic matter. Quite the opposite: the pragmatic value of a speech that was once forensic or deliberative is in the analysis of it as praiseworthy or blameworthy, as epideictic rhetoric. Admittedly, there are weaknesses in this part of Walker’s argument. Deliberative rhetoric is studied as deliberative rhetoric, not as epideictic rhetoric, because there would be no point in dividing the rhetorics in three were it not that rhetorical scholars attend to the differences in situations. If a deliberative speech becomes an epideictic speech after its time has passed, one does not study that speech as though it were epideictic (though, again, praise and blame are the key issues in the time of study). Walker’s argument could be relying on a faulty syllogism: pragmatic speech is pragmatic only in its own time, times change, therefore pragmatic speech is no longer pragmatic after its time has passed. That syllogism would be faulty for misunderstanding the “pragmatic” as though being linked to a situation meant that it could only be seen in that same situation—and that is obviously not the case since people can look back on pragmatic actions in past situations and come to pragmatic conclusions about the present by using the past. Would that mean that Walker’s epideictic rhetoric could lose the content he claims for it through a reversal of this same argument? If epideictic rhetoric is useful for something, is it no longer epideictic rhetoric? I think the proper course is to dismiss the question, after acknowledging Walker’s unique change of perspective, by accepting the more general premise that the three rhetorics are not so easily
distinguishable from each other. Coming to this conclusion accepts Walker’s most important point—that epideictic rhetoric was distinguished for its aesthetic and then ruled out of bounds—while also strengthening the overall claim aesthetics has on rhetoric by proving that the pragmatikon have epideictic sides and vice-versa.

But I should point out one major advantage to agreeing with Walker’s viewpoint about the pragmatikon inevitably becoming epideictic rhetoric: this path would give education a place in rhetoric, in epideictic rhetoric. Education should not need to have a place found for it in rhetoric—the first rhetoricians being teachers, their art inseparable from their pedagogy. But education is not called a kind of rhetoric in Aristotle’s Rhetoric, and the three rhetorics Aristotle identified were located in very specific places, the legislature, the court, the ceremonial ground. Had Aristotle considered education to be rhetorical work, surely he would have referred to a fourth rhetoric, perhaps the gymnastic rhetoric. The failure of Aristotle to place education in rhetoric led Augustine to create a forth rhetoric, the sermon, though that rhetoric has not caught on in relation to Aristotle’s original three rhetorics. But Walker’s more expansive view of epideictic rhetoric would be open to giving education a place, especially insofar as the pragmatikon become epideictic subjects from which the student of rhetoric would learn and imitate.

Praise and blame are frequently the subjects of education, though technique and contemplation—both educational orientations—would not seem to fit in the epideictic so easily without taking Walker’s interpretation of the epideictic rhetoric’s openness at its most expansive. Technique and contemplation would be epideictic insofar as the epideictic concerned itself with artistic means (though often may be pragmatic).
The third important defense of epideictic rhetoric made by Walker asserts that the epideictic would be so open that it would encompass the populism of speech, a medium such that any who make use of it could develop expertise all by themselves. Even “a plain speech, if it is skilled, that will be punctuated and pervaded by sententious flights of wisdom-invoking eloquence, and often a general sense of rhythmic composition as well, derived from epideictic registers. Speakers and signers learn their eloquence and wisdom, and audiences learn what counts as eloquence and wisdom, from the models embodied and preserved in epideictic discourse” (Walker 14). Walker could have pushed this argument one step farther: the “common” speech of the “everyday” cannot help but show off its rhetorical art. Certainly people repeat, use cliché, talk about the weather, but time is always new, situations always slightly or more different than before, and change allows repetition but only as a reaching back to another time so as to make, anew, a rhetorical connection. Reaching, making anew, connecting—surely these are artistic and not just “plain.”149 And, a step even farther than the previous one, Walker might have thought to connect his argument with feminine orality: modern scholars mostly lack the voices of women of the past precisely because women were not permitted to participate in deliberative and forensic rhetoric. But women nevertheless always were talking, and

149 Walker also made, through a reference to another scholar’s work, a touchstone with my thematic “turning” or “bending” of tradition into the future: “As Bruno Gentili has suggested, the occasionality of such genres made them a ‘middle ground between tradition and innovation,’ a place where the mythic, timeless topoi of traditional epos could meet (or be confronted with) the evidence of personal experience and the changing sociopolitical realities of the polis, in a relatively open-ended engagement.” Jeffrey Walker, Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000) 20. The reference Walker referred to is Bruno Gentili, Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century, trans. Thomas Cole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).
surely epideictic rhetoric might offer rhetorical scholars a place, a *topos*, to locate their trivialized speech.  

Heidegger dismissed some speech has mere “idle talk,” a huge mistake for someone who took such care to think about concealments. Everyday speech is not trivial, but shows off remarkable complexity, even in its supposed “thoughtlessness,” when it is spoken as though a “reflex,” what vastness of metaphysical possibilities must be foreseeable in whatever it means to be able to speak “reflexively,” “thoughtlessly”!

Clichés, as Walker himself may be suggesting in his references to audiences that learn appropriate speech from models and rhythms, would not be “idle talk,” but complex and powerful movements of social organization and “internal being” that conceal a way of being in their very dismissal as idle. When I pass someone I know, I am often asked “How are you?” and have just as often found myself embarrassed for answering the question with accuracy, saying I was miserable when I was and so on. But that response is often “too much information,” which is not to say that people do not care or that they wish not to care, but instead that the communicative move that has been made was misinterpreted and resulted in a surprising turn for the questioner. The questioner typically expects an answer, “Fine,” or “Good, thank you” and “How are you?” but not an answer that suggests distress. Why not? Because the appropriate response to distress

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150 A personal pet peeve of mine is the objection to “recovering women’s voices” that there is nothing “significant” to recover. That objection wrongly assumes that significance is tied to a history dominated by patriarchy and that the speech of women is insignificant for taking place outside the public sphere. But I am similarly frustrated by feminists who exaggerate patriarchy’s monolithic status by trying to use the “silence” of women as proof. Women have always been there, and they were always talking, and certainly persuading and using their wiles to exert kinds of power—whether we have record of these transactions or not. All marginalized people have interacted with their masters, and while there is no doubt that the position of mastery is the more comfortable position to occupy, masters are delusional to think that they come away from encounters with the margins without having been themselves changed, influenced, made part of the hermeneutic-reciprocal dialectic. Only the dead lack any kind of agency.
is attention, but the question is asked precisely to convey a sense of the possibility of
carefulness though one hopes, even expects that such a possibility will not be realized.
“How are you?” is asked to me to sort of ping me, to make sure I am still on the line, to
hear that I am well and to communicate concern in case I am not, but still holding out the
hope that such concern will be unnecessary. In fact, the hope that greater attentiveness
will be unnecessary is so strong that the failure to answer “Fine” or “Good, thank you”
could be considered rude in any case but that of an emergency. None of which is to say
that people are careless, only that they hope for each other’s good health so that they
might attend to something else that needs or wants attention (Sara Mehlretter has
reminded me that these customs are not universal and can create awkwardness in the
reverse direction: in some places, people ask “How are you?” and after receiving the
answer “Fine” or “Good” will offer to attending response because they are expecting the
answerer to go into some detail). What is meant only to be a ping, from the standpoint of
a questioner or from the standpoint of Heidegger, is found instead to be full of meanings.
Heidegger, of all people, should have recognized the potential for meaningfulness in the
idle talk he dismissed because he recognized the meaningfulness of the hammer breaking,
how the broken hammer immediately introduces its user to the “fictitious”
interconnectedness of meanings—now I cannot nail this board, now I cannot complete
building this roof over my head, now I will get wet if it rains, and so on. If being spends
most of its time “inauthentically,” as Heidegger argued in Being and Time, what twisted
logic would lead him to conclude that such time is appropriately labeled “inauthentic?”
Would it not make more sense that what a being is being most of the time is what a being
is most authentically? Heidegger was convinced that idle talk concealed an authentic
way of being—but I think that idle talk concealed an authentic kind of being from only
one being, Heidegger himself.

The “plainness” of epideictic rhetoric should have been interpreted as “plain” in the sense of openness, a wide field for possibilities of action and speech that would unconceal whole worlds of meaning. Walker’s sense of the epideictic gets at such openness for possibility, though I must also warn that he made one critical error. He once considered writing his book about rhetoric and poetry far across the ages and decided instead to limit himself to antiquity—and that was wise for his purposes—but as he briefly considered more contemporary poetics and rhetoric, he showed off some blindness: “What we today call poetry continues generally to be thought of as a discourse that expresses, dramatizes, represents, or ‘models’ states of subjectivity, or that adumbrates a complex ‘meaning’ rather than offering argument / persuasion” (Walker viii). What “we today” call poetry? Whoops. That is what happens when a scholar fails to look outside the windows of an English department: a huge development in a relevant scholarly context is missed with ethnocentric implications. A vast array of political poetries—hip-hop and spoken word—was missed by Walker, no doubt because he too was afflicted by a modern English department’s limited perceptions of what can count as poetry. The MTV version of rap has been allowed to obscure hip-hop’s more political origins, even though those political poetries continue to exist: “It is not an overstatement to say that despite its faults, hip-hop has provided America with one of its only hard-hitting indictments of the social conditions that continue to be a harsh reality for African-American young people” (Stapleton 231). Hip-hop has spread far beyond African-Americans, too. Most any marginalized community one can imagine—
Arab-Americans, Gays and Lesbians—all have taken their lyrics and charged them with political arguments. Dead Prez, for example, pulls no punches in an ode to the “War on Terror” called “Know Your Enemy”:

Know your enemy, know yourself
That’s the politic
George Bush is way worse than bin Laden is
Know your enemy, know yourself
That’s the politic
F.B.I., C.I.A., the real terrorists.
You got to watch what you say in these days and times
It’s a touchy situation, lotta fear and emotion
September 11th
Televised world-wide
Suicide plains fallin like bombs from out the sky
They wasn’t aimin at us
Not at my house
They hit the World Trade, the Pentagon, and almost got the White House
Now everybody walkin round patriotic
How we gon’ fight to keep freedom when we ain’t got it?
You wanna stop terrorists?
Start with U.S. imperialists
Ain’t no track record like America’s, see
bin Laden was trained by the C.I.A.

but I guess if you a terrorist for the U.S.

then it’s okay (Dead Prez)

It is poetry and it makes a hell of an argument; Walker just missed it. And he was so close. His etymological work cries out for a reference to hip-hop. See, for example, Walker’s discussion of the etymology of the word “rhetoric”: Indeed Hesiod’s consistent word for the ‘flow’ of eloquence in both realms, the verb *rheō*, is the root of such other words as *rhēsis* (a saying, speech, declaration, tale, or legend), *rhētos* (stated, specified, or spoken of), and *rhētra* (a verbal agreement, bargain or covenant), as well as the later words *rhētōr* and *rhetorike*” (Walker 5). Rhetoric is a flow! Hip-hop is rhythmically an essence of flow! Flow is the beat, the heartbeat (the *enthymeme*?) of hip hop. Poets, bards, slammers—they have always known the importance of flow for the message. That is why the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were remembered (and are remembered, in bits and pieces, by all who have read them—“words and deeds”!). That is why the prophet Mohammad succeeded with the youth of Mecca and not with his uncles and elders, because Mohammad chanted his revelations in verse. That is why, over five years since hearing the song, I remembered the Dead Prez lyrics and thought to track them down to place in this work—the flow caught my attention and the argument has been with me ever since. “F.B.I. C.I.A. Real terrorists.” This rhetoric has a flow that lets one step in the same river twice, more than twice, over and over.

Walker’s most important implication is, therefore, the centrality of memory in epideictic rhetoric. Walker imagined a society before literacy, where sayings were law,
but law could not be written down and had, instead, lyrics. Walker spared no hyperbole describing the significance of his findings:

The power of epideictic discourse in oral societies is difficult to overestimate. In the first place, because it is designed to be memorable and repeatable at significant, recurring occasions in a culture’s pattern of experience, it is felt to be more “permanent” than the comparatively ephemeral language of everyday business talk. As Walter Ong\textsuperscript{151} has noted, such business talk has no means of being preserved in a nonliterate society and is thus “used up” as soon as its immediate, practical function has been performed. The felt “permanence” and memorability of epideictic, by contrast, give it a culture presence, or prominence, that the more ephemeral pragmatic genres lack. It abides through time, and in people’s minds, repeating its “timeless” rhythmic words. Second, and perhaps most important, epideictic discourse carries great suasive power. This power derives, in part, from its felt authority as “permanent” or “timeless” discourse embodying ancient, ancestral wisdom. (Walker 11-12)

Timelessness! Over five years since hearing the song, Dead Prez still has a claim on part of my memory. Billy Ray Cyrus, too, haunts me with his Achy-Breaky Heart (damn the man). I reluctantly ascribe the word “eloquence” to Cyrus, but what else can one call this power?

\textsuperscript{151} Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World (London, UK: Methuen, 1982).
it exerts considerable suasory power sheerly by virtue of its rhythmic
eloquence—what Gorgias (again) described as the hypnotic “witchcraft”
of poetry and sacred incantations. Modern analyses have attributed this
psychagogic power to the bodily and subliminal effects of acoustic rhythm
and even tonal quality acting on the central nervous system and / or the
sheer aesthetic pleasure and sense of “rightness” created by the skillful
arousal, complication, and fulfillment of rhythmic and formal
expectancies. We thus have, in sum, a discourse that joins the subliminal
and aesthetic suasion of its rhythmic “witchcraft” to the felt “timelessness
/ permanence” and ancestral / archival authority of “ancient wisdom” to
generate, in the mind of its audience, a mood of numinous “truth”
surrounding whatever is being said. (Walker 12)

Walker’s epideictic rhetoric is surely *kairomatic* in its approach, though its temporal
emphasis remains on a past flow that remains memorable and is, thus, always somehow
present should the opportunity for yet another repetition arise. Creating the rhyme
requires knowing the time. The “suasory power” is from time, but is also in the timing,
in the flow, because the timing that is the flow is the hypnosis, the witchcraft, the
haunting (and the reason Cyrus should be damned, to say nothing of the countless
commercial advertisements that have appropriated our favorite pieces of music and
forever ruined them for us by tying them to trade goods and brands—real aorists).

Walker made one overt political claim in his book that resonates with special
ontological meaning: “I suggest that ‘rhetoric’ (as broadly conceived in the sophistic /
Isocratean tradition) does not depend on, rise, or fall with democratic institutions, as is
often assumed; rather, ‘rhetoric’ (so conceived) may be democracy’s condition of possibility” (Walker viii). I do not find Walker’s claim to be controversial—politicians have got to talk, lots—but “condition for possibility” immediately grabbed my attention, not only for its Kantian link but for its singularity. I have noticed several scholars refer to conditions for a possibility, or to a condition among several for a possibility, but Walker’s wording hedges around claiming rhetoric to be the condition for the possibility of democracy by predicating with a “may be.” I think the argument Walker is rejecting—that rhetoric depends on democracy—is rightly rejected to the degree that only the deliberative and forensic rhetorics are dependent on democratic institutions. But are democratic institutions founded in epideictic rhetoric? Maybe epideictic rhetoric, in both the senses of everyday talk (which might also be said to be part of a “public sphere”) and especially ritual (definitely of the public), cultivates the kind of habits which might be formalized by citizens into what are generally known as democratic institutions.

Imagine what it was like to live in the world of a polis in the time of antiquity. No newspapers. No news. No good sense of what was generally happening in the world in any place over 20 miles away, not unless one lived in a time of crisis, but even then one’s sense of what was going on would be contained literally by one’s horizons. Some are literate, many are not. Of those who are literate, there is so little to read (papyrus is expensive, writing is all by hand, wax tablets are the only inexpensive alternatives) that one probably does not get a lot of practice reading. Hence most reading is done aloud (Walker 21). The night is very dark, much darker than any night a person of the 21st century has ever seen. And the night is also cold: people of antiquity were not without ingenuity, but their technology still was limited by available resources, so warmth came
from fires, fleeces, or family. Even among the literate, most of the busy-ness of being-with is “inside” oral communication. And, since people of antiquity did not live in our “age of mechanical reproduction,”¹⁵² one’s access to images was limited to the people, animals, homes, and natural formations that one saw. Some art was present: pottery certainly, perhaps with painting on it, and in some rich places one might see some sculpture. But still, most of the “transactions” of human beings with each other in antiquity were oral. Hence the importance of memory: without the ability to take notes or photographs or video or audio recordings, the busy-ness of all people, especially illiterate people (and, do not forget that women and slaves had entire cultures of their own within these oral publics) turned on the capacity to remember. Though the entirety of the art of memory is probably lost to scholars of the 21st century (since it was an art of memory, the idea of writing it down must have seemed a bit silly), some of it has survived in classical rhetorical texts—notably the Rhetorica ad Herennium, Cicero’s De Orator, and Quintilian’s Institutio Oratoria. All three works stressed memory’s associations with places and images even so that “Gradually the idea began to dawn [on the author, Frances A. Yates] that the Middle Ages might think of figures of virtues and vices as memory images, formed according to the classical rules, or of the divisions of Dante’s Hell as memory places” (Yates xii). Yates’ book, The Art of Memory, struggled to recover from tradition the few pieces left for modern scholars from which to remember the art of memory. Places—topoi—were the first crucial element.

Images were the second crucial element. Images that were “striking” were thought best, because they separate themselves from the transactions of the “everyday,” they stick out in the memory by virtue of their difference. Hence the need for drama and for invention: “Asked in an interview why so many of his characters lie, [Tobias] Wolff replied, ‘The world is not enough, maybe? … To lie is to say the thing that is not, so there's obviously an unhappiness with what is, a discontent’” (Shulevitz). Drama is an ontological condition: “Contrast of lack and fullness, of struggle and achievement, of adjustment after consummated irregularity, form the drama in which action, feeling, and meaning are one” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 538). And drama is a rhetorically ontological condition: “The regard in which one is held is a property of (that is, changeable by) both the community and the individual, and it is both a description of one's being and one's worth. In other words, regard epitomizes the reciprocity of substance and status in the verbal world. One is what one is said to be” (Hariman "Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory" 49). The drama of being-rhetorically, of having character or identity, is built in behaviors that form a series—what I shall call habits. I now turn to habituation in American pragmatic thought, especially that of Mead and Dewey, and the French sociologist Bourdieu.

8. Mead, Dewey, and Bourdieu on Habit, the “Feel for the Game”

George Herbert Mead was an American pragmatist and friend of John Dewey. Mead’s influence on Dewey’s theories of communication, social experience, and democracy were centered on Mead’s articulation of the communicative as an experience
of anticipation. To get at the necessarily anticipatory character of language, Mead took the familiar path, plausibly hypothesizing about the evolution of language (like Vico). Many animals were already recognized as gesturing creatures—the question for Mead, then, was how to explain the move humans made from gestures to the symbol system of language, a set of “significant symbols.” Mead started with human consciousness as a premise: human beings are unique in that they reflect on gestures and are self-conscious about them. “Significant symbols” (remember Aristotle’s On Interpretation) were developed from gestures when people began to receive the same response across usages, which is to say that patterns of predictable behavior formed in response to specific gestures. Further, the receipt of patterns of behavior in response to one’s gestures had the additional effect of influencing one’s own behavior: seeing the pattern led witnessing humans to believe that they too should behave in the way prescribed by the pattern. Once patterns of consequences were established for specific language, humans began to anticipate responses to themselves prior to receipt of response (as in the “universal audience” of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca), continuing the construction of strategy. For Mead, the role of anticipation in the development of language had two important implications that might be called rhetorical. First, humans that speak are both speakers and auditors of their own performances—they are self-conscious judges of their own uses of language, which means that they see themselves through a social relation and a conscience. Humans are then capable of seeing themselves from the position of the other and sympathizing with the other because

humans, from the beginning of language, treat themselves as though they are holding the standpoint of the other. Second, then, the recognition of self and others as social beings leads humans to reflect on the social roles taken up in our relations. Language is, as Nietzsche had argued, thoroughly rhetorical, but in this case it is rhetorical because awareness of self and others attuned human beings to social relations, social roles, reflection on the self as far as it can be applied to sociality, and anticipatory use of language to achieve desired effects—the development of language and use of it necessarily meant strategizing.

Our anticipatory rhetorics have disadvantages as well. Human beings develop many useful habits, but many bad habits too since the evolutionary advantage of conformity—groupthink—encourages them to ape each other without weeding out the habits that are not dangerous enough to overwhelm the perceived goods brought by conformity. Anticipation also means anxiety, an insight important to Heidegger, but already seen in Dewey’s work:

Most mortals are conscious that a split often occurs between their present living and their past and future. Then the past hangs upon them as a burden; it invades the present with a sense of regret, of opportunities not used, and of consequences we wish undone. It rests upon the present as an oppression, instead of being a storehouse of resources by which to move confidently forward. But the live creature adopts its past; it can make friends with even its stupidities, using them as warnings that increase present wariness. Instead of trying to live upon whatever may have been achieved in the past, it uses past successes to inform the present.... all too
often we exist in apprehensions of what the future may bring, and are divided within ourselves. Even when not overanxious, we do not enjoy the present because we subordinate it to that which is absent. Because of the frequency of this abandonment of the present to the past and future, the happy periods of an experience that is now complete because it absorbs into itself memories of the past and anticipations of the future, come to constitute an esthetic ideal. (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 539)

Subordinating the present “to that which is absent,” sounds like Hobbesian “felicity” or Heideggerian “Angst”. In Camille Paglia’s Sexual Personae, anxiety was the emotion that led men (yes, men) to invent civilization, art, and technology. Dewey might well have agreed that anxiety was the “necessity” that compelled invention. Like a dark cloud that follows one around, anxiety may hang over action, suffocating its bearer with tension and hypertension. Anxiety is not quite a body in pain, but surely a psychology with torment that is vibrant throughout the body. The new is more often feared and dreaded than anticipated as hopeful (because the new never promises what can be hoped for, only that a change will occur). As from Chapter 1, Dewey studied these issues through inquiry into experience.

Recall that experience is “an affair of the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 61). The Greek for experience, empeiria, could also mean habit; for reasons I will give below, such a connection would have made perfect sense to Dewey. Experience shares affinities with the empirical because, as I have already quoted from Dewey, “experience in its vital form is experimental, an effort to change the given; it is characterized by projection, by
reaching forward into the unknown; connection with a future is its salient trait” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 61). Dewey also footnotes the word “connection” in that last sentence, not wishing to be vague: “I am speaking of connection, dynamic and functional interaction. ‘Relation’ is a term used also to express logical reference” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 66, fn). As time is concerned, experience is thus the “dynamic and functional interaction” with natality that is “projection… reaching forward into the unknown” of the future. Experience is like Da-sein in always being ahead of itself. And, as Dewey had suggested in an earlier passage, the most likely way to discover the available means for handling being-ahead-of-one’s-self is by interacting with the past.

Dewey’s discussion of “habit,” as concerns the past, is unsatisfying. He defined habit as “a form of executive skill, of efficiency in doing. A habit means an ability to use natural conditions as means to ends. It is an active control of the environment through control of the organs of action” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 488). That definition links rather nicely to Heidegger’s “enframing” as an ordering of nature for use. But Dewey presented another idea, one like habit but without the enframing baggage that habit might have taken on from Heidegger: “funded experience.” Experience is “funded” when it is reinforced by a series of experiences that are collectively bound—just like habit, but without the “efficiency” per se. The loss of efficiency is important not just for Heideggerian reasons. Dewey’s analysis of the environment and human interactions with it is not messy enough to be credible. Dewey insisted, for example, on an idea of learning that did not rely on spontaneity—an issue to which I will now turn.
One reason that Kaufman-Osborn prized the dialectic of projection and reciprocation is that it held off the human contribution of knowledge *ex nihilo*, presence from absence. In this priority, he showed his adherence to Dewey’s philosophy:

“Genuine projection of the novel, deliberate variation and invention, are idle fictions in such a version of experience. If there ever was creation, it all took place at a remote period. Since then the world has only recited lessons” (*The Philosophy of John Dewey* 70). I find much that is confusing in this position. First, why is it necessary for Dewey and Kaufman-Osborn? Perhaps it is useful in establishing the primacy of experience as a phenomenon that can be traced back to its environment and nothing else, without *inventio ex nihilo*. But that explanation leads to a second difficulty: how could Dewey or Kaufman-Osborn possibly hope to prove this assertion? The statement appears entirely unfalsifiable: any source of invention that one could find would then support their position precisely because it had been found, so only a source that could not be found would disprove their position. And the presumption of such totalizing vision over the possible influences on invention brings up a third difficulty with the assertion: does not the *hubris* of the assertion presume a capacity to name all the possibilities for a situation past so as to be able to demonstrate that invention finds its sources only in organism and environment? Dewey and Kaufman-Osborn should have listened to parts of Gorgias’ case against reality: all the sources of invention cannot be known, and if they were known they could not be communicated. Dewey and Kaufman-Osborn may be correct that human beings are arrogant to assume their inventions are “genius,” but Dewey and Kaufman-Osborn are just as arrogant in their counter-assertion that inventions are not.

Elements of the dialectic of projection and reciprocation and the dialectic of tradition and
natality will always escape us, including the elements of those dialectics that are provided by the spontaneity—the meandering—of our own minds, and if that is not genius or agency, it is close enough. If we do not invent “from nothing,” the something that we do invent from is so far beyond us, so obscure, so impossible to know that it might as well be “from nothing.”

The “apparent” presence of invention from nothing is important because it is what human beings “mistake” for agency. Were it not for the spontaneous or the unnamable in situations, funded experience would be deterministic. Dewey argued that genuine invention was “idle fiction.” On the contrary: it is not just “idle” because genuine invention is a product of every moment of being for every human being in the bending of the old to fit the new cannot amend the fact that the new is always a bringing of difference to the old. Hence the relevance of practice-as-exercise, and the idea of “funded experience”: we need consistent repetition to improve at many tasks because spontaneity (of both self and world) is so powerful in our being that it prevents us from being competent at a task after only one trial lesson.

Dewey would have been better off had he stuck with anticipation and its potential randomness in constructing an idea of habit. He linked, for example, imagination with the “trait” of anticipation: “Day-dreaming and castle-building and esthetic realization of what is not practically achieved are offshoots of this practical trait, or else practical intelligence is a chastened fantasy. It makes little difference. Imaginative recovery of the bygone is indispensable to successful invasion of the future, but its status is that of an instrument” (Dewey The Philosophy of John Dewey 64). Again, the instrumentality is bothersome, but his acknowledgement of the corruptibility of the practical (as “chastened
fantasy”) suggests an understanding of the inefficient spontaneity of thought. Funded experience would suggest a much looser configuration of habit, potentially influenced and occasionally overwhelmed by natality. For a better model of habit, I shall turn to Bourdieu.

In The Logic of Practice, Pierre Bourdieu wrote about a phenomenon of selfhood that he called the “feel for the game.” Like Arendt and Dewey before him, Bourdieu had seen that careful deliberation was not possible ahead of most actions, meaning that the governing factor in the behavior of human beings must be habit. But Bourdieu extended habit to **habitus**, a somewhat more encompassing kind of habitude that guides the logic of practice. Humans are habituated in certain ways by their wealth of (funded) experiences, which then dialectically shape future responses, which in turn continuously shape the hermeneutical hopscotch of identity and action. The “feel for the game,” then, is **habitus**, but it is also a feeling, an embodiment that orients us in whatever action we engage in.

**Habitus** is a mostly non-calculative version of Dewey’s funded experience (Aboulafia "Lecture on Bourdieu"). Rather than deliberate, **habitus** estimates because there is no time for anything more when one is in the thick of the game. **Habitus** is also a uniquely embodied kind of habit: it is the funded experience of living as a body, breathing and feeling while in the game. But **habitus** and funded experience are otherwise quite comparable. First, **habitus** and funded experience should both be thought of, roughly, as the great collectivity of dispositions that are imposed, socially or otherwise, onto the habits characterizing an embodied individual’s intuitive practices of being. Bourdieu wrote about senses of **habitus** that go beyond Dewey’s thoughts about funded experience, dealing, for example, with the practices that gender women and men.
One real difference between *habitus* and funded experience might be the differing takes on anticipation (Dewey thought that the strategy of a communicative event already presumed that a being had predicted possible consequences to possible means of communication, but Bourdieu thought that anticipation was only a feeling produced by the body’s remembering of past experience bound up in *habitus*; *habitus* is learned as a contextual aside which comes to precondition experience, meaning that one’s sense of how to act in a given situation is known beforehand even though one has not experienced the particular situation. Even so, Dewey’s articulation of the human being as *organic* in relation to the environment might be extended to bring *habitus* and funded experience close to each other. *Habitus*, according to Bourdieu’s *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, might be called the objectivity of subjectivity, the common principles that bind individuals into membership in a society by virtue of their education on similar sorts of behavior (I use “education” here though knowledge is not the proper way of thinking about funded experience or *habitus*—rather I mean to refer to the sorts of behaviors that pile on top of each other over time that result in a conditioned practice). Funded experience is also objective in a subjective way: individuals experience themselves in particularity, but are also bound to a common world in their organic, bodily needs.

Socialization takes place in the human game of communication—*habitus* is expressed as a “feel for the game,” which is not unlike the sort of feel one might have if one had great experience in playing and so was able to anticipate the moves of others. Reflection happens, but it does not usually happen in the thick of the game—human beings communicate, but do not often call time-outs to reflect on their next communicative moves. Rather, people’s moves are intuitive, not carefully judged, nearly
spontaneous, not deeply deliberative. Their bodies react to situations on cue: “The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is” (Bourdieu LP 73). Human beings may have episteme, but they are technē, are hexis. Experiences are framed with anticipations—expectations for fulfillment, which might be suspended or frustrated. These frames constitute our shared “Practical sense, social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms… to be sensible, that is, informed by a common sense. It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know” (Bourdieu LP 69). The incompleteness Bourdieu wrote about is not unlike the precariousness of living in Dewey’s world: practices necessarily entail risk in their attempt to expand the world of the human being. The incompleteness might also be read as Levinas’ notion of the infinite: names and totalizations cannot complete any being because being is possibility-bound and, thus, probably cannot be completed even as a thing-in-itself (which, again, is why some beings can come to be ex nihilo, because no god’s-eye-view exists from which to account for the totality of appearances and disappearances). The anticipation and fulfillment, suspension and frustration of the organic are fundamentally aesthetic because they are imparted with the creation of meaning.

The feel for the game reduces decision to spontaneity, and, if habituated, a “controlled” spontaneity at best. One particularly troublesome consequence of this view is its effect on the idea of responsibility. Response-ability is literally an ability to respond
differently to the scene or being-in-the-world. Response-ability must be always hypothetical because no two situations are alike and because the discussion of ability is necessarily a positing of possibilities to be or possibilities that have been actualized. But the feel for the game admits little or no response-ability because hypothesis is less possible for the player on the field. If properly trained, the player might adopt the course consistent with that discipline—but the player also might not. The spontaneity of the wandering mind and the natality of being-in-the-world make a player’s actions open to the possibility of some complete difference. Odd things happen in sports all the time, and they justifiably make for compelling drama. Additionally, one must remember the meaning of kairos as the tunnel through which a shot arrow flies to hit its target—kairos as opportunity is always also an expression not just of situation but also of the quick-reacting skillful move by the player of the game. The highest goal of any pedagogy is surely the training of a player to do all of the following: be patient, play fairly, recognize the opportunity when it comes, seize the opportunity, and be as prepared as one can be for the unexpected. Dewey, whose main interest was in inquiry as hypothesis-testing, argued for a pedagogy of doing because he wanted to emphasize the pragmatic application of doing in the experience of living in (and as) an environment. Bourdieu made no quarrel with such an educational goal as Dewey’s, but habitus is not carefully theorizing inquiry.

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154 I was using this term before I discovered that Dr. Long was also breaking it down to the ability to respond, but I do not think my argument is following his usage of the term. Whereas Dr. Long gets at truth by “doing justice” to that which is the case and then having the ability to respond as a way of doing that justice, I am breaking up the term to eventually tie it into the problem of doing what is right while in the middle of the game, while time does not permit deliberation. My argument is surely not exclusive with Dr. Long’s interpretation, but I think we are each going in different directions as concerns the goals of our cases.
The absence of grand theorizing in one’s feel for the game is precisely the thinking behind the dismissal of response-ability for violence within a “fog of war.” A fog of war is the absence of strategic or calculative over-sight where action has taken the place of deliberation; it is a place where circumstance and habit or spontaneity kick in to determine actions. The fog is an excuse related to battlefield accidents or mistakes, to a loss of response-ability where one has been rendered unresponsive by the demands of the situation and the discipline or habit that the situation plugs into.

Of course, one may also consider the possibility that some training has failed to determine action in a specific case not because of spontaneity, but because that training was displaced by training of another kind. American life, for example, presents countless opportunities for developing habits that might displace “proper” training within a fog of war. Guns are toys, especially for families filled with hunters. Video games are even more widespread and, though no statistical correlation links them with increased violence, they may still contribute to a normalization or standardization of the inconsequential nature of violence (when a player “dies,” the player just starts over again with another “life”—surely we rhetoricians would be muting ourselves if we insisted that the rhetoric of violence in video games has no influence on anyone). Neither are Americans especially prepared for recognizing the humanity of other peoples: most Americans know Arabs from their portrayal on CNN or Fox News, not from a personal connection. Few are unaware by now that the term “collateral damage” is problematic as a most excessive example of reductive totalization into “standing reserve,” but the Pentagon continues to use the phrase anyway and no significant public outcry pressures them to stop. No names accompany the homogenization; nationality is typically given,
and so is the religious orientation. Often these combined factors do not coincide with crimes against humanity, but sometimes they do.

The idea of responsibility is in dissolution. Liberal political theory had already been damaging to responsibility, implying, through its provision of rights and freedoms from tyranny, that individuals might also be freed from civic duty (a possibility not written about by most of America’s “founding fathers” if only because the idea of people having no interest in their political destinies was unthinkable). Habit or discipline was our best hope for responsibility, but Arendt, Foucault, and the Holocaust demonstrated conclusively that we neither could count on those structures to help us nor count on them to avoid turning toward totalitarianism.

9. Conclusion: Habits, Discipline, and Exercise

Across the work of Arendt, Mead, Dewey, and Bourdieu, the constitutive importance of habit is magnified, surely to the extent that rhetoric must grapple with it—the importance of habit being an idea argued for by Mitchell Aboulafia. The question of habit has recently been one of ethics. One could guide one’s self by ethical rules, but then one would be banal, thoughtless, in the bureaucratic application of the rules as Arendt has argued. One could not deliberate on the ethical because one does not usually

155 I am not an advocate for “communitarianism.” Individual liberties, including privacy, are good, useful, comforting qualities. The damage privacy rights are now taking from the “war on terror” will make each of us far more panoptic than we have ever been. If Big Brother has a name, it is surely “Amiati Etzioni.”

156 Dr. Eberly has asked me about Aristotle’s thoughts on habit. *Hexis* appears throughout his texts, especially in the *Rhetoric* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but, if we trust Foucault’s work in classicism (and many classicists have told me that we can), Aristotle’s sense of habit was probably contained within the looser set of ethics that I described at the beginning of this chapter. The *Nicomachean Ethics* itself aimed at the “golden mean,” an ethic not based on rules or prohibitions so much as moderation and self-control (*sophrosunē*).
have the time to do so, especially in the presence of the new. *Kairotically* speaking, one must be prepared to reinvent ethics from moment to moment, playing White’s hermeneutical hopscotch. If ethical reinvention means flirting with enframing or totalization, what choice does one have?

Habit can give people options: it can prepare them to prefer certain directional turns over others, and that might give them the opportunities they need to make the best of the opportunities forced upon them. But what habits shall be prioritized? And why should they be the “right” habits? Is not the new also the kind of interruption that might make the preferences of some habits entirely wrong? Might the new necessarily invite the kinds of alterior “interventions” warned about by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* and John M. Sloop in *Disciplining Gender* (*Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture)*? These are questions I wish to leave open for now, but they should not be forgotten as I continue because they suggest serious threats to the anti-totalitarian rhetoric I wish to keep within reach.

A distinction might be made between habit-as-discipline and habit-as-exercise. Whereas discipline is banalizing, producing docile bodies that may be enframed economically as standing reserve, exercise practices the possibilities for human action so as to “jog” them, to keep them healthy and alert. Foucault might have thought this distinction to be ridiculous: he was most alarmed by the ideologies that claimed to be “liberatory” because they were “elegant” exercises of power. But Foucault also argued that we cannot escape power, only toy with its configurations in the hope that we will find some that make us happier and more just. Exercise would fit the bill—and to exercise our rhetoric we all should *make* rhetoric, employ its art, find pleasure in its
aesthetics. To paraphrase Gandhi, we are the rhetoricians we have been waiting for. We, the rhetorical scholars, should study rhetoric, but also employ it in teaching, writing, relating to others, participating in civics, and being. Now I will turn to what that exercise might entail.
CHAPTER 5
EXERCISING AESTHETICS

There is no deity of politics, no single Muse of the people—mortals are left to themselves and their own cooperativeness, their own conventions or inventions. The art of politics is rhetoric.

1. Coming From Metaphysics to Aesthetics

The two preceding questions of rhetoric’s materiality and ideality and rhetoric’s temporality have expressed rhetoric’s “being” as dialectical relations. The dialectic of projection and reciprocation theorized rhetoric as a projective action that could also be reciprocated by influencing its audience, through rhetorical projections onto material things receives cooperative extension or uncooperative recalcitrance or both at the behest of materials. All rhetorical doings are, thus, also “makings” in the sense that they refashion the dialectic within the web of relations. Tradition and natality were also dialectically related as hermeneutic circles: the past is used to understand the present or future, and the new understanding is then used as part of a larger understanding of the past. Troping is, thus, also a doing that is a making because our hermeneutical hopscotch from moment to moment, identity to identity, understanding to understanding always

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Do I mean, then, to say that rhetoric is this and people who do not do this are not rhetorical scholars? Would I permit Roderick P. Hart to do rhetoric his “own way”? Of course I would, only let him not think that his way is inartistic.
rhetorically refashions our *kaironomic* being.\(^{158}\) Chapters 1 and 2 bring us from rhetoric-as-doing to the question of rhetoric-as-making. Additionally, the definition of rhetoric as given by Aristotle might now be understood as this: the art (*technē*-as-skill, technique, and *habit*) of rhetoric is the power of seeing (in imagination as theorizing, deliberating, and training), in a given situation (that is situated as the troping of tradition and natality), the available means (materially and ideally) of persuasion (movement of the soul, changing belief and potentially actualizing movement in space). This chapter will explore the meaning of rhetorical making by bending rhetoric’s ideals to meet its materiality and its tradition to meet its present or future. By “making,” I mean to explore rhetoric’s aesthetics.

2. The Arts of Making

Making is the actualization of a potency, the material “realization” of what was once only a formational possibility that was posited by an inventive mind (inventive as a dialectical relation of socialized tradition and spontaneity). Why is aesthetics a question of making? First, because the ancient Greeks thought so and are deferred to as experts on “their” notion of rhetoric. The Greeks did not have a concept like our term “art,” but three concepts, were often mentioned, that we may understand as analogous (but not reducible) to our modern idea of art: *poiēsis, technē,* and *aisthēsis.* The first word, *poiēsis,* means “a making, fabrication, creation, production” or a “poetic faculty, poesy, art of poetry” (Liddell and Scott 651). The verbal form, *poiēō,* was very common and

\(^{158}\) The importance of the past must make one wonder whether we are “symbol using animals” that are retro-troping or retro-ping?
could mean “to make, produce, create,” “of Poets, to compose, write,” “to bring to pass, bring about, cause,” or “to do… to be doing, to do or act” (Liddell and Scott 650-51).

The closest approximation of the modern “aesthetics” is, thus, *poiēsis*, but aesthetics is more than *poiēsis* for us. The word *technē* adds “art, skill, craft in work, cunning of hand” and “an art, i.e. a system or method of making or doing” (Liddell and Scott 804). *Technē* corresponds with our modern sense that aesthetics has method, history, and style.

But aesthetics are also a “sense,” an apparently universally understood, though not agreed upon, desire to distinguish beauty and ugliness, to apply “taste.” The Greek *aisthēsis* meant “perception by the senses,” “of persons… to have a perception of a thing,” or “of things, to give a perception, i.e. to become perceptible” (Liddell and Scott 23). Rhetoric is surely aesthetic in the three Greek understandings of the aesthetic. *Poiēō* is a common word throughout Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, signifying the inventive character of rhetoric’s application. *Technē* is a clear-cut case: Aristotle called rhetoric a *technē* and identified the *pisteis* as proofs that employed *technē* in distinction to other types of proof like demonstration. Aristotle’s placement of rhetoric as *technē* also explicitly repudiated Plato’s contention in the *Gorgias* that rhetoric was not a *technē* but an *empeiria* (experience, habit, or knack).\(^{159}\) Rhetoric was also directly connected to a perception, according to Aristotle, insofar as rhetoric is *theorein*, an infinitive for “seeing,” as in the power or faculty of “seeing” rhetoric’s available means (which sounds like an intuitive

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ability on some level). Rhetoric makes, it is a skill in making, and it encompasses an inventive vision for making’s possibilities.

Aesthetics involves making for a second reason: all making comes to gain appreciation, by taste, for its craftiness, in its skillfulness as invention. Architecture is a most obvious example, but this kind of appreciation is also very apparent, if not explicitly called “aesthetic,” in the love of cars and their mechanics, assorted mechanisms, and even the tools for crafting them. The aesthetics of writing are a familiarly acknowledged dimension of graphics, but can this be true even of the most banal or bureaucratic kinds of making? Do receipts, for example, engender an aesthetic? Collegiate debaters know that legal briefs are artistic, and they frequently acknowledge the beauty of their constructions. Creativity with numbers is similarly well-known to accountants, and even goes by the rather artistic-sounding name “book cooking.” Advertisers consider all sorts of aesthetics, and non-aesthetic aesthetics, what Robert Hariman has called the “realist” style as a style that attempts to hide its own stylishness (Political Style: The Artistry of Power). So receipts assuredly have an aesthetic: the aesthetic of the “bottom line,” that allows a consumer to get right to the (monetary) point, but also details information in an artistic way that allows, even invites, scrutiny—as if to implicitly say “our establishment wishes to hide nothing.”

A third reason aesthetics involves making is that it involves the formal actualization of a material possibility. Art requires material formations, either as paintings or embodied performances. Aesthetics-as-making is vital, expansive, active, living as opposed to the frozen privacy of thought (as Arendt argued, and as in idios). Hence, the material element in the aesthetic is necessary because it offers up the all-
important publicity of the work. One cannot know if one’s own work is any good until an audience judges it; this is because audience reaction places the work in the web of relations, giving it (new) meaning. The space of appearances is the space of critical judgment. Otherwise one would only be hearing one’s echo (Wittgenstein: a private language is not a language at all). Like the shallow sound of an echo, one’s own idiotic echo is a pale version of what it would sound like if fitted with a web of relations, an ego missing significance because it has no idea what would be found significant about itself were it to engage socially with others.

One objection to my equation of aesthetics with making concerns the beauty of nature: does an appreciation of nature’s beauty necessitate theism? Appreciation is surely making an interpretation or a judgment of a work. Is nature appreciated as making a work? Nature is made, and appreciated, but may be so as an “object” of its own spontaneity, a construction, though it is constructed by the spontaneity or chaos of the universe, not a sentient “maker.” The master-craft of Nature is, in science, called evolution, and it runs on a kind of craftiness, though a brutal one, called Necessity. Perhaps “agency” may be called that which is capable of moving so as to necessitate another condition (purposely or not, successfully or not).

3. Must Rhetoric Be Aesthetic or Ethical?

Aesthetics is not a subject often covered in elementary or secondary schools. Even in the university, aesthetics is the “stuffy” version of some much more fun spin on art in visual design or poetry. Thinking about what makes beauty, and beauty’s
alternatives, and what they are—surely that is an elitist game. But rhetoric demonstrates not only that all communicating people use aesthetics, not only that they have an aesthetic sense, but also that thinking about beauty is an everyday activity. We are always judging performances and arrangements, looking for the “right words,” listening to whether others are using a “tone” of voice with us, or seeking the furniture arrangement that looks best with the carpet and the drapes. With regard to what is one wondering when one wonders what others think about one’s self, if not the performance? One’s “real self”? One cannot separate the lightning from the flash, Nietzsche wrote (On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo).

What are the implications of a rhetoric-as-aesthetic? What meaning does such a phrase have? First, aesthetics are slippery, and anti-calculative: the sense of the aesthetic is immediate, an overwhelming spontaneity that ripples through the feel for the game (Arendt Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy). We may study aesthetics and come up with justifications for our judgments, but they are reflective rationalizations that are themselves works of art (as interpretation). One’s like or dislike of specific smells is not typically thought of as an object of justification, and the same may be said of the aesthetic sense in general—the “subjectivity” of the aesthetic makes the judge’s assertion self-evident. Habit or experience may come into play, but instinct-as-spontaneity overshadows them. The spontaneity in aesthetic judgment is the deus ex machina, the spontaneity of materiality, which is an uncontrollable other to rhetorical projection. Material spontaneity is thus a potency of our own bodies as well as the world, and our aesthetic judgments arising from embodied material spontaneity are immediate and overwhelming because the body is showing its recalcitrance to a sensation that no
rationalizing will surmount. At best, one may attempt to discipline the body to form habits that it will (sometimes) obediently follow. I cannot tell someone why I think a smell is bad, but I can be sure that my body feels that it is bad.

Every moment of our lives is spent between habit and spontaneity, projection and reciprocation, tradition and future. The timing of decisions is as immediate as taste-as-judgment. Agency, if time allows us to have it at all, is the decisiveness of deliberation (rare), or the ability for just a moment to think or discuss before jumping off a cliff. When we do not have time—and as perpetual performers we almost never do—our response-ability is limited to what might be dictated by habit or spontaneity.\footnote{Although I do mean to problematize the idea of “responsibility,” I am far from denying its utility or justice. If anything, the condemnation of irresponsibility-as-habituation reaches farther than traditional liberal-capitalist-utilitarian interpretations because the condemnation holds responsible not just a person in a particular case, but that person as a performed identity patterned across time.} Our decisions run between poles of complete habituation and pure impulsiveness; most decisions are a combination. We make decisions that remake ourselves or make departures that must then be made appropriable, appropriate—this is the domain of rhetoric-as-aesthetic.

Does this mean that rhetoric should theorize (to see)? Much has been written here about practice as it is controlled by habit or spontaneity, but what is theory and what does it do?\footnote{When I suggested to Dr. Long that he was making a theory/practice distinction, he dismissed it immediately saying that theory is a practice and practice applies a theory. Would a body in pain agree?} Theory is necessarily an examination of the web of relations as relations (which often means generalizations), and sometimes it “rewrites” those relations or re-places them. Theory is surely a hermeneutic, but is it heuristic? Can theory be realized in habit? Is theory, then, a potency? I answer yes to all three questions, but being-in-the-world has more possibilities than actualizations (works that are disqualified by necessity),
and a specific case of actualization requires more “energy” than does the “dynamic” positing of many possibilities.\footnote{The quotation marks are in place because this point mixes up Aristotle: it calls the bringing of some into being an “actualization,” but suggests that potency is “merely” a formational positing.} Theorizing is a univers(ity) of possibilities, but not actualizations (except as actualizing more theory). Theorizing projects hermeneutically; hermeneutics may be called the activity of rhetorical theorizing. To move from theory to practice requires, first, a departure (as in Arendt’s idea of redirecting time from its “traditional” inertia into a position where it meets the future “at an angle”), and, second, an exercise regimen that seeks to form, third, a new habit.

The calculation and deliberation of hermeneutic activity can be artistic too: \textit{fiat}, the wholly imaginary world one projects so as to consider whether the world would be better or worse if such and such were to change, is imaginative hypothesis-testing for extension or recalcitrance; it can foresee opportunities as well as be blinded to them by disciplinary rhetoric. But these are all activities outside of the “feel for the game,” meaning that they take place in places and times that are “backstage” to the drama of our lives (unless one’s drama is limited to blowing the dust off of the top of some books). Those who are backstage believe that they are not performers, but believe instead that they are the people who work so that the performance onstage might go right.

The second implication of rhetoric-as-aesthetics is that hermeneutics is our artistic interpretation that builds and builds on to itself, a panorama that only gets bigger and more detailed like Baudrillard’s map. Meaning is cartographic (indeed, \textit{topical}), not just as a “something” behind the representing map, but as a made mapping of the web of relations of meaning in their placements, oppositions, and so on. Hermeneutics must be
heuristic, and heuristics are necessarily rhetorical insofar as they compel kinds of behavior. These are the characteristics of our “knowledge” of the world. Kant, attempting to make a grounding for scientific knowledge, argued that concepts and intuitions are bent into each other through imagination. The imagination is the aesthetic glue that holds the three-fold synthesis together. The concepts that give the material world their “formation” have been shown, by Nietzsche, to be mere conventions of the rhetorical arts—meaning that Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* may be interpreted as positing a three-fold synthesis of rhetorical projection, material intuiting of reciprocation, and the imagination’s hermeneutical interplay between projection and reciprocation.

The third implication of rhetoric-as-aesthetic is that performativity reveals that our whole lives are spent performing, even if only performing for our own selves. No wonder, then, that we would value discipline, practice, repetition, or habituation: these are our shelters from chaos. Socialization in conventions is our *koinē*, currency, current-ency. We trade what is current, what is given meaning within the web of relations at our places and times. Burke’s “dramatism” is played out as White’s hermeneutic hopscotch, a game that refashions the self or identity as the show goes on. Patterns are styles (ways of making rhetoric that we wish to performatively “stay true to”) which become habitual as funded experience. Persuasion is an art, like drama, different only in that persuasion sometimes comes with a *phronetic telos*.

Response-ability is, therefore, the performance of behaviors that signify agency with regard to a situation’s placement in the web of relations. Postmodern critiques of responsibility may appear to make the concept dissolve along with the subject: What is a subject’s relation to a situation, exactly, that entails responsibility? Somehow, a subject,
a place with materiality, and a temporal event are fused together so that the subject is said to be responsible for the situation. Interpreting response-ability as a rhetorical performance, on the other hand, clarifies that responsibility is an expected pattern of behavior (a norm), but is also far reaching to the point of not being definable beyond the point of expectation and the strength of that expectation. Response-ability, in the web of relations, is a performance that is expected—by an audience that has framed its expectation within the web—with regard to other situational factors. We even artistically toy with questions in these hypotheses: the game of “Scruples,” “Truth or Dare,” competitive forensics.

The fourth implication of rhetoric-as-aesthetics is the asking of an important question: Is making “enframing”? The analysis of aesthetics-as-making, for example, may suffer from being a totalizing enframing of aesthetic sense. Is making necessarily enframing? Cannot making also admit of cooperation of human ingenuity with the “others” of the dialectic, and also concede that ingenuity’s determination is not fully within human control? Might the “answer” to enframing be as simple as having humility in place of hubris?

Humility is a political virtue, as was expressed by Arendt in her notions of promises and forgiveness (The Human Condition). A polity builds itself on trust by making promises, and a polity persists in humility by forgiving the inevitable failure of some to live up to their promises. And these are the reasons that rhetoric should prefer politics to ethics as goes its “theoretical” and “artistic” preferences for a way of being.

“Evil” rhetoric functions as ethics for several reasons. Duty is coercive, not persuasive. Discipline is rule-forming, didactic, and banalizing (in Eichmann’s sense).
Conscience is unanswerable, leading especially “ethical” souls to kill each other instead of talk. Indoctrination and propaganda link poetics to discipline, so we march in step, sing in harmony (as Plato would have wanted). The tyranny of the majority, demagoguery, takes the place of participation and negotiation in politics. Normalization or naturalization align ethics against “deviancy” or some other kind of strangeness. But we cannot rid ourselves of ethics entirely, not anymore than we could rid ourselves of discipline or power. What then is to be done? To see “what,” I will now examine the history of ethics and aesthetics, and compare that history with totality. This part of my argument would seem the most appropriate for my critique of ethics because I am at the stage of trying to articulate a distinction between flexible and artistic habitu
de of renewal as opposed to disciplining a subject to docility.

4. The Historical Development of Ethics

I referred earlier to the possibility that ethics and aesthetics may not have begun so far apart from each other. *Aisthetikos*, in the Greek, referred to simple sense perception. *Ethos*, in the Greek, meant “habit” or “character,” and, in Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality, Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, the ideal habituation toward the pleasures (and inevitably toward *aisthesis*) involved the deployment of practices that would gain *sophrosunē*, a self-control that avoided both excessive and deficient use of the pleasures. The practices deployed to help one gain self-control were literally “exercises” (*askesis*), and Foucault maintained that ancient Greek ethics never obtained a prohibitionary character precisely because ethical habits were born not of rules, but of
exercises. One would go too far to claim that Greek *ethos* had an “eye of the beholder” ambiguity, but ethics and aesthetics did more closely resemble each other in these times when compared *theoretically*. The *prohibitions* found in Greek society were not ethical, but religious (impiety) and perhaps political (nationalistic by home city). *Aisthetikos* (“perception”) had an obvious sensual relation to the “uses of pleasure,” but the most that the Greeks would have demanded of *aisthetikos* was a moderating *ethos*. The earliest work I can find that divides and opposes *ethos* and *aisthetikos* is in the work of Plato, who condemned the *mimetic* (copying) arts as manipulations of our imperfect perceptions ("The Republic"). But even for Plato (and Aristotle, of course), *askesis* was a crucial component of the philosophical life—one wouldn’t find the good by following its rules but by habituating oneself with exercises aimed at the good. According to the *Republic*, even Socrates conceded that he loved the rhythm and could be seduced by its hypnotic power.

But the history of *askesis* took some dramatic turns on its way to modernity and no one in the Western world is an ancient Greek. The difference between where the Greeks were and where Western civilization is now has been described by Poulakos: “We often pride ourselves for being the descendants of the glorious rhetoric of the Greeks. But the chasm between their sensibilities and ours is enormous. Theirs were shaped by Paris’s preference for beauty over power or domination; ours are driven by power and domination to the exclusion of beauty” (95). The etymological conversion of *ethos* to *ethics*, from personal habits and character to moral character, must have been accomplished by a transformation of simple exercise to something more disciplinary. The Hellenistic Age’s Stoic practices emphasized self-control through increased self-
denial, a distrust of the body and its appetites, and the gradual transformation of contemplative journal-keeping to Christian confession (Foucault *Fearless Speech*). The ancient Romans, though they had their occasional revelries, were conservative by modern standards—far more committed to the family unit and some degree of fidelity to a wife (complete fidelity to a husband was, of course, expected—Julius Caesar divorced his wife, Pompeia over a rumor of her infidelity because *his* wife had to be “above suspicion”). Neither Greeks nor Romans were *very publicly* comfortable with what we moderns call homosexuality—the Greeks could get away with it in certain relationships, and Plato wrote about it lovingly, but such a relationship between citizens of equal rank was frowned upon. Romans were most repressive of homosexuality, for which there was no publicly safe space. The practices of self-control became gradually more repressive from Greece through Rome—and then the Christians appeared.

Christianity was most responsible (as Nietzsche wrote) for completing the transformation of *askesis* to *asceticism*, from mere ethical exercises to strict denials of unethical possibilities (Foucault *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality*). When “scientific enlightenment” came onto the scene, asceticism was again transformed into disciplinary practices designed to *normalize, cure, and indoctrinate* its subjects (arguments for which are found in Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic, Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*). In the 20th Century, the impulse for normalization, indoctrination, for *totality* found its apotheosis in totalitarianism.
5. Totality as the Entelechy of Ethics

Recall my point, from the introductory chapter about how totalitarianism did not always have a bad name. According to Jeffery C. Isaac’s *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*, totalitarianism was, from the early 1900s through the mid-30s, the name for a movement in political philosophy that considered totality a utopian approach to the Enlightenment values treasured throughout modernist Europe. The idea was to account for all accidents, assimilate all others, eliminate all possibilities of chance, manage all aspects of being—political, ethical, economic, ideological, medical, mental, ontological—the first time totality had been dreamt of since Plato’s *Republic* (except that Plato, at least, acknowledged that humans were not gods, and so could not control the whole *kosmos*). Recall also, from the first chapter, my reference to my own previous work on Levinas and totality:

The economizing principle of ontology, what Levinas calls *totality*, consists of the sweeping optic whereby one would categorize beings. Totalizers make a claim to be above the gameboard; not necessarily in even an objective sense, but merely as an observer distant enough to be able to distinguish light from dark, rook from pawn. The project of Western ontology has been to form totality: to account for any and all pieces and places they might occupy, to define a place for everything and everything in its place (Thomas "Levinas, Arendt, and the Problem of Rhetoric in Theodicy as a Justification of Evil" 26).
The key to Levinas’ view of totality is its attempt to distinguish itself as having a radical alterity. The totalitarian imagines a world or *claims* to have gained a world that transcends categories of situatedness. More than a simple attempt to imagine the workings of the world, totalitarianism attempts to understand relations to others from outside oneself:

if I conceive of the relation to the other in terms of understanding, correlation, symmetry, reciprocity, equality and even, as has once again become fashionable, recognition, then that relation is totalized. When I totalize, I conceive of the relation to the other from some imagined point that would be outside of it and I turn myself into a theoretical spectator on the social world of which I am really part, and in which I am an agent. Viewed from outside, intersubjectivity might appear to be a relation between equals, but from inside that relation, as it takes place at this very moment, you place an obligation on me that makes you higher than me, more than my equal (Critchley 13-14).

I have chosen to drag this discussion of aesthetics toward Levinas’ thinking for a couple of important reasons. First, Levinas *prioritized ethics*. In his youth, he was an admirer of Heidegger, but he was shocked when Heidegger became a Nazi. The Jewish Holocaust, no doubt, was traumatic for Levinas, but not separately from the horror he felt in the turn of a brilliant philosopher in Hitler’s direction. Levinas’ philosophical accounting of Heidegger’s betrayal was probably offered in an essay he wrote about the history of metaphysics in relation to ethics (Levinas "Is Ontology Fundamental?"). Metaphysics or ontology has been presumed fundamental in philosophical treatises because it is the
grounding from which assumptions about knowledge, ethics, and meaning would emanate, and because no work of knowledge, ethics, or meaning could possibly hope to avoid smuggling ontological assumptions back into its conclusions. Even Levinas admits the likelihood that ontology infects his ethics—but his answer is unique: the ethical enterprise is so important as to subordinate questions of ontology. And if ontology prevented ethical options? Let justice be done though the world may parish! Levinas thought that his responsibility to the “infinite,” the radical otherness outside has calculation and worthy of his love, might be simply religious in devotion and humility.¹⁶³

Second, Levinas matters because his aims are impossible except through complete disengagement with the world, an idea contrary to Levinas’ thinking about active responsibility. One could hope to be “ethical” only at the cost of selling out politically—which is to say that private consistency with one’s own conscience cannot be squared with public imperatives for judgment and action. Levinas himself conceded the impossibility of avoiding an orientation of alterity in attempting to adjudicate between competing claims of others: political commitments obligate beings to seek justice and compromise, but claims for public adjudication will inevitably be zero-sum, giving justice to some while simultaneously denying it to others. Ethical innocence would be

¹⁶³ Maybe this is a touchstone with the “teleological suspension of the ethical” from Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling / Repetition, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1983). Since moral duties sometimes conflict, Kierkegaard concluded that one must often abandon Kantian deontology in favor of a consequence-based ethical view. Kant would have objected that one can only control one’s present conduct and not its future consequences, but Kierkegaard answered that Kant would not be able to resolve conflicting duties in present conduct without suspending his categorical imperative and making a “leap of faith” based on a teleological calculation. I will return to Kierkegarld’s idea further on when I swing back around to justifying aesthetics in place of ethics.
possible, but only for isolationists living on Walden’s pond.\textsuperscript{164} Political justice may require \textit{hurting some to help others}, but some ethical purists would not take that risk. Kant, in fact, wrote an essay in defense of his \textit{Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals} rebutting the argument that ethical people should hypothetically be allowed “white” lies to save the lives of others (“On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns”).

Ethics can also be actively dangerous in disengagement with others. Ethics can be dangerous in its \textit{idios}, its privacy—especially if one is convinced that what is going on privately is not a conversation with one’s own conscience but with one’s supposed divine arbiter of power and righteousness (“His Celestial arbitrariness,” as one of Gore Vidal’s characters calls it). Consider as an example the people discussed in Jon Krakauer’s book, \textit{Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith}. Krakauer, a distinguished journalist, traced the stories of various criminals who were also devotees of the Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints, the exiled offshoot of the Mormon religion. Joseph Smith, the founder of the original Morman church, made (at least) two significant errors in the development of his religion that went on to have lasting consequences for the church’s treatment by outsiders (these and many other mistakes besides can be read about in Fawn Brodie’s excellent biography of Joseph Smith, \textit{No Man Knows My Henry David Thoreau, American “transcendentalist” philosopher of civil disobedience, was once arrested for not paying his taxes. He was protesting the American war on Mexico which he saw as an eventual attempt to extend slavery to the West. By not paying his taxes, he was both disobedient and “not responsible” for what the U.S. government would have been doing with the money. When Thoreau’s friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson (you needed three names to join the American transcendentalist club) came to bail him out of jail, Emerson is reported to have said “What are you doing in there?” Thoreau, self-righteously, turned the question: “No, what are you doing \textit{out there}?” With the exception of giving one some ground from which to be self-righteous, disengagement has no ethical or political value except as a performance for one’s self. Thoreau’s hands were clean (supposedly), but he did not stop the war or the slavery by sitting in jail. Protests, minus persuasion or compulsion, are selfish at best—“pure persuasion” designed to allay the consciences of its participants.

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History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet). First, and most famously, he inaugurated the practice of polygamy (the chief reason that the official Mormon hierarchy has excommunicated members of the Fundamentalist church). Second, but more damaging, he preached that all members of the Mormon religion could receive direct revelations from their Heavenly Father. Smith quickly realized this was a mistake and tried to take it back, to reserve that power of direct revelation for the president of the church, but the genie was out of the bottle. Hence Krakauer’s book detailing the exploits of various Fundamentalist church members who would receive the oddest revelations like “My sister-in-law is an unholy person and should be murdered.” One man, having received his revelation, convinced another brother (not the married one) to participate in the murder. After their arrest and placement in jail, the first brother had yet another revelation: the second brother should allow the first to choke him to death through the bars of the cell. Brother number two complied, at first, but then, while being strangled (for the first time in his life?) he thought critically about the situation and broke away from his brother, saving his life. I am sure his god was very disappointed in him. Certainly, these buffoons are not what Levinas had in mind when he wrote about ethics. Nor are they what Thoreau was thinking about when he argued that consistency with his conscience was a duty greater than that of a social contract. And they are not what Socrates-via-Plato had in mind when Plato argued for consistency with one’s own self as an imperative for any virtuous person. But that Levinas, Thoreau, and Plato were not considering these possibilities is also my point: ethics is dangerous without making an appearance, without being subject to powers other than the “almighty,” without the acceptance of plurality in judgment and even in oneself. To the degree that ethics or
“morality” are very wrongly considered “private” matters, they can run amok with the spontaneity of an imagination that believes it takes its orders from the very top. Politics, on the other hand, is the very farthest thing from that kind of privacy.

The third reason Levinas matters is because totalitarianism was the inevitable consequence of Kant’s approach to ethics. Certainly that was not Kant’s intent (and surely he might have claimed that one could convict him of nothing more than an intention), but his role in the architecture of totalitarianism simply cannot be ignored. He was implicated, most famously, by Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi S.S. officer responsible for “transportation” (to concentration camps or just out to be shot). Asked about his moral thinking, Eichmann claimed to have lived according to Kant his whole life—having been ordered by his superiors to transport thousands of Jews to places where Eichmann knew they would be killed, he claimed that Kant himself would have obeyed those orders because doing so would be doing his duty. Eichmann became the model for Arendt’s theory of the banality of evil—the thoughtlessness of it—which was enabled by systems of non-thinking, means of avoiding contemplation of the ethical and political imperatives of action (Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil). Totality, in attempting to account for everything, creates rules of conduct to which one is bound by relations like duty; Kant, in providing a means of doing one’s duty through the simple following of rules, obeying of orders, was unintentionally appropriable as a totalitarian philosopher. In Kant, we discover that the field that claims alterity, that surveys all other disciplines from above and, indeed, gives meaning to the idea of discipline itself, is asceticized ethics. Many may have feared that totalitarianism did not die with the end of
the Second World War, that it continued to live as a virus within us, waiting to leave dormancy. Asceticized ethics is that virus.

So if ethics is so bad, how has it survived? Ethics has strengthened itself by claiming the status of totality, but one would use circular reasoning to say that ethics has obtained its totalizing authority by using its totalizing authority—and yet that reasoning would be circular only if the question were about how ethics obtained its authority, a question answered at length in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* (though I do not necessarily endorse all of his moves in that work). Possibly the most important of Nietzsche’s reasons for ethics’ victory through the ages has been its deployment of art! Use of art for ethical purposes should come as no surprise—called “propaganda” and sometimes “pedagogy” now—because at least since Plato himself, ethics has been propagated through pleasing works of artisanal skill. As mentioned above, Plato bemoaned (through Socrates) his own tendency to succumb to art:

we haven’t yet made the most serious allegation against representational poetry. It has a terrifying capacity for deforming even good people. Only a very few escape… When Homer or another tragedian represents the grief of one of the heroes, they have him deliver a lengthy speech of lamentation or even have him sing a dirge and beat his breast; and when we listen to all this, even the best of us, as I’m sure you’re aware, feels pleasure. We surrender ourselves, let ourselves be carried along, and share the hero’s pain; and then we enthuse about the skill of any poet who makes us feel particularly strong feelings (Plato "The Republic" 25).
And, as countless lay philosophers have been quick to point out, Plato’s condemnation of art is hypocritical because he applies the art as he condemns it. Plato’s dialogue is no mere dialogue: it is a monologue cleverly disguised as a dialogue. Plato recommends that one combat artistic trickery with “measuring, counting, and weighing” (Plato "The Republic" 21). And, yet, each time one turns back to the bibliography pages one will count only one author! Perhaps one would object that there are, in fact, many authors of a text or none at all but as merely implied authors—and those objections would also be very clever applications of rhetorical art. Whether one may have an aesthetic with boundaries beyond language differs greatly from the boundaries of the ethical: ethics cannot be expressed except with language, except with the artistic tropes of semantics, and so it is the singular aesthetic type called ethics that is restricted to the forms. But such a restriction need not mean that all possibilities for great art are foreclosed (recalling Nietzsche’s compliment of ascetic artists). Homer, the Jewish and Christian Bibles, the Qur’an—all examples of art that espoused the “propriety” of Norms of Rhetorical Culture prized by Farrell. The answer to my question, “If ethics is so bad, how has it survived?,” is simply that ethics has been good enough aesthetically to persuade a critical mass of persons that ethics deserves its totalitarian hegemony.

6. Ethics Sitting in Judgment of Aesthetics

But lately ethics has been coasting on the laurels of its former glories, maintaining its privileged position by silencing the aesthetic in the period of reason and science: just as Plato had philosophy (and, by implication, rhetoric) reserved for the elite philosopher-
kings, the fields of expertise, needed to understand the workings of reason and science, demanded an aesthetic of boredom. Too fantastic to be believed? But there is plenty of evidence. Kant’s approach to beauty aimed at the universality of form because it was necessary that the aesthetic be disinterested—were it otherwise, it would be merely a “glandular reaction” (Farrell), not the understanding produced by thoughtful aesthetic reflection at all (no doubt the aesthetic of boredom explains why Kant’s style doesn’t show the hypocrisy that Plato’s style does). Science in particular needed an aesthetic of boredom to bolster its claim on disinterested objectivity: impassioned partisan subjectivity was the stuff of politics, of rhetoric, of demagoguery. Similar thinking is at work in modern condemnation of popular art. Popularity signifies broad appeal, which signifies prurience (the sense most common to the “masses”): “The work of intellectuals and artists must be unpopular, without any commercial appeal, so that it can be certified as true art, and thereby deemed socially valuable” (Jensen 373). One should be cautioned away from thinking of popularity as parallel to a kind of collective ideology or agreed consensus: most people think the sky is blue, but those who police the boundaries of ethics and art are not likely to identify such a belief as “popular” because their interests in identifying the popular are bound up in elitist power—the power of disciplinary experts in such fields as science and ethical philosophy. Foucault, too, noticed a unique change in the direction of the aesthetic around the time of the Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution. In Madness and Civilization, he sought to describe the appearance of madness in post-Renaissance Europe and to explain the various ways of confining undesirables (Foucault Madness and Civilization). Among the “asylums,” the places reserved for the mad, were jails and hospitals—and literature? Expressions of madness
were perfectly acceptable in literature because the status of literature was bound to the all-but-dead stock of aesthetics—the mad had no credibility with which to speak because they lived in a world of fantasy (*phantasia*!), as did the “representational poets” Plato condemned for misleading the masses. Wayne Booth’s *The Company We Keep*, thus, stood out as an ironic plea from the asylum. As Booth complained that literature lacks “theorists who argue that such judgments are something more than an expression of individual taste,” he seemed not to notice that a possible reason there are no ethical critics in literature is that literature has been, for several hundred years, one of the only spaces made safe from ethical Puritanism run amok (Booth *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* 19).\(^{165}\)

Ethics totalizes: it takes the position of alterity from which to judge all of Being. But the immediate, micro-political effects of totalizing have not yet been made clear. Judgment of being from outside oneself establishes a model for relationships with all others. If ethics still has anything to do with the ancient Greek notion of a relation to one’s self, the relation to the self is the model for all *others* (who are merely neutral copies of the self, *tabula rosa*), which becomes a prescription of pedagogical treatment toward others to which others must also adhere. Seeking the control of a totality means identifying all possible relationships, rooting out all possible accidents, gaining enough knowledge so as to be able to calculate all of being.

\(^{165}\) I am, of course, well aware of ethical moves from outside the academy to censor some piece of artwork—I think that such an objection misses the point: madness is “safe,” both from itself and others, when contained in disciplinary spaces like hospitals and jails. Literature, unlike hospitals and jails, has the great virtue of being published for mass consumption, but it is still confined to the degree that its credibility is nullified by its status as fantasy (just like the ravings of the mad). Censorship is an ethical intervention, just as hospitals and jails attempt to discipline their captives, but the existence of such censorship should not be confused with a lack of “safety” for literature’s madness because that safety is guaranteed by literature’s *prima facie* unreasonableness.
The totalizing orientation toward knowledge is *surveillance*: only through observing all, uncovering all could the totality hope to root out all otherness, for annihilation or assimilation. Poulakos complained about the effect such a perspective has on the aesthetic: “‘power’ reduces beauty to a suspect notion to be tracked down and exposed as a deceptive, because hidden, form of power” (Poulakos 96). Foucault would have been sympathetic to Poulakos’ argument, given that Foucault argued towards the end that what he sought was an “aesthetics of existence” (*The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality*). Seeing nothing as innocent is a politically useful maneuver that legitimizes a lot of good criticism, but would it not also be a politically useful maneuver—or just fun—to take in the work on the terms it lays out for itself as though innocence existed? Let us fantasize! Might one find useful the enactment of perspective-by-incongruity? Let us contradict ourselves! Might resistance to the surveying orientation of ethical knowing mean having a willingness to suspend disbelief and be seduced by a text or performance? Let us get carried away! And might there not be alternatives *in between or in addition to* these polar extremes? Let us invent! The totality of ethics has allowed us only two options: discipline or not. I am not advocating blindness to ethical implications—ethics could, hypothetically, bend, but ascetic ethics cannot because ascetic ethics grounds its legitimacy in transcendent, non-adaptable stasis: right and wrong, innocent and not. I am advocating breaking our trained incapacity to

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166 I am working toward a view of rhetoric that privileges the aesthetic, but also displaces ethics in favor of politics—but politics is basically the analysis of the world from the vantage point of power relationships and fluctuations in them. I do not view Poulakos’ complaint as *necessarily* inconsistent with my view because he appears, to me, to be attacking the *reduction of beauty to power*, not the analysis of beauty with respect to power among other possibilities. In my view, beauty can relate to power, it can be affected by power and/or create types of power, but they are not equitable or reducible to each other.
see beyond those ethical implications, to recognize alternatives to Scylla of Apollonian ethics and the Charybdis of Dionysian abandon altogether—to get beyond good and evil.

Discipline is *asceticism par excellence*: no invention except as needed to reinforce or return to the discipline, mere repetition of traditional habits, the comfort of ideological rules and calculations, the efficiency of production. We know from experience where that *ethos* of efficiency leads:

We know from Joel Katz’s writing about German memos from World War II some particulars of what can happen when efficiency is the value placed above—or used to mask—all others: it is possible for many people to forget or be unable to see, under such circumstances, that other people are having their lives horribly and finally shaped to destruction through and behind the finely-carved information passing over a desk (Wysocki 151).

The duty to be efficient led modernity off of a cliff once before, and it still can because reactions in the 60 years since the defeat of totalitarianism have answered with *more pedagogy*, more attempts to instill discipline—this time, we will not miss anything, we swear—so as to do the totality right on the second try. Our failure to calculate the universe will not be our doom; rather, our failure to accept our inability to calculate being will:

The power of imagination required for art is also the faculty required for ethics—the ability to imagine oneself in the position of the other. Hannah Arendt paints Adolf Eichmann in the character of one who fatally, but ordinarily, lacks such imagination. She mentions his “heroic fight with the German language,” his habit of speaking almost entirely in stock phrases,
and most tellingly his inability to adjust his rhetoric to his audience. "The longer one listened to him," she concludes, "the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely bound up with an inability to think, namely to think from the standpoint of someone else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such.” Of course, the key to Arendt’s book is that this failure of imagination is not extraordinary. Eichmann was an ordinary man who followed the rules of a deformed system. He had read and internalized Kant's rendition of the golden rule… It was precisely the sense of honor and devotion to duty practiced by the functionaries, the bureaucratic rank and file of the Reich, that given a twisted object allowed them to execute it with all the bureaucratic zeal to which they were dedicated. In their devotion to duty, they failed in the capacity to see their acts from the outside, to see how they would look from the perspective of the other, or even simply to extend sympathetic imagination to those they were sending to their deaths. And this is why ethics without aesthetics loses the voice that gives it life, while aesthetics without ethics loses the life that gives it voice—and the two can become one only in the ethos of invention (Zulick 30-31).

Eichmann was not one man, in Arendt’s work, but a stand-in for the “60 million” other Germans who also did their duty. Heidegger himself was blinded—so lost in his worries about the technological transformation of being into disposable reserve, he failed to see
that his thinking was also a technology transforming being into disposable reserve. The danger has never been an instance of discipline in a vacuum; it has been the culture of it. Docile bodies are not dangerous in any moment; they are dangerous across the totality of a time in which they have been punishingly formed. Banality is not evil in a single instance—it is a necessary component of living the hermeneutical hopscotch given that thinking through the totality of all things, all at once, beyond even the misrepresentations of representation, is impossible except for an omnipotent being—but banality is evil as a practice of living. All of this is at stake in the conflict between ethics and aesthetics: ethical discipline breeds ethical totality, all of which can be broken up by the interruptive spontaneity of the aesthetic should we choose not to prod ourselves out of such inventiveness.

7. Turning the Tables on Ethics by Judging With Aesthetics

In the last section I considered aesthetics from the viewpoint of ethics—a necessary step in explaining the problems with ethics, but not a sufficient step since limiting oneself to the viewpoint of ethics is precisely the goal of the ethical bureaucratization of the imaginative (Burke Attitudes toward History). The reasonable next step would be to consider a theory of rhetorical aesthetics on its own terms, but also to use it to reinterpret the histories of aesthetics, ethics, politics, and rhetoric so as to genealogically put the totality of ethics to bed. The capitalist-utilitarian tendency is to see utilitarian art as art of a very peculiar kind: it is still art, but not the same sort of art that, say, Leonardo’s Mona Lisa is—it is not art for the sake of art. John Dewey thought
that art’s intrinsic value might have seemed absurd to the ancients: “the arts of drama, music, painting, and architecture thus exemplified had no peculiar connection with theaters, galleries, museums. They were part of the significant life of an organized community” (Dewey "Art as Experience" 582). Maybe they were fully integrated parts of living, but that does not seem, to me, to be sufficient for disproving the value of art within itself. Both Martin Heidegger ("The Origin of the Work of Art"), he of Levinas’ nightmares, and Dewey defined art with respect to some kind of human making:

Domestic utensils, furnishings of tent and house, rugs, mats, jars, pots, bows, spears, were wrought with such delighted care that today we hunt them out and give them places of honor in our art museums. Yet in their own time and place, such things were enhancements of the processes of everyday life. Instead of being elevated to a niche apart, they belonged to display of prowess, the manifestation of group and clan membership, worship of gods, feasting and fasting, fighting, hunting, and all the rhythmic crises that punctuate the stream of living. (Dewey "Art as Experience" 582)

Dewey was particularly insistent that art not be seen as that which is hung in a museum, but simply as that which is made. Aesthetics, then, is also a reflection of the craftiness of the things made. This articulation does get at the heart of much of the aesthetic, but it still leaves a couple of difficulties. First, the connection of these articles of human manufacture to the embodied quality of the aesthetic is not entirely clear: is some sort of tangential relation to the body sufficient for calling something art? Second, not all things that are perceived as aesthetically significant are creations of human beings—a forest’s
scenery can often be very beautiful, but not if the category of beauty is restricted to those things produced by human ingenuity. Beneath the surface of this problem lies the troublesomeness of intention: to say that something was made by someone with a mind toward creating it is to imply invention, ingenuity in the making, and possibly a sort of completion for presentation or acceptance by auditors (something true even of tools).

Both of these objections may be accounted for by the inclusion, within the field of the aesthetic, of the arts of interpretation and criticism, both of which I take to be essential characteristics of rhetoric. Just as tropes bend traditional language’s understanding to come to make sense of the new, interpretation bends traditional ideological approaches to make sense of its texts and reread them (and reread them and reread them…). Similarly, criticism juxtaposes a traditional ideology against a text for the purpose of building onto or cutting away at the meaning of a text or to falsify some readings by testing for their truth. To form orientations with interpretations and criticisms is to make art: interpretations and criticisms are built, used, performed, and reacted to just as all artworks, as all artisanal crafts are. To see the beauty of the forest really is in the eye of the beholder because it is the interpreter who, in mind and body inseparable, reacts to the perception of beauty flowing through environment and organism, within the self and to the hermeneutic moves made thereafter. The forest is not beautiful before a beholder comes to it; a beholder recognizes beauty in the forest because the perception of the forest has pleasured the senses in some way calling out for sense-making, which is supplied in the artful interpretation.

The aesthetic impulse within human being is not easily curtailed (thus, the need for all the discipline), and desires for beauty, among other appetites, break through the
shackles of ethics. Aesthetics suffers from precisely the same attack Plato made against rhetoric and poetry—it appeals to prurience without necessarily being checked by philosophical reasoning. The ethics/aesthetics divide is most easily captured in the “guilty pleasure.” As far back as Aristotle’s *catharsis*, we have known that there is a strange attractiveness in the suffering of others, be it fictional (like Greek tragedy) or not (the car accident one cannot avert one’s eyes from). Aestheticians seeking a definition of art must also trouble themselves with the relation of the field of art to other fields like ethics because those fields are holdovers from the Platonist attack on *mimetic* art. How, for example, might aesthetics philosopher Arthur C. Danto’s definition of artwork (as concerning the crossroads of expression, style, and rhetoric) function in relation to the ethical? Danto wanted to get at a sense of the artwork through metaphorical intention, but intentions and metaphors do not encompass the whole of phenomena that one might call *beautiful*. Perhaps Danto’s loophole was “artwork,” the search for what art is *as a human creation*, but if that is so then he had already stacked the deck before concluding that artwork must have some relation to intention. The intentionality problem aside, Danto was still left with the ethical question against aesthetics, or, properly, the ethical question against *metaphor*. What, for example, is metaphorical about the photograph that was taken by Tamara Beckwith and has been archived with several other photos by the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov/exhibits/911/images/01810r.jpg)? The photo depicts the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, capturing (!) the moment of the second airplane’s crash into the second tower. The photograph is neatly framed even in the online version (noteworthy in a Heideggerian context—literally *Gestell*). The picture is terrible; it recollects the vulnerability one might have felt in 2001, the awe at the
seemingly unprovoked violence, and the sadness for the dead. The picture is terrible—but it attracts my attention. I am held by the photograph, fascinated by its colors, drawn to the gapping hole in the Tower on the right as though to double-check that I’m not seeing an optical illusion in the asymmetrical crater in the building. The towers dwarf the surrounding buildings like the monoliths they are (like in *2001: A Space Odyssey*). My eyes roll through the photograph’s central attraction, the colorful eruption of the Tower on the left—it appears as things I have only seen in pictures of volcanic eruptions and sunbursts, or in movies. The picture is terrible, but is it not also beautiful? Would its beauty be attributable to metaphor?

The fascination produced by the Beckwith photograph, its attractiveness to the eye which scans and rescans it, *must* be called beauty, or else what could beauty possibly be? What else would one call the fascination one has for Beckwith’s photograph if not an attraction to beauty? One might respond to my questions by suggesting that the photograph is noteworthy for its *ugliness*, but that objection does not faze me for a few reasons. First, the fact of being attracted to it may well be called “ugliness,” but then the “attractiveness” of the ugly is its beauty. If one wished to argue that aesthetic attractiveness is to be found in its extremes of beauty and ugliness, then the point that *attractiveness* is the essential characteristic goes ignored. Second, the photograph could not be accurately identified as “ugly” on its own merits if divorced from context. Of course, nothing is divorced from its own context, but contextualization of this photograph transforms it from mere photograph to an element in a great political and cultural drama. That transformation, again, is not problematic to me, but that strategy has an *infinitely regressive* quality to it, because it suggests that one would always be able to surmount
judgment of aesthetic beauty or ugliness by simply appealing to a context in greater scope. In denoting a thing onto itself an *artwork*, an arbitrary boundary between text and context appears—and, though I do not wish to prohibit toying with that arbitrary boundary, neither do I wish the arbitrariness of what counts as the text to *delay judgment of the text*, which is precisely what would always result from a continuing ability to ask for more context. Judgments need not be conclusive, but they do need to be made for everyday living, and, in aesthetics, these judgments may be inevitable and immediate regardless of one’s orientation toward the world. Kant called aesthetic judgment in its immediacy “taste.” Kant’s theory of beauty is not palatable (because it requires on some level a kind of consensus about taste), but his insight that one’s taste is immediate *and so preempts reflective thought* is the very core of the problem of ethics in aesthetics. If one is a good guilty Catholic (a disciplined believer), one’s taste will be instantly attracted to the Beckwith photograph, but then in the next moment brought back into proper ethical form by a reflection on how *horrible* it is to pleasurably regard the pain of others. Third, the “infinitely regressive” quality of context may just as surely allow an aesthetic interpretation as an ethical one by expanding the scene to one of archetypal dimensions. Fire is Promethean, developmentally the most important of our species’ tools even as it has so often burned down the visions that had followed smoke into the sky: Nero’s Rome, Frankenstein’s monster (of film), the Phoenix, the Chicago Cubs, and so on. The destruction of a favored monument is a staple of a “barbarian’s” war against “civilization”: no ancient “Wonder of the World” survives except the Pyramids, and even they were stripped of their smooth, gleaming sandstone. This World Trade Center, a Tower of Babel, a Towering Inferno from which capitalists jumped from Circles Three
and Four down to the Wood of Suicides in Circle Seven—one’s invocation of “tragedy” as a description may say more than one knows, so often forgetting that tragedy is not *aletheia*, but *memesis*, tragedy as *tragōidia*, “goat song,” art.

The “ugliness” of Beckwith’s photograph is therefore debatable. If one makes use of the problematic contextualization strategy, the ugliness of the photograph is easily established: hundreds died in the event framed in this photo, killed in the airplane crash, the fire, the fall from the building, or in the building’s collapse. But how might the photograph be judged if one repressed contextualization? For experiment’s sake, imagine that this photograph is of a different event, a demolition, in which no one died—the public does, indeed, turn out to watch such explosions, especially of large buildings like football stadiums or famous buildings like Las Vegas casinos. Are these public spectators not drawn to the spectacle because of a kind of pleasure? And would not one find the same sort of pleasure in Beckwith’s photograph if one *did not know* that the explosion was an attack, not a demolition? Or, to cruelly apply Kant’s analysis, are we not drawn to the photograph immediately but repelled from it only on reflection? When reflection happens and succeeds in inducing guilt, but fails to overcome the spell of the aesthetic, one has what we call “guilty pleasure.”

One might find some illumination in temporarily suspending a worry about overgeneralization and imagining what fields of discourse might look like if understood from the view point of the aesthetic. A temporary suspension of ethics so as to imagine alternatives—to deliberate over possibilities and probabilities—is part of the

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wonder of rhetoric: “Understood aesthetically, rhetoric allows people to suspend willingly their disbelief and be exposed to a world other or seemingly better than the one with which they are familiar, all too familiar” (Whitson and Poulakos 138). Might one therefore call reason the aesthetic of non-contradiction added to practices of induction and deduction? And is not asceticism the aesthetic dominated by form as opposed to material? Material, being worthless, and the flesh, being material, asceticism seeks a relation to the self that disciplines its spirit (form) in relation to the body so as to avoid being “seduced” by that body’s pleasures. And ethics itself? Ancient Greek men, according to Foucault, thought ethics was an aesthetic of the relation to the self: that particular aesthetic demanded moderation, practices that got just enough nutrition, physical exercise, sex, education, and so forth. But ethics has been perverted by asceticism such that a distinction between ethics and asceticism, in our time, probably does not meaningfully exist—though the truly bourgeois know nothing of need and know plenty about excess, their ethical thinking is still dominated by an ascetic ideal that privileges discipline as the Enlightenment virtue that merged moral right and wrong with factual right and wrong. In the ethics of Western “civilization,” discipline has been the particular and totalitarianism has been the general.

8. Rhetoric-as-Aesthetics and Politics

The totality of ethics is, despite its pretensions, impossible: kairotic time necessarily breaks up the totality because it constantly demonstrates that newness cannot 

168 For more on “suspensions” of the ethical, see Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling / Repetition.
be predicted. Discipline may prepare us for reacting when the “due time” comes and some troping is deliberate (as in art), but most of our “decisions” happen on the spur of the moment because we are given no choice but to invent now.

The expansiveness of rhetorical troping is the first crucial link between aesthetics and politics. Rhetorical tropes offer a limitless number of possibilities for meaning, and the actualization of these possibilities is of political import. Merleau-Ponty made the connection:

What we mean is not before us, outside all speech, as sheer signification. [Meaning] is only the excess of what we live over what has already been said. Without apparatus of expression we set ourselves up in a situation the apparatus is sensitive to, we confront it with the situation, and our statements are only the final balance of these exchanges. Political thought itself is of this order. It is always the elucidation of an historical perception in which all our understanding, all our experience, and all our values simultaneously come into play—and of which our theses are only the schematic formulation. All action and knowledge which do not go through this elaboration, and of which seek to set up values which have not been embodied in our individual or collective history… fall short of the problems they are trying to solve (Merleau-Ponty 120).

While meaning cannot be limited—because all significations have possibilities beyond what is said—the political thrives or dies on the elaboration or lack of elaboration of values “embodied in our individual or collective memory.” Tropes and topoi (accessible
through the natality of a turn) are the elaborations of memories that make things appear in the web of relations, and hence in politics.

The tropes of rhetoricians deal with arrangements of symbols that convey meaning by virtue of their relational content. Arendt’s sense of “the political” (found primarily in The Human Condition and Between Past and Future) refers to the public space of action (words and deeds), a place where appearances are made as natality (the creation of something new). The political is valuable to Arendt because it gives itself its own purpose of freedom—doing politics is struggling deliberatively to continue doing politics. The political is threatened by invaders from outside it that would corrupt politics with Necessity—the Necessary is not negotiable, and so cannot take part in the deliberative give and take of politics without trumping the imperatives of political judgment itself. New appearances are, thus, the lifeblood of the political because they are contingent (by virtue of their newness one may surmise that they are not pure necessities but are open to negotiation because their appearance from the void suggests that they can return there) and because they offer new ways of thinking about the old (not unlike tropes). Arendt gives art a special place in the realm of action in an essay in Between Past and Future: art is the basic constituent of culture and mediates new appearances.

Recall that two especially important activities in the political sphere, according to The Human Condition, are promises and forgiveness. Promises are assertions that one or many will take a predictable course and that, on the basis of predictability, others may do as they please. But promises are inevitably broken because human being cannot control itself or the world with sufficient calculation to guarantee promises, and so forgiveness is useful. Forgiveness of human beings for their contingency, for the contingency of their
world, and the flaws of imposed by the human condition will help us escape the dilemma of the “guilty pleasure”—we must make promises and do our best to stick to them for a social order to give us freedoms, but we must also forgive each other of guilt over pleasure to turn back the calculative discipline that has sought to totalize human being through promises as deterministic. No one can be response-able for all of being; forgiveness often means acknowledging the humility of the human condition.

Artists, better than any others, should know the futility of the perfectly calculable promise because art characterizes itself with mystery (like the phoros of metaphor—we get carried away). Both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger knew art dealt with the mysteries of being, in only to say that “the idea of complete expression is nonsensical, and that all language is indirect or allusive—that it is, if you wish, silence” (Merleau-Ponty 80). But do not dismiss that silence! According to Heidegger, conversation is constitutive of our being-with (Mitsein) others: “Being able to talk and being able to hear are co-original. We are a conversation—and that means we are able to hear from one another. We are a conversation, that always also signifies we are one conversation” (Heidegger 57). And the key to conversation is its ambiguity, its silence. Were a conversation not ambiguous or silent, were conversation not a mystery, it would not be necessary or useful because lacking mystery would leave all things known. But Hans-Georg Gadamer learned from Heidegger that being-with others requires these mysteries: “No one who expresses something says what he really means. Because no one can ever have the last word, everything that one says only tends in a particular direction. And thereby remains vulnerable and understandable… We consider what speaks for a thing. But if one does not know that one only says the half of it, then the other can also not understand you.
The other needs exactly what one has not said” (Gadamer 60). And cannot this be said of *all art*? And of all moment-to-moment human character? The red square painted on a page seems inartistic (comparatively) because it lacks enough provocation of mystery with which to begin a conversation, but *great art* provokes, interrupts, questions us, invites to conversation or rumination by virtue of having *both* the representational content with which to assert *and* the openness to mystery that seduces us into engaging with the assertion. One need not “prepare” to properly see the unconcealment of being if being is acting rhetorically to not escape notice. Now one may easily say that Beckwith’s photograph is beautiful: it attracts because it has both assertion and mystery, because it both invites thinking and leaves a space open in which that thinking can take place. To be attracted to Beckwith’s photograph would be *wrong* ethically speaking—but politics, as the space of appearances that *forgives* the incalculable, *forgives* the mysteriousness, will not go on to blame us for wanting to engage the photograph or even for taking pleasure in the engagement. I can love the image and still remember that my enjoyment is completely different from the suffering it represents. I am not complicit with terrorism for being a voyeur, but I take an entirely forgivable joy in the artistry of the image isolated from its overpowering political meaning. Does that mean that I am depoliticizing the personal? Heavens, no: I am politicizing the personal more deeply than before by knowing that perceptual enjoyment is a forgivable joy for its humility in the face of the seductiveness of being beautiful.

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169 It might provoke the question “Who the hell thought this was art?” Before the end of the dissertation, a reader may come around to asking that question!
And what counts as art? *Human being is art*, remember? We have *episteme*, but we are *technē* and *hexis*! Humans that speak language or understand systems of signs cannot but help troping remembrances and interpretations. Communication itself is a great mystery to us, as is the infiniteness of the other. Our task as humans-being-artists is to *be political* instead of *ethical*, because *that* is the difference between being able on the one hand to negotiate, compromise, and forgive others in their words and deeds—in their troping—and on the other hand disciplining and normalizing otherness by assimilating it into calculative totalization, restricting the meaning of words and deeds to the literal, bureaucratizing the imaginative. Does my formulation expand the scope of art such that no meaningful category “art” can exist (because almost *nothing* is left to call “not art”)? I do not believe so: totality is not art, ethics is not art—indeed *dehumanization* is anti-aesthetic if *being human* is embracing the aesthetic within us, within our bodies. The “joy” of rhetoric then is no more than the decision to enjoy life in its mysteries and forgive—and enjoy—its incalculable mysteriousness.

9. The Question of the “Joy of Rhetoric” and Its Subsequent Thematic

Where does the joy of rhetoric leave someone who aims to exercise political art? Or educational art? Art with a message? Art that aims to persuade? How does one use rhetoric aesthetically? Perhaps by writing poetically? But how does one write poetically? With a poem? Oh, a poem! Nobody’s done that before! How can this be the rhetoric to end all rhetorics!? One cannot trope for the ages, can one? Theorizing, oddly, fails us because it too often forgets about rhetoric, the artful joy of seeing. To theorize is
to talk about the world in terms unfamiliar to it in the sense that a horse does not care being called a “horse” (though you can ask). To actualize the potency for seeing the available means of persuasion, what is needed is a performance its virtues, showing and not just telling. We need a theory of aesthetics that performs itself.
Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. The joy of rhetoric is not excess in character, trumping others for all time. The joy of rhetoric is not deficient in character, absenting the memorable moments. Rhetoric’s character takes care of its own mood by making audiences and rhetors feel fit. The joy of rhetoric is more than materiality because we take care by giving meaning and enjoying it. But meaning is more than idealism since we enjoy the feel of the game in our bodies, in rhetorical bodies both potent and set down in limits. We play within the game, but also outside it, at the boundaries of rhetoric, where there are mysteries, and freedom for troping—and all of this rhetoric we call drama.

The infliction of cruelty with a good conscience is a delight to moralists—that is why they invented Hell.

The sign on the elevator at the conference hotel said “No Exit.” I had already heard a couple of conference-goers laugh at the English skills of the hotel’s hired help—ironic laughter, of course, wink, wink. I suspected that the “Out of Order” sign was simply busy at that moment, and the other sign worked just as well to beckon people to the climb. In New Orleans, 2002, there was racism; no temporary transformation of a
hotel into an ivory tower was going to change that. Adding to the general misery, my cohort’s conference that year was under a curse. I was sick in bed with a headache for the whole first day. A few friends, Kristin and Dan, were arrested on Bourbon Street the next night for being “drunk and disorderly.” A couple more friends—Mike, Lindsay, and my professor Tony—who could not (or refused to) afford the registration fees—found themselves locked outside their own panel presentations. And it was my first academic conference, so I had not learned the ropes. Panel titles are deceptive: good topics do not guarantee good presentations; many good scholars show themselves off well, if only I could have remembered their names. It rained a lot. It was cold outside. November was no time to be a tourist in New Orleans.

I was outside the conference hotel and had almost given up on finding interesting panels when I overheard some wisdom winging its way from another corner. Eavesdropping is fruitful when one avoids sycophantic crowds and concentrates on people like the Italian man I was then listening to. He was crowded by eager graduate students, the kind who do not drool. He was neatly shaved, hair cut close to the scalp except for the bald spot haloing his head. He was tan; a Sicilian maybe. His nametag said “Marcus,” I think, but my eyes are bad and I could not really make the rest out. He was talking about the art of oratory and promised to continue on the topic with his pups on their journey to a panel some odd stories upward. He spoke, asking some questions that grabbed my attention:

Where does one discover the joy of rhetoric? Theory oddly will fail us because it will forget to employ the joyful rhetoric for theory as it always forgets its artful enjoyment of seeing. Theory is talking about worldly
beings in terms unfamiliar to them, just as a horse does not care whether
one calls it just a horse (though you can ask, of course). What, then, is
needed for actualization of the potency for seeing all of the available
means of persuasion? What else but performance of the very virtues
rhetoric has claimed, showing off and not just telling about? We need a
theory of aesthetics that performs itself. “Imagine some careful man
singing himself in this blue air; some German friend for an idea of it
afterwards.”

One of the students in Marcus’ crowd stood out, a bit taller than the rest, a bit more
rustic. “What?” he asked. “A theory of aesthetics that performs itself,” Marcus replied,
“must assert character, build up that character dramatistically, question the means used by
which that character appeals aesthetically to auditors, and discuss some of the
implications of its theorizing within a habituation—but all of that must be done not just in
the performance of theorizing, but in the theory’s performance of the very aesthetic that it
claims to be theorizing.” The student, not quite ready to depart, asked Marcus, “How
will we recognize when this aesthetic appears to us?” “Any good aesthetic provides its
own heuristic,” Marcus replied. Satisfied with that answer for the moment, the student
nodded and Marcus turned toward the hotel entrance. The group began their march.

The darkest places in Hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in
times of moral crisis.

Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. A heuristic is a guide, and as
Marcus’ students set out with their heuristic leading them I thought briefly that I might
try to find my own master’s advisor. Marcus’ crowd crossed into the hotel entrance and lobby; I sluggishly tried to keep pace with them. This conference is huge and many dress the same, so stalking someone is not easy. Assortments of uncharacterized folks fly, crisscross, through one’s path and they may be the most depressing people at the whole conference when they swoop just outside the hotel door. There are smokers, many of them former debaters I once knew who were too jaded to move from an M.A. to a Ph.D. or on to anything that mattered—not that I blame them entirely. Somewhere out there I had a friend, Linda, who entered a top law school and never came back—maybe she did things that mattered, but I was afraid to hear what difference she might be making for others. Back here at the conference was one friend, Jeff, who won many debates, succeeded at everything he did, had an intelligent and loving partner-for-life; he was smarter, more charismatic, and wittier than I am, and he gave it all up for a marijuana addiction. Addiction isn’t the right word—lethargy, perhaps? Coma? Linda and Jeff, the two most important idols in my life: a dog of war and just a dog. They were my human heuristics. Over here was another friend—loved debate, and graduate school, and the research and writing, but just couldn’t stand the grind. He is Brendon, the ponytailed anarchist-hippie: a man so genuinely kind and giving that I hated him at first because I took his goodness for high quality sarcasm. And another, Rebecca, one with brains and charms aplenty—but Rebecca is black and had experienced academia “after all we’ve done for them.” Her graduate funding was taken from her over a lawsuit against her university for “reverse discrimination.” She sat on the sideline, angry and fed up, but also stunned and uncertain about where to go next. She was far from being a quitter, but not quitting is not the same as knowing the next step in continuing. And then another
debater—a man who is not my friend—nearly tripped me just then, blocking my path so I might have to acknowledge him. I think his name was Phillip, but I never could remember. He had not mattered much since his fair debate career, ages ago, but he seemed trapped in that career without knowledge that the future had come and gone for him already (as self-fulfilling prophecy). I think he thought that the things he touched were made gold. I acquitted myself gracelessly. I had needed to speak with my advisor the whole conference, but had just missed him several times. And I still wanted to catch up with Marcus.

What power would Hell have if those imprisoned there were not able to dream of Heaven? vi

Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. Somewhere in this bar was my heuristic. I should have thought to look there sooner. It is an environment just perfect for an academic who has survived alcoholism, a few deceased wives, and increased difficulty walking. Marcus, walking past the entrance to the bar, said, “Character has a beat. Character has rhythm. Communicate the right mood and you will communicate character.” I lost hearing distance when they climbed the clamored stairway.

There is an empty inside. It doesn’t quite let you cry. It won’t really zero in on anything. I look in the mirror and see Immanuel Kant. No family. No travel. No adventure. Only study. No alcoholism though. There in the bar all else was bottoms up. A bar is a strange mix of beauty and those who once had it, if only in their arms, and then it fell away. Even the happiest people here seem sad. My advisor looked as bad as I had ever seen him. “Heaven knows what heaven is,” he gasped quietly. vi He spoke to me
without taking his eyes from his shot glass, empty, but just so that he could look endlessly towards its bottom. He was widowed—thrice. He had hip-surgery and hobbled around, maybe painlessly. I heard him laugh and smile often, but never convincingly. I’ve seen him tear up and pretend not to notice it. In this atmosphere I could not hear a word he said.

The boisterousness of a table on my left was distracting. At the table, up against the wall with dark paint barely covering the brickwork, there sat two men with the widest, brightest, most burning eyes I had ever seen. They were positioned just right in the light to look fiendish. They resembled each other in some ways—bushy facial hair, professional but ascetic dress—but their body language was jarringly distinct from one another. They were talking, but only the gray-haired, balding man was really drinking. The brunette sat defensively and motionless—knees and ankles together, elbows hooked to the body, both hands resting on the table; only his mustache looked unkempt. The brunette drank a beer, but only in sips. The gray-haired man swung as he spoke, swinging his body like he was orchestrating the symphony of his speech, keeping time by swinging his hands elegantly from shot to maw to bottle and back to shot. He was trying very hard to be merry, too, but had a smile that evoked misery. Pretending to be attending to my professor, I settled into some hearistics.

In mid-sentence I heard the gray man say “art is naturally antinomian,” whatever that means. “Art’s very accumulation (its discordant voices arising out of many systems) serves to undermine any one rigid scheme of living—and herein lies ‘wickedness’ enough.”vii “You,” the gray man swatted teasingly at the brunette out of reach, “kept the theme of transvaluation well within the sphere of ceremony.”viii The brunette looked as if
he thought to interrupt but backed off, letting the gray man continue. “An author who lives most of his life in his head must perform his transgressions on paper.” The brunette replied, quietly but in a passionate, high-pitched sort of quiet, while leaning his head inward toward the table just a little: “Enough, I am still living; and life is, after all, not a product of morality; it wants deception, it lives on deception… but there you are, I am already off again, am I not, and doing what I have always done, old immoralist and bird-catcher that I am—speaking unmorally, extramorally, ‘beyond good and evil’?”

“…once you take words as mere symbolizations,” the gray man replied in joviality, “rather than as being the accurate and total names for specific, unchangeable realities, you have lost the criteria of judgment which will tell you that it is ‘wrong,’ say, to describe a bullfight as a love encounter between the male toreador and the female bull, with the audience perhaps as peeping Toms.” The gray man was trying to get the brunette’s goat.

And get the goat he did. Lighting up and affecting shock as best he could, the brunette got gradually louder as he expounded and leaned further forward toward his ridiculously drunk interlocutor: “The great liberation comes for those who are thus fettered suddenly, like the shock of an earthquake: the youthful soul is all at once convulsed, torn loose, torn away—it itself does not know what is happening. A drive and impulse rules and masters it like a command: a will and desire awakens to go off, anywhere, at any cost; a vehement dangerous curiosity for an undiscovered world flames and flickers in all its senses. ‘Better to die than to go on living here’—thus responds the imperious voice and temptation: and this ‘here,’ this ‘at home’ is everything it had hitherto loved!” And by now the gray man was deep in hysterical laughter, making the
brunette even hotter. The gray man tried to interrupt while nodding but smirking in agreement: “The quest of the ‘norm’ led to a study of the varied ways in which men seek by symbolic means to make themselves at home in social tensions.” But the brunette at his highest pitch would not be talked over: “A sudden terror and suspicion of what it loved, a lightning-bolt of contempt for what it called ‘duty,’ a rebellious, arbitrary, volcanically erupting desire for travel, strange places, estrangements, coldness, soberness, frost, a hatred of love, perhaps a desecrating blow and glance backwards to where it formerly loved and worshipped, perhaps a hot blush of shame at what it has just done and at the same time an exultation that it has done it, a drunken, inwardly exultant shudder which betrays that a victory has been won—a victory? over what? over whom? an enigmatic, question-packed, questionable victory, but the first victory nonetheless: such bad and painful things are part of the history of the great liberation.” This man’s ethos must have been a site of smiting, a dwelling place for an earthquake of a man.

The gray man calmed down. The gray man said that he had made a “more or less covert attack upon certain critical assumptions of the day, fostered by those who mistake biography for life and insist that one write a book as though he were ordering groceries. For the conveying of information about politics, burglaries, trade markets, new comets, and outraged husbands, our newspapers have a very satisfactorily developed technique—and by far the major portion of the world’s communications can be adequately couched in this medium.” The brunette, his powder keg long since lit, now gestured for the first time, raising his hands to the roof, palms up, as if booming deified words even in that meek and squeaky voice: “…injustice is always at its greatest,” he spat, “where life has developed at its smallest, narrowest, neediest, most incipient and yet cannot avoid taking
itself as the goal and measure of things.”xvi The gray man nodded in agreement with the brunette, “though we read in our journals thousands of informative words each day, though it is the highest ambition of these words to be ‘imperceptible,’ and though they become ‘perceptible’ only when the haste of their author leads to faulty construction, most of us require the same ‘clarity’ in even our most artistic prose.”xvii

Whatever a heuristic is, I think it cannot be the goal. Or maybe it could be an end-in-itself if only it did not measure its world by its own neediness.

A thumping sound, and the two men looked in my direction. My advisor’s head hit the table; he was gone. Embarrassed—for no reason, like always—I left my advisor to his ZZZs and went off in search of Marcus.

**Hell hath no fury…** xviii

I climbed the stairs to the second floor, repeated to myself the bit I was trying to remember: any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. I found Marcus easily. Now he was speaking with only the tall student who had questioned him before, an eager looking fellow, humbly dressed, but still with the look of someone who was on the way somewhere. They were preparing to enter a room for a panel I, too, had noticed in the conference handbook the evening before: “Rhetoric and Seduction.”

“The joy of rhetoric is not excess in character,” Marcus said to his ward.

“Audiences love your play, but want room themselves to act out, too. Subtlety is also for
enjoyment. It makes an audience feel clever. And this over all else: for thine own self be new. Inflictions, memories that suffer weightily are invasions of a future time."

I hesitated before entering, not wanting Marcus and his student to notice that I was following them. The panel was still a few minutes away, so I loafed in the hallway trying my best to look comfortable. Although it was November, visitors to New Orleans insist on every day being Mardi Gras. So, despite the chill and the light rain, there was a Rip Van Winkle-ish professor on a balcony far down the hall, looking over the side while fondling a string of beads. No subtlety there. Thirty seconds or so having passed, I entered the panel room.

I did not see Marcus or his student anywhere; that didn’t matter much since I always look for the seat closest to the back corner of the room (where no one can sneak up on me). I sat. I adjusted my shoelaces. Anything to look comfortable, unnoticeable, desperate not to look out of place but just to blend in. As usual, I must have been failing at blending in because I was static; others in the room flew about, buzzing with each other, laughing, giggling, discussing studiously. C’mon already. Start the panel. I was not feeling very seduced yet.

When that finally changed, it changed too abruptly for me. I didn’t have my conference schedule-catalogue with me, so I had to gather the names of the panel from their conversation. The first panelist, a tall but rotund man wearing feathers amid the folds of a dress (but it worked on him), identified himself as “Georg” or something like that (he did not sound or look German to me; friendly though). He introduced three other panelists: one whom he identified as Richard, there was the respondent Helen, and the balcony-beaded man just making his way to the front table, Gene. I could see now that
Gene was wearing a neatly-tailored suit. But the suit was not fit for him. The suit-of-armor shininess belied the sagging and veldt-covered body underneath. Whatever else he was, Gene was the personification of a stately (male) professor: good posture, head held high, portly as a sign of health but not an over-eater, a smile with a wink somewhere within.

Georg made the usual postmodern, neo-Sophistic arguments about seduction: beauty is subjective because there are no truths, people could not know them or communicate them, so people should just enjoy representations for themselves at the very least. Love is a willingness to be seduced. Yadda yadda. At least Georg spoke like a pro—his manner was redolent of a queen, a part he played well. He discussed the “power” of rhetorical appeals and cited Sappho approvingly:

Persuasion

Aphrodite’s daughter, you cheat mortals….

With his venom Irresistible and bittersweet that loosener of limbs, Love reptile-like strikes me down"
Perhaps I was a little annoyed that he loved so much to hear himself speak. But I can hardly condemn that.

Richard was a snore: beauty is sublimity; it transcends the pettiness of subjectivity and embodiment. Love is the refusal of seduction for the sake of a higher principle of selflessness. Richard wouldn’t know sensuality if it reached out and touched him.

There’s a good chance he’d shriek.

Gene was pure trouble. His presentation wounded me emotionally. What Gene said in his fifteen minutes will haunt me as long as I live. I’ll not undo in fifteen years what he did in fifteen minutes.

“Beauty is love in embodiment, shameless and lustful and perverted. Forget your romance, it’s but a trance, says Plato to whom seduction converted. Love is what your penis makes of it; pornography its scholarly way. Throbbing and bursting and grunting and cursing, beauty’s only a mask we convey.” He was glancing down often as though at his crotch, so I found myself staring tightly at my shoelaces. I was frozen. Surely in the next moment he would stop. For sure, in mere seconds, he would come back to the marketplace of ideas. Alas, he thought he had already been coming there. The discomfort I felt before the panel was now a distant, happy memory. “Love cannot be in moderation because it sticks out, interrupting, it’s dirty and grimy and smelly and sticky; love-making is person-erupting. My favorite, *The Devil in Miss Jones*, a porno film for ages yet to come, follows a whore who, with every score, is made up uglier and uglier.”

He proceeded into a discussion of Plato’s *Phaedrus* and, seduced as he was by the opportunity to pretend that his collection of pornography is a scholarly topic, he let no double-entendre go unnamed, no middle-school joke go unmentioned, no turn go
unstoned. The whole presentation was so ugly and creepy that I cannot do it justice in description (and, in justice, I would not if I could).

When his fifteen minutes were nearly up, he showed rather greater endurance than his audience wished. He turned to Helen as if to anticipate her in the role of respondant. “Do you know what love-making is? Or do your students, the undergraduates know? Fucking, but drunk, sexing, but high, on chariots for stallions should they go.” Then he stopped. He must have been waiting an answer. As the uncomfortable impropriety of asking a colleague about the meaning of her sex life, and that of her students, musked the room, Helen finally appeared to begin speaking when Gene took the initiative to interrupt her. “You don’t know what love-making is! Plato’s Phaedrus makes plain that you should! But lacking a place for saving some face, your maidenhood’s misunderstood.” Gene, deeply in love with himself, raved on about Miss Jones’ sex adventures wearing her down—the irony of Gene’s own situation entirely lost on him as she descended.

After an eternity, it ended and then there was a long silence—not an eternal silence since it was more comfortable than what had just preceded it. The grin on Gene’s face was unbearable—it licked the inside of his mouth like he was adjusting a post-coital cigarette.

Helen had, by now, turned a whiter shade of pale (which is to say, whiter than Richard who crossed his arms and looked down at the desk so closely as to almost be resting on it with his nose for support). Sex may be a scholarly topic, of course—but were we not experiencing something totally different? Was it not that our being forced into voyeurism of Gene’s private-made-public revelations was really a problem? While Gene turned to Georg and puffed up for another round, Helen finally found her way
through the *aporia* of her momentary lapse, stood, and spoke authoritatively, not to be interrupted:

His flair is growing old. His years won’t suffice.

His hands are ever cold. He’s got only age’d eyes.

He turns bifocals on you. He won’t stop to think twice.

He burns charcoal gray, leering at your thighs.

He will tease you, just to unease you, all the worse just to fleece you.

He’s ferocious, and he knows just what it takes to make a kid flush.

He’s got lawsuit-written eyes. He’s just one of the guys.

He’ll let you sit in class. It thrills his appetite.

He’ll flay you on his hooks. He’s just one of the guys.

He’ll “take a tumble on you, roll you like you were dice,

Until you come out blue.” He’s just one of the guys. \(^{xxi}\)

She turned now and addressed Gene directly:

“She’ll expose you, when she throws you off your feet”

With contempt she shows you. She’ll be ferocious, when she learns just

What force it takes to parry thrust. All the boys’ll think she should die.

I hope she’ll laugh as you cry. \(^{xxii}\)

The whole way through Helen’s argument, Gene just shook his head—surrounded by idiots, himself the only lover in the room, maybe the world: “It’s not like I’m sexually harassing anyone.” As the panel ended and the audience shuffled out, for just a moment I thought that I might walk over there and tell him how inappropriately he was acting. But
I was still too horrified to speak. I left the room, tugged at my collar. I plopped in a heap outside the door and buried my head.

Still, my hearistics remained wide-awake. “Did you catch Gene’s tropos, there towards the ending?” Marcus asked his student. “That he wasn’t harassing anyone?” the student replied. “Apophasis…” Marcus said. The student looked at the ceiling in thought, and finished Marcus’ sentence “isn’t saying you look fat, but you do.” “Good, well done,” Marcus approved and then said “Hyperbole…” “Is the best ever,” the student answered. After a brief pause Marcus changed the subject. “Plato knew rhetoric would wound when exercise was found to captivate against one’s own project. Brockriede exaggerated when he called the speeches of the Phaedrus rape, seduction, and love. Yet, metaphorically, Brockriede was right if one takes his speakers to be orientations: speech can love, and that speech seduces we should know best of all; but can speech rape someone? Maybe not, but can speech take on an orientation of a rapist? Deliver memories that invade one to the deepest core? The trauma, relived and remembered, orients for certain. Seduction captivates, but another type of speech captivates against one’s agency, against the joy of rhetoric. Gene seduced himself but none other.”

Thoughtlessly, I interjected, “The topic of sensuality is itself a topos, a place, of intimacy, and ‘can make a heaven of hell,’ and ‘a hell of heaven.’” Marcus looked down at me with a light smile. “Yes, just so.” He motioned to his student and they moved toward the stairs.
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.\textsuperscript{xiv}

At the first turn of the third stair, past the crest of the stairway and onto the third floor, Marcus and his student (with me some turns behind) continued to talk about the last panel.\textsuperscript{xxvi} With each additional stair, I repeated the theme I had been tracing. \textsuperscript{*Huff*} Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. \textsuperscript{*Puff*} A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. \textsuperscript{*Huff*} The joy of rhetoric is not excess in character, trumping others for all time. Whew. I missed some of what Marcus and his students spoke of, my ears being so weak, but once I had fully ascended I could hear. “Seduction is not bad,” Marcus said, “not when it’s moderate and takes care. The joy of rhetoric is not deficient character. Rhetoric’s character takes care; in practice it relays expression of mood over number. Professionalism, and objectivity, and dullness, absence of character—those are the opposites to the vulgarity of our entertainment; they puritanically deny the body its due rewards. Just upstairs we will see another example of the problem we just saw, but from the opposite direction.” His student nodded assent and asked some questions I couldn’t hear. They turned again toward one of the larger rooms. Again I held back, following but taking care not to intrude. I waited a spell, and then entered.

A huge audience had gathered to hear some of the biggest names in the field clash on some postmodern gibberish. Colin, a man who I thought was my friend (a man who used to get hugs from me) noticed me and approached before the panel and said hello, calling me by the wrong name (my greatest pet peeve). I thought much more of the gaffe once he sat down among the panelists and presented words that proved conclusively that I
did not know him. At conferences, most papers are heard and not seen. The difference is huge: when reading I generally read and reread and more in ferreting out the meaning of a statement. But hearing a conference presentation does not usually allow one to hear and rehear and more. A conference presentation as a sound is uniquely temporal—in the sense of its thoughts being temporary. Imagine hearing this passage once, and then losing it immediately to whatever follows—read it aloud, think about it, and don’t look back at the paragraph again:

In the totality of circumstances evoked by a deconstructive-but-prescriptive orientation toward rhetoric, we open space for an amatory, though quotidian, dwelling that privileges a setting for the conditions of the possibility of conversing with the dialogic-other. This iteration intimates that a larger move toward a theory of good reasons might shed light on the balkanized status of rhetorical theory today. It is interesting that our means of interrogating the other relies on the schizophrenic gaze, and must be straightened out if the always already inscribed luminal space of gaze shall be interpellated. Otherwise, guidance toward otherness would be ensnared in rhetorical epistemology that appropriates otherness prescriptively while failing immediately to reflect on the real or the imaginary, either of which withholds an ideal of affirmation in the intersection of rhetorical being with becoming. Rhetoric’s articulation should hold perspective, but additionally speed throughout the performativity of its users in a fashion that liberates and enlightens even as
it disenchantingly calls into question the judgments and meanings qua presence. The seductiveness of this rhetoric should be obvious.

I did not think anything he said was obvious. He went on like that for some time—it began, it came, it passed in instants, and then it was gone to be replaced by still more, traveling in one ear and unsettlingly clogging it like a lost insect (immediately gaining so much of one’s attention that anything else being said while dealing with the insect is completely lost). When the heuristic is hearistic, is also hereistic: it is a here-and-now experience. Not for Colin’s speed and tone, but for his meaning in being speedy, and temporal-as-temporary, and poorly-toned, he reminded me of Ani DiFranco’s “Deep Dish,” a song about a bad date at a dance club. DiFranco’s date interrupts the impulsive liveliness of the surroundings with a slow, monotone chattering about nothing. Imagine wanting to dance and sing, but being held back by a conversation partner who sounded like this:

This is only a possibility,

in a in a world of possibilities.

There are,

ooobviously

there are many.. possibilities

ranging from,

small to.. large.

Before,

long,

there will be short;
before short there is.. nothing;  
when there was.. nothing, there was always the possibility of..  
something,  
becoming,  
what,  
it is. xxvii

Ani DiFranco’s character in the song reacted by reaching for the bar’s hardest liquor, and letting her “eyes ride the crowd, in a secret rodeo.” Unfortunately, academics—being professional types—save their liquor and crowds for the evenings outside the panels. So, looking around, I am trapped. And I know in advance that everyone will see the emperor’s clothes: it is too risky to say otherwise, because one did not get a good look at the text and cannot then verify that the fabric is thinner than air. Just after the panel, I saw a triad of such cynics, attached at the hips, wandering out of the room speaking in ear-wrenching squeals and growls of postmodernist dogma—they tear from the totality of postmodern nonsense the chunks that do not break up at totality so much as provide totalizers with chew toys. xxviii Let any condemn their postmodernism, though, and watch the cynics chase down the heretic and gobble her or him up into the totality. Part of the problem is that these rhetoricians clothe their work in unnecessarily confounding science or philosophy—knowing their work has no great respect around the academy, they adopt the jargon of more respected disciplines. Good scholars write to communicate; scholars who believe that they can only get at difficult concepts by speaking outside the boundaries of clear communication are engaged in monumental *hubris*. Having escaped
the cave and returned to tell the rest of us the good news, they do indeed seem dumber than ever if only for having willfully forgotten that the cave is not excluded from the truth of reality. That a sun might outshine the fire in a cave does not mean the cave disappears. \( \ldots \)

I had trouble seeing the significance of much work at the conference. I thought that a lot of academic work might not be so troublesome, but its goodness or badness was simply immeasurable because the wrong rhetorical means had been chosen for hearing it out. Many rhetoricians could, in fact, be descent scholars, but I would never know. Take, for example, “The Fox,” another panelist presenting alongside Colin. He is a heavy man, young but still balding and going gray. He was ABD, but had been for some time and would continue to be so. Actually, he looked nothing like a fox. Pretentiousness was not his problem, but something worse: a delusion or a wicked disinterest in how uninteresting he was. His presentation began:

I know of this quaint little city on the Southern coast of France, it is called the “Vide en Bas.” I have heard that General Patton stopped by there once. He was impressed with the locals, their culture and that sort of thing. They have annual festivals there and some of the best combinations of wine and cheese I have ever tasted. I saw some violin players there once and had hoped that they would play something appropriate to the situation and occasion, but if they played I missed it. I think the time of year might not have been right for kite-flying since the weather was too calm.
And the nonsense just continued, never coming to a point, a thesis, a statement, any unity or loop back on itself that I could find or stay attentive enough to remember. My eyes were rolling painfully. I imagined a darkened theater with a huge audience, and a spotlight illuminating the center stage whence between the curtains would be expected something. A drum roll… and… it stops. Nothing happens. The drum roll is tried again… and… nada. The whole dramatistic pentad is set, the audience waits in anticipation, but the character never arrives. Worse than Godot, the character is discovered never to have been. The Fox knows well how to create anticipation, how to draw out suspense; the Fox knows not how or what to deliver. Or perhaps I was supposed to be impressed by this refusal to fulfill audience expectations? Was some other, larger point being made in the performance that had escaped me? On the other hand, how much nonsense might I justify thinking that way, that the whole deep and thoughtful point was to be banal ironically? Call me a literalist.

The panel adjourned after an eternity. Once again, I found Marcus nearby, explaining what I had just seen in language better than I had found for understanding what I heard. “Character, the loop of performance that loops in a series, re-performs itself consistently within our speeches. Character re-performs enough that the pattern is seen by audiences, but not so much that its excess pains memory, nor so little that it consumes itself with each new moment and leaves behind only its crumbs as no things to remember it by. The joy of rhetoric sustains us in delight, but neither captivates us in loathing nor in this gluttony. The joy of rhetoric makes us feel fit.” I knew what Marcus meant. I saw a reminder of this meaning at the 2007 NCA conference, during a presentation by John M. Sloop. Sloop, discussing some work by Dana L. Cloud, began
each new part of his argument, changing his voice to a playfully mocking enthusiasm, saying “Dana is wrong!... about...” and then returning to his voice as usual. Too bad he did not repeat any of those points of wrongness—then I would remember more than just the repeated statement, “Dana is wrong!” Without repeating the characteristics of one’s ethos—by showing, not just telling—the whole falls into monotony, nothing stands out, and the entire message is lost. Any good aesthetic provides its own hermeneutic. But, repeating some content, using patterns of style and delivery in specific places to give the orientation of a speaker its character, making a rhythm gives one’s overall speech more than one tone, and then tones can stand out in the memory. More importantly, the tones gain the character of tropos, not just ethos; the repetitions recall something past but represent it in a new moment and hence always in a new light. To make patterns apparent, one often needs to speak less, not more; to speak with circular returns to temporal signposts, not simply in inartistic repetition.

“Let’s go upstairs now; we must see the Red Queen,” Marcus said ominously. Turning his head just briefly away from the stairs, Marcus made eye contact with me. I swear he winked, and then he and his pupil ascended, once again trading tropes. “Metonymy... “Is a nick.” “Synecdoche...” “Is a head for a whole or a whole for a head.” “Ironic...” “Is not what you expected.” I followed.

The heavens are in chaos and the situation is perfect. xxxi

A step. Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. Another step. A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. Another step. The joy of
rhetoric is not excess in character, trumping others for all time. Another step. The joy of rhetoric is not deficient character, absenting the memorable moments. Another step. Rhetoric’s character takes care of its own mood; the joy of rhetoric makes us feel fit. Another step. And another. And a final step. The fourth floor. Because I can turn. Again.

The fourth floor had an especially wide hallway, with rooms on both sides for conference panels. I might have been especially conscious of this at the time, but I thought I saw more overweight people on this floor than I had seen elsewhere at the conference. Not everyone of course—Marcus and his student were really quite slim—but most of those present seemed to carry a lot of presence. Marcus should have been easy to spot in the crowd, but he wasn’t at first. None of the people really were recognizable, their faces rather characterless, but this was to be less surprising to me later upon learning that this floor held several panels on Marxist materialism (whereas at the time I had just thought the prescription of my glasses needed an update). Dodging this person and that, boulder after boulder of impersonally rolling Marxist ideology, I finally sighted Marcus and his pupil where they were, I suppose, awaiting the “Great Enemy.” Down from another set of stairs came Rosa Eberly—surely she was not the one they were waiting for, was she? She was waltzing over to Marcus and his student, and I heard the student address her with a few nonsense questions, “Papa Satan? Papa Aleppe?”

Dr. Eberly was appropriately non sequitur in reply. Putting both hands to her cheeks, but then raising them, fists in the air in triumph, and lighting her face with circled smile and eyes, she replied “Baaaaaaa!” And then, back into her dance, she swung back into the crowd where she disappeared from sight. Marcus’ student gave Marcus a wtf-
look, and Marcus just shrugged. “Rhetoric is an art of character,” Marcus reminded the student, speaking more formally than I had heard him speak before, “and the presentation of character, like the precise intention of each brushstroke, is not going to reveal itself to you. Not exactly. And you would not want it any other way because then character would not be a mystery to us, and we would not find each other interesting at all.

Rhetoric is an art of character, but not only an *ethos* of *technē* as Eugene Garver would have it. Rhetoric is an art as *technē* is skill, but also as *poiesis* is making, and as *aesthesis* is perception. And rhetoric is not character merely as *ethos* is a dwelling place or a habit, but rhetoric is character as *tropos* is bending and turning and caring for character. Rhetoric is an art of character, and that means that rhetoric is a skillful making of perceptible bends and turns in taking care of one’s character. And one another’s care-actors.

Rhetoric makes turns. Rhetoric takes turns. And turns take rhetoric, move it, shake it, carry it away on itself. Some acts are said to ‘take skill,’ and they are said to ‘take skill’ because these acts move skill away from and beyond the intentions of the agent. But all that naturally presupposes that one does not reduce mysteriousness out of rhetoric altogether, that is what we will confront in the panel gathering in that room,” Marcus pointed, “just past where Rosa made her exit.”

Marcus and his student then lost themselves talking with another boulder I didn’t recognize. So, once again looking for something to do with my hands, I snuck into the room Marcus had pointed at, found my traditionally defensible seat, and plopped down to wait. As usual, I got out my notebook and wrote things to myself just so I would not appear uncomfortably out of place.
The room filled soon enough, overflowing. A typical conference’s absence of forethought: the panels that attract the largest audiences can be in tiny rooms like this one was, while huge ballrooms can be reserved for a handful of scholars. Panelists awkwardly circled themselves round the opposite side of the table. The identity of the Red Queen was immediately obvious: she was indeed red from top to bottom, a brilliant and imposing red. Her hair was even done up just right, as one might imagine it was a crown of red. Even her skin tone was reddish, well tanned or just very pink with liveliness. Around her were the other panelists, none of whom I recognized except—Marcus! Wonderful, I thought—I’d get some insight into this “joy of rhetoric” and “character” stuff, surely (and maybe I could be more confident of getting that insight, having ghosted after him all morning; he had not yet sounded like one to drone on, so maybe he would not “panelize” that way either).

The panel was on materialism and rhetoric, most of the presenters giving the usual list of reasons that rhetoric must be grounded in materiality: discourse is not “real” (we perform it materially, but there is no Platonic realm of meaning somewhere else), material goods are the keys to persuasion as bread is the key to feeding the hungry, capitalism sustains itself by controlling and limiting access to those materials that are the keys to persuasion (oil, food, water, and everything else), and people conceive of these materials as “necessities,” meaning that they will not give them up or be swayed except through material means. The Red Queen, satisfied that her case was made between her presentation and that of the others, nodded in satisfaction. But then the (not-so-Platonic) dialogue began as Marcus started a cross-examination of the Red Queen.
Marcus: “You believe materials overdetermine interests: fine. But how then can rhetoric confront or defeat that determination?”

Red Queen: “How else, but by an overdetermining of its own.”

Marcus: “What would that mean if not substituting swords for words?”

Red Queen: “Force may be necessary. The dying cannot afford to wait for slow change in an atheistic universe.”

Marcus: “The living cannot afford to hurry: hastiness can backfire because quick radical material changes can be just as quickly and radically reversed. If materials overdetermine persuasion, then that will be just as true of the empowered proletariat as it was of the bourgeois they overthrew.”

Red Queen: “Are the working classes to be hostage to privileged comfort forever?”

Marcus: “No: the privileged are to be held responsible for incorporating as many of the proletariat into the bourgeois as possible or else lose all.”

Red Queen: “That’s convenient for the privileged, isn’t it?”

Marcus: “The alternative is proletariat idealism. No one, the proletariat included, wants your revolution if they can’t dance.”

Red Queen: “That’s giving in to the opiates of the masses: popular culture, hegemony, false consciousness, the aestheticization of politics.”

Marcus: “No, ‘false consciousness’ is the lie that academics, and especially Marxists, tell themselves about the people because academics do not understand why they are not followed as philosopher-kings, the ‘best and the brightest.’ The people do not vote as they do out of stupidity; they are not tricked into being against their own interests. The people’s interests are simply not the interests academics assume...
them to be. If you want to argue that the people vote for evil things like Pax _Americana_ or globalizing capitalism, I will grant you that—but do not claim that they are doing so out of stupidity. The situation is even worse than you imagine. The people do not have false consciousness; they value what they are voting for.”

Red Queen: “Even if you are correct, your incremental change sells out the people who do not have the time to wait, and someone should stick up for them. You admit that people can be evil; shouldn’t we do something about that?”

Marcus: “Sure, of course, no one likes oppressing the masses exactly. It’s just a sacrifice most people are willing to live with—but we cannot save those who have no time by acting hastily. I, myself, have benefited from the slow opening up freedoms for disenfranchised classes—though I came from a very rich and powerful disenfranchised class I should note. Usually I would qualify my statements at this point in the conversation, saying that I do not claim to speak for the oppressed—but of the two of us, I think I am a better representative because my goals can eventually succeed while yours are destined for spectacular failure.”

Red Queen: _You_ can speak for the oppressed? An Italian from a rich family living in a suburb of Rome!? Look, Chickpea: materialism is the only reason you believe as you do. It has worked for you—naturally you believe it can work for others. Maybe you even believe it is conditioned on ‘working hard enough’ or something like that.”

Marcus: “No…”

Red Queen: “Your faith in progress is too idealistic to succeed. History has not been a natural progression toward greater freedom for all!”
Marcus: “I agree completely—my own circumstances were the luck of geographical proximity to Rome and the lottery of birth. I also agree that meritocracy is delusional (albeit a popular enough delusion that we need to address it on its own terms). I will even concede that my history has made me think that what has worked for me can work for others. Empirically, I am right. But now let us examine your history and how it has worked. Tell me all about the workers’ paradies set up worldwide.”

Red Queen: “The Paris Commune…”

Marcus: “…never had popular support and was crushed soon enough by more popular republican forces.”

Red Queen: “It was popular among Parisians!”

Marcus: “I agree that small republics can use socialism while avoiding totalitarianism, but that is only because the rulers are so near the people that any of the people may directly approach the ruler as a neighbor. Larger populations only require more management which means sterner policing and purging…”

Red Queen: “Don’t pin Lenin, Stalin, and Mao on communism: totalitarians—Hitler included—have masqueraded as communists or socialists, but that does not mean that communism and socialism cannot work.”

Marcus: “On the contrary, violence against the people was a necessary consequence of the dictatorship of the proletariat where populations were large—as is explained by your own materialism! When Lenin, Stalin, and Mao could not meet the material needs of all of the people, as they had promised, the available means of persuasion were reduced to available materials—so they had a choice between
using materials to keep the population down or being themselves compelled by material necessity to flee or die. Only in a small republic, where needs can be met for the citizen class, can we return to immaterial persuasion, which is to say rhetoric!”

Red Queen: “And what about all the people you leave behind? Do you decline to help your fellow human beings, despite their neediness, merely because they do not belong to your citizen class?”

Marcus: “No, but like my countryman Machiavelli, I know that the freedom produced by a republic is a precious and fragile thing—still the best of all possible politics, but always precariously existing. A good republic should diplomatically reach out beyond its borders, but it has to also know its limitations.”

Red Queen: “Limitations that doubtlessly mean sweatshops in countries with no labor standards!”

Marcus: “Probably, but at least a republic can work to change that, especially by encouraging organization of unions, so as to make use of your materialist means of persuasion, but also by encouraging others to found republics.”

Red Queen: “Spreading democracy, eh? Freedom on the march!”

Marcus: “No, no, no—republics can only exist by the volition of their own people. Forcing ‘democracy’ on someone is like forcing kids to pledge allegiance—they may do it out of groupthink, but they do not think a thing about the words, have no passion for them, and certainly know that their freedom of thought outmaneuvers any chance of ‘actually’ having to be as they say. In fact, this is the very point at which material persuasion fails to understand the power of rhetoric:
small-“r” republicanism is necessarily a belief in community, and community is an ideal and only an ideal, held together by immaterial trust, immaterial promises, immaterial forgiveness. Material persuasion is dangerous for precisely this reason: it cannot forgive anyone.”

Red Queen: “Idealist rhetoric is still worse: it can only forgive, put on a show…”

Marcus: “That is called using rhetoric.”

Red Queen: “…but with a material approach that avoids aestheticizing politics. The oppressor does not simply hand over power, but jealously guards it. No ideals will sway the oppressor except to rationalize the oppression of others.”

Marcus: “I answered this argument already with a reference to dancing. Rhetoric is an enjoyment of meaning, both in one’s body and one’s brain. One may live, of necessity, in the material, but one lives for the ideal, for the meaning. Love is not just lust. Friendship is not just an alignment of interests. Time is not just a transformation of materials, but anticipations, expectations, hopes, and anxieties over all events. Oppression is a very material kind of being, but justice is an ideal, not a material. No material will tell you that you are doing justice or injustice because material does not care about how human beings measure all things. Being material, human beings love and fear the ways they groove on their own meaningfulness in being. You want to say meaning is false, illusory, or immaterial? Fine: we do not care because we enjoy it. The de-aestheticization of politics—where meaningfulness is abandoned, where there is no hope for finding reasons to live other than the gruesome difficulty it would take to kill oneself—this de-aestheticization can have only one name: banality. Push your material up
the hill, Sisyphus; keep pushing and I will meet you back at the hill’s bottom and hopefully convince you that you can find other meanings than material toil. You must find available means of being, not just throw yourself over and over at a necessity that you cannot penetrate….

The dialogue petered out; though Marcus was on a roll he was speaking mostly to himself and his student since the panel’s time was up and many were shuffling out of the room.

Marcus’ last words reminded me that I would have to get back onto an airplane in a few days—flight terrifying me—as I was terrified when the steering wheel of my Jeep came off in my hands while driving—as I fear technology generally.

The flight out of New Orleans would, in fact, legitimate some of my fears. The plane was okay, but my bodily reaction to a fear of flying was not. Sitting at a closed window during takeoff, I had a panic attack. First, my feet went numb, the tingling feeling, though I had not been sitting on them or pinching off any blood vessel. The tingle worked its way up my legs and then, likewise, started in my hands and ran up my arms. My fingers curled up, one into a fist and the other into a sort of Texas Longhorn sign. I do not remember much of the flight—once my fingers were no longer responding to direct commands from my brain, my flight anxiety had shifted over entirely to a fear of my body. It was like a Charlie-horse, only the horse rode off. It was like an invasion of body-snatchers; they seized my hands and controlled them as they pleased, regardless of how I commanded them. I cannot just tell my body or my technology to “work” as I demand; I must negotiate with them and even fulfill their needs. Back at the conference, feeling sick as I did in thinking about the upcoming flight, I needed to get out of the room.
A Bat Out of Hell.xxxiv

I began reciting my theme to myself—“any good aesthetic provides”—but I was interrupted as I walked out the door. Out in the hallway, some moron usher with an official looking conference “badge” was trying to check that all the people entering beyond this point had “registration paid” badges of their own, but he was overwhelmed by the hugeness of the crowd. He was swept over by a river of academics, and though I would have doubted that he could ferry his way through them, he did manage to move—carrying Marcus and his student with him as it happened. I think I heard the student whine just a bit as they cruised by, “I’m not even supposed to be here today.” Poor sweet baby—you suffer a life in the gilded academy instead of the day to day worry that your water supply will give you and your family giardia. Don’t let the Red Queen hear you say that. Marcus was stern and continued the troping. “Onomatopoeia…” “Has lots of click, lots of snap.” “Pleonasmus… “Is too too.” “Oxymorons…” “Are mighty weak.”xxxv I decided to avoid the crowd by checking out another stairway, neatly decorated with looking glasses, which somehow had gone unnoticed by most everyone else. I got through the door and was only halfway up a step when I nearly ran head-on into a determined-looking grudge of a face. Too few conference faces look friendly; some look as though on the verge of losing their temper if only given the right opportunity. This man, The Emperor of Ice Cream, had a the rounded face, forehead hidden by a cap, eyebrows grimly settling around glasses, eyebrows unnaturally furrowed as if caught in between the frames and the lenses. Nearly crashing into me at full speed, his lip hooked downward like it was caught on a line. His eyes flashed frustration and
disappeared as I stepped past their reflection, and continued by the next flight of stairs. A light growl followed me. Skipping the fifth floor, I moved on.

The mind is its own place and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.\textsuperscript{xxxvi}

Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. The joy of rhetoric is not excess in character, trumping others for all time. The joy of rhetoric is not deficient in character, absenting the memorable moments. Rhetoric’s character takes care of its own mood by making audiences and rhetors feel fit. The joy of rhetoric is more than materiality because we take care by giving meaning and enjoying it.

The sixth floor was hot like a sauna—the heating system was on, but not adjustable. Didn’t anything in that hotel work right? I passed through a hall of ruined ramparts—the book sales and poster presentations made for who knows what audiences. For once, I lost track of Marcus and did not care—Kristin (she who had been arrested on Bourbon Street for partaking in its most sacred vices) was part of a discussion panel on this floor and I wanted to attend it to be supportive.

I rushed hither and went into the “Edna” conference room. Lots of thick red everywhere, carpets, window shades, chair padding. The chairs looked terrible, actually, like they had survived a violent catastrophe. One bushed academic was spread out on the floor, on his stomach with one leg bent at the knee so that he really rested on his side, his right arm spread upward for use as a pillow for his head. In his gray suit, he looked dead. I sat down in the furthest corner from the panel and from the door. I got out my notes.
Dr. Durand—mockingly referred to, by conference goers, as the “White Queen”—was the shiniest professor I have ever seen. He sparkled from the grayed hair, to the glass frames and lenses and eyes, to the smile and the cowboy-necktie, bright white suit and shoes. His hair was brilliant: bright white, parted down the middle, but it had enough poof to it that it rose upward from the parted middle into two peaks that then frizzled back down around his head like Beethoven or Mark Twain. He had sparkles conveying brilliance, but not necessarily intelligence. His face was cockiness personified—which I cannot condemn if one can back it up. *Hubris*, on the other hand, I do not need to condemn: it splatters on its own. Dr. Durand did not aim to demonstrate that principle, but he did claim that he could use rhetoric to fly. Even if he could, surely he would have flown too close to the sun and fallen anyway.

The panelists arrived—they would debate the merits of “Rhetoric Taking Flight” before Dr. Durand proceeded with his demonstration (the demonstration, I presumed, would follow so that the panelists could prepare themselves some crow). I couldn’t imagine that Dr. Cloud would miss this *Matrix* for the world, but I couldn’t see her anywhere in the audience. In fact, this audience was sparse for something claiming to be as outstanding as this. Perhaps Dr. Durand had pulled these shenanigans before in doing rhetoric his way. Perhaps other auditors knew to avoid this panel and I was the sucker for sitting here.

The panelists were no less concerned about the possibility of their suckeredness. “I dunno know what I’m doing here,” Kristin said (or exclaimed—even when quiet, she speaks as though she is exclaiming incredulously, throwing up her hands when taking breaths). “It’s fucking stupid he’s not going to he won’t jump out the window not that it
would be a loss he’d be doing us a fucking favor.” Jail time had not phased Kristin—so she slept in a place other than her hotel room, so what? Fellow-panelist Selma concurred to a point, “He’s going to introduce us to some rhetorical trick or some kind of interpretation that will then supposedly, metaphorically take flight. I bet you it’s something old and worn that was never any good, like narrative criticism.”

Dr. Durand shushed them, winking to the audience and clicking his tongue. “Sure,” he gleamed, waving both hands in dismissive circles; “let’s forget, for the moment, that y’all will shortly be proven wrong. Let’s talk—about the ‘possibility’ of a rhetoric that allowed one to take flight. In the beginning was the word—don’t ask what the word was. There’s a good chance we don’t want to know.”

Dumbfounded by the nonsense, the panelists contorted their faces: one a grimace, another rolling the eyes, the last narrowing his eyes condescendingly in preparation to speak—though no face outshone Dr. Durand’s. The last of the panelists, Bob, expressed his own incredulity (which is not of Kristin’s class in the least): “This… this is what is so bad about postmodernism and discourse-constituting-the-world and all that stuff. You can’t fly, your rhetoric isn’t going to give you wings, but you’ll make us suffer through a discussion about the impossible event that’s not going to take place anyway because you think doing that is going to show some clever nuance with no actionable purpose or political relevance.” “Only hot air could keep him afloat,” I heard an audience-member whisper, through clinched teeth, to a friend. These were the resentments of captives to inmates running the asylum.

Dr. Durand decided to take up a monologue for a minute and thrust his chest forward even more than I thought it could already puff. “Rhetoric is constitutive of our
world. We all know rhetoric functions didactically, how propaganda and advertising can drag an orientation in the direction of a potion or a poison.” These words surprised me; I’d have thought them too big for Dr. Durand somehow. He continued, “We’ve gotta protect,” and he hit the table (a bit too hard; all people who slap the table seem to do it too hard, scaring the ears), “our sense of the rhetorical from those commie-materialists.” Ah-ha! An insight into his character; perhaps he is one of those Republican academics. I bet he never stopped on the fourth floor.

And then the moment had arrived! Dr. Durand lifted himself like a cloud from the table and jaunted two or three steps toward the window on the side of the room. He opened the window, drawing back the panes like he was throwing open a set of double-doors to a ballroom and he hurled himself backwards from the window in preparation for the momentum he would use to thrust back outward toward the sky. He jumped up on the still and spread his arms wide briefly before pulling them back in toward his body; “I do not need my arms, of course—rhetoric is going to carry me to the heavens!” Like Bellerophon surely (a descendent—ha ha—of Sisyphus). Muttering carried through the audience—he’s on the still—what on earth does he think he’s doing? “I bet a boot gets tossed back through the window at us,” Kristin said.

And then he jumped. Jump. Not just any jump either. A graceful leap, like he was skipping out onto the air, but he disappeared from sight. The few of us in the room rushed the windows quickly. I heard someone say out loud “Jesus Christ!” after the jump, clearly forgetting that he had walked on water, not air. We rushed the windows and looked over the edge and saw… a body, and some of its formerly constituent
materials, spread across the sidewalk six flights down. I thought it especially odd that he still shined.

A hush settled in the room, no one knowing what to do now. No one was even making eye contact with each other, just waiting for someone else to carry us all forward into the next moment, but nothing was coming. Silence. Some widened eyes. Some shrugging. Finally, Kristin grumbled out a fitting enough encomium: “Fucking moron…” She grabbed her coat and things and hurriedly (though not hastily) left the room as though to look for a better use (possibly abuse) of her time.

After Kristin left, people finally started shuffling out. No tears or anything of the sort—just existentialist absurdity.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

The “trophy” is a word the ancient Greeks took from tropos: they set up trophies in battlefields after violence subsided and the place, the topos, could be marked as a turning point, as a tropōn topos. I moved up to the seventh floor where I was looking for another panel on a topic that sounded good (recalling, of course, that I should know better). Blood should have boiled over in the panel I saw on the seventh floor; we should have found ourselves in a river of it. The topic was merely hodge-podge—the panel was titled “Turning Points in Rhetoric,” a collection of second-rate odds and ends that fit nowhere else. But it was at a conference in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina. We were not cognizant of the violence of Mother Nature—certainly some of us came from hurricane-endangered areas, but most of us live the sheltered, peachy cream lives
academics are said to live. Our topic was not supposed to be “violence” in this panel, but violence found its way into the panel naturally.

I was still working on my theme. Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. The joy of rhetoric is not excessive in character, trumping others for all time. The joy of rhetoric is not deficient in character, absenting the memorable moments. Rhetoric’s character takes care of its own mood by making audiences and rhetors feel fit. The joy of rhetoric is more than materiality because we take care by giving meaning and enjoying it. But meaning is more than idealism since we enjoy the feel of the game in our bodies, in rhetorical bodies both potent and set down in limits.

The panel was too big, eight speakers, but was booked for a double session. The parties would then start up, so I thought I was likely going to see people sneaking out of the panel before it was all over. Bernie Zoombs, a ridiculous man who insisted on being referred to by the even more ridiculous name “Peace Wayfarer,” began the discussion. His presentation was a “comparative rhetoric” presentation about ancient Chinese rhetoric, or so he claimed:

My experience of ancient Chinese rhetoric has been extraordinary. I do not know the language, but I have many friends who study ancient Christianity and do not know Aramaic either. Anyway, it is better that I get at the experience of ancient Chinese rhetoric with the help of a translator; that way I get both the translation and the discussion with a translator about the way rhetoric was for the ancient Chinese. My translator and I can discuss various means of translation of ancient
Chinese ideas into language that my readers can understand. In fact, I can
get to an experience that is more authentic than I would otherwise have
gotten if I had studied the language myself. My approach is to perform
rhetorical criticism on the pieces that I get translated. I think most
Chinese philosophy tended away from violence, there were greater
emphases on what I would call expressions of peace. I think Taoism is a
pretty cool philosophy. I concede that I sometimes make errors in my
interpretations of Taoist rhetoric, but I don’t have a problem with that
because that can be worked out in the conversation. At the very least, I
got people talking.

I was annoyed; that last argument about starting discussion is another of my pet peeves.
People talked did they? Good thing we have your work or else people might have been
silent; and, worse yet, they might have been silent on the disinformation being spread
about because one doesn’t bother to learn the language or have a problem with getting
things wrong. Zoombs, or “Peace Wayfarer,” was most disturbing for the near absence
of any named ancient Chinese people at all—in contrast to his own self-references.

“Peace Wayfarer” was followed by several other presentations. One dead white
man presented something on public relations (and please understand that I type such
words respectfully being, myself, a future dead white man). Another dead white man
said something about German idealism (a German friend…?). Yet another dead white
man, Dr. Luther Pangloss, tried to make an argument for judging texts by more closely
adhering to the contexts of their time-periods, an argument to which I could not think of
anyone objecting. Patty, an “invitational rhetorician,” did her “second wave” feminist
shtick (most feminism is very good, but not all). An Asian-American man—you know, someone with lineage from the whole continent of Asia—rattled off something about Bakhtin. Speaker number seven never showed up, which might be terribly unprofessional but is actually a relief at conferences sometimes because it leaves open more room for discussion.

And last, but not least… Rebecca! My old friend from speech and debate, Rebecca had arrived at the panel to affirm some action. She studied performance theory, and naturally she was not one to drone about it. Quite the opposite: she was a practiced poetry slammer, someone who attended slams for fun (I was invited several times and feel sheepish that I never made a go of it). She took the floor, bobbed her head a few times, and spoke:

*This* is another performance.

Not a paper reading, ah that performs too, just a little low key for me.

*This* is another performance.

Woke up this morning, put on my best—my only—black skin, and *rose* to the occasion.

*This* is another performance.

Sinnin’ forms perchance to sing a-right verse, a little love’s labor’s lost on you all.

This *isn’t* just another performance.

I am not a clown, come-in here for your amusement, absuement, what I meant, saying

This *isn’t* just another performance
Is to tie a few tongues, lash a few whips, hip a few throws, scotch a few hops.

This *cannot be* just another performance,

Not to chance a form per second per minute per measure

Of a treasure I’m so sure would put the punch in your persuasion

*Isn’t* just another performance for me

Forming some tree, a hierarchy to be drawn out, picked to the leaf

I just came out here to do some growing and thought, damn, I’m worth being watched.

I clapped, but Rebecca’s audience was not on the level, so I clapped by myself for a few awkward seconds before the audience joined in.

Presentations were over, the Q & A could begin. First stop, the Peace Wayfarer. I wanted to snark on his endless self-references, but I needed to think of a collegial way to do it, so I decided on asking him about Orientalism from his own point of view. Once called on, I said, “My question is for Peace Wayfarer: what do you do when you are studying comparative rhetoric, looking at another culture, and you just coincidentally see only your own reflection?”

“Yes, my work is absolutely a reflection of myself, of my experience in the examination of ancient Chinese rhetoric.” Silence. Silence like he had answered my question completely. “You don’t see that as a problem?” I asked. “No.” he said. Some cheers came from the audience, from some of his students or friends or fellow comparative rhetoricians I guessed. Luckily for me, I did not have to get any more aggressive because another audience member stepped in my place. A middle-aged
woman with thinning red hair stood and said, “Bernie, I am interested in ancient Chinese rhetoric, whatever they might have called the ‘study of persuasion or public speaking.’ I am also interested in ancient Chinese people. What did they say? With what means did they represent themselves? What were their names?” “Well,” the Peace Wayfarer began, “my experience…” “Is not what I came to this conference to learn about,” the redhead cut him off. Grumbles came from the back of the room among the Wayfarer’s folk.

But the Peace Wayfarer was unmoved; maybe he was stoned. Maybe his Taoism shielded him from this criticism. Either way, he was not to be moved by the accusation that he was self-centered; he was at peace with that. He just sat there, smiling dumbly, as if we had embarrassed ourselves instead of him. The audience, indeed, seemed not to care for this line of questioning at all, but loved the Peace Wayfarer.

Dr. Luther Pangloss stepped in. That name is familiar from somewhere, damn it. “Now I think some of this questioning is being unfair. If we want to access history, we have to do it somehow. And we are not going to be able to avoid dragging ourselves along into it. The rhetorical critic is always, sort of, in Bitzer’s ‘rhetorical situation’ that way: interpretation of rhetoric presents problems for us to overcome by finding appropriate means of communicating. In this case, we want to take everything we can into account without judging it too rashly.” “What do you mean?” I asked. “You wouldn’t, for example,” Pangloss exemplified, “condemn Abraham Lincoln for racism, would you?”

“Yes,” came a voice from the front row, none other than Marcus, in the thick of things. “How else can we measure our own time if not by comparison with the lacking ethical vision of people from the past? I owned slaves once. I also executed conspirators
against the state without trial, without anything but the agreement of a group of patricians. Should not I be judged to be less than posterity has made of me?”

Pangloss was defanged: being an apologist for others is difficult when those others speak out against themselves. “You were different,” Pangloss sputtered, “you were in a unique situation.” “Unique situations, indeed, present themselves,” Marcus acknowledged, “and they do so every second, but all we have got for wits is our prior habituation. It is possible that I made the wrong decision, but the moment of decision is judged as appropriate or inappropriate only after the fact because no precedent exists for deciding what to do with the entirely unique future. Not only must we judge Lincoln, we are the only ones in any position for doing so—those before him certainly could not, nor could his contemporaries bound as they were by the same situations.”

“Then how should we judge Lincoln’s contemporaries?” Pangloss demanded, trying to reassert some control. “They were racist, too,” Marcus said. “All we can say for Lincoln is that he was not quite as racist as most of his contemporaries were. But still we must distinguish between us and them, we must judge them because that is how we mark ourselves as different and remake the world.”

Pangloss was dazed. “How then should we apply rhetoric as a tool for deliberation? What use is rhetoric if the future is entirely outside our grasp?”

“Habituation, the cultivation of the virtues of rhetoric are the silvery hopes on which we pin our futures. We examine the past for its circumstances, we train ourselves by pretending to recreate those contingencies, and then we hope that when the key moment arrives our skills and experience with troping tradition to future, materiality to ideality will ‘work out’ for us and others.” “Habituation of what?” Pangloss asked. “Of the art of
character. Drama results from eloquence, which is the expression of art that makes one lose one’s self in the drama instead of taking notice of the art’s formation of itself. That’s not to say that nothing dramatic can be found in tracing the ways art presents itself—we may indeed admire the craftiness of the maker. But we most admire the arts that are eloquent first and allow us to see them unconceal their means only later. *I wanna get lost in your rock and roll and drift away.*

Many were now slipping out the door. The questions and answers withered, got louder as they needed to rise above the shuffling, but that is only a sign of their closure. Walking out the door, Dr. Pangloss almost physically ran right into Marcus. “If this is the best of all possible worlds,” Marcus said, “I’d hate to have been stuck in one of the competing ones.” Pangloss just huffed through his nose, making a kind of “hmph” sound, and stepped around Marcus out the door. Marcus turned to his pupil.

“Euphemism…” “Is all about the birds and the bees.” “Apostrophe…” “Where are you when I need you?” “Aposiopesis…” “Is so moved by itself that it just might *sniff* cry.”

I sighed, stretched my arms. Figured I’d go back to my hotel room and rest for tomorrow’s journey. But then a unique moment changed my course. Marcus approached me, targeted me, pointing out a hand. “Hello, I am Marcus.” I shook hands and, still tripped up by the suddenness of the introduction, stammered before I was able to return the introduction. He continued, uninterrupted: “I’ve noticed you at quite a few of the same panels my own student and I have attended. We must make a brief appearance at the party on the next floor, but we were afterward planning to do some debriefing about the day’s panels just upstairs. You are invited unless you prefer the parties or have another engagement.” I delightedly nodded affirmation at the invitation and thanked him,
promising to stick with him. So the three of us—Marcus, his student, and I—walked up the next flight of stairs and onto the eighth floor.

As Marcus led and his student and I trailed I managed to get in a word with the student. “What is your interest in this conference?” I asked him. He mumbled something about trying to impress a woman. Well, I can think of worse reasons to go to a conference.

Hell is other people. xxxix

Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic. A useful heuristic does not stop at measuring its world by its own needs. The joy of rhetoric is not excess in character, trumping others for all time. The joy of rhetoric is not deficient in character, absenting the memorable moments. Rhetoric’s character takes care of its own mood by making audiences and rhetors feel fit. The joy of rhetoric is more than materiality because we take care by giving meaning and enjoying it. But meaning is more than idealism since we enjoy the feel of the game in our bodies, in rhetorical bodies both potent and set down in limits. We play within the game, but also outside it, at the boundaries of rhetoric, where there are mysteries, and freedom for troping—and all of this rhetoric we call drama.

A nice paragraph for a theme, but somehow lacking. My “art of character” is not coming through here. “If you think like Thomas Edison, could you invent a world for me?” xl What is needed to make this paragraph more than a theoretical explanation of my craft? Would a rhythm help? Could I sing it? Or would that get in the way? Would my audience hear it and know what I was talking about? Would my audience hearistically
miss what my songs meant? “She hasn’t even heard them since she found out what the
words meant. She decided she preferred them all wrong. Kind of like the last time with a
bunch of really fast rhymes. If we’re living in the past I’m soon gone.”

Marcus noticed I was talking to myself. “You would have an easier time with that
if you made a poem out of it,” he said. “But I’m not a poet. I’ve never written a poem in
my life.” “Nonsense,” he said. “You’ve heard that ‘the meaning of a word is its use in
language’?” “Yes,” I said, “Wittgenstein said that.” “And,” Marcus continued, “you that
all language depends on other language for meaning.” “Yes,” I replied, “because all
words have other words for meaning when you look them up in a dictionary, and because
words rely on each other for making distinctions plain, so night has no meaning without
day, and so on.” “So all language is used,” Marcus sounded conclusive, “to prop up a
whole network of meanings with varied relationships. Does that not mean that the
meaning of a word is not only its use in language but its factual placement as memory
itself?” I didn’t follow him. “Word meanings are arbitrary: we could call horses ‘cats’ if
we wanted and it would make no difference in theory, but in practice a transformation of
horses to ‘cats’ would mess up the whole English language because so many meanings
depend on the word ‘horse’ being placed as it is, of course of course. But! That does not
mean that one should not mess up meanings, quite the opposite. To mess with meanings
is to use language in a new way, which is to make a new meaning, which reflects off of
the distinctions in linguistic binaries in such a fashion that the *tropos*, the bend, the turn
in meaning becomes something altogether more memorable! One may not be able to
make immediate sense of what I say when I say “You can’t lead a cat to water and make
it drink,” but our familiarity with the traditional use of the cliché makes us take notice of
what is missing, what has replaced it, and we the audience come to question and ponder what is being said, meant, what the use of language is in what we hear, heuristically.”

Could I make sense of Marcus’ lengthy exhortation? To make my theme memorable, I needed to mess it up. The messiness would call attention to the movement of meaning in my language and express, heuristically and artistically, the character I had sought.

Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic,

heuristic [gesture with ear],

hereistic [gesture pointing downward].

I am character, hear me whore!

But not in excess: the joy of rhetoric does not embarrass your memory.

But not in deficiency: the joy of rhetoric does zip past so memory cannot grasp it.

But not in carelessness: the joy of rhetoric is care.

I am character, hear me whore!

Care for ideas. Care for bodies. Care for the game. Careful wrought in rotten perfection.

Ugliness with the beauty. Dissuasion with the persuasion.

I am character, hear me whore!

I project care for the mood of character that is dramatistically built for the joy of rhetoric.

The source of rhetoric’s joy is the care of toying.

With words to tropes for figures to drama raged rhythm.
Dig delivery see style in invention as arrangement moving memory.

Any good aesthetic provides its own heuristic, and that heuristic is memory. Turned.

Marcus interrupted me. “Look, you are not doing bad. I respect your attempts. But we are not going to have a *Dead Poet's Society* breakthrough here. Stop trying to make the theory dramatic and start making the drama play out independently, using the poetic turns of the theory as incidents in the drama.” I tried again.

Mnēmosynē mothered nine Muses,

All the better to remember her.

One mused of comedy in drama, Thalia—the blossoming one she,
Who laughed in rhythm of memory.

Two mused of erotic poetry, Erato—the amorous one she,
Who seduced by playing harder and easier and harder to persuade.

Three mused of lyric poetry, Euterpe—the well-pleasing one she,
Who phrased the verses of playful arrangements, all so fun to recall.

Four mused of history, Clio—called the glorious one she,
Who set the stages for the dramas in body, time, and place.

Five mused of tragedy in drama, Melpomene—the chanting one she,
Turning pain to anger, her obsessing chants risk forgetting the human condition.

Six mused of epic poetry, Calliope—the one of beautiful speech she,
Who gives a world of meaning to an absurd existence, giving us hope of joy from none but our own selves.

Seven mused of dancing, Terpsichore—the one who delights in dance she,
Who raves with violence as with grace, both being natural aspects of enjoyment.

Eight mused of eloquence, Polyhymnia—the one singing many praises she,

Who discoursed, discussed, communed with, and brought us one another.

Nine mused of the sky, Urania—the celestial one she,

Who always looks up at, onward to, toward the next moment.

Mnēmosynē mothered nine Muses, care-actors,

Joyful, joyful, and el-o-quent in their taught rhet-o-ric.

―Better,‖ Marcus said, ―but more memorable? I do not see a DJ sampling it anytime

soon.‖ "The uses of rhyme and rhythm are clearly superior means of persuasion," I said,

"so why has oratory forgotten these arts?" "They never should have been parted,"

Marcus replied, "and the oldest orators, the ones who predate ‘rhetoric,’ knew better. I

cannot tell you why public speakers have continuously sought to break off from their

artistic side, but they have done it more than once. Their attempts have all been

fruitless."xlii

A woman stopped us outside the party’s door and asked our feelings about parties.

“A convention party is a circus of distorted beauty,” Marcus said. The woman left as

quickly as she had appeared. “Watch that one,” Marcus said to his student. Then Marcus

continued, speaking to both of us, “This is a place where Plato was right about rhetoric,

that it is kolakeutikē, that it is an ‘art of flattery.’” I asked Marcus how one could make a

distinction. “Aesthetics is inventive,” Marcus replied, “and so it is always potentially

fraudulent, like truth. Maybe there is no truth, but there are still performances of

sincerity and insincerity.” But, following up, I asked why this was necessarily a

“distorted beauty”? Could not a very good rhetorician still be a very bad person but an
expert in making insincerity appear sincere? “Of course,” Marcus replied, “just as a very good person could be a very bad rhetorician by appearing most insincere. These possibilities are all consequences of the joys of rhetoric. One may have invention, but not all inventions are for the good. One may transform one’s self into someone different, but then who is to say who one is being? The joys of rhetoric are dramatistic possibilities for the performance of character, but they are the joys we have that are closest to blank canvases. Most canvases do not just come from anywhere or stand up for anyone; often they are only for the privileged few, and even these few may not recognize the available means of taking care of their characters. But character is our only joy—the characters of others are our only delights, in their otherness, in their difference, in their myriad performances be they sincere, insincere, or some other category altogether. Even in this party there are sincere performances, but sincerity is not the same as truth or justice or beauty, though we may use those words in a struggle to show sincerity’s character.”

Turning toward the circus, I could see no beauty. It was difficult for me to imagine any truth—sincerity—in Marcus’ statement that all I saw was distorted beauty. There were many turns, but were any of them beautiful? “They practice,” Marcus said, “and the development of artistic habitude might someday give them the ability to fount an elegant verse.” Many are the flatters, the panderers, the falsifiers, encircling those who talk upside-down. Some march by shit; some march in it; some even eat it; and many think it’s gold. The people are circled in pockets, pits of fire each. Near the bar, some would-be editors or conference administrators wandered around, glad-handing over their hot pitch for some managerial academic office. Many in conversation turn their heads around, looking for the next “right” cliché-paradigm to gravitate toward. I saw the Fox
dominating some pocket of people, some of whom were struggling to get out, others of whom were increasingly direct in their hints that the Fox should go away, and still others, the worst of all, pretending to listen intently out of politeness or confusion that the Fox might be someone important (in the managerial sense). The woman who had asked Marcus’ opinion snaked her way through the crowd, repeating his opinion as her own: “A convention party is a carnival of disturbed beauty.” Some, totally enflamed with drink, thrust themselves among the fire pits hoping to sound like profound givers of advice, or they sliced their ways into any pocket of conversation just to cause a ruckus as if the whole scene were not already ruckus enough (or whatever the gray-haired man downstairs in the bar had called it… wickedness?). Just being there made me feel lead-poisoned, heavy with *plumbum*, nauseous and irritable (more so than usual), going deaf but welcoming that part. I always get suckereded into going to the parties this way: “Oh, we’ll just make a brief stop,” and so on.

I turned to ask Marcus what his business was on this floor, but he was gone. I looked left and right, no sign, neither teacher nor student. I started circling each pocket of people, looking each way for any hint. The circus was in mid-performance, the carnival all arranged, and I had no rings to go to or to throw around a bottle. “Upstairs.” Maybe they had really only taken one moment at the party and gone ahead upstairs. I hoofed it up to the ninth floor.
Stairway to Heaven: You can check out anytime you like, but…

The ninth floor was filled with people, but not with the liveliness of the party just beneath it. These people were the tired, silent, frozen, partied out. A few sat slumped up against the wall, wanting to fall asleep or bang their heads. Some were already asleep; they looked most cold. In fact it was very chilly: some dummy had opened the windows—again remembering the “New Orleans” ahead of the “November.” I could see a heater across the room blowing, or else it was an air conditioner which wouldn’t have surprised me in the least. Everything about the temperature made this floor feel stupid, not that I blame its occupants. They are just weak. They want to take it easy, catch their breath, no matter how they have to do it.

Scanning the hallway I saw nothing. I had lost Marcus and his pupil. I turned and turned, looking every direction and saw nothing. But then for a moment I turned to listening and I heard something. “Syllepsis…” “Will hold its breath and the door for you.” “Antanaclasis…” “Hanges together to avoid hanging separately.” The sounds were of Marcus and his student practicing their tropes and figures, working toward being rhetorical in habituation. These sounds came from the broken elevator. The “up” arrow was lit. Marcus and his student turned onward, leaving me behind in rhetorical hell.

Attributed to Bertrand Russell.

Peter Dimock, A Short Rhetoric for Leaving the Family (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998) 14. Dimock’s book is the original inspiration for my central thesis that a theory of aesthetics must perform itself to succeed in communicating that theory.

iv Attributed to Lyndon B. Johnson, responding to riots involving African-Americans late during his time in office as President of the United States. I have found only anecdotal evidence for this citation and am still at work confirming it.

v Attributed to Neil Gaiman in “Sandman, a Hope in Hell.”

vi Attributed, by Larry Gonick, to Xun Zi (a pragmatic, materialist follower of Confucius).


viii Burke, *Counter-Statement* 15.

ix Burke, *Counter-Statement* 24.


xiii Burke, *Counter-Statement* xi., 2nd preface. Italicization mine.


xv Burke, *Counter-Statement* ix., 1st preface

Attributed to many different people, the earliest of whom I could find was William Congreve.

Adapted from Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*.


Adapted from Carnes, "Bette Davis Eyes."


Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

T.S. Eliot.


Davis, *Breaking up (at) Totality : A Rhetoric of Laughter*.

Plato. *The Republic*.


Anonymous Chinese proverb.


xxxiv An album name and song title by Meatloaf.

xxxv Gonick, Larry. The Cartoon History of the Universe.

xxxvi Milton, Paradise Lost.

xxxvii Anonymous.


xl Sleater-Kinney, One Beat.

xli Barenaked Ladies, Testing 1, 2, 3, Reprise / Wea, 2003.

xlii Walker, Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity.


xliv Led Zeppelin song title and part of a line from the Eagles’ “Hotel California.”

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Having firmly established where I am stuck, now what? What does it mean to have an aesthetic? What is an aesthetic? What counts as one? Have my “failures of metaphysical understanding,” from the introductory chapter, been “cleared up”? Have the twin dangers of reduction—essentialism and totalization—been avoided or held in check sufficiently? Has “care” been established or maintained or even clarified? Did I set up another Holocaust? Have I established an aesthetic-rhetoric that sees the available means of persuasion, that meets the conditions for the possibility (or probability) of persuading people to take action?

I originally intended a much longer work, turning from the work that has already been done here up to the concern with habituation toward a deeper discussion of the habit versus discipline issue, and a comparison of the ontology of rhetoric’s habituation with the three elements comprising Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (*The Human Condition*). Arendt argued that human beings were engaged always in doing one of three possible activities: labor, work, and action. I had wished to devote one chapter each to these activities, and contextualize them with the work already completed on habituation into chapters on, respectively, Necessity, Stability, and Agency (those being the three “qualities” dominating each of the human conditions). All of that work remains to be done, but I can outline briefly some of the directions that I thought ontology would direct the rhetorical theorizing of *The Human Condition*. 
Our abilities to “use” rhetoric also depend on Necessity (Arendt's idea that we must "labor," or perform tasks to meet basic bodily needs and cannot have leisure for anything else unless those needs are met), stability (Arendt's idea of "work," the performance of creating tools or buildings or social conventions we create to try to distance ourselves from needing to labor), and agency (Arendt's notion of "action," the performances we do in our leisure time that allow politics to work, freedom to come into being, and for great "words and deeds"). One chapter on Necessity would have concerned itself most with Arendt (The Human Condition) and Levinas (Totality and Infinity, and his essays Is Ontology Fundamental? and Useless Suffering). Another chapter on stability would have taken up the problem of distinguishing habit and discipline (if possible), comparing Arendt (On Violence) with Foucault (several of his books, as well as the essays A Preface to Transgression and Nietzsche, Genealogy, History). Finally, a chapter on agency would have returned to Arendt once more (Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy and The Life of the Mind), but also looks at Kant (The Critique of Judgment) and Bourdieu (The Logic of Practice). Below, I roughly outline where those chapters were going and where my future research will be headed. I conclude with the “turns” my dissertation has attempted towards a better life.

1. Necessity

The most unambiguous and unbending of conditions placed on action is Necessity—in the Aristotelian-Arendtian sense of the term as a force of “nature.” In the work of Arendt (The Human Condition; On Revolution), Hunger cannot be negotiated
with, so it is a Necessity. In various contexts, Arendt identified Necessity as a political and metaphysical danger. Necessity must never be allowed to drive political action precisely because it cannot be negotiated with and, thus, has nothing to lose and everything to gain from demolishing the space of deliberation, cooperation, and freedom.

The attendant feeling by which Necessity may dominate human beings might be called “pain.” And, as I have argued using Scarry’s work, pain is unlike other sensations because it bullies consciousness; character and thought are interrupted, rudely pushed to the side by pain. Pain reduces a character to a body, potentially leaving the body with nothing but its own suffering. Scarry argued that pain is a pure dehumanization: one’s humanity is crushed because “Intense pain is world-destroying,” as it pushes worldliness beyond one’s embodiment away (29). One’s humanity is also demolished by pain because “Intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of one’s world disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject” (Scarry 35).

For Emmanuel Levinas (“Is Ontology Fundamental?; Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority), Necessity’s ontologically unbending claims can be essentializing or totalizing, reductive of specific beings or all beings respectively. That “humans must eat” is an essentializing claim, reducing the nature of humanity to beings capable of eating.\textsuperscript{170} The consequent danger is dehumanization of beings that cannot eat, or do other things Necessary for humans. Consider, for example, a 9-year-old named Ashley who

\textsuperscript{170} Is this statement really reductive? The statement doesn’t exclude other possibilities for the meaning of humanity, but essentialism need not work by overtly stating its prohibitions. Language is necessarily reductive (because representation presents only a “piece” of what something “really” is), making everything that is not said important. Not all essentialisms are equal, of course, but that objection is beyond the scope of my point at this stage of the argument.
has lived unable to move herself from her own bed: “her parents, through doctors, have administered estrogen to stunt her growth and have removed her uterus and breast buds to prevent menstruation and breasts” (Saletan). Ashley’s parents have claimed this surgery is necessary for their continued comfort and transport of their mentally and physically disabled daughter. One could not stunt the growth of and remove organs from a child without these handicaps. What, then, permits and even necessitates these surgeries on Ashley? Are they really for Ashley’s benefit? Or is Ashley so far from being human in the minds of her parents and doctors that the possibility that she might someday miss her height, uterus, and breasts does not matter? Does she have any humanity to her parents, her doctors, or herself? And is it not hard to imagine parents and doctors doing any of this to a boy with similar “needs”? What compels one to call her human in spite of the human rights she has been denied?

If Ashley were in pain, if Ashley wanted to die, would we know it? Scarry has argued that understanding another’s pain requires one to rely on another’s self-reporting. One has no means of verifying how much pain a sufferer is experiencing. Listening to metaphors of “stabbing” and “throbbing,” one might be able to recall a past experience in which one felt a pain like the one described, but the language of pain otherwise leaves one farther removed from the actual pain than one would be if the pain were an object (because that is something that one can verify—a person can go find an object and study it). The language of pain fails its author both because one’s pain cannot be communicated to an audience, but also because one’s capacity to communicate deliberatively is pushed aside. I do not know whether Ashley
retains any humanity, but she doubtlessly retains Necessities. Maybe that is all that is left of her—only her ontology and her name, the humanity attributed to her.

2. Stability

“Work” is the odd category out of The Human Condition. “Action” is Arendt’s star, and “Labor” and its apolitical character steal controversy’s spotlight for relegating the neediest or most oppressed people outside of the political sphere. But work has a unique importance: it is what many of us are doing most of the time (the exceptions being those who are continuously on the brink of losing a Necessity). One way to think about work is through John Dewey’s “ontology,” wherein one finds an “organistic” view of the human condition: beings are their environments and vice-versa, and beings live so long as they expand and thrive in their environments. Dying, then, is the process of having one’s world closing in on oneself. Work is what we do when we expand in our environments and when we try to reinforce our environmental gains. Work produces degrees of stability, degrees that inevitably end in collapse but nevertheless can provide sufficient steadiness for us to feel free to be leisurely for a time. All structures and utilities that are made by human beings are works.

Work has an insidious side. Were human beings creatures that felt more freedom to toy with works, we might not allow ourselves to be goaded by them. But, fearful of pain and mortality, we frequently respond to changes in our works with passionate fits of rage and terror—works that collapse, after all, reduce us to the vulnerabilities imposed by Necessity. The destruction of work can leave us fixated on our precarious existences.
Hence, we overcompensate: ethical asceticism, technology, disciplinary normalizations and interventions, and bureaucratization are all work. Simple stability doesn’t trade off with freedom, since freedom’s possibility rests on Necessity fulfillment and some measure of stability, but excessive stability leads us to kill ourselves and each other. If the thinking of Michel Foucault can fit somewhere in Arendt’s worldview, it is in work.

Arendt and Foucault should, by conventional appearance, seem ideologically far apart from one another. They mean very different things by “power” and “politics.” Arendt insisted that much of the machinery Foucault sought to politicize was, in fact, private and should not be politicized for fear of damaging the space of the political. Foucault would reject Arendt’s characterization of politics as a “space of appearances” because the disappearances are the political dangers that need to be critically examined. Arendt was committed to creating and sustaining freedom, while Foucault wanted freedom but saw that it was too often domination clothed in the trappings of liberation. Even so, Arendt and Foucault can be made to work together within the space of work. Their combined insights reveal why stability’s consequent freedoms are both boons and poisons together, the source of our ascetics and aesthetics. Ontologically speaking, work conditions our environmental expansions, but has the capacity to work against our intentions and desires. Work can help us act or it can block us; hence the necessity of considering the conditions work sets on the possibility of being persuaded to act.
3. Agency

Even if all the universe will not stop an actor—no material constraints or necessities to block action, proper and opportune timing, no disciplinary shackles—still the actor can fail to act simply because…? Because what?\textsuperscript{171} When the fault is not in the stars but in ourselves, one still may not need to act, or want to, or even see the choice for acting at all. What is the “agency” that it may be of the sort that may be appealed to? Though there may be agreement that human beings can be appealed to because they have a contingency of mind, what that contingency of mind remains a great mystery. If we could get the answer, one possibility is that we wouldn’t want it because knowing what agency is might define, fence in, essentialize, and determine agency’s identity. Often, scholars of metaphysics will just cheat their way around the problem, offering some other name for “agency” that serves only as a placeholder for what must be our ultimate mystery. Kant attributed human freedom to “spontaneity,” some faculty that can and does act at random, sometimes in accordance with reason but often not (\textit{Critique of Pure Reason}).\textsuperscript{172} Arendt concurred (though her name for the placeholder is often “will” or simple “freedom”) and she emphasized the importance of an internal randomness by

\textsuperscript{171} The “rhetorical situation,” exigency or crisis rhetoric, neatly side-steps any problem of the will by introducing Necessity into the equation—that people may be persuaded, even persuaded to do hideous things, is no surprise because Necessity calls them to act. The rhetorical situation is, therefore, not a question of agency; Bitzer has effectively bracketed out any question of what choice would mean were it not compelled (no fault on him for not making the metaphysical analysis; my point is only to insist that he did not).

\textsuperscript{172} 19\textsuperscript{th} Century rhetorical scholar George Campbell devised a rhetoric according to which one might persuade someone, beyond belief, to take action. The steps Campbell offered have a Kantian flavor to them: a rhetorician must appeal to the understanding (using explanations and proofs), the imagination (the mind’s faculty for combining and organizing information—nearly the same as Kant’s definition of imagination), the passions (involving appeals with associated images, emotional appeals), and the will (which requires both appeals to argument and emotion). See George Campbell, \textit{The Philosophy of Rhetoric} (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1849).
contrasting it against Holocaust prisoners who had their spontaneity drilled out of them ("Thinking and Moral Considerations"). If spontaneity is an essential characteristic of being human, and if abuse and torture can effectively reduce spontaneity as claimed by Arendt, Scarry, and Levinas, then spontaneity would seem to be the opposite of dehumanization.\textsuperscript{173} That opposition is persuasive, but ultimately avoids the question of just what agency is—we may know that agency relates to freedom, that freedom makes us feel human, and that reduction of agency dehumanizes us, but we remain no closer to figuring out what is meant by the term at the center of these observations.\textsuperscript{174}

4. Turning Pedagogy Toward Aesthetics and Habituation: Exercising the Ability to Make and Remake the World

Ontology carried two major dangers, really the same danger—reduction—but of differing scales: essentialism of individuals to a genre, and totalitization of all beings to a single all-explaining meta-narrative. Rhetoric, though it cannot avoid grappling with ontology as just as all posittings cannot, was thus troubled by its unavoidable use of reduction in one of its essential characteristics, representation. Those ontological dangers may be heightened in the case of rhetoric because the available means of persuasion are also the most reliable conduits of essentialism and totalization, be they covert (like assuming Cartesian dualism as an ontology) or overt (demagoguery that attempts to use

\textsuperscript{173} But coming to this conclusion can be uncomfortable in dealing with Arendt’s work. For Arendt, action is more than just an activity or a politics—ontologically speaking, it is a privileged class of events because its prerequisite is social status privileged enough to be freed from worrying about ontology-as-labor endlessly. Equating humanity with social status is a most bitter pill to swallow.

\textsuperscript{174} Am I really considering “rhetorical agency”? This does not yet seem the same as rhetorical agency; it is more like “rhetoric and agency” because the relation being discussed crosses a distance between one and another, a speaker and an actor.
essentialism or totality in the space of the political, thus becoming oppression at best or totalitarianism at worst).

Fortunately, one of the classic defenses of rhetoric holds true in the circumstances I have highlighted: the best defense against bad rhetoric is good rhetoric. And what is good rhetoric? Reduction is the root of the trouble, and we cannot avoid reduction since we would otherwise be limited to demonstration (and I’d need that horse handy in order to talk to someone about horses), but reduction need not calcify into essentialism or totality. Reduction, like the rest of rhetoric, can be contingent, conventional, susceptible to rethinking. In fact, reduction is “only” ever a state of mind, and can be damaging only when followed up with material consequences: the discrimination of essentialism is harmful only when employed to materially limit equality of opportunity or some other value. Totality was “only” ever a grand delusion, though totalitarianism can take that delusion and wreak havoc on the world through its concerted, cooperative occupational psychosis. The material consequences of the delusions of reduction are real enough for the people who suffer them—but rhetoric does give us sufficient *dunamis* to see ways of fighting back. Hence, the usefulness of rhetoric-as-aesthetics.

We are all already rhetorical-aesthetes: all human beings already move, already talk, already cooperate with materiality, trope from the old to the new. These are ontological conditions of being (though I will not claim they are exclusive or unavoidable necessarily—this, too, is a statement that one must resist calcifying).\(^{175}\) Hermeneutical

\(^{175}\) But what if one sees this statement as categorically proven to a high degree of certainty? Remember Gorgias: there is no truth, if there was truth one could not know it, and if one knew it one could not communicate it. What is written here is an articulation of rhetoric and ontology and, though one may take it as definitive for oneself, one would be engaging in monumental *hubris*, along Cartesian lines, to think of
hopscotch is our way of being rhetorical, meaning that we will continue beyond these pages to assess and reassess our rhetorical being so that the square one might now be standing on will never again be the same place as time moves forward.

However, humans already being rhetorical-aesthetes does not mean that they should go on being as they are without regard for any of the points outlined in this dissertation. One can always improve as a speaker, as an artist, and certainly as a character. Did the Isocratean rhetoric suggest enough _topoi_ for the imagining of a non-disciplinary pedagogy? Human beings cannot recover the past exactly, one cannot hope to “recover” Isocrates’ view, but the fact that pedagogy was otherwise than it now is suggests that it can again be otherwise than it now is—that the disciplinary model of education can be broken. This dissertation claims to be nothing less than a reassessment of the whole of rhetorical training since ancient times by reasserting the necessity of _askesis_, exercise, as _imitatio_—the practice of rhetoric by means of performing specific texts. Beyond troping ideas and materials, beyond troping tradition and natality, beyond exercising so as to form new habits, one must exercise using _imitatio_ because imitation is the surest mean of broadening the access of a rhetor to available means of characterization. _Imitatio_ pretends at being an other, it “enlarges mentality” in the Arendtian sense by asking that one consider the point of view and difference of another even as one realizes that such a consideration will never approach a perfect replication of the experience of being an other. Perfect imitation is not the point; expanding one’s own means of performing character is the goal of the dramatist, the rhetorician who

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...
understands that gaining the appreciation of an audience for “an” aesthetic is not only
breaking the totality, not only extending oneself while acknowledging recalcitrance, not
only toying with natality so as to explore new possibilities, but is also and above all else
an experience in the joy of rhetoric.

5. Turning Politics Toward Aesthetics: Exercising the Ability to Make and Remake
as an Expression of Civic Virtue

Politics? Civic republicanism, civic virtue, Hannah Arendt, and public address
scholars were all present before I arrived with an ontology of rhetoric. I can offer them
increased importance in the void left by the demolition of ethics (a destruction long since
accomplished by Nietzsche). But do they need that?

Human beings need an aesthetic turn in their politics if they want to increase the
level of participation citizens take in those politics: politics must have appeal, and
aesthetic means are the rhetoric most likely of the available means to persuade people to
take charge of their governance. If Machiavelli and Arendt were correct—that republican
civics are fragile, and that invasions of the political space of appearances are likely when
prosperity’s luxuries make the people “tune out” out of anaestheticization—then only a
re-aestheticization or the dissolution of the republic can bring them back. Dissolving the
republic—from violence, corruption and decay, or a slow transition into a police state—
involves rolls of the dice that the house wins (not always, but most of the time). Re-
aestheticization of politics means applying the lessons of rhetoric to the masses:
integrating their popular culture with politics. Of course, that integration involves
dangers of its own: the popular culture will change the politics as much or more as the
politics will change the popular culture. But those are our choices: tropes or knives.

Should one choose the knife, I would advise against troping it.

6. Turning Psychology Toward Rhetoric: Theorizing Alternatives to Science and Psychoanalytic Theory

Too much of psychology has been abandoned by the humanities to science or to psychoanalysis. Sciences discoveries cannot be ignored, and psychoanalysis’ deductive reasoning cannot always be ignored—but I cannot content myself with either or both of them for explanations of the movements of the psychē. I think I will be long since dead before any will see mainstream science really grapple philosophically or rhetorically with the meaning of its work and its discoveries. Psychoanalysis is mostly unfalsifiable mythology. Some of the thinking that comes out of psychoanalysis is interesting—but I find myself far from being persuaded that I have an “unconscious mind” that is organized as though I had a “second mind,” as opposed to believing that I have memories and ideas that are in “active potency.” My mind has “non-conscious” components, and those components may have great influence on the “conscious” components of my mind, but psychoanalytic work is otherwise just mysticism. Essentializing characters, like Carl Jung and his follower Joseph Campbell, have done psychoanalysis’ reputation no favors: positing a “collective unconscious” or a “monomyth” is overt ethnocentricism. I concede that this dissertation is limited in my lack of familiarity with the work of Jacques Lacan, but the “rock star” style public intellectualism of Slavoj Žižek is easily dismissed as another permutation of revolutionary Marxism. Žižek is only amazing for being yet another example of an intellectual who bites the hand that feeds him: having been placed
atop the _avant garde_ of intellectualism by none other than globalizing-capitalism, he will rail against it uselessly, pitifully, and to the applause of his capitalist followers. When he dies, Marx will put him in a room in Hell with Sartre (and probably me).

But I digress. My point is that there must as yet be possibilities for psychology that are unexplored. Having established that Aristotle’s _Rhetoric_ is a work of psychology, perhaps rhetoric provides the _topoi_ from which to explore possibilities for a new psychology.

7. Turning Metaphysics Toward Rhetoric: “Being is said in many ways.”

“Philosophy is the study of its own history,” according to Hegel (Osborne and Edney). If that is so, then I have certainly studied philosophy in this dissertation, but have I advanced it? Can I say I have made any moves that offer anything to philosophical research? I would like to think of rhetoric and philosophy as not being at odds with one-another—but then I read a piece like Garver’s and find myself sucked back into the classical contemplative struggle between Sophists and Philosopher.

Perhaps this dissertation has been able to offer philosophy a view of its own history that was either unseen or taken for granted. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey, Heidegger—all came to more or less the same conclusions about the relations of form and matter, and tradition and natality. Perhaps that is no surprise between teachers and students—as with Heidegger and his students Arendt, Gadamer, and more. Perhaps that is no surprise between long gone thinkers and philosophers who closely followed their work: Heidegger, again, worked hard on the Aristotelian canon, was very familiar with Kant’s
work, and so on. Still there was no genealogical account that I could see (keeping in mind that I may be, like Garver, blind to something important) that linked together these metaphysical theses.

Another possible implication of this study for philosophy is the need for more hands on work, for “applied” philosophy. I understand that such a term is controversial and even unpopular in some philosophical circles. I once found myself in a philosophy graduate seminar reading Dewey’s work, and the conversation repeatedly considered Dewey’s exhortation that philosophical minutia be discarded in favor of solving problems. Again and again, the notion of “solving problems” came up, but the philosophy students were so stuck in the text that possible contextual applications of what they read went unnoticed (“remained concealed,” one might say). None of which should be taken as suggesting that the work philosophers do in closely examining a text is for naught, or that they ought to be expected to “notice” everything—but Dewey’s text more than any other is a text that explicitly points outward, outside itself, toward kinds of action. To remain in the vita contemplativa when one’s philosophy points out toward “more on heaven and earth” in the vita activa seems like an explicit repudiation or blindness to the potential of one’s scholarly work. I do not fear that I am out of my league in suggesting that philosophy may fear (or have Angst) over its own most potentiality-for-being-in-the-world.

Most rhetorical strategy is, most of the time, conservative in nature, and it must be so. That is to say, persuasive appeals offer themselves to what an auditor already believes to be true or valuable and, only in the range of those anchored beliefs (arguments that “make sense” with everything else believed), the auditor is moved. Rhetoric is a conservative enterprise in that people are moved only on the basis of what they already are inclined to move toward, and if there is any change resulting from rhetoric’s application it is a very small and predictable transformation.

Applying the “failures of metaphysical understanding” to the work of this dissertation, one might well laugh back at my attempts to find the conditions for the possibility and even probability of action. Possibility!? Human beings are creatures of felicity who demonstrate their “natural” distrust of one another by locking the doors of their houses and cars. Possibility!? The dead and dying are a world away, and even among those “closest to us” many are swept away and hidden in institutions where they may be watched over and “cared for” until they expire—removing them at the very least from burdening those who go on living, who can wonder the world expansively and use its material goods. Possibility!? Stable lives have no need for possibility: banality and docility (about some issues) suits them just fine. No one can correct every worldly injustice: why try to correct even one? Especially if such injustice falls outside the scope of one’s own “responsibility”? Possibility!? Of the two people I most admired while growing up—of the two people who seemed to have for themselves the most expansive of possibilities for making the world a better place—one has thrust herself into material
excess and the other has faded into an idealism so frustrated with the world that he is now only a jaded haze. Possibility!? I went to school with many “liberal” people, but people are only so “liberal” in their college years, when that ideology suits their freedoms and not their responsibilities. Now that many of them are taxpayers, they have become, not “concerned” citizens, but perhaps “jealous” ones. College offered them a world of possibilities, but it built for them few or no habits. I am frightened by disciplinary education—and yet I feel as much fear that habituation has failed generations of students.

What does that mean for rhetoric? I am carrying myself beyond it: that is the only way to get off the ground, to get the elevator “to work.” It is no secret among rhetorical scholars that our best work is outside rhetoric itself; that is why we so often refer to ourselves as “interdisciplinary” or to our art as “architectonic.” Our scholars of rhetoric are not so much “rhetorical scholars” as “scholars who rhetorically reflect on other objects outside rhetoric.” Nothing is wrong with any of that, in my view—but someone needed to make it more explicitly stated than before. Our “ways of being” rhetorical are as many as are available for applying rhetorical technē, limitless.

But the technē must be practiced: saying offers many ways of being, but persuasion remains a conservative enterprise, and so few of the ways of being that are spoken of are ever explored. In some sense that is to be expected: spontaneity compels human beings to dream more than they could ever do—even to dream of impossible things—and the “work” and “action” required to fulfill those dreams feels like so much dunamis and too little energeia. Only habit prepares human beings to “cash in” on dunamis and, fortunately for human beings, the kairomonic nature of the present always offers them chances to invent so as to begin new habits. Tomorrow is another day!
9. Turning Aesthetic Theory Into the Performance of Itself

Chapter three identified aesthetics as making and appreciating that which is made. Aesthetics was also contextualized with the broader senses of making implied by the Greek terms *technē, poiesis,* and *aesthesis.* “An” aesthetic, then, is a specific kind of making and appreciation of makings that characterizes itself as uniquely worthy of being called a genre. Genre—known well to rhetorical scholars as a specific theory—is meant here only in the loosest sense of the term, as a grouping that identifies itself as different from others with characterizations of some sort. “Making” was already well analyzed in chapter three, but “appreciating” was only introduced in the sense of interpretation or judgment (solving the problem of beauty in nature by letting the “beautiful” be a characterization of nature insofar as one “appreciates” how nature has made itself be). “An” aesthetic must, therefore, also imply a specific kind of interpreting or judging—application of criteria with implications, definitions, identifications, and so on. All such boundaries are conventions of the genre, and thus any aesthetic that has found a “place” for itself will in the same moment imply its future antagonists, rule-breakers, radicals. These rascals serve a virtuous purpose: they keep the conventionality of an aesthetic in plain sight so that it does not run away with itself and claim to be more than convention. All such discourse on “an” aesthetic may be called useful and enjoyable, but the discourse takes a nasty turn when calcified into an authoritative and stable method of calculation. At that point, “an” aesthetic has been enframed and will be used to enframe those that were considered the elements of its discourse. One may, however, turn back the clock on such calcification by using criticism to reawaken the lively spontaneity of
discourse about “an” aesthetic. But even then, and ever after the point of calcification, “an” aesthetic is capable of living only between permanence and change; when “an” aesthetic is “pure” permanence it is dead. “Pure” change might only be identified with the natal moment when “an” aesthetic separates itself as a new genre of making and appreciating; ever after, “an” aesthetic lives dynamically between permanence and change, developing until death as a static condition.

And what may be said about “an” aesthetic that I have tried to conjure here? My foremost goal was a theory of the aesthetic that performed itself. Did I succeed?

Scholars of aesthetics have tried to perform their own aesthetics before. Most often they were failures at it. Plato managed some artistic success with dialogues. Aristotle’s dialogues are lost—maybe for good aesthetic reasons. Nietzsche was one exception to the rule—his works are “Shakespeare” quality in German, but he had also studied music, poetry, and the classics long before getting to philosophy. Nietzsche also had a willingness to experiment with his writing (demonstrated by the large number of poems he left behind) that no other canonical aesthetics theorist has matched. Heidegger’s poetry is said to have been embarrassingly bad. Many of the thinkers I have covered concluded their ontological work with the knowledge that aesthetics was the next step, but they still did not try to move forward—Kant, Foucault, Kaufman-Osborn.

Dewey moved to education (where aesthetics go to die). John Poulakos is one person in communication rhetoric who gets it; his criticism has increasingly made use of (surprise) rhetoric since he worked with Whitson on the Nietzsche pieces. I have also heard Dr. Benson’s pieces and Dr. Stephen H. Browne’s publications consistently praised for their style and writing quality.
My attempt to move toward rhetoric-as-aesthetics performing itself was most influenced by the works of Peter Dimock, Gloria Naylor, and Dante Alighieri (and some friends mentioned in my acknowledgements). My indebtedness to the topoi of Dante is obvious, but I would not have thought of ripping him off had I not first read Naylor’s *Lindon Hills*, a story about the journey of two young men through their African American community. The “Lindon Hills” are a sort of black Beverly Hills, a community for the “successful” blacks, the ones who “made it.” But of course—being composed of nine different sections that align roughly with Dante’s nine Circles of the Inferno—the successes came with steep prices. Naylor’s use of Dante was wonderful and far more subtle than my own. Dimock gets the credit or the blame for my “aesthetic performing itself” because that was what I saw in his book, *A Short Rhetoric for Leaving the Family*. Dimock’s book has much beauty in it, but is also clustered with just enough theory to give it all a bad taste—but I admired the attempt (I do not think he would be flattered; he is a novelist, not a theorist, and would clearly be better at reversing his roles). The story, told from the viewpoint of a family member who has been exiled from the family, is a letter to two younger boys in the family explaining, through a lot of rhetorical theory, how the whole rotten lot of them were wrapped up in the architecture of the Vietnam War. “Father,” the Robert McNamara figure, gets the most blame as he was responsible for writing policy briefs like those that demanded violent reprisals against the Vietnamese people in response to the tortured logic of a ridiculously thought out war. The subtlety Dimock achieved in very gradually putting together enough memories for a reader to understand how the whole family is involved was brilliant (I suspect it was
influenced by Yates’ *The Art of Memory*). But the theoretical clutter got in the way: the “Short Rhetoric for Leaving” was not short enough to leave.

Did I succeed? Whether I succeeded cannot be determined by me—not because that would be arrogant (which I cannot necessarily condemn) or because I am poorly situated, but because the “success” of any work of art is not real or true until it has been conjured in the discourse of its appreciators, its judges, their reactions, their recalcitrance or extension, and the whole hermeneutic circle spun several times over. “Success” is a social processing of a work. Additionally, “success” might be too limited a concern to be considered, wrapped up in capitalism and popular approval as it may be. Perhaps—as “an” aesthetic may establish for itself different criteria for judgment of its succeeding or failing in pursuit of its goals—the “success” is merely “provocation,” “attraction” or the gaining of “interest,” “entertainment,” or so many other possibilities. “Beauty” and “ugliness” are consistently identified as questions of aesthetic judgment, and I do not wish to withhold the possibility of their application here, but I would like to subordinate them to the question of interest. Many beauties bore me; much ugliness captivates my attention—surely, then, aesthetics and “an” aesthetic in particular are better served by attending to more nuanced rhetorical theory than would be provided by overriding focuses on beauty and ugliness.

The joy of rhetoric is to know—always—that one is always “in the possible.” Being, especially rhetorical being, is dynamic (*dunamis*). No matter how many times one has gotten up in the morning and failed to exercise, a dog can learn new tricks. The only limit is decay and death, but this too must be a part of the joy of rhetoric—not only because it is what compels us to hurry before our “time is up,” but also because the
drama of our lives is characterized, troped, disclosed to us in the theatrics of performances we call “art.” The study of the web of relations, the meanings running through it, can provide endless hours of amusement as well as horror. Hence the importance of “care”: temporality makes us beings who by nature “care” about our circumstances, the truth, the other beings-in-the-world (whom we “care” about from identification and personal affiliation). That care is our only basis for justice, for the creation of conventions designed to deal with one-another in ways that are “care-full” but also competitive in the sense of providing drama. Even in such important matters as justice, human beings cannot help but find aesthetic pleasure in the possibilities they see for the disclosure of available means of being, becoming, making.
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Sleater-Kinney. One Beat.


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Ph.D Candidate in Communication Arts and Sciences with a focus on Rhetoric, from Pennsylvania State University (one minor in Philosophy).
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M.A. in Communication Studies: Rhetoric from California State University, Long Beach.
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