

In conclusion, we should like to add two admonitions. First, criticism is an art, not the raw tables or summaries of scholarship. The scholarship is a necessary prerequisite, and the formal reports, the compilations of the learned monograph, are essential to criticism. We have too much of unimaginative word counting, the pedestrian assemblage of arguments, the methodical and generalized commentary laid out on the Aristotelian pattern. Much of the New Criticism is exciting reading, and as such it serves an important recreative function of bringing literature to life. Now and then, as in Brigance's *Jeremiah Black*, we achieve the same end.¹⁵ But we need more of good writing.

Second, we ought not conceive of rhetorical criticism too formally. Wayne Shumaker summarizes the comparable problem of the literary critics in a single question: is literary criticism, as was once pretty generally accepted, to "measure literary works against accepted canons of aesthetic, rhetorical, and moral propriety," or is it "any intelligent discussion of literature?"¹⁶ Rhetorical criticism may include a discussion of the effect of the oration as a whole, or it may be an appraisal on canons inductively perceived, but it is both more and less — it is an intelligent discussion of oratory in the situation, oratory as spectacle, or of any one or more of the variety of *topoi* available to the critic.

¹⁵ William Norwood Brigance, "Jeremiah S. Black," in *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, ed. W. N. Brigance (New York, 1943), I, 459-482.

¹⁶ Wayne Shumaker, *Elements of Critical Theory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952), pp. 1-13.

SYMPOSIUM

Burkeian Criticism

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IN HIS recently published book, *Critical Approaches to Literature*, the English literary critic and scholar, David Daiches, remarks: "There is no single 'right' method of handling literary problems, no single approach to works of literary art that will yield all the significant truths about them."¹ Whereas many rhetorical critics would agree with the assertion in reference to their own endeavors, their practice, we believe, would not lend strong support. A glance at our critical works would indicate an overwhelming number solidly established in conventional aspects of the Aristotelian tradition, with a stress upon the functional and dynamic character of rhetoric. It is true, of course, that an occasional critic has broken through the conventional pattern of criticism to make use of methods deriving from the social psychologists, or again, to apply recommendations deriving from anthropologists or sociologists.

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¹ David Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature* (New York, 1956), p. 391.

In an era whose emphasis has been on process, not theory, perhaps we may be expected to continue in well-known paths rather than to carve out other paths. Our modern textbooks have removed us so far from the speculative and humane tradition that a major publisher has recently seen fit to observe with reference to a projected book in the humane tradition:

Although we are in sympathy with your focusing on a liberal arts objective, we wonder how much success you will have in convincing . . . teachers that this is the right approach. . . . If their concentration is in Speech, will they be equipped . . . to succeed with your approach.

Rhetoric as technique designed to secure effects, not rhetoric as an art sustained in and through dialectic, has been our concern, and our lack of equipment to deal with rhetoric in its philosophical aspects has manifested itself in our criticism. The Aristotelian rhetoric read out of the context of the Aristotelian rationale has, of course, made easy the practice of seizing upon the mechanical aspects of the lore.

Cavalier injunctions in some of our modern textbooks have provided further reason for not taking either rhetorical construction or rhetorical criticism seriously. We are enjoined by a modern linguist to *Leave Your Language Alone*. "The merit of what a person says . . . is not affected in any way by the way in which they say it."² A textbook writer tells us: "Don't worry too much about the exact meaning of words. . . . In a speech those exact meanings may be lost entirely."³ The same author in telling how to build a unit of a speech, remarks: "Yes, quote Socrates, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Cato, Homer — any known person who lived long ago. Few in the audience will know the quotation you select, so you can change it a bit to prove your point."⁴ Undaunted by the assertion of modern philosophers that "At the point of the abstract ultimate what is said . . . and the way it is said . . . may be the same thing,"⁵ the authors of textbooks sometimes so conceive the rhetorical art as to make unnecessary any serious consideration of it. At our conventions, we sometimes jauntily prate about teaching *practical* speech-making and of encouraging *practical* criticism as if others might be teaching *impractical* speech-making and encouraging *impractical* criticism. The meaning of practical does not become clearer by the application of labels of virtue. It may be quite possible that one man of solid judgment, bringing enlightenment through an emphasis on the theoretical, is doing more practical criticism and teaching than all the disciples of formulary rhetoric and a rhetoric of gimmicks, put together. Nevertheless, serious critics would be foolish, indeed, to bring the heavy artillery of a full blown critical methodology to products lightly conceived.

More than most other contemporary critics, Kenneth Burke has attempted to draw us back to the fullest meaning of the art with which we are concerned and to find methods and analytical tools that will get at the full resources of the art. It

² Robert A. Hall, Jr., *Leave Your Language Alone* (Ithaca, 1950), p. 236.

³ Edward J. Hegarty, *How to Write a Speech* (New York, 1951), pp. 55-56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵ E. Jordan, *Essays in Criticism* (Chicago, 1952), p. 193.

is true, of course, that others have given valiant support to the effort. Maurice Natanson in "The Limits of Rhetoric,"⁶ Richard Weaver in *The Ethics of Rhetoric*,⁷ Donald Bryant in "Rhetoric: Its Function and Its Scope,"⁸ and others are among these. Perhaps the fountainhead for much of the current endeavor is to be found in Burke, who, for more than thirty years, has sought a re-approachment of rhetoric, dialectic, and ethics. He has had both the literary critics and the rhetorical critics at heart in his efforts.⁹

As a philosopher, he has been searching for the assumptions on which the art rests, assumptions pertaining to language, the nature of meaning, the function of language in producing co-operation, the meaning of persuasion. As a critic, he has searched for a critical methodology appropriate to his rationale.

It is undoubtedly true that the difficulty of Burke's works has prevented a number of potential users of his writings from making practical use of them. Burke is not bed-side reading; nor can a superficial skimming of his works be productive. A few catch phrases or ideas taken from one or another of his works, without reference to fundamental assumptions and qualifications, can only serve to maim and distort.

Although the notion of language using as an *act* is fundamentally Aristotelian, it is a bit of Aristotelianism that has rarely, if ever, received the emphasis given it by Burke. It becomes the basis of his philosophical position and the basis of his critical methodology. It paves the way for a substantive rhetoric rather than a rhetoric of techniques.

In the *Journal of General Education* for April, 1951, under the title "Rhetoric — Old and New," Burke remarks: "If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the 'old' rhetoric and a 'new' (a rhetoric reinvigorated by fresh insights which the 'new sciences' contributed to the subject), I would reduce it to this: The key term for the old rhetoric was 'persuasion' and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the 'new' rhetoric would be *identification*, which can include a partially unconscious factor in appeal."¹⁰ The doctrine of "identification" introduces one of the most troublesome concepts of philosophers for generations. It in turn poses a problem for critics. Burke is concerned with the principle on which appeal rests. In Burke's language, when one "identifies" himself with someone else or something else, he becomes *consubstantial* with it. "A doctrine of *consubstantiality* either explicit or implicit may be necessary to any way of life,"¹¹ says Burke. "For substance in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and

⁶ Maurice Natanson, "The Limits of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XLI (April 1955), 133-139.

⁷ Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago, 1953).

⁸ Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Function and Its Scope," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XXXIX (December 1953), 401-424.

⁹ Kenneth Burke, "The Criticism of Criticism," *Accent* (Autumn 1955), pp. 279-292.

¹⁰ Kenneth Burke, "Rhetoric — Old and New," *The Journal of General Education*, V (April 1951), 203.

¹¹ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York, 1950), p. 21.

a way of life is an *acting-together*, and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*.¹²

Now, the word *substance* is not unfamiliar to most of us. The language of everyday speech will yield an unsettling array of uses of it. Doctors speak of a foreign substance in the blood. The politician may say: "The substance of the matter is so and so." And the schoolmen will say, "Professor Osgood's theory of language is substantially the same as that of Charles Morris." If you look into Aristotle, you will find, among other things, that a stone is a substance. If you look in Spinoza you will find only God is a substance. In the main, perhaps, the ancients used the term to denote the indestructible, enduring identity in things, that which is the same in their changing forms and in the differences of their manifestations. Emmanuel Kant who ruled it out of metaphysics found a place for it in our experiences, that is, in our knowledge of the physical world. He included it among his categories as a "necessary form of the mind," like the ideas of time, number, community, causality, etc. When Jeremy Bentham sought to carve off the accretions of language, he discarded all of Aristotle's categories as fictions, retaining only "substance," a category that pertained to a definable entity.

In the first place, then, the term involves the idea of identity, uniqueness. One might ask the question: What is a society? A person who accepts the doctrine of substance would not be satisfied if someone answered: It's an aggregate of people. He would insist that there is a unity of idea or a principle which gives coherence to the parts. Someone might ask, "What is a cell?" and receive the answer, "Well, it's a mass of protoplasm." But a substance thinker would say, "No, the substance of a cell is not protoplasmic stuff but the law according to which the cell divides, re-forms, and divides again."

Curiously enough, as Locke and others before him pointed out, etymologically the word means *to stand under*; hence, it involves a paradox of thinking of a thing both in terms of what it is in itself and what it is extrinsically. For instance, a child both is and is not one with its parents. It is both part of and separate from its parents. Even while it is consubstantial with its parents, it is at the same time a distinct substance in its own right, surrounding itself with properties of its own.

The question now arises: How does the doctrine of substance work out rhetorically and critically? One may suppose that a speaker decides to praise the common man, a distinct substance. The common man has got himself identified with Communism. Thus, one may identify himself with the common man as the principle of stability and solid virtue, but fail to identify himself with a belief in a given system of property. Or, suppose a speaker decides to praise the Salk solution, a distinct substance. The Salk solution is a product of science, and science has got itself connected with germ warfare. In other words, every distinct substance participates in a wide range of activity. Identification is a word which covers the whole range of activity. A shepherd as shepherd acts for the good of the sheep:

¹² *Ibid.*

in which case one may identify himself with the shepherd's goodness, but the shepherd, in turn, identifies himself with a project, that is raising sheep for the black market, in which case one may cease to identify himself. The notion of substance has a wide range, indeed. It may move around between idealistic and materialistic frames of reference. For instance, if men are separate in body, then show them they are united in spirit. If one wants to sanction a nation's extension of physical dominion, an audience may be made to identify itself with a nation's spreading ideals. If an organization is in disarray, one may talk of its common purposes. If there is a struggle over the means for accomplishing something, one may identify an audience with ends.

Identification may take place in principle or through the whole range of properties and interests with which things get themselves connected. It is grounded in both man's biological nature and in his rational nature. Persuasion involves communication by the signs of consubstantiality.

Although identification appears to take place from the grounding of language in property, one must not lose sight of the fact that, according to Burke, language has a property or resource of its own. Although words are aspects of a wide communicative context, much of which is not verbal at all, yet words have their own peculiar property and peculiarity. One may ask, "What is this nature of their own that words have?" Burke would argue that language at a minimum is a mode of *transcension*; hence, it has dialectical resources in itself and of itself, thus grounding appeal in dialectic. To see the dialectical feature one might note the character of such words and combinations as Albert Einstein, scientist, son of God. What such naming means is that language has the capacity to keep men apart as separate substances, like Albert Einstein, Enrico Fermi, John Locke, but also unite them on the level of idea, "men of science," and round out the symmetry of union on an even higher level of abstraction, "sons of God." This would account for some of the mystical unions and identifications which are brought about whereby men identify themselves with God in ultimate union.

For the critic, Burke's rationale necessitates a system of classification, a naming of manoeuvres that are operating in any language situation, bringing about either by calculation or by "unconscious" appeal, social cohesion, that is, *consubstantiality*, material or idealistic. It requires constant attention to both the biological and rational grounding of appeal. Burke's critical tool for locating the constituents of a situation is variously named, "dramatistic pentad," or "dialectical substance." This five-pronged approach operates to locate in Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose the integrated pattern of any experience, and to trace out the location in which identifications are possible. When graduate students coyly ask, "Have you used Burke's pentad for your analysis?" often they are unaware that the pentad is not a gadget that can be separated from the whole Burkeian rationale. What Maurice Natanson complains of in regard to the use of the obvious Aristotelian "techniques," as if they were the whole of the Aristotelian system, is applicable

here.¹³ To apply Burkeian methodology without reference to the rationale out of which it grows inevitably produces results which are not worth the effort.

The charge, however, that Burke's method is intuitive and that it works for him, but not easily, if at all, for anyone else is, in part, refuted by the successful application of the method by Virginia Holland to Wendell Phillips' "Murder of Lovejoy" address.¹⁴ That the method requires full understanding of Burke's rationale cannot be doubted. That it also requires breadth of background and steady concentration on the various aspects of any situation under consideration in order to see the full working of the elements cannot easily be doubted either. However, the successful application of the tool provides a unity and substance in critical results, often lacking in many of our efforts. For example, the whole of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* can be briefly brought to focus by the use of methodology.¹⁵ Burke's own application of the method results in findings that can be sharply summarized in the following way:

ACT — Bastardization of religious thought.

AGENT — Hitler.

AGENCY — Unity identifications, such as "one voice," Reich, Munich, Army, German democracy, race, nation, Aryan heroism, etc. *vs.* Disunity identifications, such as images, ideas, etc., of parliamentary wrangle of the Habsburgs, Babel of opinion, Jewish cunning, together with spiritualization and materialization techniques.

PURPOSE — Unification of the German people.

SCENE — Discordant elements in a culture weakened progressively by capitalistic materialism.

Burke's theory is best adjusted to the mind willing to continue to inquire, to experiment, to deepen insights with knowledge deriving from a variety of sources. He will not help those interested in preserving tradition for tradition's sake, those interested in partisan loyalties, those interested in formula. Burke would "use all there is to use."

It is in spirit, not merely in method, that Burke is forward looking, even as he makes use of the solid lore of the past. When the modern critic, R. P. Blackmur, differentiated himself from Burke, he observed: "Mr. Burke legislates; I would judge; the executive is between us."¹⁶ For the critic of public address interested in "effects" only, Burke is of little help. If, on the other hand, he wants to get himself inside a speech and find out what is happening, he might find enormous assistance. The legislator is on the floor of the House, in the scramble, aware of internal

¹³ Natanson, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-139.

¹⁴ Virginia Holland, "Rhetorical Criticism: A Burkeian Method," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* XXXIX (December 1953), 444-450.

¹⁵ Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge, 1941), pp. 191-220.

¹⁶ R. P. Blackmur, *Language As Gesture* (New York, 1952), p. 4.

manoeuvres. Resolutions, or strategies, are shaped by the scramble. The verbalizing is supported by non-verbal activity. The legislator sizes up situations in an effort to encompass them; he makes deals, sometimes with his own conscience, sometimes with constituents. He is attuned to the tonalities of adversaries that he might bring them to willing co-operation. "I was once a farm boy myself," he will say to his adversary in order to establish a bond or to bring about identification or to make two separate identities substantially one. He names things; he takes sides in accordance with truth or in accordancy with expediency; he shifts ground. The president or executive may or may not put his law into action; the court may or may not declare his act unconstitutional. Nevertheless, he has done a necessary and fundamental piece of work.

No modern critic has done more to make meaningful the opening words of the Aristotelian Rhetoric: "Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic." No modern critic has done more to counteract the superficial concern with "personality" as providing the ethical aspect of speech. With the *word* considered to be an *act* in the full moral sense, Burke has called back the ethical foundations of rhetoric from its source in the Aristotelian *Ethics*. "The origin of action," says Aristotle, "its efficient, not its final cause — is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character."¹⁷ Embedded in the concept of *act*, as differentiated from *motion*, lies an ethical concept — language is moral in its basis; it contains the choices, feelings, attitudes of originators. It has dialectical dimension in that it contains in itself the property of transcension, the capacity to separate and unite, name and divide. What language is, not merely what one does with it deliberately, furnishes the real basis for communication — and language above all else is a weighted, socialized medium, serving to unite or separate.

Burke's is a substantive rhetoric, not a rhetoric of techniques, although he does not omit techniques altogether. He treats a speech as a full moral act, grounded in man's biological and rational nature, living in and through dialectic. His critical methodology is based on this assumption; hence, the accuracy of the label "dialectical substance" to the integrated methodology of the "dramatistic pentad"; hence, also *identification* as the key word in his rhetorical system. Critics attempting to apply his system would do well to regard these matters.

¹⁷ *Ethica Nicomachea*, tr. W. D. Ross, VI, 1139a.

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