THE MODERN SCHOLAR

GREAT PROFESSORS TEACHING YOU!

A Way with Words:
Writing, Rhetoric, and the Art of Persuasion

Professor Michael D.C. Drout
WHEATON COLLEGE

A Way with Words:
Writing, Rhetoric, and the Art of Persuasion

Professor Michael D.C. Drout
Wheaton College

A Way with Words:
Writing, Rhetoric, and the Art of Persuasion
Professor Michael D.C. Drout

❦

Executive Producer
John J. Alexander

Executive Editor
Donna F. Carnahan

RECORDING

Producer - David Markowitz
Director - Matthew Cavnar

COURSE GUIDE

Editor - James Gallagher
Design - Ed White

Course Syllabus

A Way with Words:
Writing, Rhetoric, and the Art of Persuasion

About Your Professor

Michael D.C. Drout

Michael D.C. Drout is the William and Elsie Prentice Professor of English at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, where he teaches courses in Old and Middle English, medieval literature, Chaucer, fantasy, and science fiction.

Professor Drout received his Ph.D. in medieval literature from Loyola University in 1997. He also holds M.A. degrees from Stanford (journalism) and the University of Missouri-Columbia (English literature) and a B.A. from Carnegie Mellon.

In 2006, Professor Drout was chosen as a Millicent C. McIntosh Fellow by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. In 2005, he was awarded the Prentice Professorship for outstanding teaching. The Wheaton College class of 2003 presented him with the Faculty Appreciation Award in that year. He is editor of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Beowulf and the Critics,* which won the Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies for 2003. He is also the author of *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Cultural Poetics of the Anglo-Saxon Tenth Century* (Arizona Medieval and Renaissance Studies). Drout is one of the founding editors of the journal *Tolkien Studies* and is editor of *The J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* (Routledge).

Drout has published extensively on medieval literature, including articles on William Langland's *Piers Plowman, Beowulf,* the Anglo-Saxon wills, the Old English translation of the *Rule of Chrodegang,* the *Exeter Book* "wisdom poems," and Anglo-Saxon medical texts. He has also published articles on Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* books and Susan Cooper's *Dark Is Rising* series of children's fantasy novels. Drout has written an Old English grammar book, *King Alfred's Grammar,* which is available for free at his website, www.michaeldrout.com. He has given lectures in England, Finland, Italy, Canada, and throughout the United States.

Drout lives in Dedham, Massachusetts, with his wife Raquel D'Oyen, their daughter Rhys, and their son Mitchell.

Introduction

In *A Way with Words,* esteemed professor Michael D.C. Drout brings his expertise in literary studies to the subject of rhetoric. From history-altering political speeches to friendly debates at cocktail parties, rhetoric holds the power to change opinions, spark new thoughts, and ultimately change the world.

The study of rhetoric not only leads to a greater understanding of how personages such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Winston Churchill elevated the power of speech to majestic heights, but also to a stronger proficiency in using rhetoric in anyone's day-to-day life.

Professor Drout examines the types of rhetoric and their effects, the structure of effective arguments, and how subtleties of language can be employed to engage in more successful rhetoric. In these thought-provoking lectures, Drout also ponders the role of rhetoric in our world and the age-old question of whether it is just a tool for convincing people of things that aren't true, or whether it is indeed a force for good that will ultimately lead to truth.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words.*

Using Words to Change the World

One simple definition of rhetoric is *How to Do Things with Words,* which is also the title of a very important book by the Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin. We tend to think of "rhetoric" either as something bad and manipulative (when we discount speech as "just a bunch of rhetoric") or as something elevated and perhaps overblown, but in fact rhetoric is simply (and complexly) the art of using words to change the world. This is, of course, the social world rather than the physical world, but words that change the social world can be amplified, through human ingenuity and effort, into changing the physical world as well.

Most courses on rhetoric start with the history of rhetoric and trace things back to the ancient Greeks (see lecture two), but first I want us to think about the different ways that speech can change the world, so we will follow Austin in examining different categories of situations and the types of words that are used in them. The ideas in *How to Do Things with Words* are the basis of what is now called Speech-Act Theory. The fundamental idea behind Speech-Act is just what the name implies: Speech is not just the communication of information, but also a kind of action that people perform and that therefore has social as well as communicative implications.

Performative and Nonperformative Speech

Let us start by looking at a few situations.

    1a. Bills says, "John and Susan are married."

    1b. A minister or judge says, "John and Susan, I now pronounce you man and wife."

    2a. Joe says, "He dropped the ball! The runner is safe!"

    2b. The umpire says, "You're out."

In the *a* examples, the person speaking is giving straightforward information to whoever is listening: It is a fact that John and Susan are married or that the shortstop dropped the ball, and the speakers are communicating that fact. If the listeners were previously unaware of these facts—that John and Susan are married, that the shortstop dropped the ball—they are now.

But the second type of acts are somewhat different. When the minister says "I now pronounce you man and wife," something changes in the world. From that moment on John and Susan really are married. Likewise, when the umpire says "You're out!," the runner really is out, with all the consequences

6

for him, and the game, that that entails. The minister and the umpire have changed the world through their speech. Austin calls this kind of speech "performative." The person who uses a performative *does* something as well as *says* something.

This distinction, between performative and nonperformative, is very important for our understanding of rhetoric. Much rhetoric skirts the boundaries of performative utterances, and speakers and writers will often deliberately blur the distinctions between performatives and nonperformatives for the purposes of changing the minds of their audiences. For example, someone may try to *seem* to make a promise (which is a performative action) when he or she really is just giving information (which is not always performative). A promise is performative because after it has been made, a whole variety of expectations and obligations are now invoked. Telling someone that you *will* promise to do something is not the same; nor is making it *look like* you have promised when you have not.

As Austin notes, performatives are constituted in the *social* world. There are social circumstances, dictated by tradition and custom or by law, in which a performative occurs. A random onlooker cannot *decide* to say "I now pronounce you man and wife" unless that onlooker is in a situation in which that power has previously been arranged. Austin calls this situation "an accepted conventional procedure." Some of these are more complicated than others: the marriage example, for instance, requires that the speaker be a minister or magistrate or a captain of a ship in international waters, that the two people actually want to be married, and perhaps even that certain paperwork has been filled out. Likewise, fans can holler "You're out!" all they want to at a baseball game and the players, umpire, scoreboard keeper, and other fans will basically ignore them. The "performative" statement "You're out!" is not performative when anyone other than an umpire, a socially authorized and conventionally empowered figure, yells it. In the mouth of anyone else, it is noise and, perhaps, communication of information ("I think that runner is out" or, for fans of certain sports teams that shall remain nameless, "I'm yelling because I am an idiot who likes the sound of my own voice").

Performative Effects and a Great Trick of Rhetoric

There are various kinds of performatives, not all of which are the same as the "I now pronounce you man and wife" or "You're out!" examples. For example, although not just anybody can say "You're out!" and have it stick, anyone can say "I promise to be there at five o'clock" or "I bet you five bucks the Red Sox will win." The class of individuals allowed to perform these kinds of performative actions is larger than the class of individuals allowed to say "I now christen you the S.S. *Paddleboat*." In the first case, all individuals except, perhaps, very young children and the severely mentally handicapped can use the performative and make it, in Austin's terms, "happy" (or, in Latin, "felicitous"). In the second case, the person must be the owner of the boat or authorized by the owner of the boat, but as long as the person does own a boat, he or she can christen it.

All of these statements have important performative effects. In some of the occasions, for example, regarding promises or betting, if there are enough

witnesses, a person can be sued if he or she does not follow through, which is one way to tell if something is a performative: There are consequences that occur that would not occur if the performative had not been accomplished (think of the difference between "I think the Red Sox are going to win" and "I'll bet you five bucks the Red Sox are going to win" or "I'll probably get there at five o'clock" versus "I promise to be there at five o'clock").

Note also that a great source of social friction can occur because some statements *seem* like performatives. One person says "I'm pretty sure I'll be at the bar tonight at six" and another takes that as "I promise to be at the bar tonight at six." When the first person does not appear, the second becomes angry. The argument that arises is, at its foundation, whether or not a performative was successfully accomplished. The most famous example of this sort of implied performative in history occurred when King Henry II said, of Sir Thomas Beckett, "Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?" His men took this question as a performative in the category of "order" and sliced off the top of Beckett's head in Canterbury Cathedral. And although Henry had not officially given the order, he was required, by the Church, to act as if he had: His question was (rightly) interpreted as a performative.

One of the great tricks of rhetoric is to take something that sounds like a performative, such as "I promise," and move it into the realm of a nonperformative. Politicians do this all the time, in a variety of ways. For example, if you do not actually *have the power* to perform the performative action, you can promise all you want, but the action cannot—by you—be made to happen. So when a presidential candidate says, "If elected, I will lower gasoline prices," we should note that the President does not in fact have the power to lower gasoline prices. And so if gasoline prices do not go down, the presidential candidate can say, "I sent legislation to Congress and they didn't pass it." On the other hand, his opponents can try to hold him to the performative utterance. A flawed performative thus walks a very narrow line between a statement and, well, a lie. When we are analyzing rhetoric it is very important for us to keep this in mind.

Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary

As well as his identification of the performative and nonperformative, Austin makes a distinction between three separate effects of statements that will be useful to us in our future discussions. Austin labels these *locutionary, illocutionary,* and *perlocutionary.*

Locutionary acts are straightforward: We utter a phrase with a certain meaning and our hearer understands what we have said.

"That large rock is sitting on my foot" is a locution.

Illocutionary acts are a little more complicated, because they involve what the hearer is going to do. So by saying "That large rock is sitting on my foot" I am of course *informing* the hearer, but I am also *encouraging* or *urging* or even *begging* the hearer to move the rock.

> **The following is a useful mnemonic device: *ill*ocution: *I'll* try something; *per*locution: I have *per*suaded.**

The *perlocutionary* effect is still different. When I say, "That large rock is sitting on my foot," I'm *urging* the hearer to move the rock, and if he *does* move the rock, then I have *persuaded* the hearer to do something.

This three-part division is very important for analyzing rhetoric, because quite often what we *want* to do (the illocutionary force) is not obvious from the locution that we use. I say, "It's a little stuffy in here," and the illocutionary force is that I am urging you to open the window, and the perlocution is that the hearer was convinced to open the window. Speakers use the difference between the locution and the perlocution all the time in rhetoric.

When King Henry II gave the locution "Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?" his illocutionary intent was "I would like someone to kill Thomas Beckett," and the perlocutionary force was the knights who decided to go to Canterbury Cathedral to kill Beckett.

Speech-Act Theory gets a lot more complicated, particularly when scholars start to bring things like poems and literature and lies and politeness into the discussion, and there are professors of rhetoric who specialize in Speech-Act analysis, but it gets a little too specialized for our purposes in this lecture (though it is well worth reading). The most important thing to take away from this lecture is the idea of a *performative* act and the fact that there can be a distinction between the locution (what you say), the illocution (what you want to have happen), and the *perlocution* (what actually happens as a result of your speech-act), and that rhetoric relies heavily on these distinctions.

Questions

1. What is the definition of rhetoric? How does this differ from people's common perception of the term?
2. What is the distinction between performative and nonperformative speech?

Suggested Reading

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words.* 2nd ed. Eds. Marina Sbisà and J.O. Urmson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Inc., 2004.

LECTURE ONE

"You Will Like It, Like It, Like It"

In the previous lecture, we discussed how words can change the world and
we looked at some of the ways this happens, through "performative" utter-
ances. We also examined how many things that people can say actually
have several levels of meaning, the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the
perlocutionary. In this lecture, we are going to discuss what is probably a
more traditional understanding of rhetoric: how words can change the world
by getting other people to do things, how convincing people of something is
the real purpose of rhetoric—and why this is important in *all* circumstances.
We are not only doing this simply because the background and history of
rhetoric is intrinsically interesting (although it is), but also because we want
to find ways to unify our understanding of rhetoric as a kind of speech act
with more traditional views of the subject.

"Friends, Romans, Countrymen"; "Ask not what your country can do for you,
ask what you can do for your country"; "We shall fight on the beaches, we
shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets,
we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender"—these are the kinds of
statements that come to mind if someone speaks of "rhetoric." But in fact
rhetoric is not nearly so limited to soaring political statements. "Dear Professor
Drout, I've never learned so much from a teacher before, so you know that it's
very difficult for me to ask for this extension, something I've never done
before" is rhetoric. So is "When you see Libbys, Libbys, Libbys on the label,
label, label, you will like it, like it, like it on the table, table, table." People have
been using rhetoric since the first caveman tried to convince a friend to come
with him on a mammoth hunt, but our systematic thinking about rhetoric
comes from ancient Greece. The word "rhetor" means "orator" or "teacher,"
and the art of rhetoric was taught in ancient Greece for public purposes: con-
vincing and inspiring one's peers so that they would take courses of action
you believed to be wise. A group of thinkers and teachers who have gotten a
lot of bad press were the Sophists. They would come to a city in ancient
Greece, put on a performance of effective rhetoric (i.e., winning a public argu-
ment or giving an effective speech), and then sign up pupils for their teaching.
Protagoras (ca. 481–420 BC), Gorgias (ca. 483–376 BC), and Isocrates (ca.
436–338 BC) are the most important. The Sophists got their bad reputation
because Plato—whose teacher, Socrates, had been accused of being a
Sophist—attacked what he characterized as their "untrue" rhetoric. The
Sophists, he said, were just telling their audiences what they wanted to hear,
not really convincing them of things that were true.

This is a bit unfair to the best of the Sophists, but more importantly, it illustrates one of the most significant critiques of the art of rhetoric: that this skill allows people to convince others of bad or untrue things. This critique is significant because it is true: You only have to look at infomercials or political campaign ads to see how people can use rhetoric to convince others of many things that are not true. Plato was not, however, arguing against using rhetoric in general; he knew that the art of rhetoric was incredibly important, particularly in proto-democracies in which the future of a city was often determined by citizens convincing each other of the best course of action. In fact, in his *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus,* in particular, Plato was arguing that rhetoric should certainly be used, but it should only be *applied* to convince people of the good and the true: He was not opposed to the techniques; he was against their application. In some ways, Plato was trying to move debate away from strict rhetoric and into the realm of what we would call philosophy: what you should argue for rather than how you should argue.

Respecting Rhetoric

At this point, I want to make what will be the first of many pleas for respecting rhetoric. Not only because it is powerful, but also because it can be, as Plato knew, absolutely essential. Plato often communicated important ideas by stories or mythological references, so I am going to try to do the same thing.

In ancient Greek literature, Cassandra tricked the god Apollo into giving her the gift of prophesy. But as a punishment, Apollo cursed Cassandra to be right always but never to have anyone believe her. Cassandra thus exemplifies the rhetorically deficient person: She knows what is right, but she is unable to convince anyone to do anything about it.

You do not want to be a Cassandra, and if you do not have rhetorically effective communication, you very well might be.

This was an important point to Plato and his followers: They wanted to use rhetorical techniques to convince people of the truth even though those same techniques could be used to convince people of lies. One approach would be to eschew all techniques of rhetoric and speak in some nonrhetorical way. But this seems to be impossible: Any time you try to change someone's mind you are being rhetorical. Why? Because a speech-act is performative if it somehow attempts to change the world. Speakers cannot do this in a nonrhetorical way, because rhetoric is the means by which we change the world. So by making any kind of utterance of any significance, a speaker is making a locution, and that locution has illocutionary force—the speaker is trying to get someone to do or feel something. And if the speech-act is well-wrought, it will have perlocutionary force. So, unless a person wants to escape from all social interaction, that person will end up using rhetoric.

The ancient Greeks also believed that the use of rhetoric could help a person to *find* the truth, not just convince people of truth that was already known. This is another point that is often missed by many contemporary critics of "rhetoric." The great German thinker Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel developed the now-famous paradigm of thesis, antithesis, synthesis: a person proposes a *thesis,* it comes into rhetorical conflict with its *antithesis,* and

in the end you find a *synthesis* of the two opposed points. (By the way, although this idea has been enormously influential, it was not particularly important to Hegel himself and really became most well-known through the great Idealist Immanuel Kant.) Hegel and his immediate followers, however, were aware that there was a potential synthesis between Hegelian triads and the rhetorical techniques of the ancient Greeks.

Hegel did not see thesis, antithesis, synthesis as an arguing trick. He truly thought that philosophers could use these logical and argumentative techniques as a way to better understand how the world works. Knowledge would be increased through dispute. In the rough and tumble of a real all-out intellectual brawl, with both sides equally well-armed, the truth would eventually emerge.

How Do We Know We Are Right?

Logic is a part of rhetoric, and through logic you can build up an argument until you discover the truth. In the Middle Ages, all education consisted of the "Seven Liberal Arts," which were divided into the Trivium (the first three) and the Quadrivium (the final four). The Trivium comprises Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic. These were considered the necessary foundation before a learner could progress to Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. Thus rhetoric was at the foundation of everything, not just for the point of convincing people, but for understanding the truth.

That was one of Aristotle's main points in the most influential text ever written about rhetoric: *The Art of Rhetoric.* Rhetoric could be used to find out the truth about things that had already happened, as is done in a courtroom. This is called "forensics." We use forensics in the courtroom to *argue* and *prove* what someone did or did not do. Aristotle also noted that you could use rhetoric "deliberatively," to decide what you should do in the future. Deliberative rhetoric is, believe it or not, what goes on in Congress. Aristotle's final category of rhetoric is the "epideictic," which is the use of rhetoric for praising or blaming people. We see epideictic rhetoric when people are trying to flatter others and also in political campaigns. Advertising is often characterized by the application of techniques of epideictic rhetoric to consumer products.

It all really comes down to the following question: How do we know we are right? Logic provides some essential tools, but outside of mathematics and some of the harder sciences (and even here, there is a lot more ambiguity and persuasion than people realize) you are unlikely simply to be able to set forth the evidence and say, "See! I'm right." Instead you need to convince others. There is usually no other earthly authority to appeal to. If this sounds like relativism or relativistic truth, I apologize. I do not actually believe that all truth is relative or that there is no such thing as truth, but our *social systems* do work this way. Aristotle certainly did not believe that there was no such thing as truth, or that all knowledge was relative. But he did realize that there was no outside referee to which you could appeal beyond human reason. You instead had to *use* human reason. And human reason is embodied in humans. Yes, there are tools of logic, and we will discuss them. But when you try to talk

about things that are important to us, unless you confine yourself to mathematics and some forms of science, you rapidly get beyond the places where you can simply provide an answer and have everyone agree with you.

Rather, we create and test knowledge not only in its own logical terms, but also through what English professor Stanley Fish calls "interpretive communities." Interpretive communities are groups of people whom we trust to determine whether things are right or wrong. They can be official or ad hoc; they can have credentials or just be people we trust, people whom we end up trusting, who are somehow authorized to determine things, or who have the power—like the umpire at the baseball game—to make final determinations. But the point is that you get your argument accepted by convincing the interpretive community—and the subject of our next lecture is how to figure out which interpretive community you are addressing, what its rules are, and how to communicate with it.

Getting to the Truth

But I want to conclude this lecture on a positive, nonrelativistic note, because I really do believe—and this is probably a belief grounded more in optimism than in fact—that rhetoric does eventually help us get at the truth, even if the relevant interpretive community is blind or pig-headed or bigoted or stupid. Here I am borrowing some ideas from the philosopher John Searle to label the relationship between our arguments and the real world out there, the way things *actually* are (as difficult as it may be to see them), "word to world fit." That is, the words you are saying need to fit the real world, and the closer they fit, the more likely you are to be able to convince people that you are right. So, for example, if you want to convince people that pinecones and gravel make a tasty snack, well, you've got a little more work ahead of you than if you want to get them to eat strawberries or Snicker's bars.

In fact, in many cases, maybe even most cases, trying to convince someone of the truth gives you a powerful rhetorical tool. With a lie you have to keep spinning and spinning. This is exactly how the police catch defendants in lies: The story gets more and more elaborate, and harder and harder to remember, because it is all made up. If you really had your foot run over by someone's car, you will not have to remember if you said right foot or left foot or if the car was blue or brown. But when you fabricate something, you start to be forced to remember more and more information. Likewise, if you are arguing something that is not true, it is harder to fit it in with things that are true.

I know that it is *not* always easier to convince people of the truth instead of a falsehood. Some truths, particularly scientific truths, are much harder to believe than other stories, and human history gives us many examples of people believing stupid things for long periods of time. But—and again, maybe this is a romantic hope, but I really do believe this—given enough time and enough arguments and enough quality rhetoric on both sides, I believe that the truth has a lighter burden to bear and will eventually win out—through, in part, the power of rhetoric.

Questions

1. How do the sophists represent one of the most significant critiques of the art of rhetoric?
2. What does it mean to be a Cassandra?

Suggested Reading

Corbett, Edward P.J., and Robert J. Connors. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student.* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Other Books of Interest

Searle, John. *Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World.* New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Rhetoric arose out of a desire both to discover the truth and to convince
other people. In this lecture, we are going to focus on those other people, the
"interpretive communities," that judge whether or not something is true or not,
the people who have to be convinced by the rhetoric. The complexity of those
interpretive communities, and the difficulty of figuring out how they make their
judgments, is the problem of *audience.*

Know Your Audience

I have read through many, many writing handbooks (I was on the committee
to choose the official one for a fairly large university), and they all say some-
thing to the effect of "know your audience and tailor your writing to that audi-
ence." At one level this is obvious and important advice, and at another it is
the most banal and useless thing you can tell someone. If you tell someone to
write the article or give the speech to a certain audience, and the writer does
not know that audience, you have given the person no help at all. For exam-
ple, when you write a college paper, your audience is obviously your profes-
sor. But the professor does not (usually) want you to say things like "well, we
covered this in class, so you already know what I think of it." Likewise, when
you are speaking for an audience of architects, you do not need to define a
cornice or a lintel, though you might want to explain what you mean by the net
present value of future receivables if that is relevant to your argument.
Different audiences know different things, and you as a writer are supposed to
deal with that problem by putting exactly as much—not too much and not too
little—information into your speaking or writing.

You can partly address this problem by doing some research. If you are
speaking at a *Lord of the Rings* convention, you probably do not need to sum-
marize the plot of the books. If you are speaking to doctors, you almost cer-
tainly do not need to tell them what a pancreas is. On the other hand, if you
are speaking to an audience of cardiologists, it might not be a bad idea to give
quick explanations of any abbreviations or acronyms that you are using from
liver or kidney research.

As you can no doubt see, this kind of audience analysis tends to get out of
control very fast. If you give too much information, you bore or offend the peo-
ple who already know it. If you give too little, you leave people confused and
they stop following your argument. And the time it takes to research what your
audience actually knows takes away from your writing or practicing your actual
speech or doing research into the content of the speech.

The Performative Act of Writing and Speaking

So audience is a significant problem, not just for you and I, but for professional rhetoricians (politicians, advertising executives). And therefore people since the time of the Sophists have developed a variety of tricks to use in such situations. First of all, most of the time when we are speaking or writing, we actually do know what the audience knows because we are a part of that audience. In these cases, the speaker knows all the buzz words, the acronyms and, more importantly, the basic point of view of the audience. There is thus a kind of in-group solidarity created by such speech that works very well to bring about agreement, or at least careful and intelligent listening.

Good writers and speakers, artful users of rhetoric, can handle these unbelievably tricky situations because they have internalized the key observation of Walter Ong, who, in his most important article, wrote: "The writer's audience is always a fiction." Ong was working to separate the workings of writing from the workings of speech, so I do not want to go too far against the grain of his article, but I think he is right not just about writing, but also about speaking. It is certainly true that when you are speaking, you get immediate feedback in a way that you do not get when you are writing (where someone could be writing for an audience of millions, but doing it alone), but once your audience gets larger than ten or eleven people, you are having to make abstractions and simplifications there as well.

Ong argues that the writer hardly ever tries to think of his audience as composed of a certain number of discrete individuals, John Smith and Susan Jones and Freddie Davis, etc., with their specific interests. Rather, there is some kind of abstraction of the members of the audience, what they know, what they expect, and how they are likely to react. Ong says that the writer *fictionalizes* an audience in mind. And here is where the genius comes in: Ong realizes that successful writers are able to *change* their audiences by the ways in which they fictionalize them. It is the *performative* aspect of writing and speaking, though Ong does not call it that. When a writer or speaker does things effectively, the audience fictionalizes *itself* in the way the author wants it to. This is easier to show than to explain, so I am going to give you a passage from Ernest Hemingway and Ong's explanation of it:

> **Some successful writers use the trick of imagining a specific, individual audience for everything they write. I knew one fiction writer who said that she wrote every single story, novel, and poem with the idea that her grandmother would be reading it. If the grandmother would not have understood the reference or would have been offended, the author changed what she was writing. I do not think this works for everyone, but note all the successful children's stories that were written with one particular child or group of children in mind: *The Hobbit, Winnie the Pooh, Alice in Wonderland,* and many others. In these cases, the feedback from individual children and their construction in the author's imagination may have led to more perfectly tailored books.**

"In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels."

Ong points out that Hemingway came up with a brilliant trick in the way he uses the definite article "the" and the demonstrative pronoun "that":

"The late summer of that year," the reader begins. What year? The reader gathers that there is no need to say. "Across the river." What river? The reader apparently is supposed to know. "And the plain." What plain? "*The* plain"—remember? "To the mountains." What mountains? Do I have to tell you? Of course not. *The* mountains—*those* mountains we know. We have somehow been there together. Who? You, my reader, and I. The reader—every reader—is being cast in the role of a close companion of the writer. (Ong, 13)

Hemingway, by the specific tiny words he chooses, makes his reader assume that the reader and the writer have shared knowledge and shared experiences. He *makes* his reader into something different.

You may object that this is literature, not rhetoric, but the same techniques apply. Mark Antony is trying to do the same thing (or, actually, Shakespeare is doing it through the character of Antony, in the play *Julius Caesar*) when he says "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears." He is *rhetorically* implying that you in the audience are a friend of his, a countryman of his, and a member of the same city. If you were in the audience (obviously if this had been an actual speech), two of the three (Romans, countrymen) would already have applied, and the very structure of the speech would have pressured you, by its structure, to assume that you were a friend also.

Here our beginning recognition of writing and speech as "speech-acts" is helpful. You are not just taking little units of information from inside your head and putting them in your audience's heads. You are changing things. You say things that are *locutions* but they have *illocutionary* force (what you *want* the audience to think or do) and *perlocutionary* effects (what ends up happening to the audience). It is a dynamic situation, and the speaker or writer can take advantage of this by performing certain speech-acts, such as *greeting, promising,* or *displaying.*

Discourse Conventions

In both speech and writing, the sorts of speech-acts that are allowed and, to go back to our original discussion in this lecture, the amount of information that a speaker or writer needs to communicate, are governed by *Discourse Conventions.* Discourse here means the flow of words, and those conventions are the rules that have arisen around different discourses.

The most important job for a writer or speaker is to learn the discourse conventions of his or her audience. This does *not* mean investigating everything that the audience might know. Rather, it means looking at the sorts of speeches and writings that the audience might be familiar with in different situations. Just to give a quick example, no national American politician, regardless of party, can get away with *not* saying "God Bless America." To European audiences,

this is deeply creepy, as deeply creepy as American audiences find it when politicians in the Islamic world say things like "peace be upon him" each time Mohammed's name is mentioned—and in fact when someone like a British cabinet member says the whole "peace be upon him" thing, it likewise seems deeply creepy to Americans. But this is just a convention. John Kerry wasn't proclaiming a religious republic by saying "God Bless America" at the end of his speech. He was using a discourse convention to appeal to a wide variety of listeners. He knew his audience *expected* that phrase and so he used it. His *illocutionary* purpose was to say "I'm one of you," and his *perlocutionary* effect was probably something like "John Kerry is a regular old politician" or "John Kerry isn't hostile to religion" or "John Kerry is traditionally patriotic" (though for some in the television audience it was likely "John Kerry is a huge phony").

The important point is that the interpretive community sets the rules, the discourse conventions, through some kind of complex, evolutionary process that nobody yet completely understands. But within that framework, the writer or the speaker has the ability to change the audience, to shift the interpretive community. So you not only need to *know* your audience (as all handbooks of writing and speaking say), you have to *make* your audience.

And then you have to make your audience believe what you are trying to tell them. In the next lecture, we will discuss the ways that the *structure* of an argument, the way ideas are put together, the way information is communicated, works to move an audience where you want that audience to move.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why is audience a significant problem for professional rhetoricians?
2. Why is it so important for writers and speakers to learn the discourse conventions of their audience?

Suggested Reading

Ong, Walter. "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction." *PMLA* 90, January 1975: 9–21. (Journal of the Modern Language Association of America.)

Other Books of Interest

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Kirsch, Gesa, and Duane H. Roen. *A Sense of Audience in Written Communication.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.

Up to this point we have talked about how rhetorical speeches are *acts* as well as speeches. We have seen how they are bound up with the powers of interpretive communities who get to decide if things are true or false, and we have figured out some of the ways that a writer or speaker and an audience interact, so that the writer in some ways *creates* an audience. But that creation is limited by discourse conventions. In this lecture, we will focus on the ways that the large-scale structure of an argument in great part determines whether or not it will be accepted by an audience.

Organization

It would seem to make sense to begin with the building blocks of an argument—words, sentences, grammar—and steadily increase the size of the pieces we are working with. It would seem that way, but along that path, madness lies. In fact, it is far more important to understand the large-scale *structure* of arguments, how they are put together as a whole, and *then* dig into the details of the pieces. When I grade papers, or when I listen to (and mentally critique) speeches, I am always taken by the fact that the speakers and writers are always very concerned with grammar or with figures or with one-liners, and they rarely recognize that most of these problems (and I really do mean most) come from flawed structure or what might be better called "organization." How you organize something is going to determine to a great degree whether or not your ideas get across. So in this lecture we are going to look at a variety of forms of organization and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. I will start with writing, because although it is often harder to write than it is to speak, it is also often easier to see the structure in writing.

The Dreaded Five-Paragraph Essay

I want to start with what one of my colleagues calls "the dreaded five-paragraph essay." This *may* be how many of you were trained to write, but it is hard to assume that any more. There are just as many scholars and teachers trashing the five-paragraph essay, saying that it is boring and terrible and mindless, as there are people defending it. But I teach the five-paragraph essay to my students anyway because it *works*. It is not the most creative structure, and you will not surprise anyone with it, but you will find that many, many great speeches and articles and essays actually use the five-paragraph structure. I am not going to so much *teach* it right now as explain how it works and hope that familiarity does the rest.

A five-paragraph essay is composed of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. At the end of the introductory paragraph you have a thesis statement.

The Five-Paragraph Essay

INTRODUCTION } So what?

THESIS STATEMENT

IMPORTANT IDEA #1 ⎫

IMPORTANT IDEA #2 ⎬ **BODY**

IMPORTANT IDEA #3 ⎭
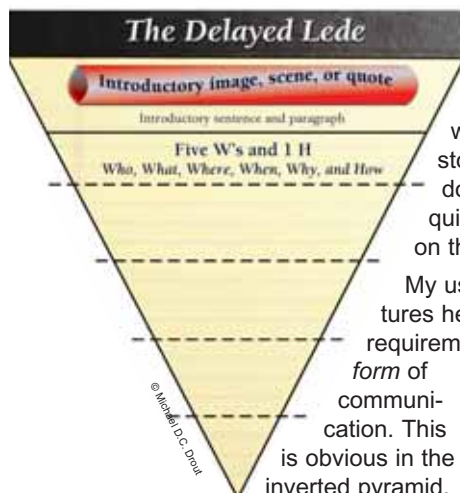
CONCLUSION } "The Big Picture"

Then, in the three body paragraphs, you make three large points, one per paragraph (telegraphed in the thesis). Finally, for the conclusion, you show how all three body paragraphs fit together to support the thesis and then you end with "The Big Picture," or why it is important that your reader or hearer accept your argument. I am sure almost all of my listeners have written this kind of an essay. You can either see it as a straitjacket or as a very useful framework upon which you can build other things. I see it as both.

But the bigger rhetorical point is this: When you *use* this structure, you communicate seriousness: It is the standard form of an academic essay, and people respond to it. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and it follows the "rule of three," which is simply that people like things grouped into threes and they can remember them more easily.

But the five-paragraph essay is not by any means the only useful structure out there. There is a rhetorical structure to journalistic stories as well; in fact, there are several. The most famous is the "inverted pyramid," which was developed back when newspapers were laid out by hand. A writer would submit a certain number of column inches and the editor would physically cut the story with scissors in order to make it fit into the allotted space. "Inverted pyramid" structure organized all facts in the story in order of importance, so that what was lost at the end of the story was the least significant material.

This structure works admirably for some news stories because readers who are interested in further information can keep reading while other readers who stop early still get the most important information. But rhetorically it is not always effective, which is why other styles of story evolved.

The traditional newspaper story (including the inverted pyramid story) begins with the famous five w's and an h: who, what, where, when, why, and how. But because variation can make readers and hearers pay more attention, different ways of presenting this information evolved. For example, there is the "delayed lede," a story in which the writer holds back the five w's and an h until after giving an illustrative example.

Inverted Pyramid

Lede: Five W's and 1 H
Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How

Introductory sentence is called lede; key paragraph is "nut graf"— the main idea of the article

MOST IMPORTANT

Story can be cut at any point without revision

LEAST IMPORTANT

© Michael D.C. Drout
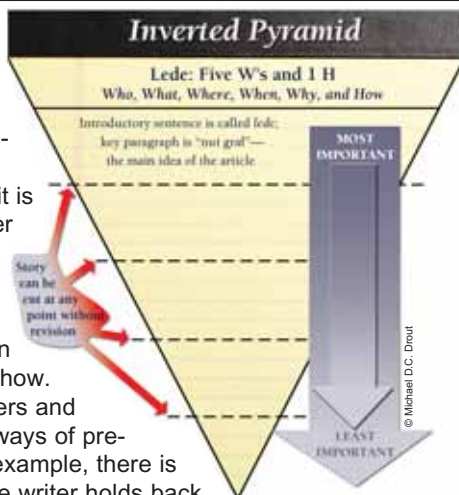
This structure is mirrored by the story that has the "kicker," a last line that gives new information or ties things up neatly. Note that the delayed lede can sometimes be used with the inverted pyramid but that the story with the "kicker" in the last line does not work as well with the kind of quick and dirty editing that can be used on the inverted pyramid.

My use of journalistic and academic structures here is meant to demonstrate how the requirements of a situation can structure the *form* of communication. This is obvious in the inverted pyramid, which is structured as it is to fulfill the needs of the editor. The strictures of rhetorical form also tend, paradoxically, to produce better writing: For some reason, the more constraints on a writer, the better the prose. But the form of writing should, ideally, be linked to the needs and desires of the reader, just as the form of speaking needs to be brought into line with the needs and desires of the speaker.

The Delayed Lede

Introductory image, scene, or quote

Introductory sentence and paragraph

Five W's and 1 H
Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How

© Michael D.C. Drout

The Delayed Lede with Kicker

Introductory image, scene, or quote

Introductory sentence and paragraph

Five W's and 1 H
Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How

KICKER

© Michael D.C. Drout
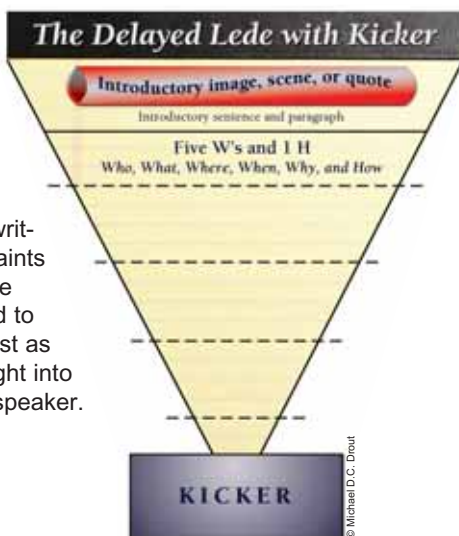
Sermons

The most thoroughly tested form in this area is, believe it or not, the sermon structure, which has been developed and polished for two millennia by some of the finest minds in Western culture. It is worth remembering that Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Yale were all founded for the express purpose of teaching young members of the clergy how to give effective sermons. Sermons, in England and America, were forms of popular entertainment and the situations in which most people encountered formal rhetoric. We see the structure of sermons used today in many political speeches and in other contexts as well.

The optimal structure for a sermon was finally worked out in the Middle Ages. Training to write and give such sermons was part of the *Ars Praedicandi,* the arts of preaching. There are thousands of medieval sermons (and even more from later periods) and most of them are unimaginably tedious. So I am going to turn to literature for what is supposedly the most perfect of all medieval sermons, Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale."

Learned sermons contained six parts: (1) the theme (the speaker says what he is going to speak about), (2) the protheme, or introduction (in which the speaker references something from the Gospels), (3) the dilation on the text (in which the speaker *explains* what the Gospels mean), (4) the exemplum (the illustrative example, usually the most interesting part of the sermon), (5) the peroration (the application of the lesson, telling the reader what lesson to take away from the sermon), and (6) the closing formula (usually an exhortation to do good and a blessing of some kind). Chaucer's Pardoner does not in fact give a complete sermon, leaving out the most boring parts, the protheme and the dilation on the text. The lack of these less exciting sections are characteristic of popular rather than learned sermons.

Chaucer's Pardoner, one of the most intriguing and wicked characters in all of literature, begins his sermon by explaining how he will talk against the "tavern sins" of drunkenness, swearing, and gambling. He denounces these sins, pointing out how they all lead to disaster,

The Sermon

PROTHEME

Introduction: In a learned sermon, this is a reference to relevant Gospels

DILATION ON THE TEXT

Explains what the Gospel selection means

EXEMPLUM

Story, example from the world, not the Bible

PERORATION

Application of the Exemplum, moral of the story

CLOSING FORMULA

Blessing, invocation, charge to change behavior, request for money

and quoting some of the key passages in the Bible that support his argument. He then turns to his *exemplum,* the story of the three drunken young men who decide to seek out Death and kill him. An old man tells them that they will find Death if they go down a crooked road. At the end of the road, they find much gold. One man is sent back to town to purchase wine to celebrate the find. While he is gone, the other two conspire to kill him when he returns. But when he is away, he decides to murder the other two by giving them poisoned wine. When he returns, the two others murder him, but then they drink the wine and die. Thus by going up the road, they have found death (rather than Death).

 In the peroration, the Pardoner warns his hearers to avoid the sin of avarice (greed) and to see how it leads to death. Then he concludes with an offer of pardons for all of them.

 You would be surprised how many absolutely contemporary political speeches have the same structure, though instead of going to the Bible for their commentary, they turn to texts like the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution. But the key is in fact the *exemplum,* the story. The minds of human beings are hard-wired to be interested in other human beings, and the brilliance of the structure of medieval sermons is that it allows a speaker *to tell a story* and then make that story have the point that the author wants. In fact, the biggest lesson of all rhetorical structures would be this: Find some way to tell a story. If you tell a story, about yourself or about someone else or even about your audience, you will get more attention and will be more likely to move the members of your audience in the direction you wish to move them.

 Now that we understand various structures of arguments, we are ready to turn to their internal components, which must be in themselves constructed effectively in order to create the agreement that is the purpose of rhetorical speech or writing.

Questions

1. What is the "inverted pyramid"?
2. What comparisons can be drawn between medieval sermons and contemporary political speeches?

Suggested Reading

Zinsser, William K. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006.

Other Books of Interest

Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

We have looked at structure, and we have seen how different structures are appropriate for different occasions and different arguments, and that part of the art of rhetoric is figuring out when to use what structure in what circumstances. Now we turn to the internal construction of arguments and, in the next two lectures, we are going to examine how to put things together piece by piece. Our real focus is going to be on *logic*, the third element of the Trivium (remember that the first element was grammar, the second rhetoric, and the third logic, but all three of these disciplines are really essential for effective rhetoric). So in this lecture we will talk about the starting points of logical arguments, and in the next lecture we will examine the different paths you can take from those starting points.

An Essential Piece of Knowledge

This entire lecture is focused around one particular technical term, but it is so important that I think it is worth a lecture. That term is one that you very well may be hearing for the first time today, although it is an essential piece of knowledge about rhetoric: *enthymeme*.

I think so few people ever speak about enthymemes or are taught about them is because enthymeme is a scary-looking word whose pronunciation is not obvious. But it is enormously important, and because this is a Recorded Books course, you can hear the proper pronunciation in the audio version of these lectures.

At this point it is necessary to give just a little jargon from the field of logic. We will talk about this material in much more detail in the next chapter, so I will only give the bare minimum here.

Logic relies upon what are called syllogisms; think of them as chains of logical statements:

Vegetables cannot speak.

Lima beans are vegetables.

Therefore lima beans cannot speak.

That is a syllogism, and it is one of the fundamental building blocks of all arguments. Chain enough syllogisms together, and you can lead your readers where you want them to go. The official definition of an enthymeme is "a syllogism with the first major premise implied or suppressed."

> Vegetables cannot speak.
>
> Lima beans are vegetables.
>
> Therefore lima beans cannot speak.

If we "suppress" the first premise of the preceding syllogism, we get:

> Lima beans are vegetables.
>
> Therefore lima beans can't speak.

Suppressing that particular first premise does not weaken the argument in this case. But that is true only as long as the suppressed first premise is something that we can all agree on. In fact, by suppressing it, we are saving ourselves and our audience time and energy, and audiences like that. However, trying to keep in mind "an enthymeme is a syllogism with the first major premise implied or suppressed" is, in itself, bad rhetoric because it is difficult to remember. So let us rephrase the definition: An enthymeme is the point of the argument where you lean forward, look the other person in the eye and say:

> "Can't we at least agree that . . ." and then go on from there.
>
> "Can't we at least agree that lima beans cannot speak."

Yes we can, as long as you have chosen your enthymeme carefully and your audience does in fact agree with it. In rhetorical studies, much attention goes to the figures of speech, the clever witticisms and the soaring cadences of sound. These things are very rewarding to discuss (and will be taken up in subsequent lectures), but the most important thing you can do in constructing your argument is the creation of an effective enthymeme. Without an enthymeme, no real argument is possible. With the right enthymeme, you can get someone to agree to pretty much anything you want. If you have defined the starting point properly, and if you use your logic correctly, your reader or hearer will *have* to arrive at your conclusion because it will be forced upon him or her by the logic.

Failed Enthymemes

But picking an effective enthymeme is a *lot* harder than it seems at first. In fact, a great many (maybe even most) major political rhetorical arguments, including some that have been going on for vast periods of time), are so contentious exactly *because* we cannot find a shared enthymeme. In the most bitter ongoing political arguments in America today, the pro-life people lean forward and in their most reasonable tones of voice say, "Can't we at least agree that all human life is worthy of protection?" and the pro-choice people say, "No." Why? Because underlying the attempt at an enthymeme is the suppressed premise that a fertilized egg or an embryo is a human life. And obviously a lot of people refuse to accept that enthymeme. Pro-choice and pro-life people have been arguing for over thirty years and they have been unable to find an acceptable enthymeme. It may be (in fact, it probably is) the case that no shared enthymeme is possible, that the argument is inherently unsolvable. The missing enthymeme is not missing for lack of trying, as thousands of essays and speeches on each side have been written, some intended to convince, others just to inspire those who already believe. But they have not had a common enthymeme.

Failed enthymemes underlie arguments about war, inequality, taxes, the size of government, the appropriate ways of raising children and the acceptable range of personal and sexual freedom. In all of those cases, if you look carefully, most of the arguments are going right past their intended receivers because what is being assumed to be agreed upon is not agreed upon. So the argument cannot ever move forward.

Working from Shared Assumptions

The utopian solution would be for each side to try to work backward to some point at which we actually could all agree on something and then develop the arguments from there, but this is really, really, really hard. Russell and Whitehead tried to do something like this for mathematics, bringing everything back to simple, agreed-upon concepts like sets and then building things up from there. It was immensely difficult for mathematics (and has problems there) and is probably impossible for concepts that are much less clean and distinct than mathematics. One notable attempt at finding enthymemes in the face of intense disagreement is John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice.* Rawls' creation of "the veil of ignorance" is a very obvious attempt to say, "Can't we at least agree that . . ." Unfortunately for Rawls, even the "veil of ignorance" was unable to bring about much agreement from those with fundamentally different starting points.

However, there are very successful enthymemes in American political discourse, and you can even see these carrying the day in areas in which previous opinion was viciously divided while contemporary opinion is not (or is much less so). If you read the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr., you will see that, unlike many contemporary politicians, he was a brilliant chooser of enthymemes. King had the great benefit—though it was also his great challenge—of knowing that a great many people in his audience were either skeptical or outright hostile to his claims. He thus was required to bring these people along, step by step. One way to do this is to figure out where your shared assumptions are and work from them. Let us look at his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In this letter, King is taking to task fellow clergymen from Alabama who had suggested that he and the people he led were moving too quickly in their efforts to end segregation. King begins with some warm-up that is not really relevant to our argument. Then, in his third paragraph, he gets down to business:

> "But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their 'thus saith the Lord' far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."

The enthymeme underlies the first sentence. "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here." This sentence cannot be put into a logical argument unless the reader supplies the suppressed premise "I should be where injustice is." Then the syllogism is complete:

> I must go where injustice is.
>
> There is injustice in Birmingham.
>
> Therefore I am in Birmingham.

Why is this enthymeme so brilliant? Because for King's primary audience (and he was well aware that he was composing the letter for a wider audience as well), that first, suppressed premise of "I must go where injustice is" is in fact shared. And so they were from the very beginning forced to start walking down the path that King wanted them to, and therefore they would end up where he wanted them to end up. And as we might expect, they did. King's use of the enthymeme here is also very effective because it pushes his reader right past the possibly more difficult problem of showing that there was "injustice" in Birmingham. To us, after King's victory, that fact seems obvious, but it was not to everyone in King's audience. However, because that assumption (that there really *is* injustice in Birmingham—and note that King gives copious evidence for this later in the letter) is supported by a shared enthymeme, the audience was willing to accept it.

This is not to say that all enthymemes are used for good purposes. In fact, because all arguments rely upon enthymemes, there are tricky and devious ones as well as brilliant ones (and part of the way we judge is to rate the argument as a whole, not just the enthymeme). "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit" is actually an enthymeme. It presupposes a longer chain of logic:

> The murderer wore the glove found at the crime scene.
>
> If it was the murderer's glove, then it would fit the murderer.
>
> My client's hands do not fit in the glove, so he cannot be the murderer.
>
> Because he is not the murderer, you must acquit him.

All of that chain of reasoning—with all kinds of logical gaps—is summed up by "if it doesn't fit, you must acquit." And, as testament to both the power of the enthymeme and the ineptness of the prosecution, it worked. We can admire the rhetorical facility of the lawyer who came up with "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit," but we can also (or many of us can) rue the fact that it was put toward an evil purpose. That is the two-edged sword of rhetoric, and of the enthymeme. The power of logic, the subject of our next lecture, is somewhat harder to subvert.

Questions

1. Why is the enthymeme such an essential piece of knowledge about rhetoric?
2. Why was the enthymeme in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" so brilliant?

Suggested Reading

Shand, John. *Arguing Well*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Aristotle. *The Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. J.H. Freese. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Howard Kahane and Nancy Cavender's *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric: The Use of Reason in Everyday Life.*

 This is possibly the weirdest lecture in this series, because it is probably unlike anything you were expecting in relation to a course on rhetoric. This lecture, which is about logic, is pretty close to being about math.

 But please do not skip ahead. This is very important material, even more so because it is often left out entirely from writing courses and discussions of rhetoric. I think this is a mistake. As Aristotle noted (and Plato and the philosophers before him recognized), logic is an essential part of rhetoric. If you want to convince someone to do something, a logical chain of reasoning is one of the best ways to do this. Although not all human beings follow logical chains of reasoning, and it is very difficult sometimes to find a starting point for such a chain, if you *do* have an enthymeme, you can generally lead a person where you need to go *if you follow a few rules of logic*. In addition, much tricky or dishonest rhetoric actually works by not following the rules of logic. We will discuss various kinds of rhetorical cheating in the next lecture on logical fallacies, but it is worth noting here that each time we discuss how logic *forces* or *proves* some statements to be true, inversions or changes in that logic can make it seem as if false things are in fact true.

Rules of Logic

 You can build up the most complex arguments based on just a very few rules.

Identity. A thing is the same as itself; A = A.

 Some philosophers argue that this can be a profound problem, but for our purposes, we will take it as a foundation.

If → Then. If it is raining, then the sky is cloudy. If something is a fish, then it lives under water.

Negation. We can say NOT to support the negation of what we were saying before. Therefore we also have NOT A equal to NOT A.

 Some uses of these foundational ideas include the following:

Inversion. Adding "NOT" to both sides of a logical statement is called "inversion."

 It is very important to note that the inverse of a true statement is not always true.

 If it is raining, then the sky is cloudy.

 We will assume this is true for now. Putting NOT on both sides results in the following:

If it is NOT raining, then the sky is NOT cloudy.

Note that this is not true. At the very moment that I am writing this, it *is* cloudy and it is indeed not raining.

If it is a fish, then it lives in the water.

But look at the inverse:

If it is NOT a fish, then it does NOT live in the water.

This is not true, as the existence of seals, whales, sea urchins, and other marine life demonstrates.

The Converse. Logical statements have what can be called "directionality" (and this makes them fundamentally different from mathematical equations). The *order* of the IF and the THEN matters. So, although IF A THEN B is true, IF B THEN A is not necessarily true.

If it is raining, then the sky is cloudy.

For our purposes, this is true. But look at the converse:

If the sky is cloudy, then it is raining.

This is not true.

If it is a fish, then it lives in the water.

True, but look at the converse:

If it lives in the water, then it is a fish.

Again, not true, as the statement above on other forms of marine life shows.

Contrapositive. However, if we perform the inverse (add NOT to both sides) and the converse (switch the order), we *do* get something that is true. This is called the contrapositive.

If it is raining, then the sky is cloudy.

Switching the order and adding NOT to each side, we get the following:

If the sky is NOT cloudy, THEN it is NOT raining.

True enough. Let us try the fish example.

If it is a fish, then it lives under water.

So invert and convert, and we get the following:

If it does NOT live under water, then it is NOT a fish.

Also true!

Syllogisms. A syllogism is a collection of multiple "if A then B" statements in which the statements are chained together because the conclusion of the one THEN statement is the IF of another.

So IF it is raining, THEN the sky is cloudy.

IF it is cloudy, THEN I am not casting a shadow.

THEREFORE: IF it is raining, THEN I am not casting a shadow.

Multiple syllogisms may be chained together:

IF it is a fish, THEN it lives under water.

IF it lives under water, THEN it cannot fly.

IF it cannot fly, THEN it cannot get onto my roof.

IF it cannot get onto my roof, THEN it cannot slide down the chimney.

THEREFORE IF it is a fish, THEN it cannot slide down the chimney.

As long as you can keep chaining syllogisms together, you can logically walk your reader or hearer from one point to another.

You will note that this chain of syllogisms uses some negative constructions.

IF it lives under water, THEN it can*not* fly.

You can restate this, for convenience's sake, as

IF lives under water, THEN NOT fly.

And this implies two very important things. First, you can chain any "NOT fly" statement to this one.

IF it can*not* fly, THEN it is not a butterfly.

But, through our knowledge of the contrapositive, we can also rearrange statements to allow them to be linked.

IF it is a seagull, THEN it can fly.

Invert and convert to get:

If it cannot fly, THEN it is NOT a seagull.

And then we can link up this statement to our NOT fly statement from before:

If it lives under water, THEN it cannot fly.

IF it cannot fly, THEN it is NOT a seagull.

Why it might be important to prove this, I do not know, but you can, I hope, see how this gives you a whole lot of flexibility in rearranging a wide variety of statements into syllogism. The contrapositive allows you to switch around a statement and still have it be true. If you have the statement, for example, ostriches cannot fly (i.e., IF it's an ostrich, THEN it can NOT fly) but you find yourself building an argument about things that *do* fly, you can use the contrapositive of the original statement, IF it CAN fly, then it is NOT an ostrich.

Now, let me pre-answer some objection (this, by the way, is the rhetorical figure of prolepsis, which we will discuss in lecture ten): I agree that nobody argues exactly like this. It would be excruciatingly boring. But this kind of structure *underlies* all of the logical arguments we encounter: You start at one step and try to chain things together. Also, this is *traditional* or Aristotelian logic; modern logic does different things. Also note that these kinds of rules don't work for statements like "some cows are brown," only for statements like "all cows eat grass"—you need to have the complete category covered. But even if you would bore your audience beyond tears with a complete (and that is the key word) argument worked out only in terms of logical propositions, you still cannot avoid logic. In fact, you do not want to avoid logical propositions, as the operation of syllogisms can be used in your favor to compel your audience to agree with you.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is an example of a contrapositive?
2. Why is it important to understand the rules of logic when forming an argument?

Suggested Reading

Kahane, Howard, and Nancy Cavender. *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric: The Use of Reason in Everyday Life.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Bergmann, Merrie, James Moor, and Jack Nelson. *The Logic Book*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Trans. Henry Caplan. Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954.

Walton, Douglas N. *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Douglas N. Walton's *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation.*

 In the previous lecture, we examined how logical arguments can be made up of syllogisms, and we noted that there are certain versions of *If* → *Then* statements that are not necessarily true (they are actually often false). For example, the inverse (putting NOT) on either side and the converse (switching the order) are not necessarily true. We also learned that the contrapositive, switching the order *and* putting NOT on each side, *is* always true. We also briefly noted that this kind of reasoning only works with certain kinds of propositions, those that are categorical—the contrapositive is not always true when it is applied to noncategorical statements like "some cows are white."

When Logic Fails

 In this lecture, which might be my favorite one in the entire course, I want to talk about the different ways that logical argument can go wrong. There is a long, long tradition of this kind of analysis, which is why nearly every kind of logical flaw you can think of has a name, an explanation, and a remedy. Thus most of this lecture will be spent examining different logical fallacies. But you should be aware that we have only scratched the surface here: There are many, many more fallacies, and you can draw very, very fine distinctions between the various sorts. Almost all of these fallacies depend, in one way or another, on the kinds of problems we have noted that can arise in logic. Many of the fallacies have great names, and they use Latin, and they are devastating argumentative weapons because nowadays not everyone is well educated in rhetoric. So if you master some of these concepts and apply analysis to note the flaws in arguments, it will make you a much more effective writer and rhetorician.

 I am unaware of any definitive list of which logical fallacies are the most common, but here, in the order that I think is most helpful, is a discussion of the most common fallacies and how to fix them.

Asserting the Consequent. This is one of the hardest fallacies to avoid. It occurs when a writer or speaker assumes that the *converse* of a true statement is automatically true. Remember that the *converse* of a true statement is the statement with the order of premises switched.

 Statement: If it is a fish, then it lives under water.

 Converse: If it lives under water, then it is a fish.

 Not true, as seals, manatees, and squid suggest.

 If the economy is growing, then people vote for the incumbent.

36

This is (probably) a true statement. But people like to turn this around to the following:

If you vote for the incumbent, then the economy will grow.

That is not logically proven. Another example might be the following:

If you play by the rules, you will be successful.

Converse: Person x is successful, therefore he must have played by the rules.

Tony Soprano and Richard the Third would enjoy a good laugh at this.

Denying the Antecedent. This fallacy is closely related to asserting the consequent. Here, instead of incorrectly assuming that the *converse* is true, people incorrectly assume that the *inverse* is true. Remember that the inverse takes a true statement and puts NOT on both sides:

Statement: If it is a fish, then it lives under water.

Inverse: If it is NOT a fish, then it does NOT live under water.

Also obviously untrue, as Shamu the killer whale proves.

An example of denying the antecedent in regular rhetoric would be something like the following:

If you play by the rules, you will be successful.

The fallacy would be in adding NOT to both sides:

If you don't play by the rules, you will not be successful.

Tell that to any number of thieves and charlatans.

Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc. This is a fallacy somewhat related to asserting the consequent and denying the antecedent. This fallacy, which is usually just abbreviated as "the post hoc fallacy," is created when a writer or speaker assumes that because something came after something else, the first thing caused the second. Politicians *love* the post hoc fallacy, because it is so difficult to separate out causes from coincidences in the real world.

Two years ago you elected me, and since that time the unemployment rate has dropped by 5 percent.

Maybe the politician had something to do with it, but the statement above does not prove that. A huge amount of the effort put into science is devoted to figuring out whether something *caused* the problem or just occurred afterwards. Noting post hoc fallacies can be a full-time job.

Petitio Principii (Begging the Question). This is one of my favorite fallacies. It means "begging the question," and it is wildly abused by newspaper columnists and others who do not know formal logic but do know that "begging the question" is not a good thing.

Begging the question does *not* mean "raising a new question," so saying that "Senator Smith's acquittal for perjury begs the question of whether he should have been indicted in the first place" is incorrect usage. Rather, *petitio principii* means that you have asked the other side to concede the main point to be argued. If we are arguing about what to eat for dinner, you say, "just to speed things up, can't you at least agree that we won't eat seafood?" so that

we can move on. But if I *wanted* to eat seafood, asking me to concede, for the sake of argument, that we won't eat seafood, is begging the question: asking for me to give in preemptively.

But begging the question can be more subtle as well. A good indicator of this fallacy is the use of an adjective or adverb to perform all the logical work in the sentence. When politicians campaign on the platform of eliminating "wasteful spending," they are in fact begging the question. Everyone is against *wasteful* spending; there is no need to have an argument about it. The real question (which has been begged here) is which spending is wasteful and which is not. Therefore the word "wasteful" begs the question by trying to get you to agree that whatever spending the politician is against, you're against too. You'll see that this fallacy is related to the enthymeme: It assumes that you share the enthymeme with the speaker even when you don't.

Again, the trick to catching this fallacy is to notice when the adjective or the adverb is doing all the work. "Wasteful" spending; "unnecessary" military force; "extreme" inequality; "tasteless" vulgarity; in every case the real argument is how to classify things into the different categories (wasteful versus important, necessary versus unnecessary, extreme versus unavoidable, tasteless versus challenging). So look for adjectives and adverbs in your opponents' speeches and then, when you catch this error, say that "unfortunately, you're guilty of the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*."

Attacking the Messenger: Argumentum ad Hominem. Back in lecture two we discussed Aristotle's various categories of rhetoric, which included forensic (finding out what has already happened), deliberative (deciding what we should do), and epideictic (praising or blaming). The ad hominem fallacy occurs when you take techniques and approaches from epideictic rhetoric and try to apply them to deliberative or forensic rhetoric.

Ad hominem means "to the man," and it is an attack on the messenger or speaker rather than on the argument. Sometimes it can be brutally effective, and this is why it is used so often. But the danger of ad hominem is that the fallacy risks alienating the audience and turning them against the speaker.

But the real fallacy of ad hominem is when an attack on the person is substituted for a substantive critique of the person's ideas. For example, "Senator Smith's plan for environmental protection should be rejected because Smith is a drunk." Smith may very well be a drunk, but that has nothing to say about the merits of his plan. Argumentum ad hominem is probably most commonly used today in attacks on people's intelligence: Candidate X is stupid; therefore his policies must be bad. Note that "candidate X is stupid, therefore we should not elect him" is a reasonable syllogism (with the enthymeme of "we should not elect stupid people"), but this says nothing about the policies the candidate is advocating.

A variant of ad hominem can be called, tongue in cheek, *argumentum ad Hitlerum*: that is, a speaker finds some area where Hitler agreed with an idea that the speaker's opponent agrees with. This is then used to discredit an argument: "Hitler was a vegetarian, so therefore vegetarianism is wrong" is an argumentum ad Hitlerum. The Internet version of this is called Godwin's Law, which states that all arguments eventually devolve into people flinging

insults about Hitler or Nazis. The first side to do so has, according to Godwin, automatically lost the argument.

Ad hominem rhetoric can be fun, and it can make you feel better about whatever you are angry about. But it really is only *effective* at riling up the troops who are already on your side; it is not going to convince anyone to agree with you. This may be useful in electoral politics, but in the kinds of situations where most of us are likely to be using rhetoric—office politics, speaking at a meeting, trying to convince people to agree with us—ad hominem is a terrible idea and is likely to backfire in a big way.

More Logical Fallacies

Tu Quoque. Related to the ad hominem fallacy is the tu quoque fallacy, or, as we used to use it in New Jersey when I was growing up, the "so's your mom" fallacy.

An example would be "famous actor X says that population control is a good idea, but he has eleven children." Famous actor X may be a hypocrite, but that does not address the merits of the idea of population control, whatever they may be. The tu quoque fallacy is probably the most common in all of political discourse.

It is worth noting that on the one hand, this is a very effective way of criticizing someone, because very few people (and even few politicians) manage to live up to every ideal they preach. The saying is that hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue, and it is worth thinking of this when considering whether or not to engage in the tu quoque fallacy: It gives you short-term cover, but in the long run you are not likely to convince anyone.

Red Herring (*Ignoratio Elenchi*—Irrelevant Thesis). Because tu quoque focuses on the hypocrisy of the speaker, it distracts the hearer or reader from the real issues. That is the same general idea of the red herring, which is an attempt to change the subject from one in which the speaker is losing to one in which he is likely to win.

For example, when a company is being criticized for dumping pollutants into the environment and a spokesman brings up the fact that the company gave a lot of money to charity that year, you have a red herring situation.

Appeal to Popularity (*Ad Populum*). One of advertising's favorite fallacies, this appeal to the herd instinct (it is also called "bandwagon") boils down to the idea that since everybody is doing it, it must be good.

Hasty Generalization. The hasty generalization is a very, very common mistake of newspaper columnists, particularly those who are responsible for spotting trends. Using too little data, the user of the hasty generalization predicts a significant trend.

In political terms, this is used every time a politician wins a primary or gets favorable (or unfavorable) results from a poll: It always is taken to show what will happen in the next election. "Special elections" are particularly subject to hasty generalization fallacies, since they allow writers to speculate (and to fulfill their own wishes) about what will next happen.

Sweeping Generalization (*Dicto Simpliciter*). This fallacy, which is akin to the hasty generalization, is the bane of students everywhere.

It occurs when a writer or speaker makes a categorical claim about something that cannot be claimed categorically: "Since the beginning of time, all people have enjoyed tipping over cows." All you have to do is find one counterexample and the entire argument fails. The key to avoiding the sweeping generalization is to be very clear whether or not your statements can be defended if they are categorical. If not, you need to use qualifiers like "many" and "most."

Appeal to Ignorance (*Argumentum ad Ignorantiam*). This fallacy is more common in verbal argument than in formal discourse because, in general, it is a sign of desperation that makes the user appear less intelligent.

"No one can prove that lima beans don't cause cancer" is an appeal to ignorance.

This is a true statement, but totally meaningless. There are many things that no one has bothered to try to link to cancer, so that absence of proof is not proof of absence.

Plurium Interrogationum (*Too Many Questions*). When a speaker asks a very large number of questions and then only allows for a short answer, he has committed the fallacy of plurium interrogationum.

It is a good trick to use when you have the other person in some kind of a defensive position (for instance, when you are a lawyer cross-examining a witness or, more commonly, a senator or congressperson badgering someone who is testifying). Plurium interrogationum can make the witness look bad, particularly if he or she gets rattled, but it is a logical fallacy and deserves to be recognized as a dirty trick (and usually the sign of a losing argument).

There are many additional fallacies, and it is worth learning them and their remedies, not only to improve your analytical abilities, but also to use in rhetorical combat with others. Avoiding fallacies is a step on the road toward rhetorical success, but it is not enough.

Questions

1. What is meant by "asserting the consequent"?
2. Why is *ad hominem* rhetoric a bad idea?

Suggested Reading

Walton, Douglas N. *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Every argument uses logic, ethics, and feeling in different ratios. Why?

In the previous lectures, we came to understand rhetoric as a kind of speech-act in which we have to convince an audience, an interpretive community, of something. Then we moved on to the macro-structure of arguments, how they are assembled in the large scale. Then we delved into the internal, logical structure of arguments: where you start (the enthymeme) and how you link things together (*If* → *Then* statements, syllogisms). Finally, we looked at the ways logic can go wrong and how it can be manipulated via logical fallacies. Now we are ready to move into analysis of the elements of arguments that everyone usually *recognizes* as rhetorical: In this lecture, we will look at the differing proportions of logic, ethics, and emotion in arguments; in the next lectures, we move to figures of speech.

Logos, Ethos, and Pathos

All arguments (even scientific journal articles; even weepy television commercials for Save the Children) contain *some* elements of logic, ethics, and emotion. Aristotle recognized this in his *The Art of Rhetoric*, noting that all arguments contain *logos*, *ethos,* and *pathos*—to be slightly more precise, he said that logos, ethos, and pathos were the three types of rhetorical proof. If it is helpful for memory purposes, you can think of the three pieces, logos, ethos, and pathos, as logic, ethics, and sympathy (the root words are recognizable).

Logos

Logos is the Greek word for "word" or utterance. Although we think of a logical argument as being somewhat mathematical (for good reasons), Aristotle's point in using "logos" here is to say that the argument is constructed out of words, not so much emotions or feelings or moral values, but simply the words themselves and how they fit together. Logos is focused on abstract relationships and rationality.

All arguments have to have logic. Even when you are talking about the heartfelt pleadings of a mother asking for clemency for her son about to be executed for murder, there is still logos in the argument: Please spare my son because not doing so will hurt me. Even the most rabid screed of a Red Sox fan about how the Yankees are the root of all evil still has a core of (twisted perhaps) logic: I love the Red Sox, the Yankees are an obstacle to the success of the Red Sox, therefore the Yankees are evil (because anything the Red Sox do is good). Even the most mindless advertising or political slogans

have a core of logos: Our product or candidate is good. Therefore you should buy or vote for him.

Ethos

Ethos, the second of the three essential elements of an argument, is defined as an appeal to the character of the speaker. When someone says, "As a wife, a mother, and a member of the school board for twenty years, I think I am qualified to tell you how to vote on this issue," she is focused heavily on ethos.

What I am about to claim goes against what major rhetorical handbooks and professors of rhetoric say, but I nevertheless believe that it might be useful—in the sense of helping you with your own rhetoric—to expand Aristotle's definition of ethos to include not only individual character but also general ethical and moral systems. I say this because it makes the whole three-fold system work a little bit better. Let us take ethos, then, as also including reference to principles of human behavior that cannot necessarily be proven by syllogism but may be widely shared by an audience. For instance, if a speaker says "the real measure of our society is how well we treat our most vulnerable citizens" he or she is not really working completely in logic, but instead is attempting to invoke agreement from a hearer based on an assumed shared ethical and moral system.

Drout's modification of Aristotle is to treat "ethos" as "ethics" rather than as personal character. I think it does explain the workings of arguments a little more effectively: Sometimes a writer or speaker will use cold, rational logic (but this can get enormously boring). Sometimes the speaker or writer uses emotion (pathos), and sometimes the speaker focuses on ethics.

Remember that even when a speaker is focusing on "ethos," he or she also needs to have logic in place. Without some logic, arguments become random or confusing messes. This necessity of logos means that even when we are working in an ethical system, we need to follow cause and effect, syllogism, and consistency.

But, Aristotle noted, logos and ethos are not enough. Strictly logical arguments can be beautiful in mathematics, but if they often do not have a human component, it is going to be hard to get anyone to care about them. And arguments about human things—what actually happened, what we should do (forensic and deliberative)—are the most important arguments that we have.

Pathos

Exactly because our arguments are important, and because they are about humans, the third element of Aristotle's triad is necessary: Pathos, feeling, is also a part of every argument. Pathos can be the primary component of an argument or it can be a minor element, but it is always there. Even the driest-seeming scientific paper contains a tiny bit of pathos. Even when we are at a "just the facts, ma'am" stage of an argument, there is enough implicit pathos in the argument to at least justify our paying attention: "This is important!" includes pathos, even "this is at least important enough to pay attention to."

Pathos leavens the supposed sterility of logic or the equally dangerous pitfall of hectoring that a strict ethical argument can fall prey to. Pathos often puts a human face on difficult issues, and because our human minds are wired to be

particularly interested in the doings of other humans, we are more likely to pay attention to, and apply our intuition to, arguments that use the right amount of pathos.

The key point in this lecture, then, is that each argument includes some logos, some ethos, and some pathos; the art of rhetoric lies in blending them in the right proportions. This is often very difficult to do. Effective speakers and writers are those who are good at choosing which arguments require which balance of the three ingredients: In law school, there's a saying, "When the facts support your case, argue the facts. When the law supports your case, argue the law. And when neither the facts nor the law support your case, pound on the table." Logos, ethos, pathos.

As an analyst of rhetoric, you should, of course, be suspicious of pathos, because it is in some ways the easy way out, and it is sometimes an attempt to short-circuit reason. But given a lot of the history of the twentieth century, we can also note that completely ignoring pathos is a common and very dangerous failure of large bureaucracies and other impersonal structures: In our current social structure, it may be a little too easy to forget about individual humans and human suffering, and the use of pathos can help us avoid that problem.

For the remainder of this lecture, then, I want to look at some elements of a great piece of rhetoric and show how the author uses logos, ethos, and pathos in various combinations. It is, again, Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." As he gets toward the middle of the letter, King writes:

> "We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights."

This is an example of ethos. The very conception of "rights" is a form of ethos, and by saying "constitutional" and "God-given," King is invoking the two major value systems in play in the United States at the time he gave the speech. But note there is also some logos here. The number "340" requires logic for you to figure out what he means (it is the time since the arrival of the Pilgrims to the year 1963, when King gave his speech). He continues:

> "The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter."

This is a combination of logos and ethos, with just a little pathos thrown in: The nations of Asia and Africa were indeed moving quickly toward political independence in the 1960s, and America was moving slowly away from segregation. The ethos here is that America should not be behind Asia and Africa. The pathos is generated by the contrast of jet-like speed for something as large as political independence with the horse-and-buggy pace for something as small as the right to buy a cup of coffee. King goes on:

> "Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait.' But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an

airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children . . ."

I'm going to stop there, because this is such a beautiful example of the *effective* and *correct* use of pathos. King brings in the tears in a child's eyes and uses this as a symbol of the entire, larger problem of segregation. The ethos is obviously there, and the logic is also there, particularly when King continues to say how his daughter's mental world is beginning to be clouded by the idea of inferiority and by bitterness toward white people. But the pathos of the tears in the eyes of King's daughter is what pulls the entire piece together, and to my mind, at that moment, early in the letter, King had already won the argument. Everything works (logos, ethos, and pathos) and the argument performs the highest function that rhetoric can perform: to convince a hostile and unwilling audience of something that is not merely what the speaker wants, but which is, in the much larger sense of the world, true.

The use of logos, ethos, and pathos is essential to all arguments, and all arguments have to have all of the foundations that we have discussed previously. But there is a lot more that speakers can do to delight and move their audiences.

Questions

1. What did Aristotle say are the three elements of all arguments?
2. Why are people more likely to pay attention to arguments that contain elements of pathos?

Suggested Reading

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Ed. James M. Washington. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.

We have been building up our understanding of arguments from the foundations, through the fundamental building blocks of structure and logic, and into the completed rhetorical edifice. In the previous lecture, we discussed how every successful argument needs to have the right balance of logos, ethos, and pathos. Now we are moving beyond the basics into virtuosity, looking at what writers can do *beyond* the basics to enhance their writing. So we will now examine figures of speech.

The Purpose of Figures of Speech

Analysis of figures does two things for us. First, it allows us to classify and explain the various effects that writers are able to create so that we can understand them ourselves and duplicate them when we want to. Second, figures of speech demonstrate ways that writers and speakers have already solved difficult rhetorical problems. It is useful to look at these successful solutions so that we can steal good ideas and use shortcuts that other people have found. You can, of course, use figures just for their own sake or to show that you know how to use figures. But more importantly, you use figures to get you somewhere you need to go, the same way you might use a particular technique that someone has already figured out in carpentry or cooking. Originality is important, but there is also accumulated wisdom for you to draw upon.

A figure of speech is really any kind of nonstandard usage, but that is a pretty broad definition. A simple form might be, "if you notice it, it is a figure of speech," which makes sense, but also suggests that there *is* such a thing as nonfigural speech, which some scholars of linguistics would deny—they believe that all speech is figurative or conventional once you dig down deep enough into it. I am not really sure who is existentially right, but for our purposes, it is enough to say that most people in a culture can tell you what is standard and what is unusual, and the unusual things are very often figures.

Schemes and Tropes

The major medieval text on figures is *de Schematibus et Tropis*, by the Venerable Bede, and traditionally, scholars of rhetoric have divided all figures into two types: schemes and tropes. A figure of speech is defined as a "scheme" when a writer uses words in a nonstandard order; it is a "trope" when a word is used in a nonstandard way, such as a pun or a metaphor.

Some Renaissance writers were able to classify nearly two hundred figures of speech, with about twice as many schemes as tropes. On that path madness lies, because if you end up with too many categories and Greek or Latin

names for them, you quickly reach "analysis paralysis" and end up arguing over trivial things and missing the point of how figures of speech help to make rhetoric more convincing.

Not all rhetoric textbooks would agree, and this is in fact my own theory (so you can "take it with a grain of salt," which is a rhetorical figure), but I believe that figures make speeches and writings more rhetorically effective because they make them more memorable, because they apply preestablished solutions to difficult problems, and because they access cultural authority. The link between memorability, figures of speech, and cultural authority is part of my own technical research, which is not officially on rhetoric but is in medieval studies. However, you can learn more about how ideas are transmitted and remembered and modified in my book *How Tradition Works*, particularly chapters 1, 2, and 3 for the theory and then chapter 5 for some application of rhetorical analysis. Much shorter, but on some of the same material, is my essay "Tolkien's Prose Style: Some Literary and Rhetorical Effects," which is published in volume one of the journal *Tolkien Studies*.

Schemes

Obviously, I could expand on the theory here, but I believe that it is more effective to analyze specific figures, both schemes and tropes, so that we can see how they might contribute to rhetorical effectiveness. We will begin here with schemes, and in the next lecture we will take up tropes. Remember that schemes are the use of nonstandard patterns of organization or word order; tropes focus on individual words or short phrases.

Anaphora. This is probably the most frequently used figure in contemporary political rhetoric.

Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences. Probably the most famous example of anaphora is Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech, in which he says:

> "And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.
>
> And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.
>
> Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.
>
> Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.
>
> Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.
>
> Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.
>
> But not only that:
>
> Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.
>
> Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.
>
> Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.
>
> From every mountainside, let freedom ring."

Anaphora is effective for several reasons. First, what is easy to remember is what is rhetorically effective. Anaphora reduces the effort required to remember something (because you only have to remember the repeated phrase

once). Second, repetition makes things easier to remember. And finally, repetition, when done right, can be aesthetically pleasing because the hearer or reader gets the pleasure of repetition mixed with the pleasure of novelty in a nice proportion.

If we look at Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, we note:

> "But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract."

Lincoln's use of anaphora (on *we cannot*) is different than King's in one sense: King is leading his reader to one particular goal, continually developing the idea of what "let freedom ring" means. Lincoln is performing a quick switch on his readers. He is saying that we cannot do certain things—which must have seemed strange to his hearers, since they were there for the purpose of consecrating a battlefield—but then, at the last instant, after the repetition has built up and after the audience is already expecting what comes next, he *shifts* and says "they have already done so." Very effective.

Epistrophe. Lincoln also uses the opposite of anaphora in the *Gettysburg Address.* Epistrophe is the repetition of words at the *end* of a sentence or clause.

Lincoln says:

> ". . . that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

The repetition of "people" at the end adds enormous emphasis to Lincoln's speech and works to further his rhetorical aims, which were to unify the Union after a great and bloody battle. Lincoln is asking, Who are "we"? We are the people, the people, the people. It is a profoundly democratic ending to the speech.

Anastrophe is the inversion of normal word order.

I used it when I wrote "on that path madness lies," and the reason I did so was to give more emphasis to the word "madness" (and to make an allusion to Shakespeare). A speaker or writer can use anastrophe to make a single word stand out. President Eisenhower said in his farewell speech:

> "Crises there will continue to be. In meeting them, whether foreign or domestic, great or small, there is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties."

Putting "crises" first emphasizes this word and also gives the passage a semi-biblical flavor: Crises will always be; they are like a natural phenomenon that will recur regardless of what we do. And just as they recur, we will continue to meet them.

Antithesis is the juxtaposition of two opposite or contrasting ideas.

Speakers use antithesis to communicate the idea that they are encompassing all possibilities. In his *I Have a Dream* speech, King uses antithesis at the end:

> "And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:
>
> *Free at last! Free at last!*
>
> *Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"*

Since black and white, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics are usually considered opposites, King's usage in this case further develops his idea of *all* people. He is not just saying the word "all"; he is illustrating it.

Allusion. Lincoln and King are also masters of the use of allusion in their rhetoric (note that some authorities would classify allusion as a trope, but for our purposes it is a scheme).

Lincoln and King bring in subtle reference to other works without actually naming them, as King does with "let freedom ring" (which is a direct allusion to "My Country 'Tis of Thee"). Lincoln is a little more subtle, as his "of the people, by the people, for the people" refers obliquely to the Preamble to the Constitution. And, in one of those interesting circles of influence that so fascinate literature professors, King alludes to Lincoln's speech: "Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation." The allusion is done by the use of the old-fashioned, even biblically styled word "score." And the point of allusion, rather than simple reference, is that it enables a writer to bring in the authority of another work without having to stop and say "as X says" (blatant reference is usually the mark of an insecure speaker or writer). Allusion also allows the person making the allusion to use those words as his or her own while still adopting a previously discovered solution to a rhetorical problem (i.e., how do I convince people of this, whatever it is), and it is a kind of a wink to the audience, saying "you and I know what this is, so we're together on this one." Such an approach helps to reshape the audience into what the speaker or writer needs, which, as we discussed in lecture three, is a very useful technique for generating agreement.

Those are just a few schemes, mostly beginning with "A." There are obviously many, many more, which you can find in any handbook of rhetoric. The important point to note is that it is not necessary to memorize all of the Latin names for all of the schemes, but it is very useful to examine schemes and see how they work and how they might be adopted in various rhetorical contexts. Let me conclude with one last important scheme.

Polysyndeton is the repetition of conjunctions when normally a writer might try to vary them.

Thus:

> "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

You probably know this as the motto of the United States Postal Service, but in fact it is an adaptation of some lines by the Greek historian Herodotus that were carved onto the General Post Office building in New York City. Polysyndeton is nearly as common as anaphora in political discourse, and you will often see it used to try to make an unappealing laundry list of topics seem a little more interesting. The flaw in polysyndeton is that it can cause a speaker to rush through a list without much understanding, and, mnemonically, lists arranged only by polysyndeton are not particularly effective. Polysyndeton *is* effective, however, in giving the impression of an exhaustive list: both in the Postal Service's pseudo motto and in any given State of the Union speech, the point of the figure is to attempt to show that nothing has been overlooked.

We have just scratched the surface of the use of schemes, but I think you now have enough analysis to see how they are useful in rhetoric. In the next lecture we will examine tropes, where individual words or phrases are used in unusual ways to gain attention, cause agreement, and ornament rhetoric.

Questions

1. What are the two types of figures of speech?
2. Why is anaphora effective?

Suggested Reading

Quinn, Arthur. *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995.

Other Books of Interest

Drout, Michael D.C. *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Poetics of the Anglo-Saxon Tenth Century.* Tempe, AZ: Arizona Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2006.

———. "Tolkien's Prose Style and Its Literary and Rhetorical Effects." *Tolkien Studies* 1 (2004): 139–63.

Lanham, Richard A. *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is George Orwell's *The Orwell Reader: Fiction, Essays, and Reportage.*

In the previous lecture, we examined schemes, figures of speech in which normal word order is varied in order to generate rhetorical effects. Tropes are figures of speech in which the speaker or writer varies the meanings that words generally have. There are a great many tropes, and many of them are not worth going into in detail, either because they are so obscure or, more commonly, because they have become such regular parts of communication that most people use them without thinking. In that case, the name is useful but you have probably already understood the trope and know what its effects are. But in this lecture, we will present some of the most important and useful tropes that are found everywhere from advertising to student requests for paper extensions to elevated political discourse.

Oxymoron. This trope (which most people mispronounce "oxy-moron," but which is technically pronounced "ox-ZYM-or-on) is the deliberate bringing together of two opposites.

Oxymorons are used most frequently in poetry and advertising: My favorite oxymoron is "jumbo shrimp," but there are many others. Oxymoron works because language allows for contradictions while the real world does not. The trope rarely convinces someone of anything new, but it is a pleasing rhetorical ornament when it is not overused.

Euphemism. Oxymoron can get tiresome, but it is not as loathsome as euphemism, using a happy-sounding word for something less pleasant.

"Putting the dog to sleep" or buying a "previously loved" car or any of the other tedious dishonesties that people and organizations use ("down-sizing," "re-organization") are examples of euphemism. It may seem at first glance that euphemism is just a nice way of getting through the day, but in fact it, more than any other trope, leads to intellectual dishonesty. George Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language" has a scathing and accurate condemnation of euphemism.

Antiphrasis. This is another exceptionally common trope. Antiphrasis is defined as using a word or phrase to mean exactly the opposite of its denotative meaning.

"Oh, that's great!" said sarcastically is an exceptionally common antiphrasis. At times it is possible to let the irony and sarcasm content of a rhetorical statement creep up too much (especially because sarcasm does not play well to an audience that is not already mostly on the speaker's side), but in

general, antiphrasis can be a useful antidote for euphemism and the fog of poor thinking that accompanies that trope.

Paranomasia. When we use a word that sounds a lot like another word to make an often humorous point, we are using the trope of paranomasia.

Maureen Dowd, the *New York Times* Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist, uses paranomasia all the time (probably too much), as do headline writers. Sometimes Dowd gets it right though; her best pun was her calling Bill Clinton's relations with Monica Lewinsky, "maladroit du seigneur," which uses paranomasia (on the "droit du seigneur," the mythical right of the Lord of the Manor to have sex with a young woman before her husband) and the word "maladroit," meaning inept.

It is hard to go through a newspaper without finding headlines that use para-nomasia. Immediately before writing this, I flipped through the *Wall Street Journal* (which actually uses fewer of these than most papers) and found: "Russia Puts Motorola on Hold" (about a business deal), "Not So Friendly Relations" (about the family that owns the Friendly's restaurant chain), and "See You Later Alligator" (about reptile problems in Florida). Headline writing is very difficult, but obvious and boring paranomasia—which usually involves linking an actual event to a clichéd phrase—weakens stories rather than strengthens them. Paranomasia is better at mocking an opponent or making a joke to relax your audience than it is at generating direct agreement.

Hyperbole.

At the civil rights rally at which he gave his *I Have a Dream* speech, Martin Luther King said:

> "I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation."

This is at least arguably true, and thus not hyperbole, but King could not know this at the time, and of course there might be future demonstrations that are even greater. But King's use of hyperbole, deliberate overstatement, in the *I Have a Dream* speech, worked. Likewise, when Bill Clinton said that the economy under George H.W. Bush was "the worst economy in fifty years," no reasonable economist actually could substantiate that idea, but the rhetorical tactic was successful. Notice also the danger of hyperbole: when John Kerry tried to use the same Clinton line, it was not successful. Hyperbole wears out very quickly, and, as anyone who reads weblogs knows, it is a trope that is so seductive that it leads writers astray from making an argument. Thus it is often convincing only to those who already agree with a speaker or writer.

Litotes. The antidote to hyperbole, litotes is a deliberate understatement for the purpose of provoking humor or creating the impression of modesty.

Litotes goes all the way back to ancient Greece, but my favorite old example is in *Beowulf* where, after killing a significant number of sea monsters who had tried to eat him, Beowulf says of the creatures, "they had no joy in that feast." Litotes can be tricky, because you have to rely on the audience getting the joke and not think you are just being boring. Also, litotes have a tendency to work their way into the language through euphemism. Our idiom that someone is "drunk" actually began as a litotes. Someone would be reeling

and vomiting on himself and someone else must have deadpanned, "Well, it looks like he has drunk" (one drink), and that description eventually evolved to our current meaning.

Apophasis and *Paralipsis*.

> "Speaking of drunk, I won't say how often my opponent is drunk, because I think this campaign should be above such low charges. And I'll skip over my opponent's thievery and graft because that's not relevant to our argument."

These are examples of two closely related tropes. We use apophasis when we say that we will not say something (and in so doing, say it). Paralipsis draws attention to something by noting that we will skip over it. Both tropes require a fair bit of subtlety for them to be successful, because their use is often obviously an attack upon the opponent. When Bob Dole would elliptically talk about "character" without directly attacking Bill Clinton, it was an attempt to get the effect of apophasis without being called on it. It was not successful for Senator Dole.

Prolepsis (also *Procatalepsis*). Possibly Dole's criticisms were rhetorically unsuccessful because in some ways Clinton had used prolepsis to deal with them. Prolepsis (a more technically correct but unwieldy term is procatalepsis) is the trope of answering criticism before it has been made.

This is a smart strategy and tends to work very well. If you have pre-answered an objection, even if the answer isn't particularly good and the objection is strong, you seem to have already thought about your opponent's arguments and refuted them. Prolepsis can sometimes work against a speaker, however, if the use of the trope raises an objection that your opponent had not considered or if it draws your audience's attention to a flaw in your argument that they otherwise would not have noticed.

Rhetorical Question. This is possibly the most common of all tropes, but it is far less useful than many speakers realize. Rhetorical questions are so overused that they no longer (if they ever did) inspire the sorts of agreement that is their intention.

A rhetorical question in writing is almost always an instance of the author trying to hide his or her inability to prove a point. One very effective debating trick is to *answer* the rhetorical question, taking the answer in a direction different from that which the asker of the question intended.

Hypophora. To prevent people from coming up with the "wrong" answer to a rhetorical question, speakers and writers sometimes use "hypophora," a trope in which you answer your own rhetorical question before someone else can give an answer you are not looking for.

The danger here is that you may bore your audience; if you give the question and the answer, you could have just made a statement to begin with:

"Is there any reason at all to buy Professor Drout's *A History of the English Language* course?" "Yes! You'll learn a lot about English!" could obviously be simplified into "You should buy Professor Drout's *A History of the English Language* course because you'll learn a lot about English" (really, you will).

Pleonasm. The trope of pleonasm is related to the problem of raising a rhetorical question and then answering it.

Pleonasm is defined as unnecessary repetition (and there you see the logical fallacy of petitio principii; all the work in that definition is being done by the word "unnecessary." Of course *unnecessary* repetition is bad; now can you tell me what repetition is unnecessary, please).

The petitio is in the definition because one person's pleonasm may be another's effective ornamentation. For example, the "let freedom ring" anaphora that King uses in the *I Have a Dream* speech certainly is not bad or ineffective pleonasm.

There are many more figures, and it can be very enlightening to mark up a political speech with different colored highlighters to indicate the schemes and tropes. There are probably more common schemes than there are tropes in contemporary political discourse, but both are everywhere, from advertising slogans to students making excuses, and from the courtroom to the kindergarten playground. Figures are the ornaments on the rhetorical structure, but if the house falls down, no one notices the ornaments, which is why we spent so much time on the foundations, structure, frameworks, and the bricks involved in the construction. Now that we have discussed the ornaments, we will go back inside and look at the specific materials (if I can stretch this metaphor even further) and small-scale techniques that are used in putting the whole building together, the metaphorical equivalent of the boards, sheetrock, nails, screws, and electrical wiring of the house. We are going to examine grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary to see how these essential elements are used throughout any rhetorical edifice. This passage, by the way, was an example of *allegory* or *extended metaphor*, in which a complex and detailed comparison is used to clarify a particular situation. I hope it convinced you.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why is paranomasia so common in newspaper headlines?
2. What rhetorical technique did Bill Clinton employ to combat Bob Dole's apophasis?

Suggested Reading

Orwell, George. *The Orwell Reader: Fiction, Essays, and Reportage.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1984.

Other Books of Interest

Mackin, John H. *Classical Rhetoric for Modern Discourse*. New York: Free Press, 1969.

In this lecture, we will examine how grammar is *used* to improve rhetoric, approaching speech and writing not only from the point of view of the grammarian, but from that of the linguist and the philologist. However, we cannot follow the descriptive linguists, who believe that anything uttered by a native speaker of a language counts as a grammatical sentence. This may be true in their sense of studying the natural utterances of native speakers, but it is not a helpful approach to rhetorical analysis: Some grammatical usage is more effective than others; some figures of grammar are considered more beautiful or more prestigious. Grammatical rules are important for conveying the idea (true or not) that a speaker or writer is cultured, educated, and knows what he or she is talking about.

We begin, then, with one essential principle: *The purpose of grammar is to clarify meaning*. Grammar in English is a set of rules for organizing words so that a hearer or reader comes as close to understanding something the way the speaker intended for him or her to understand it. Most prescriptive rules are aimed at clearing up confusion and ambiguity.

Here it is worthwhile to review what I want to call word functions. Most people listening to this lecture are very likely not to want a review of "the parts of speech" (which include nouns, which are naming words; verbs, which refer to actions; pronouns, which stand in for nouns; adjectives, which modify nouns and pronouns; adverbs, which modify verbs and adjectives; conjunctions, which link things together; and prepositions, which indicate relationships). Far more important to us than parts of speech are the word functions, and these are slightly less familiar.

Every sentence has a subject, which does the action, and a predicate, which includes the action (the verb), what received the action (the direct object), and the indirect receiver of the action (the indirect object). Sometimes there are prepositions, and they get objects, too. But the most important thing to recognize is the distinction between subject and object. The subject is the doer, the object the thing getting done. This is so important because English makes a variety of distinctions based on whether or not something is a subject or an object. For example, we say, "He will give the book to him," not "Him will give the book to he."

Who and Whom

Native speakers will almost *never* get the he/him distinction wrong, but we do have trouble with *who* and *whom. Who* and *whom* rely on the same kinds

of subject/object distinctions as he/him or she/her, but because they are often parts of questions (which rearrange standard word order), *who* and *whom* are often confused. *Who* is always a subject; *whom* is always an object. So you use *who* in the subject position (doer of the action) and *whom* in the object position (receiver of the action). There is an even easier way, however, to solve the who/whom problem. Just mentally substitute the familiar he/him for who/whom.

So, for "Who is coming over to dinner?" substitute in "He is coming to dinner?" and note that this is grammatically correct. Then, to check, for "Whom is coming to dinner?" substitute in "Him is coming to dinner?" and recognize that it is incorrect.

Questions are created when we apply what linguists call a transformation to a statement, rearranging the word order. "To who did you give the book?" because we've moved the pronoun to the front of the sentence, where the subject usually goes, it seems almost as if *who* is correct, but if we perform our substitution ("To he did you give the book?") we may recognize a problem. If we rearrange things still further ("Did you give the book to he?"), we can see that the subject-case pronoun *who* is incorrect. Substitute in the object-case pronoun *him,* however, and you get "Did you give the book to him?," which is correct. Now swap *whom* for *him* and you read "Did you give the book to whom?," which we rearrange into "To whom did you give the book?" That he/him substitution always works, though sometimes you have to think about it more.

Me, Myself, and I

Many, many people are sure that they get who/whom wrong, but few care very much; most just avoid using *whom.* But the next problem in subject/object relationships is far, far more anxiety-generating: people are actually terrified of using the word *me* in a plural object.

Pronouns are one of the more difficult elements of language for children to learn, because pronouns are *relational*: I can remember some frustrating conversations with my daughter that went something like this: "Do you want to go play?" "Yes. You want to go play." "No, do *you* want to go play? *I* want *you* to tell me." "Yes. You go play." And so forth. The power of pronouns is that *I* and *you* switch depending on who is speaking. This takes a while to learn.

It gets even harder when you have plural subjects or objects, and this is where the problem comes in. Kids say "Me and Sam are going to the store." Mom says "Sam and I," giving two separate corrections (switching the order of subjects supposedly to be polite, and changing the object case pronoun to the subject). The double correction is hard to deal with, and kids do not always understand why they are being corrected, so they either adopt the correction for all plural subjects and objects or find a way around it entirely. "The teacher gave the homework to Sam and I" is incorrect, since *I* is subject case and cannot receive an action (like getting the homework). Therefore "The teacher gave the homework to Sam and me" is correct, but this seems so much like the often-corrected "Me and Sam went to the store" that people are afraid to say it. The problem gets even more tangled because African-American English (also called Black English Vernacular) has a different set of

grammatical rules governing the use of *me,* and these rules and their use (which can be inconsistent in speakers who are moving between different uses of language codes) bring in all the cultural complexities associated with crossing various social and conventional boundaries.

 Interestingly enough, this problem has been solved by athletes and those who coach them on public speaking by eliminating the use of the word *me.* Listen to an athlete—of any race—being interviewed and you will find that most of them never use "me" exactly because they are avoiding the entire problem of possibly misusing the pronoun. So they say something like "Curt Schilling and myself combined to pitch a shut-out" or "Mariano Rivera threw gopher-balls to David Ortiz and myself." *Myself* is not technically correct, but as it is a reflexive pronoun, it is not changed from subject to object, so therefore a speaker does not need to stop to think about whether to use a subject or object form.

 A relatively simple solution to the "me, myself, and I" problem—without just substituting *myself*—is to break the plural subject or object into two pieces: "Manny Ramirez and X hit home runs" into "I hit home runs." "Curt Schilling threw strike-out pitches to Derek Jeter and X" into "Curt Schilling threw strike-out pitches to me."

 The major point to get out of this lecture and the next one is that 99 percent of your spoken grammar is flawless, but that there are a few small areas in which a mistake stands out. So we work on correcting those and suddenly you have the appearance of flawless grammar (which you were very close to having in the first place).

 In the next lecture, we're going to discuss some things that are a little more subtle—that is, they don't *feel* as obviously wrong as "Whom is going to the store" or "Him and me went to the store." Some of these things, such as split infinitives, are rather stupid. Some, like dangling participles, actually confuse your readers or hearers. Others, like saying "very unique," are deeply wrong but do not immediately seem to be. We will also talk about that other bugaboo of speakers and writers: punctuation, which is in fact your friend, but which scares people. In all cases, grammar, punctuation, and the various subtleties of word choice and usage should not be seen as obstacles to writing but rather as techniques by which you can improve your readers' understanding and thus more easily gain agreement—which is the major purpose of rhetoric.

Questions

1. What is the purpose of grammar?
2. Why are people so afraid to use *me* in a plural object?

Suggested Reading

Pinney, Thomas. *A Short Handbook and Style Sheet*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1977.

Other Books of Interest

Fowler, Henry. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage.* 2nd rev. ed. Intro. Simon Winchester. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Lynne Truss's *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.*

In the previous lecture, we discussed the power of grammar to clarify logical relationships and then discussed in detail the problems caused by the subject-object distinction. In this lecture, I want to examine some additional grammatical problems and their solutions, focusing on problems that can reduce the effectiveness of rhetoric either by communicating the idea that the speaker is uncultured (even when this is untrue) or by confusing a hearer or reader. We will then move on to punctuation, which may sound trivial, but which is in fact an immensely powerful tool for writers and speakers.

The Split Infinitive

Many people worry about split infinitives, a few obnoxious people correct others for using split infinitives, and very few people know why we supposedly should not split infinitives.

An infinitive is the form of the verb that is written as "to ___": to go, to run, to fish, to hide. It is called infinitive because it is equally valid for the past, present, and future: I liked to fish, I like to fish, and I will like to fish. In Latin, the infinitive is only one word; there is no "to" particle: "*currere*," to run; "*vincere,*" to conquer. Now at some point in the nineteenth century, some prescriptive grammarians decided that because the Latin infinitive and the English infinitive were analogous, they should be treated the same way, and because you cannot split "*vincere*" into "*vinc*" and "*ere*" and then place other words between them, you cannot put any other words between the "to" and the verb in the English infinitive, even though doing so *is completely natural for English*. So for a century or two teachers have been forcing people to avoid putting an adverb there because that would "split" the infinitive. Thus "To boldly go where no man has gone before" is grammatically incorrect. This is in fact a very silly rule, because following it does not improve reader comprehension: It is merely a tedious convention. However, there are in this world certain people who have internalized this arbitrary and basically idiotic rule and thus think that a speaker or writer is ignorant if he or she splits infinitives, and so, because you may need to convince those people, you should split infinitives with caution, if at all.

Dangling Participles

Dangling participles are actually much more serious than split infinitives (though the two errors are often lumped together) because dangling participles really do interfere with comprehension. A participle is a verb used as an adjective. Take the verb "to ache" and add "ing" = aching. That describes something, so it is used as an adjective: "Professor Drout's *aching* back kept

him up nights." The "ing" form is called a "present participle" because it is in the present tense. You can also add an "ed" instead of an "ing" to get the past tense: "Professor Drout's *tired* eyes made it hard for him to read." Again, the verb is being used as an adjective.

Participles are not usually any trouble when they are by themselves. We treat them as adjectives and move on: a shining light, a broken toy. But when they are part of phrases, the trouble begins.

Running down the alleyway, the garbage can tripped Alison.

Did you picture a little garbage can with feet, running down the alley? Is that what the author meant? What went wrong?

"Running" is a participle (the "running water"; it is also a gerund, but we will set that aside for now), and "running down the alleyway" is a participial phrase. Since it is a participle, a verb acting like an adjective, it modifies a noun or a pronoun. We readers assume that the next noun we encounter is going to be the one modified, so when we reach "garbage can," we naturally assume that this is the noun being modified by the participial phrase. And grammatically it is, although the author did not intend this. The phrase is in fact describing "Alison," and so it needs to come just before Alison, or the entire sentence needs to be reorganized. This is how a participle "dangles" at the front of the sentence, referring to some noun or pronoun from which it is separated.

Dangling participles (and their cousins, dangling modifiers, which are often adverb phrases rather than participial phrases) often appear in writing and speaking when an author is distracted. The key element in the sentence I gave above, and the one that I wanted to communicate, was that the main person in the sentence was running down the alleyway, so I said that first. Then, because I was past the point where I could use the word "while," and I was trying to avoid passive voice, I was stuck with the dangling participle.

Dangling participles in impromptu speech, when you recognize them, are a good excuse to stop and laugh at yourself a little. In written communication you want to rearrange the sentences so that the modifier is next to what it modifies:

While *she* was running down the alleyway, the garbage can tripped her.

Passive Voice

Active voice is the default mode for most speech: "Joe dropped the glass." "The dog ate the homework." But English allows us to recast those sentences in "passive voice," in which the subject, the "doer" for the sentence, gets deleted: "The glass was dropped," "The homework was eaten." The object (that which receives the action) gets moved to the front of the sentence and becomes the subject. Then the verb is given a "helping" (technically an auxiliary) verb. So "glass" moves from object to subject and "dropped" picks up a helpful "was."

Using passive voice, like starting sentences with a conjunction or ending sentences with a preposition (both of these are in fact acceptable), is one of those things that is often beaten out of us in high school and even in college. Passive voice is usually considered to be poor writing and poor rhetoric because it tricks you into leaving out information. Who dropped the glass?

Who ate the homework? This is seen, often quite rightly, as a flaw. Passive voice leads to confusion, and a confused reader is not a convinced reader.

Passive voice, however, is not always bad and can be rhetorically effective. What if you *want* to leave out information? Then passive voice is your friend. "Mistakes were made," you say, when challenged about the collapse of the multibillion dollar corporation you were running. Why not say "I made mistakes"? Well, it makes you a lawsuit target (you have just "admitted" to making mistakes), whereas if you just say "mistakes were made," you end up looking as if you've admitted something without actually doing any admitting. "I made a mistake" is a performative utterance, with all of the difficulties that go with it. "Mistakes were made" is not performative. As an analyst of rhetoric, look out for passive voice. And as a creator of rhetoric, use it responsibly.

Almost all of the grammatical elements we have discussed thus far are in the realm of syntax, the order of words. And I want to end with one more before moving on. Many of us had drummed into our heads that you cannot start a sentence with "and" or "but." There is a reason behind this rule: Children, when learning to write, use words like "and" and "but" to help them string together ideas. Teachers, attempting to force students to use more complex sentences, forbid us from starting a sentence with a conjunction. But because we are no longer in first grade, we can use conjunctions to start sentences when we want to create specific effects. In fact, you not only can but *should* use "because" to start sentences because this word encourages you to explain things more clearly to your audience, and more clear explanations will in turn be more likely to bring about agreement.

Punctuation, or "Pause and Effect"

People often incorrectly think of punctuation as a series of mistakes not to be made rather than as an incredibly useful tool for helping to get a point across. But punctuation is not merely something to fear. It is in fact an art about which most readers and writers already know quite a bit. I've stolen the title of this section, "Pause and Effect," from a book about medieval punctuation because, believe it or not, punctuation really was invented in the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, scribes began to realize that they could make their texts more legible, and the readings more consistent, if they could indicate the places people were supposed to pause. This probably has a fair bit to do with the problems of learning Latin in the Church: We have evidence that a surprisingly large number of priests could not actually understand the Latin they were reading and were instead working through the text phonetically, so knowing when to pause did not arise from the sense of the material. These readers were probably very happy to have scribes indicate when to pause and when not to in order to recite the material correctly.

Punctuation simply tells readers where to pause. A comma is a one-count pause, a period is a two-count pause, a semicolon is one-and-a-half and a colon is just shy of two, maybe one-and-three-quarters. An apostrophe marks something that has been deleted. Dashes add emphasis to an aside; parentheses mark the aside as less significant. Of course there is much more, and it is useful to read a book like Lynne Truss's *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* to see many more of the subtleties of punctuation, but I have just given you the most important rules in a single paragraph.

You can use the pause rule and be right most of the time. However, it is very important to recognize that the pause you are recording is the pause you want the reader to make, not the pause *you* made when you were thinking of what to write. Punctuation, like most rhetoric, is at its foundation about fulfilling the reader's needs, not the writer's thought processes. You have to give your audience what they need.

In general, you will be much better off if you read a questionable sentence out loud, but let us look for just a moment at the most common mistakes and how to avoid them. The single most common mistake in punctuation is not about a pause, but concerns the apostrophe: The word *it's* only *ever* means "it is." It would make sense that "belonging to it" would be marked with a possessive apostrophe, but it is not, and the reason is linguistically interesting (and may help you to remember the rule). Recall that an apostrophe indicates that a letter has been removed, so what has been removed from a possessive? Back in Old and Middle English, a possessive singular was made by adding "es" to a word. Dog ➤ Doges. When we stopped *saying* doges, and instead started saying "dogz," we used the apostrophe to mark the missing "e" (the same way we use an apostrophe in "don't" to mark the missing o). However, the plural for *it* was never "ites," so there was no "e" to delete and thus no reason to mark it with an apostrophe. Likewise, an apostrophe is never used simply to make a plural. Never.

If there is one punctuation mark that most people worry about, it is the semicolon. And because they do not want to use something of which they are unsure, people avoid the semicolon. But semicolons are your friends. Use them correctly, and people will think you are smart. And although there are a great many rules about the semicolon, they can, for the most part, be reduced to a very simple equation:

$$\textbf{,} + \textbf{and} = \textbf{;}$$

A semicolon equals a comma plus an *and*. A longer form would be "a semicolon equals a comma plus a coordinating conjunction like and, but, or, for, yet," but 90 percent of the time you are going to use *and*.

This equation needs to be linked with one other rule. If you have two grammatically complete sentences next to each other, and you want to link them, the pause that a comma gives is not enough to stick them together—in your hearer's or reader's perceptions—it will sound like just one long, confusing sentence. Likewise, just an "and" does not communicate the required pause to indicate the linkage of two separate, grammatically complete sentences. So if you have two complete sentences, you either use a comma plus "and" or a semicolon to link them. The point here is that the semicolon and colon give you more variation in pause length, and thus your reader or hearer can be charmed by your fluency and, more importantly, can be sure to understand exactly what you are saying. Semicolons are subtle, but subtle pauses and other clever, almost subliminal effects, are what really effective speakers and writers do all the time. In the next lecture, we will look at some of those subtleties in word choice and speech style.

Questions

1. What is the reason teachers have instructed students to not "split" infinitives?
2. What is the correct punctuation mark used between two grammatically complete sentences that are contained within another sentence?

Suggested Reading

Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.* New York: Gotham, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Parkes, M.B. *Pause and Effect: Punctuation in the West.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Shertzer, Margaret. *The Elements of Grammar.* London: Longman, 1996.

Lecture 13: Subtleties: Word Choice, Speech Patterns, Accent

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Maxwell Nurnberg's *I Always Look Up the Word "e•gre•gious": A Vocabulary Book for People Who Don't Need One.*

This lecture examines some more of the nuts-and-bolts material that we discussed in lectures eleven and twelve, but it will also move us back into engagement with the more big-picture ideas we discussed in the earlier part of the course. We are going to examine the subtleties of rhetoric, both written and spoken, discussing word choice and the tricks that contemporary politicians and advertisers use in terms of accent, tone of voice, and speaking style.

Etymology

The study of individual words is in some ways the most interesting part of an English professor's job. Rhetoric is, after all, made up of words, and for a philologist like me, it is all about words. Words and their changing through time are intrinsically fascinating, and the study of the changes in words is called etymology. Words often carry their histories inside them, and the job of the etymologist is to explain not only what a word means now, but what it meant before and how these changes shape the subtle implications of words today.

For this analysis to make sense, we need to define the terms *denotation* and *connotation*. Denotation is the dictionary definition of a word, what a word actually means. Connotations are what a word implies by its use (for mnemonic purposes, you can think of the "con" in connotations as being related to "context": the connotation gives some of the context for the word). All words have both denotations and connotations, and usually only the denotations are listed in a dictionary. But it is the connotations that produce some of the strongest rhetorical effects. For instance, "body," "corpse," and "stiff" all mean the same thing, but think how you would feel if a eulogist used the last word in a funeral oration. The connotations of "stiff" are significantly different than those of "body." Etymology can be important because it can explain the reason why words have some of the connotations that they do. Learning etymologies (just paying attention to them when looking words up in the dictionary) can go a long way to improving the subtle effects of rhetoric.

It is also important to avoid offending people. Being aware of the connotations of words helps in this task, but it is also important to note that sometimes accidental figures of speech can create problems and so should be avoided. The trope of *paranomasia* (one word sounding or looking like another, different word) often plays out here, also. Even if the denotation of a word is acceptable, if the word *sounds* like something else, it can be risky to use it. The seventh planet in the solar system is called Uranus. Newscasters hate to say that there were mysterious rings discovered around Uranus, but there

were, and they had to say it, provoking much hilarity. Likewise the name of a country in Africa and an adjective meaning "miserly" are close to a certain horrible racial slur, and so people reasonably avoid them. This behavior has a long pedigree, going back at least as far as the tenth century in Old English, when monks avoided using the word "rot," which meant "glad," because it sounded too much like the word "hrot," which meant "scum."

The Monstrosity That Is S/He

A related subtle problem is the lack in English of a singular pronoun for a person of undetermined gender. Tradition was that if you wanted to talk about your reader, you would say "he," as in "The reader of this book will find that he has learned a lot from Professor Drout." But recently this became socially unacceptable and was marked as "sexist language" in many contexts. Saying "he or she" is clumsy but still better than monstrosities like "s/he," which one can't even read aloud. Many people in colloquial speech use the plural—"The purchaser of this lecture will discover that they've bought a great course," but that is actually grammatically incorrect, no matter how much people try to spin it as acceptable (it is grammatically incorrect because it sows confusion, by suggesting that there is a plural where there really is no plural).

To solve this problem, I recommend trying to cast all the unclear nouns in the plural. Then "they" is acceptable. Instead of "the purchaser" or "the reader," say "readers" and "purchasers." But you can also be aware of audience traditions. If you are speaking to older or conservative hearers, use "he." If you are speaking to other groups, use "he or she" if you cannot rework things to use the plural.

Sub-lexical Elements

Word choice can be subtly manipulated to create the right connotations for a speaker's purpose. But word choice is only one of the subtle techniques that rhetorical experts like advertisers or politicians use. Possibly more important and, unfortunately, more difficult to discuss, are what linguists would call "sub-lexical" elements of language: accent, tone of voice, and self-presentation through timing and body language.

Let me give you a few examples. Former Senator John Danforth had multiple degrees from Yale University. He was also from a quite upper-class part of Missouri. Yet when Senator Danforth went out campaigning, he would talk about what was best for the great state of "Mizzourah." I lived in Missouri when Danforth was campaigning, and in rural Missouri, people definitely said "Mizzourah." But not in the upper-class St. Louis enclaves from which Danforth came. Likewise on campaign stops Danforth would use more of a Missouri accent: In Missouri, when you have a word that ends in "p" and then you put an "ed" on it, instead of changing the whole "ped" morpheme to "pt," which is what most American speakers do, you change the accent profile of the word and say, for example, "stripe – ed." There is no way John Danforth ever talked about a "stripe – ed" tie in Washington, D.C., but he talked about trouble farmers were having with "stripe – ed" cucumber beetles on the campaign trail.

Likewise, if you listen to tapes of John Kerry from the 1970s, you hear a very definite Kennedy accent. Some of this is real, as Kerry and Kennedy are

both from Massachusetts. But Kerry is a Boston Brahmin, a different social and accent grouping from the Kennedy family, and his natural accent, to someone who knows Massachusetts accents, is quite different. But in the 1970s Kerry put on a much more Kennedy-like accent than he did in his 2004 presidential campaign. This was not an accident. Likewise, when Kerry speaks *in* Massachusetts, he lets his Boston accent have free reign, while when he speaks to a national audience, it is very much toned down: "I'm John Kerry and I'm reporting for duty" was his opening line at his 2004 acceptance speech. In a true Massachusetts accent it would be "repawting" or "repahting" for duty.

The problem of speaking with the accent of the place you are in is difficult for transplant people as well: On the one hand, it is difficult to communicate; on the other, an outsider using the accent can sound phony. For example, where I live in New England, they pronounce the word for good topsoil "loom" even though it is spelled

> **TWO PET PEEVES:**
> *Unique* **and** *Literally*
>
> Never use the common phrase "very unique." First of all, as a piece of rhetoric, it is a tedious and boring cliché; you should distrust anyone who uses it as not being very original. But even more, it is logically incorrect. "Unique" means "only one of its kind." It is impossible for something to be "very" "the only one of its kind." Unique cannot take a modifier.
>
> The word *literally* means that an actual thing in the real world has turned out to be the same as an *idiom* or a *figure of speech.* For example, if I pick up a baked potato off of the grill and it burns my hand, I say "that was literally a hot potato." But nothing else that is not a high-temperature tuber can be called "literally a hot potato." Literally does not mean "very much." If you want to say that something is "a literal dagger pointed at the heart of America," you had better be able to show me the dagger, and it had better be pointy. Hilary Clinton recently said that she was worried about people who thought that "work" was "literally a four-letter word." Unfortunately, "work" is *literally* a four-letter word (count the letters). My advice: the "literally" trope has gotten worn out and should now be avoided.

"loam" and pronounced everywhere else "loam." I cannot bring myself to say "loom," but no one knows what I am talking about when I try to order "loam." So I exercise my power of word choice and say "topsoil."

It would be easy (and partly accurate) to call Danforth and Kerry phonies for putting on one voice for the home crowd and one for the away. But the point is more significant: Your hearers are very much going to be influenced by whether or not they think you are one of them, and in America (in England as well, though the subtleties of class, rank, and region are somewhat different), a large country with a lot of regional accents, it is important for people to think, in certain circumstances, that you are one of them. That makes for a real challenge for mainstream politicians. You will also notice

that local advertising often uses speakers with much *heavier* local accents than the average: Advertisers have found that local buyers find those voices more trustworthy even if they themselves do not use such a strong accent.

Challenges are also opportunities. Bill Clinton played this up beautifully, making *more* of his Arkansas accent in the 1992 campaign than he had in his widely panned 1988 convention speech. There, he came across as a Yale-educated, new-class intellectual. In 1992 he came across as a semi-rural, basically unsophisticated politician arriving to fix a broken system. It worked beautifully: Clinton allayed fears that as a Democrat he was too leftist by communicating to Southern and midwestern voters, through his voice and body language, that he was one of them.

Other tricks that all politicians use, but which Clinton mastered, include eye contact, appearing to "listen" very hard when asked a question, and a subtle trick in which the speaker, instead of nodding along to a hearer (which looks stupid, particularly on television, though it is totally natural), slowly drops his chin and then executes a slow and deliberate nod as the interlocutor finishes speaking. Speakers in America, anthropologists and linguists note, generally look at a point somewhat above and to one side of a speaker's head while they are listening, darting their eyes back and forth. If you look *too* straight-on at a person's eyes, you look crazy. But good politicians have learned how to vary that behavior, not staring in the eyes enough to seem crazy, but just enough to communicate sincere interest. The experience of talking to an elite politician, a Clinton or a Reagan or a Giuliani, gives one the impression of being the center of that person's world for just a moment. And it works because, as George Burns said, if you can fake sincerity, you've got it made.

This lecture has moved from the nuts and bolts of crafting rhetoric—as both writing and speaking—to the subtleties that separate the great from the average. We'll now move on to the analysis of some of those great pieces of rhetoric and see how all the things we have learned over the past thirteen lectures can be pulled together.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is the difference between denotation and connotation?
2. What "tricks" did Bill Clinton master to communicate sincere interest?

Suggested Reading

Nurnberg, Maxwell. *I Always Look Up the Word "e•gre•gious": A Vocabulary Book for People Who Don't Need One.* New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1998.

Other Books of Interest

Strunk, William, Jr., and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style.* 4th ed. London: Longman, 2000.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Owen Collins's *Speeches That Changed the World.*

When I set out to write this lecture, my idea was to find obscure speeches that were rhetorically brilliant as well as speeches from famous people that were rhetorically terrible. Unfortunately for my original conception, it turns out that there just are not many great, unknown speeches. This is possibly due to politicians recycling good speeches and continuously polishing them until they become very effective and eventually famous. Or perhaps it is simply that the famous speeches really deserve their reputations. I found that the old chestnuts of rhetorical studies, *The Gettysburg Address*, Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech and Winston Churchill's *We Will Fight Them on the Beaches; Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat;* and *Sinews of Peace* ("Iron Curtain") speeches, for instance, are really as great rhetorically as they are thought to be. I found other speeches that get referenced a lot for their rhetorical virtuosity turn out not to have worn very well. Lincoln's famous second inaugural and William Jennings Bryan's *Cross of Gold* speeches, for instance, are so tangled up in the issues of the time that they do not lend themselves to rhetorical admiration without an awful lot of historical background having to be thrown in by the professor. Pericles' funeral oration is likewise so much about contemporary politics (in ancient Athens) that it does not translate well.

I have also come to the conclusion that presidential State of the Union speeches are almost uniformly terrible—long laundry lists of this program or that program that might have mattered when they were given but are of merely historical interest now. I also discovered that some of the best speeches you can find are not really speeches at all, but dramatizations of speeches by Shakespeare. Of course he had the advantage of being able to control the characters, the situation, and at least some of the audience response (i.e., the audience that was made up of actors on the stage), and Shakespearean speeches were never actually delivered to troops waiting to go into battle, and furthermore, I do not recommend that contemporary politicians attempt to cast their speeches in iambic pentameter. Nevertheless, his speeches show that Shakespeare had mastered the art of rhetoric more than many professional politicians have.

It was also a lot harder to find rhetorical train wrecks than I had anticipated. Most of the famous bad speeches or performances were not really rhetorical: they were gaffes, slips of the tongue, factual errors. So President Ford's accidentally saying that Poland was free (when it was under communist dictatorship) or, well, just about anything Dan Quayle ever said, or Al Gore's sighing debate performance or George H.W. Bush's accidentally reading "Message:

I care" cannot really count as rhetorical train wrecks. These are, however, rhetorically weak speeches that, upon close examination, were in fact train wrecks for their speakers. Let us briefly look at some of these before we turn to the triumphs.

We will begin with one of the most recent. John Kerry had a train wreck of a convention speech in 2004. This was surprising, because Kerry can be a good speaker, and he can be a good speech writer. But for his biggest speech ever, he started out:

> "I'm John Kerry and I'm reporting for duty."

It is possible that John Kerry lost the presidential election right there. Because what was so important to him—to emphasize his war-hero persona—was not the purpose of the speech he was giving. His speech was meant to show him as possessing the qualities that the American people want in a president. The president is, after all, a leader. But by saying "reporting for duty," Kerry immediately gave the impression of a low-level soldier saluting his commanding officer. Yes, one could make the argument that the president does his duty by serving the American people. But Kerry was not an incumbent president, and he needed to show leadership. Instead of portraying himself as the leader, he showed himself as a follower and communicated the idea that he wanted to relive his Viet Nam experience. These were exactly the wrong connotations.

Kerry continued:

> "My fellow Americans, we're here tonight united in one purpose: to make America stronger at home and respected in the world. A great American—a great American novelist wrote that you can't go home again. He could not have imagined this evening. Tonight, I am home; home—home where my public life began and those who made it possible live."

You will also notice somewhat striking similarities between Kerry's opening and that of another candidate for president, Al Gore (although this speech was given in 1996, when Gore was running for a second term as Vice President; Gore's own acceptance speech in 2000 was significantly better):

> "Four years later, we meet in this great city of Chicago, the place Carl Sandburg called 'the city of the big shoulders . . . with lifted head so proud to be alive . . . and strong.' Four years later, Democrats are proud. Our hopes are alive. And America is strong."

Both Kerry and Gore make the mistake of giving a quoted reference when they could have used an allusion (Kerry to Thomas Wolfe, the "American novelist" he cites; Gore, even more pedantically, to Carl Sandburg's Chicago poem). Both candidates seem to have a need to prove that they are smart and cultured, but what the reference does is distract from the flow of the speech itself. And neither Kerry or Gore needed to prove that they were smart, anyway. That was not the issue. In both cases the candidates had not clearly thought through their audience's needs; they had not analyzed the rhetorical situation. Their job was not to make themselves look smart or literary; it was to make themselves look like leaders. Kerry's speech got somewhat better in places. Gore's did not.

I seem to be picking on one political party, and for that I apologize, but I could not in fact find a speech from the other party that was worthy of being called a train wreck. Perhaps this is actually to the credit of Gore and Kerry, who wrote their own speeches, whereas George W. Bush uses professional speech writers. I noted in analyzing Bush's speeches that they appear much better on paper than they are in his delivery, which is hampered by him appearing to give relatively short sentences and to pause at the end of each line. This prevents him from stumbling, but it also prevents the speech from developing the flow and variation that marks good rhetoric.

Compare, for example, any Bush speech to the speeches of one of the great rhetoricians of the twentieth century, Winston Churchill. In his *Sinews of Peace* speech given at Westminster College in Missouri, Churchill noted the many millions of people struggling to provide peace and security to their families:

> "To give security to these countless homes, they must be shielded from the two giant marauders, war and tyranny. We all know the frightful disturbances in which the ordinary family is plunged when the curse of war swoops down upon the bread-winner and those for whom he works and contrives. The awful ruin of Europe, with all its vanished glories, and of large parts of Asia glares us in the eyes. When the designs of wicked men or the aggressive urge of mighty States dissolve over large areas the frame of civilised society, humble folk are confronted with difficulties with which they cannot cope. For them all is distorted, all is broken, even ground to pulp.
>
> When I stand here this quiet afternoon I shudder to visualise what is actually happening to millions now and what is going to happen in this period when famine stalks the earth. None can compute what has been called 'the unestimated sum of human pain.' Our supreme task and duty is to guard the homes of the common people from the horrors and miseries of another war. We are all agreed on that."

Note the variation in sentence length, the creation of powerful images (the "two giant marauders," the "curse of war" that "swoops" down, the "vanished glories of Europe"), and the way he ends the two paragraphs: "even ground to pulp" is a painful emptiness and "we are all agreed on that" is the ultimate enthymeme.

Churchill also knew how to build an extended metaphor and use it to compel agreement and explain a complex idea:

> "I spoke earlier of the Temple of Peace. Workmen from all countries must build that temple. If two of the workmen know each other particularly well and are old friends, if their families are intermingled, and if they have 'faith in each other's purpose, hope in each other's future and charity towards each other's shortcomings'—to quote some good words I read here the other day—why cannot they work together at the common task as friends and partners? Why cannot they share their tools and thus increase each other's working powers? Indeed they must do so or else the temple may not be built, or, being built, it may collapse, and we shall all be proved again unteachable and have

to go and try to learn again for a third time in a school of war, incomparably more rigorous than that from which we have just been released. The dark ages may return, the Stone Age may return on the gleaming wings of science, and what might now shower immeasurable material blessings upon mankind, may even bring about its total destruction. Beware, I say; time may be short. Do not let us take the course of allowing events to drift along until it is too late. If there is to be a fraternal association of the kind I have described, with all the extra strength and security which both our countries can derive from it, let us make sure that that great fact is known to the world, and that it plays its part in steadying and stabilising the foundations of peace. There is the path of wisdom. Prevention is better than cure."

Again, note the use of metaphor and the particularly Churchillian technique of creating images of horror before moving to a powerful, positive conclusion. Note also how the extended metaphor of the Temple of Peace is created, rested for a while, and then brought up at the very end of the paragraph in the phrase "stabilizing the foundations of peace."

But it is not peace, but war, that has brought out the greatest rhetorical triumphs. This is sadly not surprising, for war mobilizes human passions like no other endeavor. In literature we find some of Shakespeare's greatest rhetorical accomplishments associated with war. For example, the famous St. Crispin's Day speech in *Henry V*, given by Henry (the now-grown Prince Hal from the two *Henry IV* plays) to rally his troops at Agincourt:

This day is called the feast of Crispian:

He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,

Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,

And rouse him at the name of Crispian.

He that shall live this day, and see old age,

Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,

And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian':

Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.

And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'

Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,

But he'll remember with advantages

What feats he did that day: then shall our names.

Familiar in his mouth as household words

Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,

Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,

Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.

This story shall the good man teach his son;

And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,

From this day to the ending of the world,

But we in it shall be remember'd;

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition:

And gentlemen in England now a-bed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,

And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks

That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Perhaps one has to see and hear this speech performed to appreciate fully the power of Shakespeare's words. Note how Henry brings the entire army into unity through the two-part technique of first calling the army a band of brothers and then adding "he who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother," showing how the individuals can be so welded together. The last pronoun in the speech, "us" pulls the crowd together and the coda "upon Saint Crispin's day" fills out the line rhythmically, allowing the actor to end the speech on a rhetorical high note.

Possibly the greatest triumph of rhetoric in Shakespeare, however, is one that is far too long and complex to quote here, but which I strongly recommend. In *Richard III*, evil, hunchbacked Richard manages to convince Anne to marry him right in front of the corpse of her husband, whom Richard has murdered. The scene requires immense acting skill to pull off, but when it is done successfully we are able to see the full force of Shakespeare's rhetorical skill, as Richard cleverly turns Anne's own hatred and emotional vulnerability into love for him.

Of course that is rhetoric for the stage, and even on the stage it is directed at one person. Rhetoric directed at a nation is a different story. Again I must invoke Churchill, who, upon becoming Prime Minister, began the task of rallying his nation in the famous *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat* speech:

"I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.

We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realised; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal. But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, 'come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.'"

This speech is remarkable because Churchill is in fact giving very bad news to the British people, and yet he was able to inspire them. Note the use of anaphora (no survival, no survival, no survival), repetition (victory, victory), and the typically Churchillian technique of moving his audience first down and then up emotionally.

In his *We Shall Fight on the Beaches* speech Churchill does something very similar:

> "I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength. Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."

The repetition here (we shall fight, we shall fight, we shall fight) drums in to his hearers Churchill's message, and it communicates that resolve to his other two important audiences: the enemies, who now know England's resolve, and to America, whom England was trying to bring into the war. Churchill could not *plead* publicly for American help, as that would have undone his work at inspiring the British, but he could link his resolve to the eventual help he hoped to receive from America. This was very successful, and perhaps changed the course of world history.

It is tempting to close with such a brilliant piece of formal rhetoric, but I think it is important to notice how rhetoric may be evolving along with the culture, with formal schemes and tropes being abandoned to be replaced with something that seems more impromptu and unscripted (even if it is not). One of the most successful speeches of recent days did not feel like a speech at all, but rather like an unscripted talk (although it almost certainly was not). I refer to Rudy Giuliani's speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention. Giuliani seemed to be speaking, perhaps, from notes, but not from a script, and he delivered his lines with emotional intensity but also without the kind of

classical, speech-sounding cadences of a traditional formal speech. Giuliani also told jokes throughout the speech, not only at the beginning, and he brilliantly alternated moments of high drama (speaking about the September 11th attacks on New York) with gentle comedy:

"And I remember the support being bipartisan and actually standing hand in hand Republicans and Democrats, here in New York and all over the nation.

During a Boston Red Sox game in the seventh inning there was a sign that read, "Boston loves New York.

You're not going to see it now with a 4.5 game spread between the two teams.

And then one of the most remarkable experiences was, I was driving along and I saw a Chicago police officer directing traffic in the middle of Manhattan, sent here by Mayor Daley of Chicago, who was a good friend of ours, and is. And that's what I mean about no Democrats or Republicans.

Well, the guy is directing traffic. And I got out to thank him, and I did. And then I went back in my car and all of a sudden, I had this thought: 'I wonder where he's sending these people.'

I think some of them are still driving around the Bronx, but it was very reassuring to know how much support we had, and I thank all of you for it, because you all gave us support—Republicans, Democrats, everyone."

It is quite possible that Giuliani's style of rhetoric will become more common as regular speech, or at least the illusion of regular speech, replaces scripting in more and more media. But even if this change occurs, the elements of rhetoric—from the speech-act foundations through audience analysis, structure, logic, figures, and subtleties—will still be present. For rhetoric is in the end the improvement of speech and communication, and as long as there are humans with a need to communicate, there will be a need for, and the practice of, rhetoric.

Questions

1. Where did John Kerry go wrong in his 2004 convention speech?
2. What are some of the techniques of Churchill's rhetorical triumphs?

Suggested Reading

Collins, Owen. *Speeches That Changed the World.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

Suggested Readings:

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words.* 2nd ed. Eds. Marina Sbisà and J.O. Urmson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Collins, Owen. *Speeches That Changed the World.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

Corbett, Edward P.J., and Robert J. Connors. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student.* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Kahane, Howard, and Nancy Cavender. *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric: The Use of Reason in Everyday Life.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2005.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Ed. James M. Washington. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.

Nurnberg, Maxwell. *I Always Look Up the Word "e•gre•gious": A Vocabulary Book for People Who Don't Need One.* New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1998.

Ong, Walter. "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction." *PMLA* 90, January 1975: 9–21. (Journal of the Modern Language Association of America.)

Orwell, George. *The Orwell Reader: Fiction, Essays, and Reportage.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1984.

Pinney, Thomas. *A Short Handbook and Style Sheet*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1977.

Quinn, Arthur. *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995.

Shand, John. *Arguing Well*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.* New York: Gotham, 2004.

Walton, Douglas N. *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Zinsser, William K. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006.

These books are available online through www.modernscholar.com or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3399.

Other Books of Interest:

Aristotle. *The Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. J.H. Freese. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.

Bergmann, Merrie, James Moor, and Jack Nelson. *The Logic Book*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Other Books of Interest (continued):

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Inc., 2004.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Trans. Henry Caplan. Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954.

Drout, Michael D.C. *How Tradition Works: A Meme-Based Poetics of the Anglo-Saxon Tenth Century.* Tempe, AZ: Arizona Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2006.

———. "Tolkien's Prose Style and Its Literary and Rhetorical Effects." *Tolkien Studies* 1 (2004): 139–63.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Fowler, Henry. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage.* 2nd rev. ed. Intro. Simon Winchester. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Kirsch, Gesa, and Duane H. Roen. *A Sense of Audience in Written Communication.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.

Lanham, Richard A. *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Mackin, John H. *Classical Rhetoric for Modern Discourse*. New York: Free Press, 1969.

Parkes, M.B. *Pause and Effect: Punctuation in the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Searle, John. *Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World.* New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Shertzer, Margaret. *The Elements of Grammar*. London: Longman, 1996.

Strunk, William, Jr., and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style.* 4th ed. London: Longman, 2000.

These books are available online through www.modernscholar.com or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3399.