CHAPTER   **1**

Ancient Rhetorics: Their Differences and the Differences They Make

CHAPTER SURVEY

Ancient Rhetoric: The Beginnings

Some Differences between Ancient and Modern Thought

Language as Power

> *For us moderns, rhetoric means artificiality, insincerity, decadence.*
>
> —**H. I. Marrou**

When Americans hear the word **rhetoric,** they tend to think of politicians' attempts to deceive them. Rhetoric is characterized as "empty words" or as fancy language used to distort the truth or tell lies. Television newspeople often say something like "There was more rhetoric from the White House today," and editorialists write that politicians need to "stop using rhetoric and do something," as though words had no connection to action. Many people blame rhetoric for our apparent inability to communicate and to get things done.

But that isn't the way **rhetoricians** defined their art in ancient Athens and Rome. In ancient times, people used rhetoric to make decisions, resolve disputes, and to mediate public discussion of important issues. An ancient teacher of rhetoric named Aristotle defined rhetoric as the power of finding the available arguments suited to a given situation. For teachers like Aristotle or practitioners like the Roman orator Cicero, rhetoric helped people to choose the best course of action when they disagreed about important political, religious, or social issues. In fact, the study of rhetoric was equivalent to the study of citizenship. Under the best ancient teachers, Greek and Roman students composed discourse about moral and political questions that daily confronted their communities.

Taken from *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, Fourth Edition, by Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee.

Ancient teachers of rhetoric thought that disagreement among human beings was inevitable, since individuals perceive the world differently from one another. They also assumed that since people communicate their perceptions through language—which is an entirely different medium than thoughts or perceptions—there was no guarantee that any person's perceptions would be accurately conveyed to others. Even more important, the ancient teachers knew that people differ in their opinions about how the world works, so that it was often hard to tell whose opinion was the best. They invented rhetoric so that they would have means of judging whose opinion was most accurate, useful, or valuable.

If people didn't disagree, rhetoric wouldn't be necessary. But they do, and it is. A rhetorician named Kenneth Burke remarked that "we need never deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction as a characteristic motive of rhetorical expression" (1962, 20). But the fact that rhetoric originates in disagreement is ultimately a good thing, since its use allows people to make important choices without resorting to less palatable means of persuasion—coercion or violence. People who have talked their way out of any potentially violent confrontation know how useful rhetoric can be. On a larger scale, the usefulness of rhetoric is even more apparent. If, for some reason, the people who negotiate international relations were to stop using rhetoric to resolve their disagreements about limits on the use of nuclear weapons, there might not be a future to deliberate about. That's why we should be glad when we read or hear that diplomats are disagreeing about the allowable number of warheads per country or the number of inspections of nuclear stockpiles per year. At least they're talking to each other. As Burke observed, wars are the result of an agreement to disagree. But before people of goodwill agree to disagree, they try out hundreds of ways of reaching agreement. The possibility that one set of participants will resort to coercion or violence is always a threat, of course; but in the context of impending war, the threat of war can itself operate as a rhetorical strategy that keeps people of goodwill talking to each other.

Given that argument can deter violence and coercion, we are disturbed by the contemporary tendency to see disagreement as somehow impolite or even undesirable. We certainly understand how disagreement has earned its bad name, given the caricature of argument that daily appears on talk television.

Thanks to these talk shows, argument has become a form of entertaining drama rather than a means of laying out and working through differences or discovering new resolutions. We are apparently not the only ones who feel this way. In October of 2004—three weeks before the presidential election—Jon Stewart, the host of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, appeared live on CNN's political "argument" show named *Crossfire* to register his disappointment with the state of argument in America. In what has now become a famous plea (thanks to viral video on the Internet), Stewart asked then-*Crossfire* hosts Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson to "Stop, stop, stop, stop hurting America." How, exactly, does Stewart think that *Crossfire* is hurting America? Here is a segment from the show's transcript:

STEWART: No, no, no, but what I'm saying is this. I'm not. I'm here to confront you, because we need help from the media and they're hurting us. And it's—the idea is . . .

[APPLAUSE]

[CROSSTALK]

BEGALA: Let me get this straight. If the indictment is—if the indictment is—and I have seen you say this—that . . .

STEWART: Yes.

BEGALA: And that CROSSFIRE reduces everything, as I said in the intro, to left, right, black, white.

STEWART: Yes.

BEGALA: Well, it's because, see, we're a debate show.

STEWART: No, no, no, no, that would be great.

BEGALA: It's like saying The Weather Channel reduces everything to a storm front.

STEWART: I would love to see a debate show.

BEGALA: We're 30 minutes in a 24-hour day, where we have each side on, as best we can get them, and have them fight it out.

STEWART: No, no, no, no, that would be great. To do a debate would be great. But that's like saying pro wrestling is a show about athletic competition.

Stewart's **analogy**, in which professional wrestling is to athletic competition as *Crossfire* is to debate, is worth dwelling on in part because the move from engaged performance of sports or debate to the sheer entertainment and antics of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE, formerly the World Wrestling Federation) is a move from "real" to "mere." In other words, what could become earnest rhetorical engagement becomes instead a staged spat, "mere" theater. *Theater*, in fact, is the word that Stewart settles on to describe *Crossfire* later in his appearance. That a current WWE show called *Smackdown* has a title that could well be mistaken for a cable "debate" show helps underscore Stewart's point: like WWE, shows like *Crossfire* seem to exist to dramatize conflict solely for entertainment purposes. In doing so, the so-called debate shows effectively distance argument further from the American public, placing it on the brightly lit set of a television show, making it seem as if "argument" has distinct winners and losers, and playing up the embarrassment of "losing."

It is interesting to note that after Stewart's appearance on *Crossfire*, CNN canceled the show altogether, but they did not replace it with what Stewart—or we— would consider a debate show. We wholeheartedly agree with Stewart's criticism. Shows like *Crossfire* perpetuate rhetoric's bad name, because the hosts and guests don't actually argue; rather, they shout **commonplaces** at one another. Neither host listens to the other or to the guest, who is rarely allowed to speak, and then only intermittently. Even the transcript quoted here shows how because of the hosts' frequent interruptions, Stewart must work very hard to maintain a point. Shouting over one another is an extremely unproductive model of argument because doing so rarely involves listening or responding, and seldom stimulates anyone to change his or her mind.

Engaging in productive argument is much different from shouting tired slogans. For one thing it is hard intellectual work, and for another, it requires that all parties

to an argument listen to positions stated by others. Despite its difficulty, people who live in democracies must undertake productive argument with one another, because failure to do so can have serious consequences, ranging from inaction on important issues, such as global warming, to taking serious actions such as going to war. Consider this *New York Times* account of a rather unproductive encounter between two well-known celebrities and President George W. Bush's deputy chief of staff, Karl Rove:

We offer this account of the heated exchange as an example of a simultaneous faith in rhetoric—Laurie David claims she "honestly thought" she "was going to change his mind, like, right there and then"—and a refusal of rhetorical engagement (Rove's alleged "don't touch me"). Indeed, Americans often refuse to talk with each other about important matters like religion or politics, retreating into silence if someone

Bush Aide's Celebrity Meeting Becomes a Global Warming Run-In

Put celebrity environmental activists in a room with top Bush administration officials and a meeting of the minds could result. At least that is a theoretical possibility.

The more likely outcome is that an argument will break out, as it did at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner on Saturday night between Karl Rove, the president's deputy chief of staff, and the singer Sheryl Crow and Laurie David, a major Democratic donor and a producer of the global warming documentary featuring Al Gore, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Ms. Crow and Ms. David, who have been visiting campuses in an event billed as the Stop Global Warming College Tour, approached Mr. Rove to urge him to take "a fresh look" at global warming, they said later.

Recriminations between the celebrities and the White House carried over into Sunday, with Ms. Crow and Ms. David calling Mr. Rove "a spoiled child throwing a tantrum" and the White House criticizing their "Hollywood histrionics."

"I honestly thought that I was going to change his mind, like, right there and then," Ms. David said Sunday, The Associated Press reported.

Ms. Crow was at the dinner as a guest of Bloomberg News. Ms. David and her husband, Larry David, a creator of "Seinfeld," were guests of CNN. Mr. Rove was a guest of The New York Times.

The one thing all three parties agree on is that the conversation quickly became heated.

As Ms. Crow and Ms. David described it on the Huffington Post Web site on Sunday, when Mr. Rove turned toward his table, Ms. Crow touched his arm and "Karl swung around and spat, 'Don't touch me.'"

Both sides agreed that Ms. Crow told him, "You can't speak to us like that, you work for us," to which Mr. Rove responded, "I don't work for you, I work for the American people." Ms. Crow and Ms. David wrote that Ms. Crow shot back, "We are the American people."

In their Web posting, Ms. Crow and Ms. David described Mr. Rove as responding with "anger flaring," and as having "exploded with even more venom" as the argument continued.

"She came over to insult me," Mr. Rove said Saturday night, "and she succeeded."

Mr. Rove did not respond to a request for comment on the women's Internet posting on Sunday.

Tony Fratto, a White House spokesman, said, "We have respect for the opinions and passion that many people have for climate change." But, Mr. Fratto said, "I wish the same respect was afforded to the president."

He accused Ms. Crow and Ms. David of ignoring the president's environmental initiatives, like pushing for alternative fuels, and for "going after officials with misinformed assertions at a social dinner."

"It would be better," Mr. Fratto said, "to set aside Hollywood histrionics and try to help with the problem instead of this baseless, and tasteless, finger pointing." (*New York Times*, April 23, 2007, A16)

brings either subject up in public discourse. And if someone disagrees publicly with someone else about politics or religion, Americans sometimes take that as a breach of good manners. Note the White House spokesman's moral offense that such a matter would come up at "a social dinner," suggesting that Crow and David committed an etiquette violation by mixing arguments with hors d'oeuvres.

Americans tend to link a person's opinions to her identity. We assume that someone's opinions result from her personal experience, and hence that those opinions are somehow "hers"—that she alone "owns" them. For example, when Whitehouse spokesman Tony Fratto refers to Crow's and David's approach as "Hollywood histrionics," he effectively reduces their stance on global warming to a small demographic, invoking a **commonplace** about out-of-touch Hollywood, and referring to their confrontation as a type of acting. Rhetoric gives way to personal insult, engagement to hand-waving dismissal.

Too often opinion-as-identity stands in the way of rhetorical exchange. If someone we know is a devout Catholic, for example, we are often reluctant to share with her any negative views we have about Catholicism, fearing that she might take our views as a personal attack rather than as an invitation to discuss differences. This habit of tying beliefs to an identity also has the unfortunate effect of allowing people who hold a distinctive set of beliefs to belittle or mistreat people who do not share those beliefs.[1]

The intellectual habit that assumes religious and political choices are tied up with a person's identity, with her "self," also makes it seem as though people never change their minds about things like religion and politics. But as we all know, people do change their minds about these matters; people convert from one religious faith to another, and they sometimes change their political affiliation from year to year, perhaps voting across party lines in one election and voting a party line in the next.

The authors of this book are concerned that if Americans continue to ignore the reality that people disagree with one another all the time, or if we pretend to ignore it in the interests of preserving good manners, we risk undermining the principles on which our democratic community is based. People who are afraid of airing their differences tend to keep silent when those with whom they disagree are speaking; people who are not inclined to air differences tend to associate only with those who agree with them. In such a balkanized public sphere, both our commonalities and our differences go unexamined. In a democracy, people must call into question the opinions of others, must bring them into the light for examination and negotiation. In communities where citizens are not coerced, important decisions must be made by means of public discourse. When the quality of public discourse diminishes, so does the quality of democracy.

Ancient teachers called the process of examining positions held by others "**invention,**" which Aristotle defined as finding and displaying the available **arguments** on any **issue.** Invention is central to the rhetorical process. What often passes for rhetoric in our own time—repeatedly stating (or shouting) one's beliefs at an "opponent" in order to browbeat him into submission—is not rhetoric. Participation in rhetoric entails that every party to the discussion be aware that beliefs may change during the exchange and discussion of points of view. All parties to a rhetorical transaction must

be willing to be persuaded by good arguments. Otherwise, decisions will be made for bad reasons, or **interested** reasons, or no reason at all.

Sometimes, of course, there are good reasons for remaining silent. Power is distributed unequally in our culture, and power inequities may force wise people to remain silent on some occasions. We believe that in contemporary American culture people who enjoy high socioeconomic status have more power than those who have fewer resources and less access to others in power. We also hold that men have more power than women and that white people have more power than people of color (and yes, we are aware that there are exceptions to all of these generalizations). We do not believe, though, that these inequities are a natural or necessary state of things. We do believe that rhetoric is among the best ways available to us for rectifying power inequities among citizens.

The people who taught and practiced rhetoric in Athens and Rome during ancient times would have found contemporary unwillingness to engage in public disagreement very strange indeed. Their way of using disagreement to reach solutions was taught to students in Western schools for over two thousand years and is still available to us in translations of their textbooks, speeches, lecture notes, and treatises on rhetoric. Within limits, their way of looking at disagreement can still be useful to us. The students who worked with ancient teachers of rhetoric were members of privileged classes for the most part, since Athens and Rome both maintained socioeconomic systems that were manifestly unjust to many of the people who lived and worked within them. The same charge can be leveled at our own system, of course. Today the United States is home not only to its native peoples but to people from all over the world. Its nonnative citizens arrived here under vastly different circumstances, ranging from colonization to immigration to enslavement, and their lives have been shaped by these circumstances, as well as by their genders and class affiliations. Not all—perhaps not even a majority—have enjoyed the equal opportunities that are promised by the Constitution. But unfair social and economic realities only underscore the need for principled public discussion among concerned citizens.

The aim of ancient rhetorics was to distribute the power that resides in language among all of its students. This power is available to anyone who is willing to study the principles of rhetoric. People who know about rhetoric know how to persuade others to consider their point of view without having to resort to coercion or violence. For the purposes of this book, we have assumed that people prefer to seek verbal resolution of differences to the use of force. Rhetoric is of no use when people determine to use coercion or violence to gain the ends they seek.

A knowledge of rhetoric also allows people to discern when **rhetors** are making bad arguments or are asking them to make inappropriate choices. Since rhetoric confers the gift of greater mastery over language, it can also teach those who study it to evaluate anyone's rhetoric; thus the critical capacity conferred by rhetoric can free its students from the manipulative rhetoric of others. When knowledge about rhetoric is available only to a few people, the power inherent in persuasive discourse is disproportionately shared. Unfortunately, throughout history rhetorical knowledge has usually been shared only among those who can exert economic, social, or political power as well. But ordinary citizens can learn to deploy rhetorical power, and if they have a chance and the courage to deploy it skillfully and often, it's possible that

they may change other features of our society as well. In this book, then, we aim to help our readers become more skilled speakers and writers. But we also aim to help them become better citizens. We begin by offering a very brief account of the beginnings of ancient rhetorical thought and then move to considering some important differences between ancient and modern thinking about rhetoric.[2]

Ancient Rhetoric: The Beginnings

Something quite remarkable happened in the small Greek city of Athens during the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries BCE. During this period, the citizens of that community evolved a form of government they called *demokratia* (*demos* ["people"] and *kratos* ["political power"]). Any Athenian who was defined as a citizen played a direct role in making important decisions that affected the entire community: whether to go to war, to send ambassadors to neighboring countries, to raise or lower taxes, to build bridges or walls, to convict or acquit people accused of crimes against the state or other citizens.

In the Athenian political system, citizenship was determined by birthright and thus was awarded to any adult male who could establish his Athenian heritage, whether he was wealthy or not, aristocratic or not. These were very inclusive requirements for the time, even though they excluded the bulk of the population who were women, foreign-born men, or slaves. Because of these requirements, classical Athens can hardly be said to have been a democracy in our more inclusive sense, although we remind readers that for almost half of its history, the United States limited suffrage to white males. Nor was Athens a representative democracy, as ours is said to be, since the few hundred people who were defined as Athenian citizens participated directly in making political and judicial decisions rather than acting through elected representatives.

The citizens met in the Assembly to make political decisions and acted as jurors at trials. Athenian men apparently took their civic responsibilities seriously. Despite the difficulties entailed in meeting this responsibility—leaving work undone for several days, traveling to the city from outlying farms—as many as five hundred or more citizens could be expected to attend and vote in the Assembly when it was in session.

Sometime during the fifth century BCE, all citizens earned the right to speak in the Assembly. This right was called *isegoria* ("equality in the agora" or assembly place). Most likely, very few citizens exercised their right to speak. When five hundred Athenians met to deliberate on important issues, not everyone could speak at once, nor was everyone sufficiently informed about the issue at hand to speak effectively. The task of filling in the details and of arguing for a course of action fell to people who were trained in speaking, who had sufficient education to understand the issues, and who had the leisure to study the issues at hand. These were the professional *rhetores*. In the fifth century, the term *rhetor* referred to someone who introduced a resolution into the Assembly, but by the fourth century BCE the term meant something like "an expert on politics." Later it came to mean "one skilled in public speaking" as well. In this book, we refer to people who practice rhetoric as rhetors. We refer to people who teach it or theorize about it as rhetoricians.

Some Differences between Ancient and Modern Thought

The great age of ancient rhetorics dictates that there will be differences between them and modern thinking about rhetoric. One such difference is that ancient rhetoricians did not value factual proof very highly, while **facts** and **testimony** are virtually the only proofs discussed in modern rhetorical theory. Ancient teachers preferred to use arguments that they generated from language itself and from community beliefs during an intellectual process they called "invention." They invented and named many such arguments, among them commonplaces, examples, **conjectures**, maxims, and enthymemes (see the chapter on rhetorical reasoning). Another difference is that ancient rhetoricians valued opinions as a source of knowledge, whereas in modern thought opinions are often dismissed as unimportant. But ancient rhetoricians thought of opinions as something that were held not by individuals but by entire communities. This difference has to do with another assumption that they made, which was that a person's character (and hence her opinions) were constructions made by the community in which she lived. And since the ancients believed that communities were the source and reason for rhetoric, opinions were for them the very stuff of argument.

A third difference between ancient and modern rhetorics is that ancient rhetoricians situated their teaching in place and time. Their insistence that local and temporal conditions influenced the act of composition marks a fairly distinct contrast with the habit in modern rhetoric of treating rhetorical occasions as if they were all alike. For example, modern rhetoric textbooks insist that every composition display a thesis. Ancient teachers, in contrast, were not so sure that every discourse has a thesis to display. For example, people sometimes write or speak in order to determine what alternatives are available in a given situation. In this case they are not ready to advance a thesis. And if a rhetor has a hostile audience, after all, it might be better (and safer) not to mention a thesis at all, or at least to place it near the end of the discourse.

A last difference between ancient and modern rhetorics has to do with ancient teachers' attitude toward language. Modern rhetoricians tend to think that language's role is limited to the communication of facts. Ancient rhetoricians, however, taught their students that language does many things. Cicero, who was an extremely skilled and influential speaker in the days of the Roman Republic, asserted that the ends of language use are to teach, to give pleasure, and to move. But the point of instructing or delighting audiences is, finally, to move them to accept or reject some thought or action.

Just the Facts, Please

From an ancient perspective, one of the most troublesome of modern assumptions about the nature of argument goes like this: if the facts are on your side, you can't be wrong, and you can't be refuted. Facts are statements that somebody has substantiated through experience or proved through research. Or they are events

that really happened, events that somebody will attest to as factual. Facts have a "you were there" quality; if the arguer doesn't have personal knowledge of the facts, he is pretty sure that some expert on the subject does know them, and all she has to do in that case is to look them up in a book. Here are some examples of factual statements:

1. Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. The moon orbits the earth.
3. On April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech student Cho Sueng-Hui killed 32 people and himself on his campus in Blacksburg, Virginia.

These are facts because they can be verified through experience or by means of testimony. Individuals can test the accuracy of the first statement for themselves, and all three statements can be confirmed by checking relevant and reliable sources.

No doubt the importance given to facts derives from the modern faith in science or, more technically, from faith in empirical proofs, those that are available to the senses: vision, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. During the nineteenth century, rhetoricians came to prefer so-called scientific or empirical proofs to all the other kinds outlined in ancient rhetoric. After 1850, American rhetoric textbooks began to reduce the many kinds of evidence discriminated by ancient rhetoricians to just two: empirical evidence and testimony. Both of these kinds of evidence have the you-are-there quality: empirical evidence derives from someone's actual sensory contact with the relevant evidence; testimony involves somebody's reporting their acquaintance with the facts of the case. During the twentieth century, rhetoric textbooks enlarged testimony to include accounts by persons recognized as experts or authorities in specialized fields of study. The modern reverence for facts and testimonies explains why students are often asked to write research papers in school—their teachers want to be sure they know how to assemble empirical evidence and expert testimony into a coherent piece of writing.

There are some problems with the approving modern attitude toward empirical evidence. For one thing, it ignores the possibility that the evidence provided by the senses is neither reliable nor conclusive. People are selective about what they perceive, and they continually reconstruct their memories of what they perceive, as well. Moreover, people don't always agree about their sensory perceptions. The Older Sophist Protagoras pointed out that a blowing wind could feel cold to one person and hot to another and that honey tasted bitter to some people although it tastes sweet to most.

Perceptions, and thus testimony about them, can also be influenced by an observer's perspective. Over the years during which we have been writing and revising this book, the National Football League has changed its policy on the use of instant replay several times. In instant replay, the referees watch video tapes of a controversial play taken from several different angles in order to decide what penalties to assess, if any. Even though professional referees are trained observers of the game, sometimes they simply cannot see whether a defensive player used his arms illegally or whether a receiver managed to keep his feet within bounds while he caught the ball. The problem with instant replay, though, is that sometimes television

cameras are not well positioned to see a contested play either. In terms used in this book, the supposedly factual or empirical account yielded by instant replay is often no better at resolving disagreements about violations than is the testimony given by referees. Currently the NFL uses a rather complicated combination of taped replays and referee judgements to make decisions about contested plays. In other words, the NFL has opted to combine facts and testimony as evidence for opinions rendered about close calls. This example interests us because fans seem to trust referees' judgements less than they do that of the television camera operators. Indeed, fans often accuse referees of having an interest in one outcome or another, assuming that this interest influences their perception of events. This suggests in turn that football fans may trust machines rather more than they trust human experts, even though the machines are, after all, constructed and operated by human beings. One seldom hears complaints that CBS or Fox placed its cameras in positions that might serve its own interests, at least in the context of football games.

This example highlights the even more interesting observation that the facts of the physical world don't mean much to anybody unless they are involved in some larger **network of interpretation.** In football the relevant network of interpretation is the rules of the game. Without these rules, the exact placement of a player's arm or the exact point at which his feet touched the ground pretty much loses its relevance. (Sometimes football players suddenly switch to a network of interpretation that allows them to read an arm in the face as an act of aggression. When this happens, referees have to assess more penalties until the game's more usual network of interpretation can be restored.)

Here's another example that demonstrates that facts are not very interesting or persuasive unless they are read within a network of interpretation: geologists use the fossil record as evidence to support the theory of evolution. They point to boxes and crates of mute, stony facts—fossilized plants and animals—as evidence that species have evolved over time. But the fossil record itself, as well as the historical relationships that geologists have established among fossils from all over the world, is a network of interpretation. That is, geologists have read a series of natural objects in such a way as to construe them as evidence for a huge natural process that nobody could actually have witnessed. If you want to object that a fossil is a fact, please do. You are quite right. Our point is that it is not a very useful (or interesting) fact apart from its interpretation as a fossil, rather than a rock, and its location within the network of interpretation called evolutionary theory. Using other networks of interpretation, a fossil can just as easily be read as a doorstop or a weapon.

In contrast to moderns, ancient philosophers understood the usefulness of empirical facts quite differently from moderns. Early Greek thinkers were skeptical about the status of phenomena, the name they gave to the facts of the physical world—stuff like trees, fossils, rocks, honey, cold winds, and the like. They argued about whether such things existed at all, or whether they existed only when perceived by the human senses. Most agreed that human perception of the facts of the physical world necessarily involved some distortion, since human thoughts and perceptions and language are obviously not the same things as physical objects like rocks.

Perhaps because of their skepticism about the nature of facts, ancient teachers of rhetoric were equally skeptical about the persuasive potential of facts. Aristotle

wrote that facts and testimony were not truly within the art of rhetoric; they were *atechnoi*—"without art or skill"—and hence extrinsic to rhetoric. Extrinsic proofs were not developed through a rhetor's use of the principles of rhetoric but were found in existing circumstances. Aristotle defined an extrinsic proof as "all such as are not supplied by our own efforts, but existed beforehand" (*Rhetoric* I ii 1356a). Such proofs are extrinsic to rhetoric, then, because no art is required to invent them. A rhetor only has to choose the relevant facts or testimony and present them to an audience.

Because facts are relatively mute in the absence of a relevant network of interpretation, rhetors seldom argue from a simple list of facts.[3] Today, practicing rhetoricians invent and use a wide variety of nonfactual arguments with great effectiveness. Take a trivial illustration: many MP3 player advertisements are arguments from **example.** Advertisers show a silhouette of a woman dancing energetically, hair flying, while wearing headphones and holding a distinctive-looking MP3 player in her hand. They assume that the attractive example will make people reason as follows: "Well that woman listens to a particular brand of MP3 player, and look at how she moves, how cool she is, and how much fun she's having. If I listen to that kind of player, I'll be a sleek, dancing, fun-having person too." The ad writers hope that viewers will generalize from the fictional example to their own lives, and draw the conclusion that they should buy the MP3 player. There are no facts in this argument—indeed it is a fiction, a digitally-mastered silhouette, constructed by scriptwriters, graphic designers, directors and others—and yet it is apparently persuasive, since this type of advertisement endures.

Rhetors who rely only upon facts and testimony, then, place very serious limits on their persuasive potential, since many other kinds of rhetorical argument are employed daily in the media and in ordinary conversation. These arguments are invented or discovered by rhetors, using the art of rhetoric. Aristotle described invented arguments as *entechnoi*—"embodied in the art" of rhetoric. This class of proofs is **intrinsic** to rhetoric, since these proofs are generated from rhetoric's principles.

In rhetoric, intrinsic proofs are found or discovered by rhetors. **Invention** is the division of rhetoric that investigates the possible means by which proofs can be discovered; it supplies speakers and writers with sets of instructions that help them to find and compose arguments that are appropriate for a given rhetorical situation. The word *invenire* meant "to find" or "to come upon" in Latin. The Greek equivalent, *heuriskein,* also meant "to find out" or "discover." Variants of both words persist in English. For instance, the exclamation "Eureka!" (derived from *heuriskein*) means "I have found it!" This word was so popular during the nineteenth-century gold rush that a town in California was named "Eureka." The Greek word has also given us **heuristic,** which means "an aid to discovery," and we refer to anyone who has new ideas as an "inventor," from the Latin *invenire*.

A **proposition** (Latin *proponere,* "to put forth") is any arguable statement put forward for discussion by a rhetor. A proof is any statement or statements used to persuade an audience to accept a proposition. Proofs are bits of language that are supposed to be persuasive. Ancient rhetoricians developed and catalogued a wide range of intrinsic rhetorical proofs, most of which relied on rhetors' knowledge of

a community's history and beliefs. The Older Sophists contributed the notions of commonplaces and **probabilities.** Aristotle contributed **enthymemes, examples, signs,** and **maxims,** and Hermagoras of Temnos is credited with the invention of **stasis theory.**

Aristotle discriminated three kinds of intrinsic rhetorical proofs: *ethos, pathos,* and *logos.* These kinds of proofs translate into English as ethical, pathetic, and logical proofs. Ethical proofs depend on the rhetor's **character;** pathetic proofs appeal to the emotions of the audience; and logical proofs derive from arguments found in the issue itself. Our words *logic* and *logical* are derived from the Greek *logos,* which meant "voice" or "speech" to early Greek rhetoricians. Later, *logos* also became associated with reason.

Here is an example. Like water and air pollution, light pollution has lately been receiving attention, perhaps because the issue of climate change has caused the American people to pay more attention to environmental issues. In 2003, in fact, *The Simpsons* aired an episode called "Scuse Me While I Miss the Sky," in which Lisa Simpson, having decided to become an astronomer, is an outspoken opponent of light pollution. In making her case to the people of Springfield, Lisa Simpson could have made any of several interesting arguments in support of a "dark-sky" ordinance, which would reduce the amount of light emitted into the night sky by streetlights and billboards. She could point out that current light levels from these sources interfere with astronomers' ability to observe the night sky through their telescopes. The association of astronomy with science gives her a strong appeal from ethos, because scientists are generally respected in our culture (and, of course, as a member of the Simpson family, Lisa enjoys her own unique **situated ethos** in the town of Springfield). She can also make an emotional appeal by reminding her audience that human-made lighting interferes with the ordinary person's ability to see the moon and stars clearly, thus decreasing his enjoyment of the night sky. In addition, there are a good many logical proofs available to her in the issue itself. She can reason from **cause to effect:** city lighting causes so much interference with telescopes and other instruments that the quality of observational work being carried out at the observatory is diminished. Or she can reason from a **parallel case:** "a dark-sky ordinance was enacted in the town down the road, and the quality of astronomical observations has improved enormously there. The same thing will happen in Springfield if we install a dark-sky ordinance here." If Lisa made these arguments, she would rely on only one fact: that current light levels from the city interfered with her ability to make astronomical observations. Interested citizens could contest even this statement (which the ancients would have called a **conjecture**), since it obviously serves the interests of someone who needs a dark sky to complete her observations.

Recently, the dark-sky campaign has moved into the U.S. national parks, as the following excerpts from an article by Alison Fromme demonstrate:

Chad Moore has been successful in making light pollution matter—to backpackers as well as to the National Park Service. His efforts involve a good deal of data collection, as is evident from the opening paragraph of the article, but the data collection is usually not enough; numbers also need arguments. For example, it is very important for Moore to present himself as a reasonable person and to be clear in

Crusaders of Darkness

Chad Moore isn't afraid of the dark. On moonless nights, while many backpackers are sitting around campfires, the 36-year-old park ranger is humping 65 pounds of specialized gear along inky mountain trails. He heads for high, open spaces—treeless ridgetops are perfect—and unloads a wide-field digital camera, motorized tripod, laptop, and enough wires and batteries to jump-start a bus. Moore assembles the gear quickly, his routine honed by forays into dozens of backcountry locales from Nebraska's Agate Fossil Beds to California's Lassen Volcanic National Park. He isn't a hobbyist pursuing astronomy, however. As head of the National Park Service's Night Sky Team, Moore is giving up his sleep so backpackers can enjoy darker nights and more stars. . . .

Preserving dark skies and quantifying light pollution has been Moore's focus for most of his 12 years as a ranger. When he founded the Night Sky Team in 1999, his goals were too ambitious for the available camera technology. So Dan Duriscoe, the project's technical leader, built a motorized tripod and camera mount that could be used to take sky surveys. This system has generated thousands of night-sky images to yield light-pollution baselines for many park units. Moore has presented these results at astronomy conferences, and published his data in a 2007 scientific paper and on the web (nature.nps. gov/air/lightscapes). For many park rangers and scientists, the team's description of widespread light pollution isn't new. But Moore's energetic campaign has won new converts, including bigwigs at NPS headquarters who responded by increasing the team's funding. After running his operation on a minuscule budget for several years, Moore received a $4 million, 4-year NPS grant in 2006. "I think the Park Service takes pride in being a leader in this fight," he says.

Reducing light pollution isn't as easy as switching off a few floodlamps. Light can travel hundreds of miles, spoiling views far from its source. And since no one's pulling the plug on Vegas, saving starry nights for backpackers in Death Valley calls for more creative solutions. Moore understands this challenge. "We're not here to tell people to turn off all the lights," he says. Instead, his team wants to help the public adopt smarter, more efficient, and in the long run, more economical lighting options. . . . Like his colleagues racing to preserve endangered animals and plants, Moore knows he's defying the headlong rush of civilization. But there's one important difference, he notes. Darkness isn't subject to extinction, only a temporary loss of intensity. The night sky will always be recoverable; we just need to dim the lights. (43–44)

advance about what he is proposing, and what he is not, as he does with this assertion: "We're not here to tell people to turn off all the lights." This sentence is a small but persuasive argument found within the rhetorical situation, what Aristotle called an intrinsic proof.

Ancient students of rhetoric practiced inventing a wide variety of intrinsic proofs while they were in school. By the time they finished their education, invention strategies were second nature to them, so that whenever they were called on to construct a speech or to compose a piece of written discourse, they could conduct a mental review of invention processes. This review helped them to determine which proofs would be useful in arguing about whatever issue confronted them. The means of inventing rhetorical proofs can still provide rhetors with an intellectual arsenal to which they can resort whenever they need to compose. Anyone who becomes familiar with all of them should never be at a loss for words.

To become adept at invention is not easy, though. Invention requires systematic thought, practice, and above all, thoroughness. But careful attention to the ancient strategies for discovering arguments will amply repay anyone who undertakes their study and use. Hermogenes of Tarsus wrote that "nothing good can be produced

easily, and I should be surprised if there were anything better for humankind, since we are logical animals, than fine and noble *logoi* and every kind of them" (*On Style* I 214). In other words, to invent arguments is essentially human. But invention also has a less lofty, more practical aim: rhetors who practice the ancient means of invention will soon find themselves supplied with more arguments than they can possibly use.

That's Just Your Opinion

There is another category in popular notions about argument that deserves our attention. This is the category called "opinion." People can put a stop to conversation simply by saying, "Well, that's just your opinion." When someone does this, he implies that opinions aren't very important. They aren't facts, after all, and furthermore, opinions belong to individuals, while facts belong to everybody. Another implication is this: because opinions are intimately tied up with individual identities, there's not much hope of changing them unless the person changes her identity. To put this another way, the implication of "Well, that's just your opinion" is that Jane Doe's opinion about, say, energy use and global warming is all tied up with who she is. If she thinks that driving a Humvee is morally wrong, well, that's her opinion and there's not much we can do about changing her belief or her practice.

The belief that opinions belong to individuals may explain why Americans seem reluctant to challenge one another's opinions. To challenge a person's opinion is to denigrate his character, to imply that if he holds an unexamined or stupid or silly opinion, he is an unthinking or stupid or silly person. Ancient teachers of rhetoric would find fault with this on three grounds. First, they would object that there is no such thing as "just your opinion." Second, they would object to the assumption that opinions aren't important. Third, they would argue that opinions can be changed. The point of rhetoric, after all, is to change opinions.

Ancient rhetoricians taught their students that opinions are shared by many members of a community. The Greek word for common or popular opinion was *doxa,* which is the root of English words like *orthodoxy* ("straight opinion") and *paradox* ("opinions alongside one another"). Opinions develop because people live in communities. A person living alone on an island needs a great many skills and physical resources, but she has no need for political, moral, or social opinions until she meets up with another person or an animal, since politics, morality, and sociality depend upon our relations with beings that think and feel.

Let's return to the example of energy conservation in relation to climate change. Here is an article written by *Addison County Independent* reporter Megan James, entitled "Step It Up for Global Warming."

If we return to our earlier discussion of Jane Doe equipped with the notion of shared opinion, we can see that Jane's opinion about global warming is not "just hers." Rather, she shares it with other people like Laurie David and Al Gore, whose film inspired Stacey Lee-Dobek, the focus of this particular article, to become more resolute and outspoken for the cause. She shares it with singer Sheryl Crow, author and activist Bill McKibben, and a host of students at Middlebury College as well. She also shares her opinion with thousands of people whom she has never met—with

Middlebury

When Lincoln resident Stacey Lee-Dobek saw "An Inconvenient Truth," the film about Al Gore's fight against climate change, for the first time last December, she knew it was time to take action against global warming.

"I stood up and said out loud to myself, 'I have to do something more than changing my light bulbs,'" she said. "It became a New Year's Resolution."

So Lee-Dobek sat down at her computer to begin researching the issue, and before she knew it, she'd found Step It Up, Ripton environmentalist Bill McKibben's nation-wide virtual demonstration to send the U.S. government a singular message on Saturday, April 14: "Step it up, Congress! Cut carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050."

Over the last five months, McKibben and his crew of six recent Middlebury College graduates have helped facilitate the organization of more than 1,200 actions to take place simultaneously in all 50 states that day. From the tops of melting glaciers and the steps of town halls, demonstrators will upload digital images of their actions to the Step It Up Web site at www.stepitup2007.org, and those images will be compiled and delivered straight to Congress.

Lee-Dobek fell in love with the idea immediately, and in her excitement, signed herself up for two different demonstrations. Realizing she couldn't be in two places at once, she dropped the idea she'd planned for Burlington, and focused instead on organizing a primary rally for Middlebury.

"My focus is letting Vermonters know what they can do to help," she said. "I'm concerned about mankind and coastal cities, especially where the economy is really poor. I've got kids, and they're going to have kids and I want their quality of life to be just as good as ours."

For Lee-Dobek, the first key to fighting global warming locally is "aggressive conservatism" of energy.

"Carpooling is one of the most effective things we can do as Vermonters," she said. "It's amazing how much we drive in this state."

Middlebury's rally will begin this Saturday at 2 p.m. on the town green, where demonstrators will convene with banners, posters and possibly even drums. They will then walk to the Marble Works footbridge, where they will pose for the group photo, and continue to the municipal gym, where from 3 to 5 p.m., area renewable energy activists and musicians will hold an environmental fair.

The activities will begin with a performance by Ripton-based folk trio Bread and Bones, featuring Richard Ruane, Beth Duquette and Mitch Barron. Middlebury College english and environmental studies professor John Elder will give a short presentation about what Vermonters can do to lessen their impact on the environment and how to affect change in Congress. Representatives from area environmental organizations will set up informational booths.

"What I've been impressed by is how much is going on in Addison County," Lee-Dobek said. "Until the bug bit me I had no clue."

She is excited to see all of these local efforts to combat climate change showcased in one room on Saturday, including Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) Cow Power, Bristol-based IdleFree Vermont, Addison County Relocalization Network (ACoRN) and SolarFest, a Middletown Springs nonprofit that uses art to build renewable energy education in its community.

With Step It Up, area residents have a unique opportunity to send their message directly to Congress. Lee-Dobek urges everyone to join a demonstration on Saturday, whether it is in Middlebury or at one of the 64 actions planned for Vermont. The ones in area towns will take place in:

- Brandon, where a bike ride against global warming will begin in front of the Brandon Free Public Library and a pinwheel parade will take place at the gazebo in the park by the falls at 10 a.m.
- East Middlebury, where residents will gather at the Gorge at the Middlebury River at 11 a.m.
- Orwell, where Singing Cedars Farmstead will host a seed-planting event starting at 10 a.m.

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- Ripton, where students from the North Branch School will serve a potluck lunch at the Ripton Community House at 11 a.m. and people will gather at Spirit In Nature off Ripton-Goshen Road at noon.
- Salisbury, where residents will gather at Camp Keewaydin at noon and then offer a couple of interpretive hikes in the area.
- Vergennes, where people at Vergennes Union Middle School will spend the day, starting at 8 a.m., writing to legislators and creating an art project focused on global warming.

And if all of these are still too far to drive, Lee-Dobek suggested that interested Vermonters create their own demonstration. To do so, go to the Step It Up Web site for information on how to register a new action.

"It's not too late for people to host their own actions," she said. "People can climb to the top of Mount Abe or Camel's Hump. The important thing is to get a banner with the slogan and to upload a photo from wherever you are." *(Addison County Independent)*

everyone who believes, as she does, that it is wrong to continue such excessive use of fuel without regard for global warming. And Vermont, where Stacey goes to school, is particularly hospitable to environmental concerns and has taken a leadership position among states. It might be easier for someone like Jane to care about global warming in a Vermont community as opposed to, say, a community in a state such as Texas, where the oil industry has a stronghold. And if her opinion is not just hers, it follows that, should she wish to, Jane can change her opinion without changing her identity.

This is not to deny that changing one's opinion, particularly about deeply held religious or political beliefs, is very hard work. But it can be done, and it can be done by means of a systematic examination of the available positions on an issue. Environmental activism is an interesting example in this regard because it was until recently a minority belief and practice. Arguments supporting minority beliefs and practices must actively be sought out; often they are not available in venues that convey more dominant opinions, such as mainstream media. As few as five years ago, it took work to find arguments against the wastefulness of American lifestyles, and environmental activists could only become so after rejecting a more dominant view. Opinions and practices that are dominant, on the other hand, can be accepted without much thought or investigation. Most Americans born after the Second World War grew up believing in the infinite availability of gasoline and electricity, often driving long distances on vacations and idling at drive-thrus waiting for food that was shipped to the restaurant. That individuals and major corporations have very recently felt the need to examine their "carbon footprints"—and that the phrase "carbon neutral" has now entered into the mainstream—indicates that previous practices have met with a rhetorical challenge significant enough to threaten their status as commonplaces, that is, as dominant, mainstream beliefs that used to "go without saying."

If we locate opinions outside individuals and within communities, they assume more importance. If a significant number of individuals within a community share an

opinion, it becomes difficult to dismiss that opinion as unimportant, no matter how much we like or detest it. Nor can we continue to see opinions as unchangeable. If Jane got her opinion about climate change from somebody she knows, something she read, or a film she saw, she can modify her opinion when she hears or reads or sees a different opinion from somebody else. For example, perhaps her economics professor may caution that the American economy will take a nosedive if legions of Americans suddenly begin to pay attention to carbon footprints and the like. Communication researchers have discovered that people generally adopt the opinions of people they know and respect. Opinions are likely to change when we lose respect for the people who hold them or when we meet new people whom we like and respect and who have different opinions.

The modern association of facts with science, and opinion with everything else, draws on a set of beliefs that was invented during the seventeenth century. Science was associated with empirical proofs and rational problem solving, while nonscientific methods of reasoning began to be considered irrational or emotional. It was also during this period that the modern notion of the individual emerged, wherein each person was thought to be an intellectual island whose unique experiences rendered his or her opinions unique. While the modern notion of the individual is attractive in many ways, it does cause us to forget that opinions are widely shared. Too, the modern distinction between reason and other means of investigation keeps us from realizing how many of our beliefs are based in our emotional responses to our environments. Indeed, our acceptance of our most important beliefs—religious, moral, and political—probably have as much to do with our desires and interests as they do with rational argument. The reason/emotion distinction also keeps us from realizing how often we are swayed by appeals to our emotions or, more accurately, how difficult it is to distinguish between a purely rational appeal and a purely emotional one. And the notion of the unique individual makes it difficult for us to see how many of our opinions are borrowed from the beliefs that we share with other members of our communities.

Ancient teachers of rhetoric believed that rhetorical reasoning, which is used in politics, journalism, religious argument, literature, philosophy, history, and law—to name just a few of its arenas—is fully as legitimate as that used in any other field. And even though it utilizes appeals to community opinion and to emotions, if it is done responsibly, rhetorical reasoning is no more or less valid than the reasoning used in science. In fact, scientific reasoning is itself rhetorical when its propositions are drawn from beliefs held by the community of trained scientists.

On Ideology and the Commonplaces

We suggested earlier that networks of interpretation—the way people interpret and use the facts—have persuasive potential, while facts by themselves do not. Postmodern rhetoricians use the term *ideology* to name networks of interpretation, and that is the term we use in the rest of this book.

An ideology is a coherent set of beliefs that people use to understand events and the behavior of other people; these beliefs are also used to predict events and behaviors.

Ideologies exist in language, but they are worked out in practices. They are sets of statements that tell us how to understand ourselves and others and how to understand nature and our relation to it, as well. Furthermore, ideologies help us to decide how to value what we know—they tell us what is thought to be true, right, good, or beautiful in a community.

Each of us is immersed in the ideologies that circulate in our communities once we begin to understand and use language. Hence ideologies actually produce "selves"; the picture you have of yourself has been formed by your experiences, to be sure, but it has also been constructed by the beliefs that circulate among your family, friends, the media, and other communities that you inhabit. You may think of yourself as a Christian, Jew, New Ager, or atheist. In each case, you adopted a set of beliefs about the way the world works from some relevant community (in the last case, you may have reacted against dominant ideologies). Even though identities are shaped by ideologies, they are never stable, because we can question or reject ideological belief. As we have suggested, people do this all the time: they undergo religious conversion; they adopt a politics; they decide that UFOs do not exist; they stop eating meat; they take up exercise because they have become convinced it is good for them. Often, it is rhetoric that has brought about this ideological change. Ideology is the stuff with which rhetors work.

We mean no disrespect when we say that religious beliefs and political leanings are ideological. Quite the contrary: human beings need ideologies in order to make sense of their experiences in the world. Powerful ideologies such as religions and political beliefs help people to understand who they are and what their relation is to the world and to other beings.

Sometimes people make small changes because the ideological bias of a customary practice has been called into question by the community with which they identify. For example, the first edition of this book used a BC/AD dating system. This nomenclature is ideological because it is particularly Christian (*BC* stands for "before Christ" while *AD* abbreviates the Latin *anno Domini*, "in the year of the Lord," and is used to designate the years after the birth of Christ). In the second edition, we adopted a new and increasingly customary dating system, BCE/CE, which stand for "before the Common Era" and "Common Era" respectively. We realize, as one of our critics has pointed out to us, that changing the naming system still does not alter the calendar itself. The year "zero" is still associated with the birth of Christ. But in changing from BC/AD to BCE/CE, we made an ideological choice to use a secular dating system. In doing so, we follow our own beliefs as well as scholarly convention—the common practice in a broad community of scholars. (If this were a book about the history of Christianity, we might have made a different choice.)

Ideologies are made up of the statements that ancient rhetoricians called commonplaces. The distinguishing characteristic of a commonplace is that it is commonly believed by members of a community. These beliefs are "common" not because they are cheap or trivial but because they are shared "in common" by many people. Commonplaces need not be true or accurate (although they may be true and they are certainly thought to be so within the communities that hold them). Some commonplaces are so thoroughly embedded in a community's assumptions about

how the world works that they are seldom examined rhetorically. Here are some examples of commonplaces that circulate in American discourse:

Anyone can become president of the United States.
All men are created equal.
Everyone has a right to express his or her beliefs because free speech is protected by the Constitution.

Please note that even though these statements are widely accepted in American discourse, they are not necessarily true for all Americans. In other words, outside the communities that subscribe to them, commonplaces may be controversial. If you disagreed with us earlier when we asserted that "men have more power than women," your disagreement should alert you to the presence of a commonplace that is accepted in some community to which we belong but not in the communities with which you identify. In a case like this, the commonplace is contested. Contested commonplaces are called **issues** in rhetoric, and it is the point of rhetoric to help people examine and perhaps to achieve agreement about issues.

Most people probably subscribe to commonplaces drawn from many and diverse ideologies at any given time. Because of this and because our subscription to many of our beliefs is only partially conscious, our ideological beliefs may contradict one another. For instance, if John believes on religious grounds that abortion is murder, he may find that belief to be in conflict with his liberal politics, which teach that women have the right to determine whether or not they wish to carry a pregnancy to term. Thus John's ideology contains a potential contradiction. This is not unusual, because ideology is seldom consistent with itself. In fact, it may be full of contradictions, and it may (and often does) contradict empirical states of affairs as well. For example, the commonplace that affirms that "anyone can become president of the United States" overlooks the reality that all presidents to date have been white men.

Rhetorical Situations

Ancient rhetoricians defined knowledge as the collected wisdom of those who know. In ancient thought, knowledge was not supposed to exist outside of knowers. Teaching and learning began with what people already knew. People talked or questioned each other, and worked toward new discoveries by testing them against what was already known (Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I i). Ancient rhetoricians assumed that anyone who wanted to compose a discourse had a reason for doing so that grew out of his life in a community. Young people studied rhetoric precisely because they wanted to be involved in decisions that affected the lives of their family, friends, and neighbors. Students of ancient rhetoric did engage in a good deal of practice with artificial **rhetorical situations** taken from history or literature or law (the rhetorical exercises were called *progymnasmata* and *declamation*). However, this practice was aimed at teaching them something about the community they would later serve, as well as about rhetoric. In other words, they did not study rhetoric only to learn its rules. Instead, their study was preparation for a life of active citizenship.

A rhetorical situation is made up of several elements: the issue for discussion; the audience for the discussion and their relationship to the issue; as well as the rhetor, her reputation, and her relation to the issue. Rhetors must also consider the time and the place in which the issue merits attention.

Because of its emphasis on situatedness, on location in space and time, and on the contexts that determine composition, ancient rhetorical theory differs greatly from many modern rhetorical theories which assume that all rhetors and all audiences can read and write from a neutral point of view. The notion of objectivity would have greatly puzzled ancient rhetors and teachers of rhetoric, because it implies that truth and accuracy somehow exist outside of people who label things with those words. What interested ancient rhetoricians were issues: matters about which there was some disagreement or dispute. In other words, nothing can become an issue unless someone disagrees with someone else about its truth or falsity, or applicability, or worth. Issues do not exist in isolation from the people who speak or write about them.

Language as Power

Many modern rhetoric textbooks assert that language is a reliable reflection of thought. Their authors assume that the main point of using language is to represent thought, because they live in an age that is still influenced by notions about language developed during the seventeenth century. In 1690 John Locke argued influentially that words represent thoughts and that the function of words was to convey the thinking of one person to another as clearly as possible. The assumption that language is transparent, that it lets meaning shine through it, is part of what is called a **representative theory of language.** The theory has this name because it assumes that language represents meaning, that it hands meaning over to listeners or readers, clear and intact.

Ancient rhetoricians were not so sure that words only or simply represented thoughts. As a consequence, they had great respect for the power of language. Archaic Greeks thought that the distinguishing characteristic of human beings, what made them different from animals, was their possession of *logos*, or speech. In archaic Greek thought, logos was tightly linked to identity, a person's *logos* was her name, her history, everything that could be said about her. Another word for *logos* was *kleos,* "fame" or "call." Thus, to be *"en logoi"* was to be taken into account, to have accounts told about one, to be on the community's roster of persons who could be spoken, sung, or written about. Any person's identity consisted in what was said about her. Someone's name, or tales told about her, defined the space in which she lived.

In keeping with the archaic Greek emphasis on language as the source of knowledge, the Older Sophist Protagoras taught that "humans are the measure of all things." By this he apparently meant that anything that exists does so by virtue of its being known or discussed by human beings. Because knowledge originates with human knowers, and not from somewhere outside them, there is no absolute truth that exists separately from human knowledge. Moreover, contradictory truths will appear, since everyone's knowledge differs slightly from everyone else's, depending on one's perspective and one's language. Thus Protagoras taught that at least two

opposing and contradictory *logoi* (statements or accounts) exist in every experience. He called these oppositions *dissoi logoi*.

The Older Sophist Gorgias apparently adopted Protagoras's skepticism about the relationship of language to truth or to some absolute reality. In his treatise on the nonexistent, Gorgias wrote: "For that by which we reveal is *logos,* but *logos* is not substances and existing things. Therefore we do not reveal existing things to our neighbors, but *logos,* which is something other than substances" (Sprague 1972, 84). In other words, language is not things, and language does not communicate things or thoughts or anything else. Language is not the same thing as honey or fossils or cold winds, nor is it the same as thoughts or feelings or perceptions. It is a different medium altogether. What language communicates is itself—words, syntax, metaphors, puns, and all that other wonderful stuff. Philosophers are mistaken when they argue that justice or reality exist; they have been misled into thinking that justice or reality are the same for everyone by the seeming unity and generality of the words *justice* and *reality*.

Ancient rhetoricians were aware that language is a powerful force for moving people to action. Gorgias went so far as to say that language could work on a person's spirit as powerfully as drugs worked on the body. He taught his students that language could bewitch people, could jolt them out of their everyday awareness into a new awareness from which they could see things differently. Hence its persuasive force. As he said, language can "stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity" ("Encomium to Helen" 8). If you doubt this, think about the last time you went to a movie that made you cry, or saw a commercial that induced you to buy something, or heard a sermon that scared you into changing your behavior.

Isocrates argued that language was the ground of community, since it enabled people to live together and to found cultures ("Nicocles" 5–9). Communication was the mutual exchange of convictions, and communities could be defined as groups of human beings who operate with a system of roughly similar convictions. For Isocrates, language was the *hegemoon* (prince, guide) of all thought and action. He pointed out that language makes it possible for people to conceive of differences and to make distinctions like man/woman or good/bad. It also allows them to conceive of abstractions like justice or reality.

The Greek notion of *logos* was later translated into Latin as *ratio* (reason), and in Western thought the powers that were once attributed to language became associated with thinking rather than with talking or writing. Cicero blamed the philosophers for this shift:

> [Socrates] separated the science of wise thinking from that of elegant speaking, though in reality they are closely linked together. . . . This is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain, leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak. (*De Oratore* III xvi 60)

The notion that thought can be separated from language began with the philosopher Socrates, who was the teacher of Plato, who was the teacher of Aristotle.

In one of his treatises on logic, Aristotle wrote that "spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" (*On Interpretation* 16a). This passage made two important assumptions: that mental experiences are independent of language and that the role of language is to symbolize or represent mental experiences. The passage also suggested that written words are representations of spoken words, as though speech is somehow closer to thinking than writing. In the *rhetoric,* Aristotle wrote that style and delivery—the rhetorical canons having to do with expression—were secondary to the substance of an argument (1404a). Even though it was necessary to study style and delivery, because these forms of expression were persuasive, according to Aristotle the first prerequisite of style was clarity, which implied that whatever thoughts were being expressed should be immediately apparent to readers (1404b).

Here Aristotle expressed his subscription to a representative theory of language. The notion that a style can be clear, that language allows meaning to shine through it without distortion, makes sense only if language is thought to represent something else. Naturally enough, philosophers are less interested in the rhetorical effects produced by language than they are in using language to say what they mean, as clearly and exactly as possible. That's why they prefer to argue that language somehow represents thought or reality. However, this argument presents a problem to rhetoricians, since the representative theory of language implies that some piece of language can be found that will clearly express any thought. So if a piece of language is not clear to an audience, anyone who subscribes to this model of language must blame its author, who either had unclear thoughts or was unable to express them clearly. The only other possible explanation for misunderstanding is that the audience has not read the language carefully enough or is for some reason too inept to understand it.

Aristotle's attitude toward clarity also assumed that rhetors can control the effects of language—that they can make language do what they want it to do, can make listeners or readers hear or read in the way they intended. Furthermore, Aristotle's attitude about clarity seriously underestimated the power of language. People who assume that it is "the thought that counts" must also assume that language is the servant of thought and, hence, that language is of secondary or even negligible importance in the composing process. This attitude sometimes causes teachers to blame unintelligible compositions on a student's faulty thinking, when the difficulty might be that the student's language had more and different effects than she intended.

Ancient teachers never assumed that there is only one way to read or interpret a discourse. Audiences inevitably bring their ideologies, their linguistic abilities, and their understandings of local rhetorical contexts to any reading or listening they do. Contexts such as readers' or listeners' experiences and education or even time of day inevitably influence their interpretation of any discourse. This is particularly true of written discourse, which, to ancient ways of thinking, was set adrift by authors into the community, where people could and would read it in as many ways as there were readers (Plato, *Phaedrus* 275). Today, however, people sometimes think that texts can have a single meaning (the right one) and that people who don't read in this way are

somehow bad readers. This attitude is reinforced by the modern assumption that the sole purpose of reading is to glean information from a text, and it is repeated in school when students are expected to take tests or answer a set of questions about their reading in order to prove that they comprehended the assignment.

But people do many things when they read a text for the first time, and determining what it says is only one of these things. When you read any text, especially a difficult one, you simply can't find out what it says once and for all on your first trip through it. You can't consume written words the way you consume a cheeseburger and fries. When written words are banged up against one another, they tend to set off sparks and combinations of meanings that their writers never anticipated. Unfortunately, writers are ordinarily not present to tell readers what they intended to communicate.

Sometimes unintended meanings happen because written letters and punctuation marks are ambiguous. There are only twenty-six letters in the English alphabet, after all, and just a few marks of punctuation in the writing system. So most of these letters and marks must be able to carry several meanings. For example, quotation marks can signify quoted material:

"Get lost," he said.
But they can also be used for emphasis:
We don't "cash" checks.
Or they can be used to set off a term whose use a writer wants to question:
This is not a "liberal" interpretation.

In speaking, the work done by punctuation is conveyed by voice and gesture, but writers do not have the luxury of conveying meaning through their bodies; instead they must rely on stylistic and other indicators to negotiate meaning in their writing.

The meanings of words differ, too, from person to person and from context to context. Indeed, the meanings of words are affected by the contexts in which they appear. In current political discourse, for example, words such as *patriotism*, *freedom*, and *justice* can mean very different things to the people who use them, depending upon whether they subscribe to conservative or liberal ideologies. The slogan "Support our troops" has been used by those in favor of the war in Iraq as well as by those who oppose it. Because people are different from one another, they have different responses to the same discourse.

When we listen to someone speaking, we have several contextual advantages that readers do not have. If we misunderstand a speaker, we can ask her to repeat or to slow down. This is why press conferences or lectures usually feature a question-and-answer session. Our chances of misunderstanding spoken language are also decreased by the fact that we can see and hear the person who is speaking and we can interact with her, as well. Thus we can support our interpretation of the meanings of her words with our interpretations of her facial and bodily gestures and the loudness and pitch of her voice. Too, we are often acquainted with people who speak to us, while often we do not know writers personally. And even if we don't know a speaker well,

we do understand our relationship to her. If a speaker is your mother rather than your teacher or boss or fitness instructor, you can rapidly narrow down the range of possible meanings she might convey when she commands you to "shape up!" All of these kinds of contexts—physical and social—help us to interpret a speaker's meaning.

But these contexts are not available in any writing that is composed for an audience of people who are not known to the writer. So writers have to guess about the contexts that readers will bring to their reading. Usually those contexts will be very different from the writer's, especially in the case of a book like this one that introduces readers to a new field of discourse. Our experience as teachers has taught us that our familiarity with rhetoric and its terminology often causes us to take some of its fundamental points for granted. When we do this in a classroom, students can ask questions until they are satisfied that they understand. But readers cannot do this. So even though we have tried very hard to make the contexts of ancient rhetorics clear in this book, people are bound to understand our text differently from each other and perhaps differently from what we tried to convey. Ancient rhetorics were invented by cultures that have long since disappeared, and that is one potential source of differential understanding in this particular text. But writers always fail to match their contexts with those of readers, and this kind of differential understanding is universal. It arises simply because writers can only imagine readers—who they are, what they know.

To put all of this another way: writers and speakers always fail to put themselves precisely in their readers' and listeners' shoes. This potential for differential understanding is not a curse, as modern rhetorical theory would have it. Rather, it is what allows knowledge to grow and change. The ancients understood this, and that's why they celebrated copiousness—many arguments, many understandings.

Because ancient rhetoricians believed that language was a powerful force for persuasion, they urged their students to develop **copia** in all parts of their art. *Copia* can be loosely translated from Latin to mean an abundant and ready supply of language—something appropriate to say or write whenever the occasion arises. Ancient teaching about rhetoric is everywhere infused with the notions of expansiveness, amplification, abundance. Ancient teachers gave their students more advice about the divisions, or **canons,** of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery—than they could ever use. They did so because they knew that practice in these rhetorical arts alerted rhetors to the multitude of communicative and persuasive possibilities that exist in language.

Modern intellectual style, in contrast, tends toward economy (from Greek *oikonomia,* "a manager of a household or state," from *oikos,* "house"). Economy in any endeavor is characterized by restrained or efficient use of available materials and techniques. Of course the modern preference for economy in composition is connected to modern insistence that clarity is the only important characteristic of style. People who bring modern attitudes about clarity and economy to the study of ancient rhetorics may be bewildered (and sometimes frustrated) by the profuseness of ancient advice about everything from invention to delivery.

They also miss an important aspect of ancient instruction: that messing around with language is fun. Composition need not be undertaken with the deadly seriousness that moderns bring to it. Moderns want to get it right the first time and forget about it. Ancient peoples fooled around with language all the time. The Greeks

sponsored poetry contests and gave prizes for the most daring or entertaining elabo-rations on a well-known theme. Romans who lived during the first centuries CE held rhetorical contests called declamations, the object of which was to compose a com-plicated and innovative discourse about some hackneyed situation involving pirates or angry fathers. The winner was the person who could compose the most unusual arguments or who could devise the most elaborate amplifications and ornamenta-tions of an old theme.

Practice, Practice, Practice

To return to the positive side of Jon Stewart's analogy equating competitive athletics with real debate—or, in this book's terms, with rhetorical engagement—it is interest-ing to note that many teachers of rhetoric in ancient Athens and Rome found it useful to think of rhetorical training and performance as roughly analogous to athletic competition. As one of us argues in another book, the ancients deemed the struggle of competition (*agonism*) to be productive and beneficial, and in the con-text of rhetoric, they believed hard work paid off. Many ancients devoted themselves to devising conceptual tools and training methods that would help their fellow citizens become strong rhetors, active citizens equipped to think about issues of the day. All the rhetors and rhetoricians mentioned in this book believe that rhetoric is a complex and flexible art that can nevertheless be learned and taught. And while there was much disagreement among the ancients about the best way to learn rhetoric, most of them agreed on three points: practice, practice, and practice. Contemporary rhetorical theorist David Fleming points out that in ancient rhe-torical education, practice had three main components: exercise, imitation, and composition (2003, 107).

Too often modern classrooms treat such activities and exercises as "busy work," something to fill time between "real" assignments. We believe this is because of a heavy emphasis in twentieth-century classrooms on writing-as-product. In case it isn't clear by now, the ancients placed less emphasis on the product—the speech or the piece of writing—and more emphasis on constant activity and practice. The best comparison for the ancient model of rhetorical education is the immersion technique of foreign language learning, wherein students speak only the language being learned. Likewise, these activities and exercises encourage students to see rhetoric all around them, to engage rhetoric analytically, and to practice improving their use of rhetoric when they speak and write.

Aelius Theon, one of the early developers of *progymnasmata*, had strong faith in their effectiveness:

> It is quite evident that these exercises are altogether beneficial to those who take up the art of rhetoric. For those who have recited a narration and a fable well and with versa-tility will also compose a history well . . . Training through the chreia not only produces a certain power of discourse but also a good and useful character since we are being trained in the aphorisms of wise persons. Both the so called commonplace and descrip-tion have benefit that is conspicuous since the ancients have used them everywhere. . . . (*Progymnasmata* Preface 1)

Ancient rhetoric teachers believed their students would become the best rhetors if they combined study of rhetorical principles with lots of practice composing. This book is designed to strike that balance as well. It makes sense that ancient rhetorical training spanned years—sometimes a decade or more.

The *progymnasmata* brought to the students' attention patterns in language. The regular and varied practice at composing often has the surprising effect of making people enjoy writing and speaking just by making them more familiar as activities. *Progymnasmata*, as the classicist Ruth Webb argues, did not key to the "end result" but rather sought to cultivate rhetorical sensibility through constant—and constantly changing—rhetorical activity (2001, 300).

Even more than *progymnasmata*, though, the imitation exercises might feel strange to contemporary students. When asked to imitate a passage written by an author you admire, you might feel as if you are violating some sort of rule about copying. Beliefs about rhetorical style have, in many ways, gone the direction of opinions and argument: style has become an "individual," ineffable thing. We disagree. And so would the ancients. We would never encourage students to violate copyright laws or university plagiarism policies, but we also believe that imitation has nothing to do with stealing. Imitation exercises, if practiced in the way that the ancients practiced them, can lead you to a more finely tuned rhetorical method of reading and listening. That is, when reading and listening rhetorically, we read and listen as much for *how* a writer or speaker builds an argument with words, sentences, paragraphs, and sections, as for *what* the writer or speaker is arguing. And what is more, while plagiarizing (copying work from someone else) is easy (that's why people do it), imitation exercises can be extremely difficult. This is because imitation exercises ask you to try new approaches and to innovate within those approaches. Imitation exercises can be as challenging as they are fun.

Professional rhetors know that much more work is produced during invention than is actually presented to audiences. That is, not everything that is composed actually ends up in a finished piece. Some ancient exercises are for practice, while others draw attention to style. Still others increase understanding of rhetorical principles. Practice is not wasted effort because everything a rhetor composes increases copiousness—a handy supply of arguments, available for use on any occasion.

RHETORICAL ACTIVITIES

1. Look around you and listen. Where do you find people practicing rhetoric? Watch television and read popular newspapers or magazines with this question in mind. Jot down one or two of the rhetorical arguments you hear or see people making. Presidents and members of Congress are good sources, but so are journalists and parents and attorneys and clergy and teachers. Do such people try to support these arguments with facts? Or do they use other means of convincing people to accept their arguments?

2. Consider Jon Stewart's point about the state of argument in America today. Have you encountered any examples recently of argument-that's-not-really-argument? How can you tell the theatrical sort of argument from the rhetorically engaged?

3. Think about a time when you tried to convince someone to change his or her mind. How did you go about it? Were you successful? Now think about a time when some-

one tried to get you to change your mind. What arguments did the person use? Was he or she successful?

4. Try to answer this question: what counts as persuasion in your community? Here are some questions to start from: Think of a time when you changed your mind about something. How did it happen? Did somebody talk you into it, or did events cause you to change the way you think? How do the people you know go about changing their minds? How does religious conversion happen, for example? What convinces people to stop smoking or to go on a diet? How do people get to be racists or become convinced they ought to stop being racist? How does a president convince a people that they ought to support a war? Make a list of arguments that seem convincing in these cases.

5. The Roman teacher Quintilian underscored the importance of rhetorical situations to composing when he suggested that students should consider

> what there is to say; before whom, in whose defence, against whom, at what time and place, under what circumstances; what is the popular opinion on the subject; and what the prepossessions of the judge are likely to be; and finally of what we should express our deprecation or desire. (IV 1 52–53)

If you are at a loss for something to say or write, you can use Quintilian's list as a heuristic, or means of discovery. Begin by thinking about the communities of which you are a part: your families, relatives, and friends; your street, barrio, town, city, or reservation; your school, college, or university; groups you belong to; your state, country, or nation and the world itself. What positions do you take on issues that are currently contested in your communities? This exercise should help you to articulate what you think about such issues.

a. Start with this question: what are the hotly contested issues in the communities you live in (the street, the barrio, your hometown, the university you work in, the reservation, the state, the nation)? Make a list of these issues. (If you don't know what these issues are, ask someone—a parent, teacher, friend—or read the editorial and front pages of a daily newspaper or watch the local and national news on television or access news sources on the Internet.)

b. Pick one or two issues and write out your positions on them. Write as fast as you can without stopping or worrying about grammar and spelling. Use a computer if you have access to one and are a fast typist, or write by hand if that is more comfortable for you. At this point you are composing for your use only. So don't worry about neatness or completeness or correctness; write to discover what you think about these issues. Write for as long as you want to, but write about each issue for at least 15 minutes without stopping. Remember that thinking is exercise, just like running or bicycling, so don't be surprised if you tire after a few minutes of doing this work.

c. These writings should give you a clearer view of what you think about one or two urgent issues. Let them sit for awhile—an hour is good but a couple of days is better. Then read them again. Now use Quintilian's questions to find out your positions on community issues. What is the popular opinion on each issue? What is the position taken by people in authority? What is your position on the issue? Are there policies or practices you advocate or reject? With which members of your communities do you agree? Disagree? On what issues? What positions are taken by people who disagree with you? How will the community respond to your propositions?

    d. Now you should have an idea about which issue interests you most. Be sure to select an issue that you can comfortably discuss with other people. Write about it again for awhile—say 15 minutes.

    e. Give what you've written to someone you trust; ask him or her to tell you what else he or she wants to know about what you think. Listen carefully and take notes on the reader's suggestions. Don't talk or ask questions until the reader finishes talking. Then discuss your views on the issue further, if your reader is willing to do so. If your reader said anything that modifies your views, revise your writing to take these changes into account.

    f. Keep these compositions as well as your original list of issues. You can repeat this exercise whenever you wish to write about an issue or when you are asked to write for a class.

6. Begin recording in a journal or notebook the arguments that you commonly hear or read.