

Whatever concerns one might have about the future audience for poetry (when poets' systems of reference can seem increasingly hermetic), and even about the future of poetry itself (in an age in which great publishers are canceling their poetry lists), rhetoric will continue to provide poets and their successors with the means of reflecting about their medium, their audience, and their purposes. Poetry, for its part, completes and transcends the process of inquiry into the nature and effects of language inaugurated by rhetoric.

[See also Criticism; Law; Renaissance rhetoric, *article on Rederijkers*; and Style.]

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#### **POLITICS.** [This entry comprises seven articles.]

- An overview
- Constitutive rhetoric
- Critical rhetoric
- Rhetoric and legitimation
- Rhetoric and power
- The third face of power
- The personal, technical, and public spheres of argument

*The first article provides an overview on rhetoric and the public sphere, the distinguishing mark of which is the separability of domains of citizenship from the traditional taken-for-granted realm of acculturation assumed in traditional rhetoric. The second article discusses constitutive rhetoric in terms of identity formation and collectivization, and in terms of the rhetorical theories of Burke, Charland, Althusser, Derrida, and White. Critical rhetoric, explored in the third article, acknowledges the role of reason, discusses the two forms of critical analysis that comprise the practice of critical rhetoric, and surveys eight principles of critical practice. The discussion on rhetoric and legitimation, the fourth article, confronts these two contested ideas, covers Weber's three "ideal types" of political legitimacy, and briefly presents theories of modern thinkers Rawls, Habermas, and Lyotard. The fifth article, on rhetoric and power, considers issues related to the impact of expanded power on civic discourse. The sixth article discusses the use of third-face-of-power strategies in the twentieth century. The last article discusses the three broad spheres of argument that are recognized in a pluralistic society.]*

#### **An overview**

The Western tradition has joined politics with rhetoric since its earliest recorded times. The fate of the Achaeans and Trojans in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer is influenced as much by deliberation among the gods and the guile of Odysseus

as by their armed conflict. Hebrew scriptures record exchanges between Yahweh and the Israelites, as well as between mere mortals, who deliberate the ways of God and humanity. The ancient Athenian political accomplishment of a participatory democracy, in theory and practice, rested on the bond between politics and rhetoric. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) formalized this bond in *On Rhetoric*, when he placed rhetoric under the ethical branch of politics.

The ancient union of politics with rhetoric is distinctive for its emphasis on the former as a practical art. Whereas the modern science of politics often focuses on the structural, economic, and legal features of institutional relations associated with power, the rhetorical concern of politics historically has been with the ongoing negotiation over how we shall act and interact. Although that negotiation always involves questions of power, it is also concerned with enabling practical judgment.

Western democracies situate judgment with citizens. A democracy's citizens, in principle, possess ultimate political power through participation in deliberative processes and by exercising their right to vote. Yet democratic politics has never had an easy acceptance of its inherently rhetorical character. Democracies have always been beset by a fundamental tension between the participatory rights of all citizens, regardless of their education, station, or means, and fear among an educated, wealthy, and well-positioned elite that the majority are too ignorant and too easily swayed by the emotional appeals of demagogues to make sound decisions. This tension is expressed well by the ancient adage: the people reign, the elite rule.

Tension between the people and the elite in ancient Athens was managed best by a strong leader, such as Solon early on (c.594 BCE) or Pericles (c.440 BCE), who understood that competing interests could produce powerful and destabilizing factions capable of imposing their will on the minority. Such leaders were as aware in their political context as James Madison (1751–1836) was in his of the need for compromise to maintain order and preserve political freedom for all citizens. The difference between Pericles' Athens and Madison's America, on the other hand, is significant for understanding the evolving role of rhe-

torically constituted politics within the context of democracy's own changing character.

Ancient Athens practiced a politics based on the ideal of civic virtue, which was manifested as a public performance of noble words and deeds. Civic virtue constructed individual identity through citizenship, and Athenian culture emphasized a citizen's public persona as the ground for that individual's meaning. This understanding was italicized by the inscription on Athens's ancient city wall: "The man with no public business has no business," and by the Greek word for the person who was mute on public affairs: *idiot*.

As a model of social organization, civic virtue invaded the private realm; as a political norm, it organized a person's meaning, leaving no buffer between political and social life (Taylor, 1995). It was a model of accomplishment assembled by the state. An individual's virtue was not a personal trait but a public quality that had to conform to the ideals and standards inscribed in the laws and customs of the *dēmos*, or the people as a whole (De Colanges, 1956). The politics of civic virtue emphasized public good by subjugating the private self to the public realm. Excellence (*aretē*) was a quality of publicness that reflected the *dēmos*'s understanding of moral virtue as a public rather than a private attribute. The citizen realized civic virtue by active and continual participation in public political affairs. Civic virtue projected a moral vision of personal choice and action regulated by the sovereign authority of the political community, not by the sovereign or the individual actor. This vision was performed through conformity of the actor's particular will to the community's will. The community's political authority referred not to the obvious fact that it was the source of morality but that the community existed as morality (Seligman, 1995, pp. 202–204). [See Oratory.]

The Western tradition of politics continues to embrace as part of its heritage the model of civic life portrayed by civic virtue. However, the change from a participatory to a representative democracy has brought significant changes in the way rhetoric constructs politics. In liberal democratic societies, citizens no longer have a direct voice in the decision-making process and the individual no longer acquires identity through public performances under the sovereign authority of the

political community. The power of civic virtue that made the *vita activa* the organizing paradigm of existence began to erode as Rome's centralized power went into decline and the alternative institution of the Christian church began its rise. The church was independent of the state; its dogma taught followers to organize their individual lives around a set of moral principles and ideals rather than political ones. Its paradigm was the *vita contemplativa* (Arendt, 1958), in which a person sought detachment from earthly possessions and power to establish an inner communion with God. Christians were members of two societies, one temporal, the other spiritual, neither subjugated to the other, each constituted by its own rhetorical character.

Equally, with the rise of the monarchy during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, political power gravitated to court only to encounter new challenges. The powers of feudal lords, who had firmly established property rights, constrained monarchs in their efforts at nation building, as did the church. When monarchs attempted to counter this preexisting social force by granting autonomy to towns, they found the burghers who led them to be both feisty in their independence and too wealthy to be ignored. For some time, monarchs had found it necessary, periodically, to convene the body of estates—assemblies of the clergy, nobility, and burghers who were considered to represent the great collective interests of the nation—to raise resources for governing and waging war. Soon monarchs found themselves vulnerable to the uncertainties of the estates themselves (Hall, 1995).

The rise of the Christian church and of the body of estates eroded the rhetorical understanding of politics forged in the Athenian democracy and projected in its model of civic virtue. Both the church and the estates provided a sense of social identity apart from citizenship. They provided a mode of social organization in which their members could engage in discourse unregulated by the state. This changed locus of identity was formally developed in the political writings of Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke (1632–1704 CE), Montesquieu (1689–1755), and Rousseau (1712–1778). They maintained that humankind formed a community of sorts constituted under natural law and in existence prior to soci-

ety, which was itself prior to the government. Their formulations replaced the link between society and its political organization with the idea of civil society as a third arena, independent of the church and the state. Civil society was multidimensional, with a political dimension that consisted of the network of associations whose members sought to regulate themselves through discursive exchanges that balanced conflict and consensus in ways consistent with a valuation of difference. Enlightenment thinkers associated this arena with the rise of an autonomous public integrated with the state through expressions of its own opinion.

The Enlightenment concept of *publicness* represented a new understanding of politics that went beyond what was objectively present and open to everyone's inspection. It designated a concern that involved the common interest of all citizens. These common concerns, moreover, were explored in new, discursive spaces—newspapers, personal exchanges in coffee houses and salons, political clubs—that extended beyond the court and assembly. With the exception of salons, which frequently were organized by women of high standing, these were gendered spaces open to all males, or at least to those who were literate. These were arenas of open deliberation in which current issues were discussed and, ideally, resolved to the extent that a tendency of shared opinion emerged. This discourse gave rise to a new idea of public opinion as a prevailing opinion dispersed among those who were actively engaged by an issue. It introduced the radical idea that such opinion formed outside the channels and public spaces of the official political structure. Public opinion was purported to be society's opinion; its channels and spaces were those of civil society.

Public opinion expressed society's identity apart from the state and represented a shift in how society engaged in politics. The network of associations that comprised civil society and in which public opinion formed called for a mode of rhetoric different from that practiced in Greek and Roman antiquity. The discursive spaces of government were no longer the only domain in which social will could be articulated and executed. New spaces, populated by difference and relations of mutual dependency, were organized

as a lattice of self-regulating rhetorical domains that advanced social coordination. Collectively they forged a public sphere in which a public could form its own opinion, could challenge the state's primacy in setting social purpose, and might expect its shared understanding to bear weight on what the state did.

A second change accompanied the transition from civic virtue to civil society. Classical rhetoric was wedded to politics as a productive art. Its concern was to prepare students to practice political persuasion. With the advent of the scientific revolution, European thought dismissed rhetoric as dangerous, since it invoked a logic of probabilities and engaged emotions in forming decisions (Howell, 1996). Science gained methodological authority because it claimed to be rigorous, objective, systematic, and consistent, and to follow prescribed protocols in gathering data and drawing inferences. It provided a windowpane on reality. In response, thinkers like Giambattista Vico, in the eighteenth century, and Friedrich Nietzsche, in the nineteenth, challenged the authority of scientific reasoning by positing that the human world was composed differently from the realities of nature. The human world of politics, they thought, could not be extricated from rhetoric because politics was constructed through language. This counterargument shifted the fundamental question of rhetoric from a dominant concern with producing persuasive appeals to one of how rhetorical practices were embedded in all language use and, therefore, were constitutive of the human world. This shift has broadened and deepened our understanding of politics as a rhetorical construction (e.g., see Cloud, 1998; Darsey, 1997; Wells, 1996).

Since the end of World War II, the prevailing political problem confronting complex societies and the international community has been to establish effective political meaning among political actors who lack ideological common ground. Sometimes these differences are so profound that the active participants cannot even meaningfully describe shared difficulties to partners with whom they are at odds. The union of rhetoric with politics lies at the center of this problem. The civil society frame highlights society's continuous engagement in negotiation over how we shall act and interact as it occurs in preinstitutional as well

as institutional forums. These may be vernacular or formal exchanges and transpire in civic groups and organizations or the counterpublic spheres of social movements, campaigns, protests, and identity enclaves equally as in the official public spheres of political parties and the state.

These differences accentuate the conflict-riven relations of competing interests. But the search by political actors in multiple arenas for shared interests and common judgments on them ultimately stresses codependency and the need for collaboration. The civil society frame models politics as the ability to establish rhetorically salient meaning in multiple public spheres and construes political power as a function of successful "border crossings" (Hauser, 1999). This frame's linguistic turn challenges the dominant realist paradigm of political relations as an exclusively strategic calculus intended to secure advantage (Hariman, 1995). A rhetorically-based theory of this sort—a postrealist theory—grounds politics in what Vico called *ingenium*, an invention of language that takes form in a given case (Grassi, 1980). But this is a volatile politics destabilized by postrealism's own metatheory of rhetorical deconstruction and reconstruction.

The civil society's heavy reliance on the transformational possibilities of rhetorical invention reverses the architectonic relationship Aristotle asserted between politics and rhetoric. It emphasizes rhetoric's productive powers as the architectonic or master art for a political practice that brings divergent perspectives into a collaborative union of common action (Mailloux, 1989; McKeon, 1971). It explains postrealism's transcendent tendency toward fusing the theory of conduct with the debate by which a course of conduct is invented (Beer and Hariman, 1995). It also reminds us that whether the political public sphere is colonized by the state and power elites, as Jürgen Habermas (1962) depicts in his rendition of late capitalism, or remains open to the possibility of its own self-regulation, it is itself subject to the rhetorical possibilities and performances it can sustain (Farrell, 1993; Hauser, 1999).

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### Constitutive rhetoric

Constructing and providing its addressed audience with an identity, constitutive rhetoric is fundamental to collectivization and to the emergence of nations. It can be understood both as a

genre of discourse and as a theory for understanding rhetorical processes. As a genre, constitutive rhetoric simultaneously presumes and asserts a fundamental collective identity for its audience, offers a narrative that demonstrates that identity, and issues a call to act to affirm that identity. This genre warrants action in the name of that common identity and the principles for which it stands. Constitutive rhetoric is appropriate to foundings, what Hannah Arendt called "founding moments," but also to social movements and nationalist political campaigns. It arises as a means to collectivization, usually in the face of a threat that is itself presented as alien or other.

As a theory, constitutive rhetoric accounts for the process of identity formation that this genre depends upon, where audiences are called upon to materialize through their actions an identity ascribed to them. Political oratory and rhetorical theory usually take the identity of the audience to be given, and as a consequence, rhetoric is usually understood to produce persuasion. The persuasion model dominates rhetorical theory and is fundamental to Aristotle's (384–322 BCE) writing on the subject. He considered rhetorical practice to be the art of crafting speech to persuade an audience that is called upon to render a judgment regarding a contingent question. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is a guide to invention that stresses the need to offer proofs that exploit the typical presumptions, values, character, and affective dispositions of a given audience. In doing so, Aristotle does not consider the role of rhetoric in producing the very identity and character of an audience.

The constitutive model, in contrast, can be traced to the Sophists, who had an appreciation of paradox and recognized the constitutive power of utterances. [See Sophists.] Their view emphasized the contingent and conventional nature of knowledge and thus recognized discourse as productive of the very categories by which the world, and indeed the self, are understood. This view of rhetoric is well exemplified in the oratory of Gorgias (c.483–c.376 BCE), a Sophist and contemporary of Socrates. The power of Gorgias's oratory is said to have been based in its capacity to enthrall an audience, not addressing their reasoning faculty, but poetically transforming their very experience of being. Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) is heir to this line of thought when he argues that