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Lisa Storm Villadsen:

Introduktion: Burke og retorikken set gennem Ivies øjne

Rhetorica Scandinavica bringer denne gang en artikel af Robert L. Ivie som bygger på en forelæsning Ivie holdt på Københavns Universitet i november 2015. I artiklen præsenterer Ivie sit syn på Kenneth Burke og hans værkers betydning for retorikken, og her ser vi nærmere på Ivie og den indflydelse som Burkes værker har haft på hans forskning.

Kenneth Burke er, med Chaïm Perelman og Lucie Olbrecths-Tyteca, blandt de mest markante skikkelser i moderne retorisk teori og kritik, og hans tanker og begreber har fortsat relevans og forklaringskraft i en verden der ser meget anderledes ud end hans samtid før og efter 2. Verdenskrig. Uanset om man interesserer sig for de kommunikative dynamikker i sociale og andre medier, for populistisk retorik eller for retoriske virkemidler i æstetiske genrer, har Burke stadig meget at byde på. Men hans forfatterskab er notorisk vanskeligt tilgængeligt. For nogle kan det virke meget indforstået med sine mange referencer til den engelsksprogede litterære og dramatiske tradition, for andre kan det være frustrerende at der sjældent optræder én samlet diskussion af et begreb, men at man må spore det på kryds og tværs af forfatterskabet. Derfor bringer *Rhetorica Scandinavica* her en introduktion til Kenneth Burkes forfatterskab skrevet af en kender, nemlig Robert Ivie.

Robert Ivie er professor emeritus ved Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. I USA indtager han en fremtrædende position i retorikmiljøet og blev i 2013 tildelt prisen "Distinguished Scholar Award" fra den store amerikanske kommunikationsforening, National Communication Association. Han har været redaktør på tre forskningstidsskrifter (*Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, Quarterly*

Journal of Speech og *Western Journal of Speech Communication*) og sidder i redaktionsrådet på ikke mindre end otte tidsskrifter, herunder *Presidential Studies Quarterly* og *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*.

Udover sit virke i amerikansk retorik har Ivie en særlig tilknytning til det skandinaviske retorikmiljø, idet han er tidligere adjungeret professor ved Afdeling for Retorik på Københavns Universitet (2010-2015). I den egenskab deltog han også i *Rhetoric in Society 4*-konferencen på Københavns Universitet i 2013 hvor mange skandinaviske retorikforskere samledes. Ivie optrådte da blandt andet med opsummerende og perspektiverende kommentarer ved konferencens afslutning.

Burke i Ivies forskning

Ivies indgående kendskab til Burke bygger på mere end fire årtiers forskning. Allerede i en artikel fra 1974 trak han på Burkes pentade i kortlægningen af hvordan amerikanske præsidenter har motiveret krigsførelse gennem tiden (”Presidential Motives for War,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (1974): 337-345). Her var Burkes dramatisme med dens drama-metafor for menneskelig adfærd i centrum. I teoriens analytiske model, pentaden, betragtes enhver kommunikativ handling som bekendt som bestående af fem dele: ”Act, scene, agent, agency” og ”purpose” som hver især kan være bærer af retors motivation. Disse analyseres frem gennem ”ratio-”er, dvs. næranalyser af dynamikken mellem to dele af pentaden for at undersøge hvordan denne bruges til at drive tekstens argumentation og verdensbillede (Burke ville kalde det ”ideologi”) frem. Siden har Ivie brugt Burkes teoretiske bidrag om hvordan sproglig form/stil ikke bare former læserens forventninger, men også kan danne en grundstruktur for tekstens argumentationsform. Det skete blandt andet i artiklen ”Progressive form and Mexican Culpability in Polk’s Justification for War,” *Central States Speech Journal* 43 (1979): 311-320. Som Ivie beskriver nærmere i artiklen i dette nummer af *Rhetorica Scandinavica* er Burkes tanker om en soningscyklus grundlæggende for hans syn på menneskelige motiver. Den begynder med menneskets trang til at rangordne og selv søge mod toppen af hierarkiet. Når denne stræben viser sig ikke at lykkes, ’løser’ mennesket det psykologisk ved at skyde skylden for fiaskoen over på nogen andre. Det er syndebuk-princippet: Ondskaben projiceres over på en syndebuk som dermed ofres (”victimage”) af hensyn til opretholdelsen af den ønskede orden. Denne proces var fx det teoretiske udgangspunkt i Ivies artikel ”Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War,” *Communication Monographs* 47 (1980): 453-477. I det hele taget har Burkes tanker om mennesket, dets selvforståelse (symbolbruger, opfinder af det negative, drevet af et hierarkisk princip og ”rotten with perfection”), og dets brug af kommunikation været en central inspirationskilde for Ivie igennem hele hans virke som retorikforsker, og det gør ham i sjælden grad i stand til at præsentere Burkes oeuvre med overblik og pædagogisk forenkling som netop var det han var blevet opfordret til i sin forelæsning i København.

Ivie understreger at hans præsentation af Burke ikke er en universalistisk fremstil-

ling, men en der afspejler hans egne forskningsinteresser, især hvad angår den retoriske kritikers rolle i forhold til den omgivende politiske kultur som den er præget af spørgsmål om krig, demokrati og dissens. Ivie skriver selv om sin livslange fascination af Kenneth Burkes arbejder i et forord til sin artikel "The Metaphor of Force in Prowar Discourse: The Case of 1812" da den blev genoptrykt i samlingen *Critical Questions. Invention, Creativity, and the Criticism of Discourse and Media* redigeret af William Nothstine, Carole Blair og Gary A. Copeland (St. Martin's Press, 1994). Her får man også et nærmere indblik i de personlige omstændigheder der førte Ivie til studiet af krigsretorik, hvorfor Burkes syn på retorikken appellerede til ham, og hvordan Burkes tanker om metaforen som "master trope" hjalp analysen frem. Tanken om at der er fire særligt vigtige troper – metafor, metonymi, synekdoke og ironi, er ikke oprindeligt Burkes, men i sit essay om disse fire 'mestertroper' viser han hvordan de ikke blot er udtryk for stilistiske valg, men også hver især har et særligt epistemisk potentiale for hvordan sproget tillader os at vide hvad. For metaforens vedkommende er dens funktion at give perspektiv; man ser en ting gennem en anden. I den pågældende artikel viser Ivie hvordan magt-metaforen brugtes af krigstilhængere til systematisk at lægge et perspektiv på England som brutalt og drevet af voldelige impulser, og hvordan krigstilhængernes argumentation dermed blev så meget desto mere tungtvejende i debatten om at gå i krig mod England. Ivie konkluderer, i tråd med Burkes syn på det figurative sprogs funktion, om krigstilhængernes bogstaveliggørelse af magtmetaforen at den "represents something far more substantial than a happy extra trick with words. It is the defining of reality itself" (277).

I forordet til genoptrykket af denne artikel fortæller Ivie også om sin personlige motivation for studiet af krigsretorik. Kort tid efter at han var begyndt på sine videregående studier i slutningen af 60erne, blev han indkaldt til militærtjeneste i forbindelse med Vietnamkrigen. Han beskriver denne tid som dybt foruroligende fordi den indebar et moralsk dilemma for ham: på den ene side at gøre sin pligt over for sit fædreland og på den anden side at bidrage til en krig som han betragtede som forkert. En yderligere frustration var det at han var forhindret i at protestere mod krigen så længe han var i aktiv tjeneste. Han beskriver sin tilbagevenden til sine universitetsstudier som drevet af ønsket om at undersøge hvordan vi mennesker så at sige taler os selv i krig. Her viste Kenneth Burkes dybe undersøgelse af retoriske motiver sig hurtigt at være en oplagt vej ind i forskningsprojektet. På dette tidlige stadium, fortæller han, var det især Burkes ideer om hierarki og offergørelse ("victimage"), den dramatistiske pentade og ratioerne samt identifikationsstrategier der udgjorde hjørnestenene i hans retoriske analyser (260), alle begreber som Ivie giver en indføring i i sit omskrevne foredrag fra København.

Fælles forpligtelse på samfundskritik

Ivies fascination af Kenneth Burke knytter sig ikke bare til hans rige teoretiske og begrebsmæssige bidrag, men også til den klare samfundsmæssige og handlingsorienterede impuls i hans arbejder. Begge ser de retorisk kritik som en form for

samfundskritisk kommentar der peger på muligheder for forbedring. Udover at titlen på Ivies artikel er et ordspil på Burkes forfatterskab hvor ordet "attitude" indgår i en af hans bogtitler (og desuden var det sjette element som han aldrig fik indarbejdet i pentaden), signalerer denne 'holdning' til retorikkens relevans også det ideslægtskab som Ivie deler med Burke: Retorikken er en konstruktiv vej til samfundskritik der kan omsættes til (symbolsk) handling i form af ændret sprogbrug og argumentation.

I en leder i online-tidsskriftet *American Communication Journal* (4, Spring 2001; http://www.acjournal.org/) skrev Ivie en artikel der med rubrikken "Productive Criticism Then and Now" alluderede til en leder han skrev i sin tid som redaktør af *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (1993-1995) om hvor værdifulde han anså Burkes tanker for at være for retorisk kritik. Ivie ser helst retorikken som en disciplin der forener *rhetorica docens* og *rhetorica utens* med et fokus på samfundsanliggender og en orientering mod social kritik. Han forklarer at hans syn på retorisk forskning som en form for social kritik primært er inspireret af Kenneth Burkes dramatistiske teori om symbolsk handling og retorik som leve-udstyr ("equipment for living"). Ivie opfatter selv sin samfundskritiske brug af Burke som afvigende fra andre tilgange, bl.a. Gusfields mere sociologiske brug af Burkes symbolteori og Rueckerts normativt orienterede tilgang til Burkes tanker om det komiske korrektiv. Som afsæt for sin egen mere samfundsorienterede motivation skriver han til andre retoriske kritikere der også har beskæftiget sig med Burkes forfatterskab: "We think of Burke's theory as a way of accounting for rhetorical practice rather than as a way of addressing social problems and improving human relations". Men Burke giver mulighed for et mere direkte engagement. Uden at ville reducere retorisk kritik til politisk handling eller skille akademisk kritik fra politik forestiller Ivie sig et spektrum af genrer der er indbyrdes forbundne i en større demokratisk kultur, og at akademikeres undervisnings-, forsknings- og formidlingsindsatser kan berige demokratiske holdninger betydeligt, også selvom det foregår indirekte. Ivie illustrerer sin pointe ved at fremhæve Burkes essay, skrevet i 1939, om Hitlers *Mein Kampf* der havde det klare formål at opfordre til at undersøge hvordan det kunne lykkes for Hitler at samle folk på så uhyggelig vis. Burke ønskede altså med sin analyse at forberede folk på hvad de skal tage sig i agt for hvis de vil forhindre at en lignende "medicin" [Burkes ord om Hitlers retorik] skal kunne bruges i USA.

Ivie sporer Burkes socialt handlingsorienterede forskning igennem en række af hans værker. Han påpeger fx at Burkes bog *Atittudes Toward History* (1937) handler om menneskers sameksistens i politiske fællesskaber, og om hvordan henholdsvis accepterende og afvisende forståelsesrammer ["frames of acceptance and rejection"] og komedie/tragedie-terminologien kan bruges til at forklare hvordan menneskelig forståelse kan fremmes eller gå i hårknude. Pointen er at Burkes tilgang ikke var neutralt observerende, men drevet af ønsket om handling (og dermed normativt) som illustreret i bl.a. dette citat fra Burke: "We must name the friendly or unfriendly functions and relationships in such a way that we are able to do something about them […] since the names embody attitudes; and implicit in the atti-

tudes there are the cues of behavior" (*Attitudes*, p. 4). Ivie ser i det hele taget Burkes kritiske arbejde som møntet på at udvide og nuancere sprogbrug for derved at fremme gensidig forståelse og tolerance. I sin egen vision for "produktiv kritik" peger han på retorisk kritik, snarere end direkte politisk handling, som den bedste måde at pege på problemer i demokratiske kulturer og gennem sproglig nuancering at udvide folks, og især politikeres, forståelse for hvordan de bedre kan udvikle strategier der kan bygge bro over meningsforskelle.

Burke som teoretisk og analytisk inspiration i studiet af krigsretorik

Denne forpligtelse på at lade retoriske indsigter komme i spil forhold til aktuelle politiske forhold har kendetegnet Ivies egen forskningskarriere, og særligt markant med hensyn til krigsretorik. Ivies interesse i krigsretorik har varet ved og har udmøntet sig i seks bøger og mere end 30 forskningsartikler om emnet som alle har en burkeansk klangbund. Siden sin pensionering har han senest udgivet bogen *Hunt the Devil: A Demonology of U.S. War Culture* (2015) på baggrund af bloggen "Hunt the Devil. Mythic Interventions in US War Culture" (https://huntthedevil.wordpress.com) som han driver sammen med Oscar Giner, professor i teatervidenskab ved Arizona State University.

Eftersom Ivie har været optaget af hvordan demokratiske lande overbeviser sig selv om at gå i krig, er det naturligt at det deliberative aspekt også har optaget ham. Her er det især spørgsmål om hvordan demokratier håndterer dissens der senest har haft hans store interesse. Navnlig er han inspireret af visse teoretikere inden for 'deliberative democracy'-traditionen, ikke mindst Chantal Mouffe og hendes diskussion af nødvendigheden af at opelske en agonistisk tilgang til demokratiet hvor uenighed og diskussion (*agon*) betragtes som sundhedstegn (og altså ikke systemfejl), fordi de kan modvirke tendensen til en antagonistisk offentlig debat hvor deltagerne betragter modparten som en modstander der skal bekæmpes (se fx Ivies artikel "Rhetorical Deliberation and Democratic Politics in the Here and Now," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 277-285).

I artiklen "Democratic Dissent and the Trick of Rhetorical Critique" kombinerer Ivie bl.a. Mouffes og Burkes teoretiske rammer med henblik på at skabe en heuristisk ramme for studiet af dissens (*Critical Methodologies* 5 (2005): 276-293). Jeg fremhæver denne artikel fordi den illustrerer hvordan Burkes værker både præger Ivies teoretiske og praktisk analytiske tilgang til retorisk kritik. Således trækker han bl.a. på Burkes tanker om "consubstantial rivalry" i beskrivelsen af dissens som udtryk for et konkurrerende syn på hvordan fælles problemer skal løses, altså et syn på dissens som en form for loyalt modspil snarere end fjendtligt angreb. Ivie er også inspireret af Burkes tanker om identifikation og "consubstantiality" i udviklingen af sit syn på dissens som en balanceakt mellem adskillelse og identifikation. Han argumenterer for at Burkes begreb "consubstantial rivalry" kan ses som paradigme på politisk dissens og aktivt medborgerskab. Det er fordi det betoner at demokratisk praksis foregår under forhold præget af adskillelse (borgere er ikke bare forskellige og har forskellige ønsker til samfundets indretning, men har også ringe kendskab til

hinanden på tværs af fx geografiske eller sociale barrierer). Samtidig må målet med kommunikationen på tværs af disse identitets- og meningsforskelle være på én gang at respektere at parterne er forskellige og søge felter hvor deres indbyrdes forbundethed og delte erfaringer kan danne grobund for fælles løsninger (280). På det mere konkret analyserende plan er det Burkes begreb om "master tropes" og især metaforen der spiller en stor rolle for kritikeren, fordi den figurative tilgang til praktisk sprogbrug udmærker sig ved at pege på netop det figurative; ordvalget er et *valg* som indebærer et *perspektiv* der bæres frem af den sproglige formgivning og som derfor også åbner muligheder for den politiske debattør til at imødegå det dominerende synspunkt med fx konkurrerende metaforer eller andre troper og *topoi* (284).

Med Ivies tekst har skandinaviske læsere nu en introduktion der kort gør rede for de vigtigste begreber og sætter dem i relation til hinanden – lidt som de "hop on/hop off-"turistbusser der kører besøgende rundt mellem seværdighederne i en storby og kort introducerer dem før hvert stop. I denne tekst er de tre væsentligste stop Burkes tanker om retorik som symbolsk handling (eksemplificeret med Burkes definition af mennesket) samt begreberne dramatisme og identifikation (eksemplificeret ved hhv. "victimage-"ritualet og det komiske korrektiv). Tilsammen giver de et indblik i Burkes tilgang til samfundskritik på retorisk grundlag. Ivies tekst kan af nye læsere bruges som hjælp til at få overblikket og af alle læsere som inspiration til fordybelse i enkelte dele af Burkes forfatterskab.

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Robert L. Ivie:

Kenneth Burke's Attitude Toward Rhetoric

This paper charts a course through Kenneth Burke's extensive body of works by focusing on his rhetorically inflected theory of social criticism. It progresses from Burke's ideas about symbolic action and dramatism to a discussion of identification. It features Burke's definition of man, his treatment of the victimage ritual, and his notion of the comic corrective as three useful heuristics for understanding rhetoric as a vehicle for improving agonistic human relations without sacrificing diversity.

Kenneth Burke was one of the most important rhetorical theorists living in the twentieth century. His writing about rhetoric as symbolic action—as language used to induce cooperation among beings that naturally respond to symbols[1]—is as profound as it is expansive. Scholars continue to probe Burke's major concepts.[2] His insights promote thoughtful reflection on, and transforma-

1 Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 43.

2 Articles about, or drawing on the work of, Kenneth Burke are too numerous to list. There is even a Kenneth Burke Society that sponsors the *KB Journal* (online at http://kbjournal.org/) to promote the "exploration of what it means to be 'Burkean.'" Books about Burke, too, are numerous, including by way of example (see the Bibliography for full citations): Biesecker, *Addressing Postmodernity*, on Burke and social change; Blain, *Victimage Ritual*, for an application of Burke's victimage ritual to the critique of discursive tactics in the war on terror; Bygrave, *Kenneth Burke*, on the relationship of rhetoric to ideology in Burke's writing; Carter, *Scapegoat Process*, on Burke's theory of the scapegoat; Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes*, for an application of Burke's theory of identification to a study of American identity in the context of tourism and, Clark, *Civic Jazz*, applying Burke's rhetorical theory to an understanding of jazz as a democratic aesthetic; Coupe, *Burke on*

tions of, troubled social relationships and problematic political cultures. Yet, reading his oeuvre is challenging. Knowing how to begin requires an overview to get one's bearings, to find a way in.

Offering such an overview of Burke's take on rhetoric means approaching the subject from a particular perspective. No one overview is quite the same as another. My perspective is that of a rhetorical critic engaging issues of political culture. Specifically, I write about war culture, democracy, dissent, and peace building.[3] I treat as especially problematic discourses that demonize, dehumanize, and otherwise alienate people from one another enough to motivate violence, both structural and physical. Burke's understanding of human division and conceptualization of rhetorical identification speaks to these concerns. Thus, it is Burke's attitude toward rhetoric as a means of improving human relations, of overcoming estrangements, promoting tolerance and contemplation, and inducing cooperation and cohesion in the midst of strife—of managing "the wavering line between identification and division"[4]—that attracts my interest and serves as my North Star when reading through his considerable corpus.

With that guiding interest, we can chart a pathway through a body of work produced over the course of seven decades, beginning in the 1920s. Burke was an unorthodox social theorist known for his treatment of language as symbolic action and literature as equipment for living, an intellectual maverick whose work could not be contained within a single discipline. He influenced scholars in multiple fields focused on the study of symbols, including literature, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, theology, ecology, and rhetoric. His overriding argument was that human conduct, as distinguished from physical motion, is symbolic action shaped by the figure of drama. Dramatism was his trope for studying human attitudes and

Myth, and Coupe, *Myth to Ecology*, on Burke's theory of myth; Crable, *Ellison and Burke*, for an exploration of Burke's ideas about race; Crusius, *Burke after Philosophy*, on Burke as a philosopher; Eddy, *Rites of Identity*, on Burke's notions of piety, tragedy, and comedy; Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, on the role of bodies in Burke's rhetorical theory; Garlitz, *Logology and Criticism*, for a study of how Burke draws on religious ideas to explicate the role of analogy; Heath, *Realism and Relativism*, on Burke's theory of language; Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change*, on Burke as a political intellectual; Lewis, *Romancing the Difference*, for a critical application of Burke to an understanding of fundamentalist rhetoric; Rueckert, *Drama of Human Relations*, and Rueckert, *Encounters*, on Burke's theory of dramatism; Selzer, *Greenwich Village*, and George and Selzer, *Burke in the 1930s*, on his historical context and encounters with voices of modernism; Tilli, *Continuation War*, for an application of Burke's theory of symbolic action; Weiser, *Burke, War, Words*, for a close and historically contextualized analysis of Burke's notion of dramatism; Wess, *Rhetoric, Subjectivity*, on the relationship between Burke's literary theory and postmodern theories of subjectivity; Wolin, *Rhetorical Imagination*, on Burke's theory of social and political criticism.

3 Robert L. Ivie, *Democracy and America's War on Terrorism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Robert L. Ivie, *Dissent from War* (Bloomfield, CT: Kamarian Press, 2007); Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner, *Hunt the Devil: A Demonology of US War Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015).

4 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 45.

motives, for understanding how motives are constituted in language, and for conceptualizing language as a mode of action. Even as he acknowledged the recalcitrance of social formations and constraints of non-symbolic forces, he insisted on conceptualizing human conduct in terms of action and choice instead of reducing it to the realm of motion.

The Works of Kenneth Burke

Burke was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on May 5, 1897. He died at the age of 96 on November 19, 1993. He was basically self-educated after high school. He dropped out of Ohio State University after only one semester and out of Columbia University after a year. He could not find a single course of study to his liking. So he moved first to Greenwich Village in New York City and then to a rundown farm in Andover, New Jersey to find his calling. He played saxophone and flute, wrote as a music critic for *The Dial* and *The Nation*, served as a managing editor of *The Dial*, worked as a translator, editor, and writer, wrote poems, short stories, reviews, and a novel. He taught for eighteen years at Bennington College in Vermont, beginning in 1943. Over the course of his career, he held temporary teaching positions at various other universities in the United States, including the University of Chicago, Princeton University, Indiana University, University of California, and Harvard University.

Although influenced by the writings of Karl Marx, Burke distanced himself from Marxism beginning in the mid-1930s. Other influences on Burke's thinking, among many, included Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thorstein Veblen, and American pragmatists such as William James. In turn, Burke influenced Susan Sontag, Erving Goffman, Edward Said, René Girard, Frederick Jameson, and Gifford Geertz, among others. Laurence Coupe argues that Burke advanced a mythic perspective on modernity and the "technological psychosis" of industrial capitalism to critique "progress" and its degradation of the planet.[5] Burke was a dedicated critic of the war system and persistent proponent of democratic values.

Burke's theoretical and critical thought emerged in eight books published between 1931 and 1966. *Counter-Statement* (first published in 1931 and revised in 1953) concerned the social function of literature and the psychology of form, defining form as the creation and fulfillment of expectations ("an arousing and fulfillment of desires") and enumerating the aspects of form as syllogistic progression, qualitative progression, repetitive form, conventional form, and minor or incidental forms (such as chiasmus, paradox, bathos, apostrophe, etc.).[6] *Permanence and Change* (originally published in 1935 and revised in 1954) advanced a theory of human relations from the perspective of communication, focusing on the relationship of metaphor to motive and the notion of perspective by incongruity. *Attitudes Toward History* (first published in 1937 and revised in 1959) compared frames of acceptance, such as tragedy and comedy, to frames of rejection, such as satire and

5 Laurence Coupe, *Kenneth Burke on Myth* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3, 6.

6 Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 124.

burlesque, arguing that frames of rejection are too narrow and that the comic frame of acceptance is a charitable corrective to the cosmic orientation of tragedy. *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (originally published in 1941 and revised in 1967 and 1973) addressed the question of critical methodology, including cluster analysis, discussed literature as equipment for living, and reprinted Burke's long critical essay on the rhetoric of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Burke's *A Grammar of Motives* (published in 1945) developed the notion of the dramatistic pentad as a way of exploring the attribution of motives in narratives of human conduct by tracking the ratios between terms for act, agent, scene, agency, and purpose. It provided a critical heuristic for discovering what gets emphasized (overdeveloped) and what gets left out (underdeveloped) in any given articulation of perspective. *A Rhetoric of Motives* (published in 1950) shifted the emphasis of rhetoric from persuasion to identification and broadened the scope of rhetoric to consider, not just devices of persuasion, but ways of counteracting "the torrents of ill will."[7] *The Rhetoric of Religion* (published in 1961) drew out of the Western tradition of Christian theology a theory of nomenclature called logology (the study of "words-about-words") and advanced a logological thesis that "the close study of theology and its forms will provide us with good insight into the nature of language itself as a motive."[8] *Language as Symbolic Action* (published in 1966) was a collection of Burke's essays about dramatism as "a theory of language, a philosophy of language based on that theory, and methods of analysis developed in accordance with the theory and the philosophy."[9] Two of the volume's summarizing essays are "Definition of Man"—the symbol-using animal that is "rotten with perfection"—and "Terministic Screens"—through which language reflects, selects, and deflects reality.[10]

Burkean Social Criticism

Burke's rhetorically inflected theory of social criticism can be usefully surveyed in three moves, at least for the purpose of getting oriented before reading him more closely. Each move marks a reference point in a progression of ideas from symbolic action to dramatism to identification. It is not so much a linear progression as a web of ideas linked to one another through several strands of thought. The moves can be made in any order with the beneficial result of perceiving the relationship of ideas freshly from different angles. The path I take, for present purposes, starts with Burke's definition of man, moves to his treatment of the victimage ritual, and ends on his notion of the comic corrective.

7 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, xv.

8 Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), vi.

9 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), vii.

10 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 16, 45.

Definition of Man

Burke defines humans as symbol-using beings. We humans form attitudes as predispositions to action, which are shaped and reshaped, for better or worse, by language dynamics, conventions, practices, and manipulations. "Rhetorical language," Burke observes, "is inducement to action (or to attitude, attitude being an incipient act)."[11] Perspectives constructed linguistically function as systems of motives. A perspective or orientation is a serviceable "framework of interpretation," the subdivisions of which comprise "vocabularies of motives." As such, "motives are shorthand terms for situations," linguistic vehicles with which we discern situations and interpret reality.[12] Short of determining behavior, they guide perceptions and prompt choices by rendering them into meaningful responses to situations.

Perspective or orientation corresponds to attitude or motivation in Burke's lexicon. Terministic screens serve as terministic incentives. Thus, for Burke, language is an aspect of action, the "essential function" of which is "attitudinal or hortatory." It reflects, selects, and deflects reality as its "nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others." Terms affect the nature of our observations so that "much of what we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms."[13]

With orientation comes "piety," Burke's metaphor for "the sense of what properly goes with what." Piety designates a ritualistic "yearning to conform" and represents a tendency toward system building and carrying the implications of terms to their limits.[14] It inclines toward a "bureaucratization of the imaginative," which is a standardization and extension of otherwise pliant symbols into a regime of "obedience to the reigning symbols of authority":

> An imaginative possibility […] is bureaucratized when it is embodied in the realities of a social texture, in all the complexity of language and habits, in the property relationships, the methods of government, production and distribution, and in the development of rituals that re-enforce the same emphasis.[15]

Such piety constitutes a "trained incapacity," an oxymoronic figure Burke borrowed from Veblen to indicate how a rigidified and narrowed perspective can "function as blindness," when a "way of seeing" becomes a "way of not seeing."[16]

Burke borrowed the term entelechy (the notion of possessing a telos within, of each thing aiming for a perfection natural to its kind) from Aristotle to underscore

11 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 42.

12 Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 19, 21-22, 25, 29, 35.

13 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 44-46.

14 Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 69, 74, 77.

15 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, 225-226.

16 Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 7, 49.

that we humans can be transported, not just blinded, by the language we use.[17] We are bodies that learn and use language, but language has its own dynamic as a medium of thought and action—its own tendencies, momentum, directionality, and culmination. As the "specifically symbol-using animal," we are "intrinsically goaded" by "the 'entelechial' principle, the symbol-guided tracking down of implications, going to the end of the line."[18] This "principle of perfection," which is "intrinsic to symbol-using," functions as a motive for a "consistent rounding out of a terminology."[19] It starts with giving something its "proper name" and ends with naming the "perfect villain."[20] The generative capacity of language motivates the actualization of form, the completion of the narrative. We track down the implications of the terminology we use in order to perfect it, even to the point of destruction, disaster, and looming oblivion.[21]

Burke's conception of form as the arousal and fulfillment of desires—a logic of gratifying expectations linguistically induced—carries rhetorical entailments, as illustrated by Christopher Darr's critique of Congressional incivility. Darr argues that US Senators created and satisfied an undemocratic appetite for incivility that undermined the legitimacy of different points of view in their debate over the nomination of John Ashcroft to serve as President George W. Bush's Attorney General. Progressive form configured the dismissive logic of both political parties. Democratic Senators, for example, engaged in syllogistic progression by observing that Ashcroft was ideologically opposed to pro-choice, gun control, gay rights, and other liberal projects, thereby suggesting he was lying when he testified that, as Attorney General, he would enforce Roe v. Wade and other laws of the land.[22] Their argument by implication and insinuation illustrates the implicit rhetoric of entelechy. It is called "syllogistic" or "formal" (one might consider it enthymematic and informal, but perception is the issue at hand) when premises advance step by step "because, given certain things, certain things must follow" insofar as "the audience, from its acquaintance with the premises, feels the rightness of the conclusion."[23] One would not be hard pressed to find more extreme rhetorical forms of incivility in today's partisan debates in Congress and on the Presidential campaign trail.

The pull toward "perfection," which is "central to the nature of language as motive"—the idea of being moved by the principle of perfection implicit in the nature of being a symbol-using animal—infuses Burke's full definition of man with

17 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 17.

18 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, 422.

19 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 155.

20 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 16, 18.

21 William H. Rueckert, *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 273.

22 Christopher R. Darr, "Civility as Rhetorical Enactment: The John Ashcroft 'Debates' and Burke's Theory of Form," *Southern Communication Journal* 70.4 (2005): 316-328. Roe v. Wade refers to the US Supreme Court's decision in 1973 that the Constitution protects a woman's right to abortion prior to the visibility of the fetus.

23 Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124.

the problematic condition and unsettling inclination to hierarchy.

> Man is
> the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal
> inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative)
> separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making
> goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)
> and rotten with perfection.[24]

By hierarchy, Burke means "the motive of the social ladder, or social pyramid, involving a concern with the 'higher' as an organizing element, in men's modes of placement." Everything and everyone is viewed and assessed "*in terms of* a summarizing Word," a "god-term," or a "title of titles."[25] The nuclear bomb, as Barry Brummett argues, became "a symbol functioning as a God term in several motivating vocabularies of American public address." The symbol of the Bomb summed up and spun out the vocabulary of revenge, for example, to the point of perfection.[26] Hierarchy, as a motivating sense of order, engenders the victimage ritual.

Victimage Ritual

Corrupted by hierarchy, symbol-using beings classify, grade, and rank one another on a scale of best to worst. Those who are deemed better are privileged over those who are not, all the way down the line. The criteria used—such as wealth, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, and so on—may or may not vary with circumstances. When something goes wrong in our idealized world (as it must and does), we affirm ourselves and sustain our sense of order by blaming others for the troubles. The "sacrificial principle," Burke argues, "is intrinsic to the idea of Order."[27] This tendency is pervasive and the process is ongoing. Burke's name for this tragic ritual is victimage.

> Here are the steps
> In the Iron Law of History
> That welds Order and Sacrifice:
>
> Order leads to Guilt
> (for who can keep commandments!)
> Guilt needs Redemption
> (for who could not be cleansed!)
> Redemption needs Redeemer
> (which is to say, a Victim!).

24 Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 16-17. Emphasis in original.

25 Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion*, 41. Emphasis in original.

26 Barry Brummett, "Perfection and the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Teleology, and Motives," *Journal of Communication* 39.1 (1989): 85.

27 Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion*, 4.

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill) . . . .[28]

The recurring cycle of order, violation, guilt, and redemption by scapegoat to preserve the prevailing order resists change by projecting onto "the enemy any troublesome traits of our own that we would negate." The "political scapegoat" exhibits the "sacrificial principle" of "hierarchal psychosis."[29] A critical first step out of this destructive dynamic and toward an attitude of tolerance is to acknowledge victimage and recognize its symptoms.[30]

Burke's analysis of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (an essay Burke first published in 1939) was an attempt to take that initial step by warning Americans to reflect critically on their own tendencies toward fascistic victimizing. Burke saw in Nazi militarism, especially its use of the projective device of the scapegoat, a perversion of religion. The Jew served as a devil figure the killing of which ritualistically purified the blood of the Aryan nation to allow Germany to be reborn and unified. Drawing on sexual symbolism and images of blood, pollution, and disease, Hitler portrayed himself as Germany's savior and rival to the Jewish seducer that had poisoned the blood of the feminine masses. A cluster of terms (blood poisoning, seduction, syphilis, prostitution, incest, etc.) in Hitler's rhetoric intermingled imagery and ideation to elevate and exaggerate the agent term at the expense of taking scenic factors into account when assessing the troubles of the German nation, thus making Hitler a super-agent, an incarnation of the will to power. Hitler, the rhetorical medicine man, "swung a great people into his wake." Something similar could happen in the US, Burke argued, unless a better understanding of the medicine Hitler concocted can be developed to "forestall the concocting of similar medicine in America."[31]

Indeed, as Burke warned, the projection device of the victimage ritual has worked its will on US political culture. After 9/11, George W. Bush swung a great country into militarism's wake by declaring an unrestricted war on evil. The sign of evil—drawn from a pervasive cultural code—converted a quest for security into a secular prayer for redemption. By sacrificing a scapegoat, in whom all evil was invested, America would be made whole again, redeemed as a chosen nation with a sacred mission. Channeling a cultural predisposition to render any enemy diabolical, Bush spoke in biblical cadences and coded religious language to invest the war with messianic meaning, even to the point of justifying preemptive warfare, in his words, "to rid the world of evil." Enemy making was an expression of the self-proclaimed exceptional nation's fear of damnation and desire for redemption by

28 Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion*, 4-5.

29 Burke, *Languages as Symbolic Action*, 18-19.

30 Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 442-443.

31 Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 191.

vicarious sacrifice. The enemy, reduced to an evildoer, was portrayed in projective fashion as religious fundamentalists and fanatics who kill innocent civilians, including women and children, as power-hungry thugs who would remake the Middle East in their own image. Thus, Americans were blinded to their own appetite for power and the destructive force of their war machine.[32]

War, Burke suggests, is a corruption of peace, "the ultimate *disease* of cooperation […] a perversion of communion." Temptations to strife, enmity, and faction are ubiquitous in human relations and "implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships."[33] Producing enemies by projecting dehumanizing and demonizing caricatures—bonding in opposition to an out-group—is all too commonplace in social interactions and political affairs generally, not just in war. Ritualized victimage abounds wherever rhetoric fails to bridge and broaden perspectives, to bring different perspectives into consideration of one another.

The narrowing of perspective, which fosters the scapegoat, is revealed in what gets left out or underemphasized in the narratives that structure the tragic dramas of human relations. Drama is Burke's defining metaphor for symbolic action, and tragedy is its principal genre. Stories that shape human relations for better or worse are more or less balanced and complete in their treatment of the five key terms for attributing motivation: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. "All statements that assign motives," Burke insists, "can be shown to arise out of [this pentad of key terms] and to terminate in them":

> In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the *purpose*.

People will disagree over how to depict each of the elements, but "any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind of* answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)."[34]

These five terms allow for ten ratios or ways of gauging the hierarchal design of a narrative (scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose). Thus, the story may be such that the scene is portrayed in a way that mandates action of one kind over another. Similarly, in a scene-agent ratio, the scene may dominate the agent; alternatively, the agent may overcome the constraints of the scene or even change the scene.[35] Tracking ratios—identifying which ratios are expressed within a

32 Robert L. Ivie, "Fighting Terror by Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10.2 (2007): 222-224, 227, 229, 233-234.

33 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 20, 22.

34 Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, xv-xvi. Emphasis in original.

35 For an example of this shifting pentadic dynamic, see David S. Birdsell, "Ronald Reagan

narrative and which term within each ratio is emphasized over the other—helps to identify patterns of selectivity in the assignment of causes and attributions of motives.[36]

As with Burke's dialectical method of analyzing clusters—determining in a given text what terms go with what terms (What equals what?), what terms are opposed to what terms (What versus what?), and which terms lead one to the other (From what to what?)[37]—his pentadic analysis of ratios locates patterns of emphasis, preference, opposition, and transformation, but it also provides a way of inventorying what a given discourse and its motivational scheme leaves out of consideration. If a fully rounded narrative includes answers to all five questions, then a truncated narrative ignores or understates one or more of the questions, thereby simplifying the complexity of human motives so as to make caricature and the troublesome concoction of scapegoats easier.

Competing assignations of blame by the political left and right for Jared Lee Laughner's attempted assassination of US Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (a shooting that occurred on January 8, 2011, killing six people and badly wounding Giffords) were analyzed for their pentadic structure by Francesca Marie Smith and Thomas A. Hollihan. Smith and Hollihan argue that liberals advanced a scene-act ratio in which the violence was motivated primarily by the larger toxic context of political incivility, a scene of rhetorical belligerence that tacitly at least, and sometimes explicitly, legitimized violence as an appropriate response to political differences. Conservatives countered this criticism of their toxic rhetoric by locating motivation within an agent-act ratio, arguing that the shooter was deranged and, as such, singularly responsible for his heinous act. This truncated emphasis on the agent term, constituting Laughner as the scapegoat by ignoring scene, co-agency, and other pentadic motives, amounted to an unbalanced rhetorical frame that conveniently alleviated guilt without accepting any responsibility for contributing to the tragedy, that is, by suggesting a deranged Laughner "was not participating in the same moral or social order as his peers, accusers, and victims."[38]

To Burke's way of thinking, the homicidal nonsense of ritualistically redeeming ourselves by vilifying others in caricature is the work of the devil. Ritual drama, as Burke's Ur-form of symbolic action[39] and as the object of critical analysis via the dramatistic pentad, is fraught with the sacrificial impulse of hierarchic psychosis. Satan is the personification of the entelechial principle of perfection pushed to its tragic extreme. This figurative devil, although drawn from biblical texts, is a secular

on Lebanon and Grenada: Flexibility and Interpretation in the Application of Kenneth Burke's Pentad," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73.3 (1987): 267-279.

36 Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, 15, 18.

37 Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 74-75.

38 Francesca Marie Smith and Thomas A. Hollihan, "'Out of Chaos Breathes Creation': Human Agency, Mental Illness, and Conservative Arguments Locating Responsibility for the Tucson Massacre," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 17.4 (2014): 603.

39 Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 103.

subject.[40] He is the temptation to perfection, the tendency to treat one's limited perspective as complete, universally valid, principled, and ultimately righteous. George W. Bush, the decider, acted the role of the Burkean devil in his simplistic call for a war on flat evil.[41]

Burke's devil—in the epilogue of *The Rhetoric of Religion*, entitled "Prologue in Heaven"—engages in a dialogue with God. Burke's aim in this heavenly dialogue is to offer a dramatic "Parable of Purpose" based on his "definition of man as the 'symbol-using animal.'" The Lord is a "Blakean bearded patriarch," Satan an "agile youth," wearing a "fool's cap with devil's horns, and a harlequin costume of two colors, dividing him down the middle." These two interlocutors are "quite obviously on friendly terms," with the Lord being "affectionately amused by his young companion" while Satan, "an intense admirer of the older man," proves to be "overhasty, mercurial." Mercurial Satan, sitting at the Lord's right hand, is corrected throughout the dialogue by the refrain, "It's more complicated than that." When Satan observes that everything follows logically from a proper definition, the Lord responds with, "It's more complicated than that." When Satan draws the inference that humans as symbol-using beings are caught in a web of necessity (that their sense of freedom and choice is an illusion), the Lord explains it is more complicated than that because ideas taken separately motivate humans differently than if ideas were grasped all at once in the heavenly way of an omniscient one. Humans can make mistakes, Satan concludes, but even that is not quite right, the Lord says, because being partially wrong means they can be partially right. In this manner, the dialogue moves forward to explain the key notions of Burkean logology, illustrated by Satan's own foibles—his rottenness with perfection. There can be no absolute authority or perfection—verbal or otherwise—except in heaven. Indeed, "the idea of hell is the idea of a really perfect ending." Satan's definitions are "perfectionist in a devilishly reductive sense," just as human definitions are "oversimplifications."[42]

Word-people (symbol-using and misusing animals), Burke cautions, are too much like Satan: clever, energetic, ambitious, eloquent, fawning, and foolish. They act like the devil in their quest to emulate the Lord, inevitably falling short of their pretensions and then scrambling to redeem themselves vicariously. The heroic frame of tragedy, with its cosmic overreach, best captures the human/satanic quest for perfection that necessarily leads to disaster (unless somehow its hubris is reduced and complexities are acknowledged). Tragedy prompts the ritual of blaming scapegoats rather than reflecting critically on the limitations of one's own perspective. Yet, Burke is not a consummate pessimist. The goal of his theory is to enhance human relations, to provide heuristics for critical insight and constructive intervention. Accordingly, the shortcomings of the tragic frame of acceptance require comic correctives.

40 Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion*, 5.

41 Robert L. Ivie, "The Rhetoric of Bush's War on Evil," *KB Journal* 1.1 (2004), online at http://kbjournal.org/ivie_Bush.

42 Burke, *Rhetoric of Religion*, 274-277, 280, 282, 303, 306-307, 312.

Comic Corrective

Comedy, like tragedy, is a frame of acceptance, not rejection, in Burke's dramatistic theory of language as symbolic action. A frame of acceptance is a "more or less organized system of meanings" for gauging a situation and adopting "a role with relation to it." It is a wider, more inclusive, and well-rounded "strategy for living" than a frame of rejection. It names forces both friendly and unfriendly, sets attitudes in preparation for combat, and "draw[s] the lines of battle." Acceptance is uppermost in the poetic categories of epic, tragedy, and comedy. A frame of rejection emphasizes the negative. It stresses "the partiality of rejection rather than the completeness of acceptance" in its opposition to some "reigning symbol of authority." It focuses, to the point of fanaticism, on "one factor above others in the charting of human relationships," whether that factor is money or something else. Thus, it lacks "the well-rounded quality of a *complete* here-and-now philosophy."[43] The poetic categories of rejection include elegy, satire, burlesque, and the grotesque.

Comedy, like tragedy, "warns against the dangers of pride, but its emphasis shifts from *crime* to *stupidity*." People are represented as mistaken, indeed, "necessarily mistaken," rather than vicious or evil. Everyone encounters situations that render us foolish. The comic lesson of humility is that "*every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness." It teaches that wisdom requires "fear, resignation, [and] the sense of limits." While tragedy represents "*cosmic man*," comedy "deals with *man in society*." Thus, comedy does not reduce to humor, for humor is the opposite of the heroic. Where tragedy magnifies the hero and makes the hero the equal of a challenging situation, humor dwarfs the situation, gauging it falsely by oversimplifying it. The comic frame broadens and matures a guiding perspective, and therefore is "the most serviceable [frame] for the handling of human relationships." It is charitable but not gullible, "neither wholly euphemistic, nor wholly debunking." Comic critique is an attitude, not a formula, "the search for a vocabulary" that can "provide humility without humiliation," that enables people to act with "*maximum consciousness*."[44] Accordingly, it is Burke's chosen perspective for social criticism, his "attitude of attitudes," his "methodic view of human antics . . . as a comedy ever on the verge of the most disastrous tragedy."[45]

Burke's comic corrective addresses the problem of perspective, or frame of reference. Being wrong is not the same as being evil, even if one is terribly wrong. "People, taken by and large," Burke observes, "are acting reasonably enough, *within their frame of reference*," which "may not be large enough to encompass all the important factors" operating in a given situation. "Hence, they need a *still wider* frame of reference."[46]

The widening of a problematic frame of reference is, like life itself, a project of

43 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, 5, 20-22, 28-29, 43. Emphasis in original.

44 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, 41-43, 102, 106-107, 166-167, 171, 344. Emphasis in original.

45 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, "Introduction," no page numbers.

46 Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 188. Emphasis in original.

composition and revision. The process involves the migration of a metaphor from one restricted field to another, producing a kind of "perspective by incongruity" that mediates rigidified thinking by enlivening the "dead metaphors of abstract thought." As such, the comic corrective to "maladjustments due to the 'bureaucratization of the imaginative,'" is an exercise in social criticism that provides fresh imagination (pliancy, liquidity) to that which has been bureaucratically literalized, naturalized, and systematized to the point of being "embodied in the realities of a social texture, in all the complexity of language and habits, in the property relationships, the methods of government, production and distribution, and in the development of rituals that re-enforce the same emphasis." The term "bureaucratization" is itself a metaphorical migration that enacts a comic attitude. It achieves a critical perspective by incongruity, Burke explains, by a process of "verbal 'atom cracking,'" a planned act of wrenching a word from the category in which it customarily belongs and metaphorically applying it to a different category. Planned incongruity is an act of impiety that would refresh and extend an otherwise outmoded frame of reference.[47]

Karen Whedbee illustrates the comic corrective with her analysis of Norman Thomas' use of perspective by incongruity in 1943 to resist, and attempt to shift, the dominant perspective of the Second World War. Thomas, as a Presbyterian minister and leader of the Socialist Party in the US, argued contrary to popular opinion that the war was a wrong road to peace. His linguistic impieties challenged the Manichean logic of a contest between Good and Evil, which allowed Germany and Japan to serve as overly convenient scapegoats. US soldiers, he observed, were serving at their peril as messengers of death. The war was a game to which the public attended as passive observers. The goal of total victory in this game was not a path to real peace, to overcoming racism and economic rapaciousness, colonialism, and imperialism. His dissent was prophetic, offering a broader framework for the post-war debate on economic reform and civil rights.[48] His game metaphor functioned as a comic corrective, not in the sense of humorous debunking or falsely dwarfing the deadly momentousness of world war, but by sensitizing listeners to their own foibles and goading them to act with maximum consciousness rather than remain passive observers.

Even if a comic corrective takes hold (usually not completely or immediately, but perhaps eventually and partially), no frame of acceptance can be corrected and extended endlessly. Frames are casuistically stretched to the point of eventually breaking. Circumstances change too much to be encompassed forever by the terms of any guiding perspective, no matter how fully rounded it has become. Such is the role of recalcitrance. Despite the fact that a guiding perspective tends to be self-perpetuating, and that it can hang on beyond its usefulness in a fossilized existence, it also "contains the germs of its own dissolution." Its destiny is eventually to decay

47 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, 173, 225, 229, 308-309, 381, 411, 422.

48 Karen Whedbee, "Perspective by Incongruity in Norman Thomas's 'Some Wrong Roads to Peace," *Western Journal of Communication* 65.1 (2001): 45-64.

to the point that "conditions require a shift in our patterns of allegiance." The curve of history is such that "the last act" of one "collective poem" may become "the first act of a later version." New frames tend to develop out of the "by-products" of their predecessors. Thus, in Burke's anticipation of "emergent collectivism," declining Hellenism is followed by Christian evangelism, which develops into a mediaeval feudal synthesis based on "the family metaphor stressing obedience and custom," followed by the enlightenment, rationalism, and individualism of renaissance and reformation, which then led to naïve capitalism and its vision of converting "individual greed into collective wealth." Each new orientation is a way of re-reading signs, a reorientation, a shift of metaphor, a rediscovery based on a fresh principle of interpretation, which is the work of cultural prophets. New frames re-describe situations by emphasizing factors that were previously neglected or insufficiently stressed and minimizing factors that were previously accentuated.[49]

Identification

This, in three moves, is the theory of human relations, the conceptual context of language as symbolic action, and the dramatistic attitude of poetic frames of acceptance that Burke brings to the study of rhetoric as a discourse of identification. The devil would be speaking through me (or, more accurately, I would be performing the role of the devil) if I concluded that Burkean theory reduces to just these three main points. It is more complicated than that. However, Burke's definition of man, the victimage ritual, and the comic corrective, taken as heuristics, provide a useful context for understanding his treatment of rhetoric.

Burke's rhetoric of identification, his philosophy of rhetoric, is about promoting social cohesion, about how rhetorical analysis of texts helps to understand human relations generally. It is written to promote critical reflection, transform images of killing, and motivate greater tolerance. It is a response to the condition of division ("strife, enmity, faction") that defines relationships within and between communities, "the region of the Scramble, of insult and injury, bickering, squabbling, malice and the lie, cloaked malice and the subsidized lie." Forms and strategies of identification, which are "compensatory to division," serve to widen frames of acceptance. Identification is another name for the bridging principle, stylized symbolic action that, at its best, bridges dueling perspectives to resist the cult of the scapegoat. There are limits, of course, to what can be accomplished rhetorically, but rhetoric's potential for partially transcending the conditions of social estrangement is significant. The process is ongoing and never-ending, for division is the default condition of social relations and political affairs.[50]

Rendering divisive peoples, as symbol-using beings, more tolerant of one another, more consubstantial, cohesive, and cooperative—that, in Burke's view, is

49 Burke, *Attitudes toward History*, 99, 111, 134, 139, 160; Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 99, 111, 134, 139, 160, 167, 169, 179-181, 194, 220, 255-261.

50 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, xiii-xv, 19-20, 22, 42-43, 46, 169, 195, 208, 211, 215.

rhetoric's function, both as a multifaceted theory of discourse (*rhetorica docens*) and in its uses for productive social criticism (*rhetorica utens*). Burke extends the range of rhetoric and the resources of identification to encompass not only the devices of classical rhetoric with its emphasis on the skillful speaker and explicit design, but also "the persuasiveness of false or inadequate terms . . . which we impose upon ourselves, in varying degrees of deliberateness and unawareness."[51] His interest is in the characteristics of language as symbolic action, as terministic incentives, and as inducements to identification.

Even as it reframes, extends, and synthesizes rhetorical knowledge, Burke's concept of identification is qualified, not limitless in scope and purpose, not an end in itself. Identification compensates for division rather than eliminating it. It is a partial, not complete, corrective. Like any guiding term subject to the principle of entelechy, it could seek purity through ultimate perfection, but the identification about which Burke writes is restricted. It is not the sole rhetorical motive. It remains within the dialectical sphere of parliamentary conflict, leaving "the competing voices in a jangling relation to one another" rather than settling on a "unitary principle."[52] Accordingly, Burke's conception of identification is democratizing rather than tyrannizing.[53] As a principle of courtship, it works to increase inclusiveness without sacrificing diversity. It is achieved rhetorically, which means by addressing others in an agonistic context, with the goal of bridging differences enough to hold opposing perspectives accountable to one another, for "nothing is more rhetorical in nature than a deliberation."[54] At the wavering line between identification and division, we find humanity "huddling together, nervously loquacious, at the edge of the abyss."[55] Genuine peace can only be achieved democratically through a rhetorical process of identification, which means risking "contamination" by adversaries, seeking deliberately to "give full expression to the voice of the enemy."[56] This is the way of diplomacy, the way of "*muddling through*," by which Burke means "to be not over-exact, to let events shape themselves in part, to make up one's specific policies as one goes along, in accordance with the unforeseen newnesses that occur in the course of events, instead of approaching one's problem with an entire program laid out rigidly in advance."[57]

So we end where we began with this perspective on Kenneth Burke's attitude toward rhetoric, a perspective that focuses on the problem of war and the possibilities of peace, the reason I started and continue to read Burke. When I returned to my post-graduate studies more than forty-five years ago, after a two-year interrup-

51 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 21-22, 35-36, 43-44.

52 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 187, 198, 211-212.

53 Rueckert refers to Burke as "one of our great democratic critics." William H. Rueckert, *Encounters with Kenneth Burke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 44.

54 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 45.

55 Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 272.

56 Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 263.

57 Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 108. Emphasis in original.

tion of active-duty military service during the Vietnam War, two questions motivated my research: How do we talk ourselves into war? And how might we talk ourselves out of it? Burke's dramatistic answer is that we are tragically inclined as symbol using beings toward the cult of the kill but capably equipped to enact comic correctives by practicing a rhetoric of identification.

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