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## RHETORIC OF INQUIRY

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Scholarship uses argument, and argument uses rhetoric. The "rhetoric" is not mere ornament or manipulation or trickery. It is rhetoric in the ancient sense of persuasive discourse. In matters from mathematical proof to literary criticism, scholars write rhetorically.

Only occasionally do they reflect on that fact. The most common occasion is the manifesto, which seeks to expose the rhetoric of an earlier line of scholarship, demonstrating how the tone, figures of speech, and other devices of style to be discarded have lied or misled us. Yet even writers attacking an earlier rhetoric customarily pay no attention to their own. Modern scholars usually deny their rhetoric. Wearing masks of scientific methodology first donned in the seventeenth century, they have forgotten about the rhetorical faces underneath. Their simple repetition of official rhetoric against rhetoric serves mainly to dampen anxieties about how things really happen in the lab or library. Of late, the propaganda of governments and advertising agencies has devalued rhetoric still more.

Since the 1950s, however, and especially in the last few years, rhetoric has revived. Literary critics, theorists of communication, and teachers of public speaking never wholly abandoned Cicero, Quintilian, and company. Now the rhetorically minded seem prescient in their steadfastness, for the masks of methodology are wearing thin. Many people grow weary of claims that experimental technique, documentary interpretation, or regression analysis can avoid "subjectivity." Many scholars doubt that science opposes or replaces art, that "ought" ought not be derived from "is," or that any method ensures un-

problematical results. Thus scientists and humanists alike appear again in the classical guise of rhetors: good people skilled at persuasion and the inquiry needed to support it.

## I

One way to see beneath the masks of methodology is to look at how scholars really do converse. In anthropology, history, law, political science, sociology, architecture, medicine, economics, biology, physics, psychology, and mathematics, scholars have recently begun to attend to actual argumentation. The attention reforms their inquiry and helps them talk intelligently about it. They can recognize how mathematical inquiry connects to social and literary inquiry, and how all connect to politics.

To emphasize the rhetoric of scholars is to replace simple acceptance of their reports with insightful scrutiny of their reasons. Treating each other's claims as arguments rather than findings, scholars no longer need implausible doctrines of objectivism to defend their contributions to knowledge. At a practical level, to stress rhetoric is to discount claims to neutrality in measuring, say, the costs and benefits of a subway system. Detailed attention to rhetoric can reveal underlying issues and better ways to consider them responsibly. At a theoretical level, to take rhetoric seriously is to dispute the spectator story of inquiry. To be sure, challenges to the received view of science are not unique to rhetoric. The spectator theory has suffered attacks for two centuries, though only recently has it lost decisive ground. The professed neutrality of social engineering has never been supported universally, though only recently has it attracted widespread scorn. Rhetoric of inquiry shows how such views fail to explain or to improve the words and deeds of scholars. It also fosters more effective thinking, speaking, and acting by their students and by audiences outside the academy.

Rhetoric of inquiry rests on two assertions. It maintains that argument is more unified than is commonly understood, and far more unified than the fragmentation of academic fields might imply. Every scientist or scholar, regardless of field, relies on common devices of rhetoric: on metaphors, invocations of authority, and appeals to audiences—themselves creatures of rhetoric. But rhetoric of inquiry also insists that argument is more diverse than is commonly understood, and far more diverse than the official philosophies of science or art allow. Every field is defined by its own special devices and patterns of rhetoric—by existence theorems, arguments from invisible hands, and

appeals to textual probabilities or archives—themselves textures of rhetoric.

Rhetoric of inquiry does not deny that there are things to discuss in the methodological midlands that intellectuals now cultivate so intensively. But it does connect discussions of methodology to concrete inquiries in various contexts, and especially to the languages of their conduct. Thus it encourages methodology to become comparative, situating itself in actual researches and exploring their mutual implications for better inquiry. Accordingly, rhetoric of inquiry does not seek to be a subject unto itself or an authority over other investigations. Fields properly divide into separate conversations with distinct dialects. Nonetheless, they share the grammar of our civilization more than they know. Rhetoric of inquiry makes us more widely aware of this, making the arts and sciences more intelligible to themselves and to others.

Without much effort, and with no central orchestration, rhetoric of inquiry is emerging in most departments of the intellect. Philosophers who practice it are startled to find, for instance, that it is arising in economics also; students of communication are surprised to see it in psychology; nonmathematicians are amazed that mathematicians do it at all. Their varied practices are parts of a single project. A lawyer cannot directly help physicists to run experiments in particle accelerators, but physicists can learn that their arguments follow courtroom forms and—like legal arguments—depend on precedent. An anthropologist cannot help economists measure the elasticity of cocoa supply, but economists can learn that observations are subtle forms of participation, and that supply curves are symbols which shape economic inferences. These are parts of a common rhetoric of scholarly inquiry. It creates languages for talking about what we have in common and for understanding why we do not—and cannot—have everything in common. Rhetoric of inquiry is a way of conversing about intellectual conversation—and improving its quality.

Rhetoric, like most important matters, has a long history. It begins with the sophists of the fifth and fourth centuries, wise men whose name in common usage has become a tag for deviousness. The sophists aroused an enemy, *philosophia*, whose champions nearly stifled *rhetoreia* at its origin. Socrates was a sophist—though his student, Plato, would have none of that, and portrayed rhetors as blowhards careless of Knowledge and Truth. Aristotle, Plato's student, appreciated rhetoric; and rhetoricians use his *Rhetoric* still. He nonetheless widened the rift between philosophy (determined by truthspeaking dialecticians) and mere persuasion (left to courtroom hacks). The Romans for a time

took a broader view. Three centuries after Plato, Cicero propounded a scheme to unify philosophy and rhetoric. A century later, Quintilian contended in *Institutio Oratoria* (I: 11) that philosophical matters "are truly part of our subject, and properly pertain to the art of oratory."

The Ciceronian view that rhetoric is the whole of argument survived the death of classical civilization, to reemerge at its rebirth. But under the onslaught of a Method claiming neutrality and universality, rhetoric fell precipitously from favor in the seventeenth century. Henceforth it was redefined as suitable only for the underside of public life, for turning a crowd this way or that. Those who acted and spoke in public would cultivate it—but did so at the price of soiling themselves, inviting suspicion by trying to persuade. The ancient fear of rhetoric, as a powerful weapon, gave way to scorn.

The private person, it was said increasingly from the seventeenth century on, could ignore rhetoric. Individuals could see directly the results of their experiments and feel directly the experiences of their souls, letting the wordiness of discourse take care of itself. Science and even poetry came to be viewed as essentially solitary undertakings, with achievements spilling out by natural cause or ineffable inspiration, as though inquiry and language were individual accomplishments. By the eighteenth century, communication among scientists began to shift away from the sometimes vituperative arguments of earlier science toward the stilted rhetorics of reportage in present day journals of science. Late in the century, even poetry took an intensely personal turn, exchanging private for public subjects. Romance and science both devalued the social character of inquiry.

Philosophy reflects these changes. We suffer from seventeenth-century dichotomies of subject and object, which gave fresh force to opposing truth and rationality on the one side to conversation and rhetoric on the other. Solitary speculation came to be contrasted with talk. Talk is of course social, admitting many reasons. The older, rhetorical style bids the listener well and offers gentle arguments; the newer, scientific way makes the reader subject to hierarchies of proof or method that intimidate and exclude most people—even if we grant that, in principle, the subject may aspire to personal expertise. Those who really *know* benefit from privileged and usually undiscussable observations, compelling because scientific techniques certify that the findings must mirror nature. Capable of opinion only, the humble subject must submit to the rigors of Method in order to ascend the heights of Truth. This opposition spurns rhetoric and substitutes conviction for persuasion. Alternately we might say that authoritarian rhetorics of compelling proof and convincing demonstration usurp the office of

sweet reason. *Convincere* means "to defeat thoroughly," but *suadere* shares a root with *suavis*, Latin for "sweet." As Cicero enjoined (*De Oratore*, I: 31: 138), "the first duty of the orator is to speak in a manner suitable to persuading."

Philosophically, then, the denigration of rhetoric has its modern origin in René Descartes. The larger history of the denigration is complex, but recent foes of rhetoric are Cartesian in a broad sense, committed to the idea of Method. The revival of rhetoric has therefore taken an anti-Cartesian form. There is irony in this, since Descartes's own rhetoric was as self-conscious as it was successful. Exploring his "Experiments in Philosophical Genre," Amelie Oksenberg Rorty observed that "despite his austere recommendations about the methods of discovery and demonstration, he hardly ever followed those methods, hardly ever wrote in the same genre twice." Indeed, he "found himself using the very modes he intended to attack."<sup>1</sup> As Cicero said of Plato, Descartes was the best rhetorician when making merry of rhetoricians.

## II

The twentieth century has seen a weakening of the Cartesian base (and Kantian superstructure) of philosophy. In the English-speaking world, countermovements remain in the minority; but even here, their recent momentum is impressive. And their diversity should open many eyes. Even a brief survey must mention more than two handfuls of philosophers. In various ways, they all point toward rhetoric of inquiry.

Friedrich Nietzsche, for instance, assaulted directly the dichotomy of subject and object. "The objective," he wrote, "is only a false concept of a genus and an antithesis *within* the subjective."<sup>2</sup> He reviled the positivist view that "there are only *facts*." On the contrary, facts are "precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself': perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing."<sup>3</sup>

Martin Heidegger made Nietzsche's attack systematic, perhaps too much so. *Being and Time* undermines oppositions between subject and object by rejecting the notion of subjects as spectators, standing in isolation from objects.<sup>4</sup> It substitutes *Dasein*, an existence that is "always already" constituted by the situation within which it acts. *Dasein* is not the modern "subject" (whose very mention implies an object) but a "Being-in-the-world." Humans are not to be addressed apart from their worlds, as though the world were separate from the self. Only in

interaction within the world do they create identities, and only in this creation of identities does the world of human beings take shape.

Neither Nietzsche nor Heidegger developed the rhetorical implications of this attack on Descartes and his successors. In fact, some aspects of their styles continue the Cartesian bias against rhetoric. Speaking thus as Zarathustra, Nietzsche delivered tablets of a new law, rather than presenting reasons for a new persuasion. Speaking as a German professor of philosophy, Heidegger pronounced Truth *ex cathedra*, rather than arguing for interpretations in context. Still, other aspects of their styles and substantive claims remain favorable to rhetoric. This holds not only for their criticisms of earlier philosophers but also for their views of action in everyday life. In overthrowing "the fact in itself," for example, Nietzsche and Heidegger disputed the notion that facts speak for themselves. Rhetoric of inquiry is needed precisely because facts themselves are mute. Whatever the facts, *we* do the speaking—whether through them or for them.

To admit these rhetorical dimensions of inquiry has seemed dangerous to modernists, who crave certainty. Some oppose rhetoric with shouts of "Relativism!" But as Stanley Cavell and Richard Rorty argue, though to different ends, epistemology is more cause than cure of this philosophical disease. It would be better to stop requiring an ever larger number of certainties and to start accepting the partial assurances of human speech. For inquiry as for business, accepting uncertainty can lead to riches. It pluralizes science; and it chides philosophy of science separated from the histories, sociologies, aesthetics, and rhetorics of real sciences in actual practice. This is the best part of what Nietzsche intended in celebrating *Leben*, and it is the main implication of Heidegger's argument that practice is constitutive of human beings. It returns the attention of scholars to that most practical of human pursuits, rhetoric. Conference maketh a ready scholar.

John Dewey's attack on the Cartesian quest for certainty is comparable to Heidegger's, although in many respects the two philosophers could hardly be more different. Heidegger performed briefly (and disastrously) in politics, but was generally hostile to it. Dewey, by contrast, displayed a central and participatory concern with politics. He celebrated American democracy and its public rhetoric, though rejecting the false certainties of left and right. Philosophically and politically, he provided a rhetorical way of relating scholarship to politics.

Ludwig Wittgenstein was another who wanted to free scholarship from philosophers, or at least from philosophers who wished to separate it from practical life. From the start of Wittgenstein's sparring with philosophy, he manifested a preoccupation with the corruption of ordi-

nary language. To be sure, he tried first to assimilate language to the alleged certainties of logic and mathematics. But he later renounced this craving for certainty in favor of a practical and rhetorical emphasis on human languages as games among speakers, listeners, and actors. The metaphor of the game encourages attention to the back and forth, the give and take, of real argument.

Another major contribution of Wittgenstein to rhetoric of inquiry is his deconstruction of philosophical criteria for criticism and truth. Stanley Cavell has extended that work in detail, with sensitivity to its rhetorical and political implications. Especially in *The Claim of Reason*, he shows that standards of judgment reflect everyday life.<sup>5</sup> They are properly applied and refined *within* the worlds of inquiry, not at a philosophical distance. The standards are not simple, because they stem from the welter of everyday events and perspectives. Yet Cavell's account implies that it is precisely through rhetoric that we come to understand every human activity, including scholarship.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's contribution to the revitalization of rhetoric is to add a dialogic dimension that is missing, or at best undeveloped, in Nietzsche and Heidegger. Gadamer emphasizes the communitarian side of interpretation, as Cavell emphasizes the ties of reason to community. The similarity is especially notable considering that these two come from mutually hostile communities of philosophy. Gadamer flirts with the possibility of redefining argument and epistemology as hermeneutics, the study of understanding. A similarly hermeneutical perspective has been urged by Richard Rorty. At the end of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, he claims "that there is no point in trying to find a general synoptic way of 'analyzing' the 'functions knowledge has in universal contexts of practical life,' and that cultural anthropology (in a large sense which includes intellectual history) is all we need."<sup>6</sup> Rorty has detailed his vision of a cultural anthropology of knowledge in ways that agree closely with the rhetorical tradition. Above all, he promotes a philosophy that would edify through persuasive contributions to "the conversation of mankind."<sup>7</sup>

For Rorty, inquiry that avoids trying to mirror nature escapes "seeing the attainment of truth as a matter of necessity,"<sup>8</sup> whether logical or empirical. The rejection of necessitarian truth and coercive argument is now shared by many philosophers, among them John Searle, Hilary Putnam, and Nelson Goodman. Even Robert Nozick, in many ways a polar opposite of Rorty, has written eloquently on behalf of less dictatorial and more persuasive styles of academic discourse. His *Philosophical Explanations* begins by decrying the coercive terminology of recent philosophical argument.<sup>9</sup> After a subtle inquiry into how he is

actually persuaded when reading philosophical texts, he proposes revisions in the presentation of philosophy. These impart priority to persuasion over logical demonstration, implying both a new rhetoric and new openness to rhetoric by its old foes.

Yet another stylistic (and political) facet of rhetorical consciousness is exemplified by Jürgen Habermas, the target of Rorty's complaint about analysis in terms of "universal contexts of practical life." Instead of dissolving philosophy into hermeneutics or rhetoric, Habermas has been trying to incorporate rhetorical principles into philosophy. His indictment of "distorted" communication produces a pointedly political version of rhetoric of inquiry. His version is also among the more self-conscious. His *Theory of Communicative Action* brings a wide range of recent projects in social theory under the rubric of communication.<sup>10</sup>

Habermas can be said to seek a rapprochement of rhetoric and philosophy. The writings of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are more aggressive. It may be misleading even to call them philosophers, though it is equally misleading to call them historians, culture critics, or other common name—good or bad. Their heritage is plain enough: they are children of Nietzsche and Heidegger. After devastating criticisms of the modern legacy in scholarship, they turn to language. Derrida's notorious assertion that "there is nothing outside the text" is, among other things, a reminder of the rhetorical constitution of reality. The relentless unlogic of his deconstructions unravels what lies behind demonstrative arguments, if anything at all can be said to "lie behind" them. Like Derrida, Foucault displayed striking sensitivity to rhetoric in politics and inquiry. He drove even more directly toward rhetoric. Always he insisted that we uncover the machinations of power within claims to white-coated objectivity in science or society. It is not necessary to accept everything that either of these corrosive theorists has said in order to learn from them. What they most obviously teach are the rhetorics of myths and stories. Time and again, these wild men of contemporary "discourse" have provoked starts of recognition by discovering residues of oppressive myths within scholarship itself. Repeatedly, they have urged us to reach beyond questioning past tales to compose new stories of our own.

The restoration of storytelling to scholarship is also a major theme of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Utopia*.<sup>11</sup> There he condemns as impossible and incomprehensible the modern project of a single social science pursuing lawlike generalizations tested empirically. In its place, he defends the dependence of actual social sciences on ethics—and the dependence of ethics in turn on social "roles," in something close to the theatrical sense. Any view that provides for the virtues in human living

must focus on life's dramatic or narrative structure. MacIntyre's stories of modern morality and scholarship show that "relativism" is a result of modern philosophy and politics, not a reason for retaining them in their antirhetorical form. As in Rorty and Cavell, rhetoric is the cure, not the disease.

Even taken together, these writers are nothing like a school—unless common enemies make a school. What they share is a sensitivity to language taken beyond language alone into the practices of living in our times, plus a conviction that the conduct of inquiry is as communal as its consequences. Thus we see in their work anticipations of the concerns that constitute rhetoric of inquiry.

### III

The vision of a single, certain, natural, and rational order haunts us still and may never disappear entirely. But it is fading in recent practices of science and scholarship. An important project of the late twentieth century, only partly acknowledged, has been to deconstruct Enlightenment rationalism and its culture of authoritarian liberation. As a result, the study of rhetoric is slowly returning to the center of our self-awareness.

Literary critics such as I. A. Richards and William Empson struggled to keep rhetoric from becoming completely peripheral. Still, the related drives to create sciences of society and to ascertain the fundamentals of inquiry have in the last hundred years eclipsed most of the scholar's rhetorical needs and resources. Popular myths have presented scientists as individual machines of awesome logic occasionally informed by flashes of inspiration. Scholarly conceptions concede increases in the scale and significance of institutions in science but otherwise have been much the same. What place might there be for communal arts of persuasion in technical halls of science where logical rigor and unaccountable genius reign supreme?

Steps toward transforming logic of inquiry into rhetoric of inquiry are especially evident in the work of Chaim Perelman, Stephen Toulmin, and Thomas Kuhn. Indeed, the transformation is evident more widely in the history, philosophy, and sociology of science. As we have already suggested, one sign of the growing awareness of rhetoric is greater attention to actual argumentation. The catalysts were two books published in 1958, *The New Rhetoric* by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca,<sup>12</sup> and *The Uses of Argument* by Stephen Toulmin.<sup>13</sup> Perelman and Toulmin are philosophers: Perelman was

trained in law; Toulmin in analytical philosophy of a British sort. Yet much of their inspiration and most of their impact so far lies outside professional philosophy. Many of their notions derive from argument in law and other speechmaking, and the first audience for their books was the peculiarly American discipline of communication studies, which has been much enriched by their work.

Perelman came to rhetoric as a student concerned with the nature of justice. This led him to ask how we reason about values, which in turn led him to casemaking in law. The need for a new rhetoric emphasizing reasoned persuasion was forced on him by the contrast between law and more formalized inquiry. Toulmin's initial concern was also ethical. In *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, he explored how moral reasoning actually occurs, as distinct from deriving principles a priori from postulates.<sup>14</sup> Turning then to logic, he looked for a way to focus on "practical" rather than on "theoretical" reasoning; and he too found it in law. *The Uses of Argument* treats logic as a "generalized jurisprudence" concerned with "the sort of *case* we present in defense of our claims."<sup>15</sup>

The European inspiration for a rhetoric of inquiry, then, was law; the American inspiration was politics. Since its formal beginnings around World War I, the study of speech communication has focused on political speech. Political rhetoric flourished in the nineteenth century, when American democracy was creating its rhetorical traditions. The American concern with politics is evident in Thomas S. Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.<sup>16</sup> Its dominant metaphor of revolution is political. The history of modern science reveals patterns of change dramatically different from the picture implied by extant logics of inquiry, and better suited to a rhetoric. It therefore challenges philosophy to account for the actual operation of scientific communities—their professional devices of communication and socialization, their political structures, their reliance on aesthetics, their rhetorical dependence on persuasion.

Perelman and Toulmin are drawn to law because of its self-conscious tradition of argument constrained by alterable standards. Kuhn's attraction to politics seems to stem from its interplay of order, authority, communication, and change. Both law and politics put a premium on narrative, putting in context the timeless generalizations pursued by philosophers of science. Both fields are notable for their concern with actual conduct and practical action. And both appreciate, as Dewey did, that persuasion is necessary for action. Like the pragmatists before them, the new rhetoricians treat inquiry as action—and law and politics are assuredly arenas of action.

Further glimmerings of a rhetoric of inquiry appear in the work of other dissenters from received views in the philosophy of science, such as Norwood Russell Hanson, Imre Lakatos, and Paul Feyerabend. They joined Kuhn and Toulmin in challenging the rhetorical insensitivity of epistemology. At about the same time, circa 1970, the study of science itself underwent a revolution. Bernard Barber, Robert Merton, and others developed a sociology of science; the history of science attained maturity and an unprecedented popularity; and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann revitalized the sociology of knowledge in *The Social Construction of Reality*.<sup>17</sup> This work is being extended into a variety of projects in the anthropology, history, and sociology of science, including the "strong programme" of the Edinburgh School. Philosophers of science such as Max Black, Mary Hesse, and Earl MacCormac began about the same time to turn epistemology toward the rhetoric of thinking—which is to say, the rhetoric of models and metaphors. And now scholars in virtually every field are looking beyond official methodologies, to address how their research is really done.

All these precursors of rhetoric of inquiry have opposed the overemphasis on formal logic in the philosophies of "ideal language." The programs of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Rudolf Carnap pivoted on developing a grammar separate from and superior to substantive inquiry. The goal was to yield a single methodology for all fields—that is, a unified science. Such programs were loosely tied to an idealized (and erroneous) view of physics, taken as the height of Science. But this narrow logic of inquiry and its attempt at a neutral language of observation failed decisively, in its own terms. For example, Carl Hempel's covering-law account of historical explanation strikes most practicing historians as unilluminating and implausible. No one follows it literally. Yet scholars who are insecure about the status of their disciplines, or who simply lack ideas, have *tried* to follow such prescriptions. Especially in the social sciences, the attempt has caused immense confusion and wasted effort. What researchers actually find reasonable fits ill or not at all with what a formal logic of inquiry implies to be their duty.

The old program evades such difficulties by distinguishing between "perfect" and "imperfect" sciences, attributing all incompatibilities between the proposed methodology and actual practices to the immaturity of the practices. The imperfection is seen as a failure to resemble some pure form compatible with a simple logic. The rhetoricians start instead with the substantive arguments. They might be said to replace models from mathematics and physics (though misapprehended) with models from law, politics, and literature. Rhetoric of inquiry regards

any field of human discourse as a reasonable starting point for a study of inquiry.

This means that rhetoric of inquiry begins with texts. It is literary. Because literary critics never entirely abandoned rhetorical ways of reading texts, the specifically rhetorical turn of literary theory enjoys many contributors. Still, Kenneth Burke and Wayne Booth deserve special notice for spreading rhetorical consciousness beyond literary studies, and the same may be said of Hayden White in history. Their work converges with the interest of speech communication in the epistemic status of rhetoric.

Burke led a reunion of rhetoric with poetics, which he defines as the serious business of acting with symbols. In regarding *Language as Symbolic Action*, he has pursued *The Philosophy of Literary Form* into such areas as *Attitudes Toward History*, *A Grammar of Motives*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, and *Terms for Order*.<sup>18</sup> White has extended Burke's rhetorical mix of politics and poetics into historical and social inquiry. In *Metahistory*<sup>19</sup> and many essays since, he has joined Burke, Northrop Frye, Roman Jakobson, Stephen Pepper, and others in attending to how scholars "prefigure their phenomenal fields." He explores the rhetoric of tropes, ideologies, genres, and stories. Booth, too, uses Burke to connect diverse realms—of philosophy, art, literature, music, politics, and psychology. But Booth's rhetoric emphasizes the more traditional dimension of argument. Against modern dogmatisms and relativisms, he defends a rhetoric of "good reasons" that aims to encourage thinking about when we should and should not change our minds. In his literary theory and in books directed at wider audiences, such as *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me* and *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*,<sup>20</sup> he has advocated a pluralism rendered coherent by rhetoric.

In speech communication, Booth's books have contributed both to the theory of argument as a presentation of "good reasons" rather than logical proofs and to the study of "rhetoric as epistemic." The latter phrase was introduced in 1967, in a seminal and still controversial essay by Robert L. Scott.<sup>21</sup> Since then, speech communication has studied the rhetorics of science and of other special fields. It recognizes the need we identified at the outset for a binocular view of the unity and diversity of scholarship. Rhetorical studies are beginning to spread onto the scholarly sites themselves, fulfilling another need: locating rhetoric of inquiry out in the field.

Two barriers sometimes frustrate efforts at rhetoric of inquiry. One is the philosophical tendency to contrast rhetoric and rationality, taking rhetoric to endorse radical relativism (or mere nihilism). The other is

the failure to examine rhetoric within actual practices, academic or otherwise. The best response, given in this book, is to do rhetoric of inquiry, showing that it works. That is the usual way of overturning established methods and jargon-laden expertise. It would involve directing attention away from Methodology toward specific pieces of scholarly inquiry and communication. To borrow Toulmin's terms, it would include shifting attention away from the abstract and allegedly universal standards of Reason and toward the "warrants" and "backings" of particular reasonings. It means stressing the importance of the audience in humanistic and scientific speech: the warrants and backings must be shared with audiences if an argument is to have power. And it entails focusing on the figurative and even the mythic parts of inquiry. In short, it requires that we study concrete communities of inquiry instead of abstract logics.

#### IV

There is a lot to be studied, and the questions are many. What does the rhetoric of a piece of scholarship imply for its uses? Why do genres of scholarship differ from one field to another? How do narratives matter? What roles do metaphors play in scientific persuasion? How have rhetorical conventions affected particular fields? How does their rhetoric affect their public reception? What do theories of rhetoric imply for the conduct of research? What does rhetoric imply for relations among the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professions? How might recent theories of rhetoric revise our conceptions of rationality? What are the connections among rhetoric, epistemology, ethics, logics, myths, poetics, politics, psychology, sociology, and other aspects of inquiry? How might increased awareness of rhetoric reform education in the disciplines?

Rhetoric of inquiry is especially valuable for the human sciences, the systematic studies of humankind. Rhetoric is generally recognized as part of the humanities. Its renaissance started there, and it promises important revisions at home. But the social sciences have less awareness of rhetoric than do the humanities, and would benefit more from increased rhetorical self-consciousness. The humanities already regard human acts and products as events for understanding, criticism, and celebration; the social sciences now regard them as objects for explanation, prediction, and control. The role of rhetoric has been played down in the humanities, but it has been downright ignored in



the social sciences. In consequence, the social sciences float in warm seas of unexamined rhetoric.

But rhetoric of inquiry can also bring down needless walls between the human sciences. Its lessons come often from comparing different inquiries, encouraging scholars to learn from their colleagues—whereas Methodology tells them to learn exclusively from Plato, Descartes, Hempel, or Popper. Rhetoric acknowledges, too, the capacity of every field to encompass diverse and changing rhetorics. Discovering the sciences and the professions to be no less (but differently) rhetorical than the humanities may lead scholars to abandon the ramparts of Method.

The main challenge is to integrate rhetoric of inquiry into the normal business of scholarship. Caught up in abstraction, logicians of inquiry often fail to address actual practice. Rhetoricians of inquiry must not make the same mistake: they must not seek an abstracted and autonomous field. Their work must arise from practice. It must learn from many projects, and alter many. And it must reach beyond academic life.

There are places for specialists in rhetoric of inquiry, but not just in a single discipline, such as literary theory or communication studies. Such a concentration would produce outside authorities, obliged to speak from afar and tempted to instruct from above. Rhetoricians of inquiry must be able to talk with the persuasiveness of insiders. Experts on literature and communication have much to teach others about historical comparisons and theoretical principles important in rhetoric of inquiry. But there also need to be economic critics of economics and anthropological critics of anthropology, in the style of poetic critics of poetry—a new race of Coleridges and Eliots.

The literary criticism of a field requires showing how it departs from its official norms of research. Such critics can discern in detail what is obvious in outline: that scholars call on different reasons that are persuasive at different points. They can examine how inquiries should be sensitized to their own rhetorics. These rhetoricians can take advantage of the tendency of rhetoric to merge the field of study with the practices studied. "Rhetoric" covers at once what is communicated, how it is communicated, what happens when it is communicated, how to communicate it better, and what communication is in general. Rhetoric of inquiry enlarges these meanings to encompass the interdependence of inquiry and communication, and to encourage connecting all the skeins of rhetoric into a commitment for better inquiry to inform action.

Rhetoric of inquiry reflects a renewed concern for the quality of speaking and writing in scholarship. It emphasizes the interaction of style and substance. But mostly it tries to improve the conduct of inquiry, inside and outside the academy, by learning from its diversity. As immanent epistemology, within particular fields, rhetoric of inquiry shows what we are really doing and how to criticize it. As comparative epistemology, across different fields, rhetoric of inquiry shows what others are doing and how to learn from it. Rhetoric of inquiry explores how reason is rhetorical.

## NOTES

1. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "Experiments in Philosophical Genre," *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1983): 548.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, part 8, vol. 2: 17.
3. *Ibid.*, 1: 323.
4. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).
5. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
6. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 391.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
9. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).
10. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). This work was originally published in German in 1981.
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12. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969). This book was originally published in French in 1958.
13. Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).
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