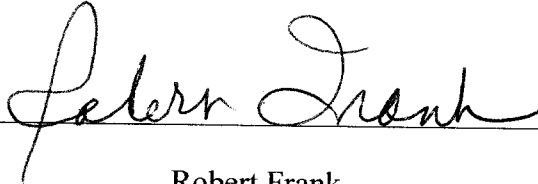# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Josh M. Beach for the degree of Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in English,
History, and Philosophy presented on June 25, 2002. Title: Ideology, Reality, and
Rhetoric: Kenneth Burke's Dramatism.

Abstract Approved: _____

Robert Frank

The American philosopher and literary critic Kenneth Burke was an "ideologist"
(although he never called himself this, and added to that, he spent most of his life
avoiding the Marxist term of ideology to describe human "systems" of ideas). Burke
instead used the terms "orientation," "rationalization," "perspective," "critical
perspective," "way of life," "critical mind-frame," "Weltanschauung," and "gestalt" to
describe basically the main idea behind ideology: "a system of ideas, aiming at social or
political action." The first definition of ideology that Burke lists in A Rhetoric of
Motives (his only book to take on the term ideology directly) is "the study, development,
criticism of ideas," which is exactly what Burke did for his entire philosophical life.
Thus one could argue that the preeminent idea at the "center" of Burke's thought is the
role and function of ideology in terms of human individual and socio-cultural
development and communication. It is my purpose to critically locate and order the
many divergent trails of ideology that Burke blazed in his major works in order to
present, through his many models, a tangible *theory of ideology.*

Ideology, Reality, and Rhetoric: Kenneth Burke's Dramatism

by

Josh M. Beach

A THESIS

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Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of

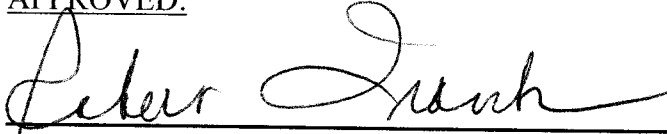the requirements for the

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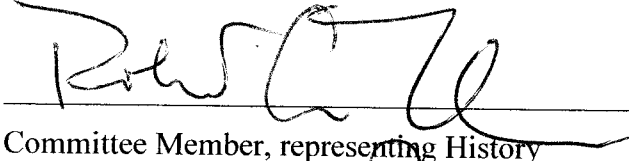
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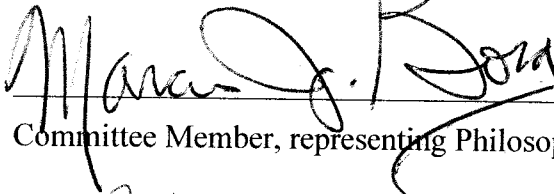
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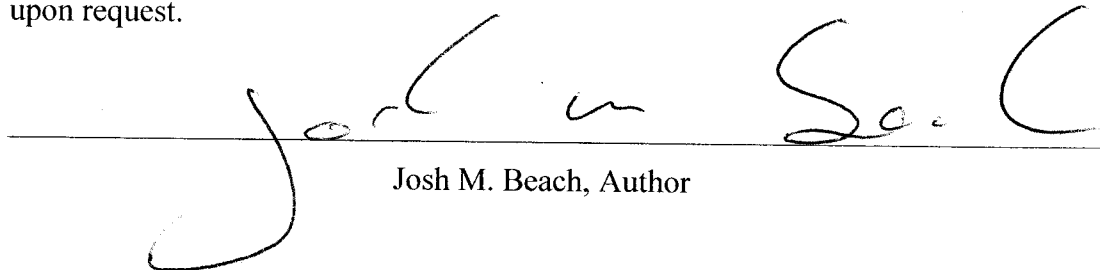Committee Member, representing Philosophy

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorized release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Josh M. Beach, Author

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KENNETH BURKE'S DRAMATISM

1. INTRODUCTION: CHARTING IDEOLOGY, COMMUNICATING TERMS, AND CHANGINCOURSES

Kenneth Burke once stopped half way through a book and wrote, "let us try again. (A direct hit is not likely here. The best one can do is to try different approaches towards the same center, whenever the opportunity offers)."[1] This statement sums up the eclectic (and what some have called eccentric) manner of Kenneth Burke's philosophical approach. He preferred to take aim at whatever topic was his focus (estheticism, ideology, history, human freedom) and blaze as many trails as he could towards the ever allusive "center" of his proposed discussion hoping that the reader could follow by at least one of his paths towards an understanding. For Burke, there was never a definitive statement of "truth," only the haltingly imperfect utterances of approximations to the "truth" vying for limited communicative space within the human "conversation" of history.

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Early in his career Burke made some logical deductions to argue that the emergent ideological orientations of psychology, economics, and world history had had to elbow their way into dominance by marginalizing and diminishing the importance of

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[1] Burke, Kenneth. A Rhetoric of Motives. 1950. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. 137.

other established ways of seeing the world (art, religion, poetry). They did so, as Burke

explains through his lengthy aside in "The Status of Art" (1931), by inventing

terminologies germane to their emergent ideological orientations and then, through

rhetorical fiat, using these invented terms to analyze competing ideologies through an

imposed (and hostile) critical filter, which through a rhetorical/referential translation,

disparaged any *other* analyzed ideology as "unfit" under the new ideological "standards."

Thus Burke, in defending the ideological orientation of art, had to critique the "critical

filter" of an alien ideological orientation in order to make a case for art (as its own

ideological orientation with its own germane terminology and points of reference): Burke

ends by saying that art is *at least* nothing more and nothing less then any other

ideological orientation (although one can see through the language and terminology that

Burke uses in Counter-Statement (1931) that he personally privileges the ideological

orientation of art).

Burke writes, "In times of revolution, it is usually the best features of the old

regime that are attacked. Vandals, swarming upon a city, will select the finest

monuments to topple and leave inferior things unharmed."[2] Conquering armies

inevitably bring their own gods and forms of government with them and, thus, the

physical displacement of a population has never been enough (moving bodies). There

- must also be an accompanying *ideological displacement* as well (shaping minds). In the

West, the Christian Empire, as the Romans before them, converted the

"heathens/barbarians" by transforming their indigenous beliefs through a process of

rhetorical replacement. By imposing a new ideological frame of reference, what was

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[2] Burke, Kenneth. Counter Statement. 1931. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. 89.

once a sanctified ritual of social importance became marginalized, maligned or replaced through the new hierarchical system of privileged terminologies and meanings.

Physical displacements are always accompanied by ideological displacements and in an established physical realm of warring human factions, Burke would come to spend his career highlighting the verbal wars of ideology. For Burke explicitly links the ideological and the verbal with the physical and the biological: "an ideology is a 'culture.'"[3] Burke's definition stems from the cultural theory of Hegel (*Bildung, Volksgeist*), Ralph Waldo Emerson (Over-soul, self-culture), and Matthew Arnold (culture) who collectively explained in the 19th century that "culture" was not only a set of values, a linguistic system or a set of social standards, but it was also a way of living because it was the foundation of the human activities of sensory filtration (interpretation) and epistemological speculation out of which was grounded the means for social organization.[4]

The formation of culture is an "artistic" function derivative of the creative processes of the human mind, which through an active and highly subjective dynamic of sensory interpretation and categorization comes to produce something like Freud's concept of "illusions" or Burke's "something added to experience." Culture is a creative process of forming Identity through the development of language and the refinement of conceptual thought. Culture is the creation of a dynamic orientation rhetorically constituted for an individual or a group of people. Culture is a Way of living, an orientation, a Gestalt. Culture is, in short, an ideology.

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[3] Ibid. 161.

[4] Max Weber and John Dewey were contemporary cultural theorists working out of the same tradition as Burke.

Besides reiterating this important idea, Burke was able to introduce (or reinforce) two relatively new equations into the definition of *culture-as-ideology*.[5] The first was that ideologies are formed as responses to environmental circumstances[6] and as such they need to continually adapt and reformulate themselves in response to environmental changes. A healthy ideology is one that is flexible to change. But what philosophers like Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche came to discover was that once vibrant and dynamic cultures become established and began to thrive in a particular environment they tend to solidify (by means of institutionalization and "bureaucratization") into a "decadent" phase where decay seems to set in. Nietzsche went so far as to say that "truth," and by extension ideology (as ideologies are the human processes that create truth), is viable for only a few decades before it becomes outdated and inefficient. Burke echoed this same idea in "Applications of Terminology:"

> Any principle can lead to vast absurdities, if only because principles persist and grow in popularity long after they have gained the end for which they were formulated. And in outlasting their original beneficent function, they take on a maleficent function, for instead of running counter to the situation which they were designed to correct, they may now be carrying to excess the situation which they served to bring about. Indeed, we might almost say that the predominance of a principle is *per se* evidence that this principle has outlived its usefulness; for by the time it has penetrated from the busy centers of thought to the sluggish periphery of mankind, the situation for which it was designated has certainly altered.[7]

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[5] "Culture-as-ideology" will here on out refer to an ideological Gestalt governing a group or society and "ideological-orientation" will refer to the ideological Gestalt of an individual. The terms remain synonymous but for the fact of the newly introduced contextual scope.

[6] A note on my usage of the word "environment:" the word and its associated meanings come from a biological-evolutionary context of ecological conditions and in this essay, as we are dealing exclusively with human beings, I want to extend the definition of the word "environment" to include both social/political/economical (demographic) and also historical (temporal) conditions.

[7] Burke. Counter-Statement. Ibid. 186.

One should not be hung up on the particular linguistic expressions of "truth" or "principles" for they both refer to products of the same *seeing-naming-knowing* process; a process we are calling "ideology:" *ideology-as-culture* (social) and *ideological-orientation* (individual). The point that Burke makes, and that I am reinforcing, is that as environments change so too do (or should) ideologies, but ideologies once established seem to resist change. Either 1) the dissemination process of a particular ideology outlives the ideology's efficiency because by the time the ideology becomes solidified within a socio-political complex the environment has changed significantly or 2) because certain ideological-orientations (individual) and ideology-as-cultures (social) are privileged and held on to through the dynamics of power, despite the ideology's inefficiency in reacting to changing environmental conditions.

This idea gives rise to the second modification Burke made to his discussion of ideology. In "Lexicon Rhetoricae" Burke wrote, "the shifts in ideology [are] continuous, not only from age to age but from person to person": ideology "varies from one person to another, and from one age to another."[8] Here Burke is explaining the range of ideology from individuals to social groups and he notes that ideological frameworks not only differ and change in large-scale social shifts seen from "age to age," but they also do the same from individual to individual. He goes on to elaborate this notion (prefiguring cultural theorists like Stuart Hall and Dick Hebdige[9]) when he writes, "there are cultures within cultures," with each "subdivision" having "divergent standards and interests," having its

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[8] Ibid. 147, 161.

[9] Burke footnotes a small discussion on "style" in <u>Permanence and Change</u> (pg. 269-70) prefiguring Dick Hebdige's influential book <u>Subculture and the Meaning of Style</u> (1979).

"own characteristic ideology:" "An ideology is not a harmonious structure of beliefs or assumptions...[it] is an aggregate of beliefs sufficiently at odds with one another."[10]

Burke makes two extraordinary inferences here predating Derridian deconstruction and Foucaultian de-centering and also modern theories of Psychology. First, Burke introduces the idea that an ideology is not a monolithic system of orientation, but a divergent dynamic composed of competing subdivisions, which vie (sometimes "at odds with one another") for control of an ideological apparatus. This description parallels Derrida's de-centered "I" and Foucault's de-centered social "power" structures, while simultaneously referring to modern theories of the human ego, which describe an individual's "I" as a collection of disparate and often competing factional identities.[11] This leads to the second point Burke raises, which predates the established conclusion of all three of the theoretical positions above: In every emergent ideological-orientation or ideology-as-culture a governing ideological "center" is created through a process of hierarchizing and facilitating the factional subdivisions, which often means a privileging of certain factions and the marginalization of others. An "I," an "Ideology," a "Culture," or an "Identity" are all negotiated constructs: they are a combination of rhetorical, material, and psycho-social mechanisms determined through a charged power struggle between an existing set of rival factions.

To conclude our early discussion of ideology: ideological-orientations (individual) and ideology-as-cultures (social) are aggregates of disparate and competing identities or needs hierarchized and facilitated through a "centering" apparatus, which processes the subdivisions in relation to environmental demands and privileges the

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[10] Burke. Counter Statement. Ibid. 161, 163.

ideological alignment most suited to functionally satisfy the situational context. Over time certain ideological alignments are continually used and privileged, and in the case of a society, disseminated throughout the population, which systemically solidifies an arch-ideological alignment as *the* identifiable ideological-orientation or ideology-as-culture. This signifies the decay and, thus, growing inefficiency of the ideology because it is institutionalized into a rigid seeing-naming-knowing system, which impedes adaptability to changing environmental circumstances. Inefficient ideological apparatuses are often kept because of individual choice or social pressures (power), which will benefit from the establishment of certain ideological orientations.

We will end here by restating the *efficiency* of a dynamic and active ideology governed by the facilitation of competing subdivisions and the *inefficiency* of a static and institutionalized ideology governed by a single, "orthodox" ideological alignment. The first promotes adaptability and the later does not. In an "evolutionary"[12] context predicated upon changing environmental conditions, adaptability is the key to survival. Therefore, a species or individual with an efficient and adaptable ideological orientation would theoretically be more prone to survive and thrive under constantly changing environmental or "evolutionary" conditions.

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[11] Burke would call the psychological divergence within the ego as "man's original biological divisiveness" in A Rhetoric of Motives (147).

[12] Now Burke was aware of the theories of evolution, but he himself was not working within an explicit "evolutionary" context although one can correlate much of Burke's thought to modern theories of evolution. Burke was aware of a growing Ecological awareness (Attitudes Toward History, "Footnote," 150), which has made him one of the forerunners of "ecological criticism." One could also argue that "The Curve of History" in Attitudes Toward History is but a grand narrative describing the "evolution" of ideology in the West. Burke's explicit philosophical frame of reference hearkens back to Aristotle where he speaks of "man in society" as opposed to the two other dominant frames of reference of Burke's time: religion ("man as citizen of heaven") and Darwinian evolution ("man in the jungle") (Ibid 170). Modern breakthroughs in evolutionary thought have increased our knowledge of the evolutionary process through natural selection and sexual selection, and like geology and physics, evolution represents the premiere efforts of the human

This outlines our preliminary definition of ideology. I have expanded Burke's foundational usage of this idea into a theoretical model so that we may see how Burke's discussion of ideology progresses and is complicated throughout his career. Burke moves from his thoughts on ideology in Counter Statement to his second major work Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose (1935), wherein, the discussion of the seeing-naming-knowing process of ideology is framed within terms of Behaviorist and Gestalt Psychology in order to highlight two main ideas: there is a biologically grounded sensory filtration system we are calling "ideology-as-orientation" and also how particular ideological orientations are programmed into individuals through social (physical and verbal) "training" or "conditioning." The second emphasis becomes important, as Burke explains, because training can go wrong: orientations are developed out of the need to meet a particular set of environmental circumstances and when environmental circumstances change, the old orientation has trouble identifying and meeting the new needs of the new environment. Old orientations can become dysfunctional.

Identifying "dysfunction" in ideological apparatuses and correcting dysfunction through verbalization sets Burke's course in Permanence and Change. He outlines his purpose for the work as basically threefold: 1) to explain the "rational" process of how human orientations are formed through "terminologies," 2) to suggest a "criticism of criticism" by which to evaluate divergent or competing ideological orientations and measure their "functionality," and 3) suggest how one might understand, manipulate, and unify ideological orientations through the "terminological" coordinates of human communication. In a large part this work foreshadows his 1965 essay Terministic

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species to trace our place in the universe. For our efforts in this essay "evolution" will refer to the changing, "evolving" nature of environmental contexts.

Screens where he defends the need for a "dramatistic" set of terms with which one can size up the "modes" of linguistic action so as to be able to chart a discussion of how functional an ideological perspective ("terministic screen") is in reading the needs of a particular environmental situation.

But before Burke presented his theory of "dramatism" for the first time in The Philosophy of Literary Form (1941) he took a bit of a detour in Attitudes Toward History (1937) so as to re-contextualize and flesh out his main thesis and key terms begun in Permanence and Change within a less biological and more explicitly historical context: he presents a grand narrative of sorts wherein he tells of how particular Western ideologies evolved and changed hands through what Robert Wess has called the "agon of history." He invents a new terminological coordinate of "acceptance" and "rejection" with which to size up the evolving nature of ideological orientations so as to reinforce his earlier idea that competing factions ("heresies") within an "orthodoxy" can, and do, change both the face and the substance of existing identities over time, and play as much of a role as "counter-orthodoxies" in shaping the course of ideologies-as-cultures through the process of history.

He does not dwell long upon the process of history *per se*, as he presents it more as a deterministic environmental context (a "circumference" or a "scene"), because he is more interested in how individuals and groups *talk* about history and *use it* to read the nature of reality and, thereby, construct or reinforce ideological-orientations or ideologies-as-cultures so that they can create new "acts." The last 120 pages of Attitudes Toward History are devoted to a dictionary, which explains key terms introduced both in this book and in Permanence and Change.

Burke explained in a 1958 essay "The Seven Offices," included as an "Appendix" to the second 1959 edition of <u>Attitudes Toward History</u>, that his emphasis was moving towards the "advantages" and "risks" of the "Talking Animal" in relation to *how* (form) and *why* (motive) biological organisms, specifically human beings, do what they do (act). This was Burke's focus as he segued into his next work, <u>The Philosophy of Literary Form</u>, where he began to create the chart that he could use to map the coordinates of human actions (which are based upon ideological-orientations). However, his eye was aimed not only on the *way* people act (ideological methods) and *why* (motivations), but also, and seemingly more importantly for Burke, how people *talk* (rhetoric) about the methods and motives directing their acts.

In this way Burke discussed and explained verbally expressed dramatic acts (verbal action/symbolic action) in both historical (<u>Attitudes Toward History</u>) and fictionalized (<u>The Philosophy of Literary Form</u>) settings. Burke argues that the role of the critic should be one of reading the dramatic act for influences of ideology (method) and purpose (motivation) so as to size up the contextual situation at hand and, thereby, determine what the act means and, further, how the verbal symbols describing the act have influenced its meaning. Burke was trying to introduce a new critical perspective, (a criticism of criticism or an ideology of ideology) that would operate as a "calculus -- a vocabulary, or set of coordinates" that would serve to "integrate" the disparate "phenomena" of historical and fictionalized dramatic acts under a new method with new terms.[13] Burke offered his new critical method as way to limit the dysfunctional effects

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[13] Burke, Kenneth. <u>The Philosophy of Literary Form</u>. 1941. 3rd Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. 105.

of particular ideological-orientations so as to more honestly read and understand the reality outside the human doors of perception.

The terms he introduces, although he does not use them in The Philosophy of Literary Form, are the, by now familiar, "Pentad:" act, scene, agent, agency, purpose. He says that these terms will help the critic look past the motivation (purpose) behind an act so as to "locate the strategies" (ideology, method) informing or dictating an act.[14] He defends his new "dramatic perspective" as a "structure of analysis" that hopefully can avoid the antithetically minded and value driven ideological pitfalls that other "faulty" structures of analysis contain:

> It is, then, my contention, that if we approach poetry from the standpoint of situations and strategies, we can make the most relevant observations about both the content and the form of poems. By starting from a concern with the various tactics and deployments involved in ritualistic acts of membership, purification, and opposition, we can most accurately discover "what is going on" in poetry.[15]

We must remind ourselves that when Burke uses the word "poetry" he means both "factual" (ex. politics) and "fictional" (ex. literature) dramatic acts.[16] One reads the paper, an act of congress, or the Constitution of the United States in the same way that one would read a poem (and this becomes very evident in A Grammar of Motives). The critical eye sizes up the situation through the form and content of the verbalization so as to decide upon the motivation and, more importantly, the ideology behind the act.

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[14] Ibid. "Footnote 25." 106.

[15] Ibid. 124.

[16] Frank Lentricchia interprets Burke's wide definition of "literature:" "It is all writing considered as social practice, all writing viewed in its material circumstances and in its purposiveness. It is power as representation. The literary is all around us, and it is always doing its work upon us. It bears the past in many complex ways, but it does its deed, makes its mark, marks us, here and now." Lentricchia quotes Burke as saying, "not only is Mein Kampf literature; it was highly effective literature" (Criticism and Social Change, 157).

Burke's preoccupation was always on identifying the ideological parameters, which in a large part, shape and determine the course of human motivation and human actions. He thought that if humans could perfect their verbalization (and thus analysis) of motives and meanings then, somehow, the ideological-orientations would thereby become more honest and more flexible or adaptable.

This leads us to Burke's monumental and groundbreaking piece of theory (and perhaps his greatest work) A Grammar of Motives (1945). In this endeavor Burke re-introduces his pentad (and the series of ratios that they can combine into) in order to present a critical framework that can more accurately *read* a particular act. He then moves into a discussion of "substance" and how it is rhetorically constituted and held up, as it were, by a series of verbal constructions. Burke's eye, at this point in his career, was always on the verbal/rhetorical "magics" that humans use to construct their views of reality and assign meanings, and therefore, he moves into a rhetorical analysis of several different philosophical schools of thought in order to present *how* particular terminologies stemming from particular ideological-orientations *see* and *construct/constitute* reality in different ways. Again, Burke is looking for the functional and the dysfunctional ways ideological-orientations and their terminologies size up reality:

> Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is a reduction. Its scope and reduction become a deflection when the given terminology, or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it is designed to calculate.[17]

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[17] Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. 1945. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962. 59

Burke's pentad (and the series of ratios that it makes) was designed to locate the reflections, selections, and deflections of any given ideological vocabulary and, by and large, his pentad seems to be able to do just that with remarkable accuracy.

As Burke argued in The Philosophy of Literary Form, a critical perspective must "illustrate" its "scope" by "concrete application" in order to prove its worth and/or to refute other critical perspectives.[18] The third part of A Grammar of Motives is where Burke put his critical terminology to use in order to create the premier "concrete application" of his critical theory. He analyzed the rhetorical construction and re-construction of the American Constitution to find within this highly influential political document a series of competing articulations of "what should be" vying for their substantiation as "what is."[19] A constitution becomes, under Burke's analysis, a hierarchical system of ordering divergent and competing "wishes" in order to satisfy those wishes deemed worthy by the powers that be. In essence, Burke reiterates that constitutions as verbal acts are also historical acts, meaning, constitutions are created and drafted in a particular time to meet particular environmental circumstances and, as such, they need to be reinterpreted, re-created (re-constituted) to meet the new needs of a new environment. As Burke would say in his last major work, The Rhetoric of Religion, "all true thought is but recapitulation:"[20] all ideological orientations and terministic screens are necessarily re-constitutions of the old to meet the new

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[18] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 124.

[19] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. Ibid. 358.

[20] Burke, Kenneth. The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology. 1961. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1970. 284.

Conservative perspectives resist the new while progressive perspectives rush to embrace the new. Kenneth Burke followed <u>A Grammar of Motives</u> with a work designed to compliment his discussion of the *act* with a discussion of *discussion*, that is, a discussion of rhetoric. <u>A Rhetoric of Motives</u> (1950) marks the second volume in an envisioned dramatic trilogy (the last volume was to be entitled <u>A Symbolic of Motives</u>, but it was never written[21]) and in this work Burke looked to argue for a "New Rhetoric" as the necessary complement to his criticism of criticism: a new terminology beyond his pentad (or extended from his pentad) to articulate his new critical perspective. It is specifically in this work where Burke marks the "power" of ideological-orientations to "mystify" themselves (and thus tangle the individuals and cultures they serve) within the vocabularies that they create.

This is a brief summation of Burke's philosophical endeavors with ideology, ideological terminologies, and critical perspectives. We will turn now to a detailed discussion of his primary works to uncover the particular avenues that Burke took in his quest to define and articulate a groundbreaking critical theory accompanied by a unique critical vocabulary.

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[21] Wess. <u>Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric, Subjectivity, Postmodernism</u>. Ibid. 243-46.

2. SEEING AND NOT SEEING: THE BLINDNESS OF IDEOLOGY

Kenneth Burke dropped out of Columbia University in 1918 to be a writer in

Greenwich Village (he would never earn even a B. A.). In New York, he published some

of his short fiction in the small "experimental" literary magazines of the day and later

became associated with the highly influential aesthetic/literary journal The Dial.[1] It is out

of the mental ferment of this environment that Kenneth Burke wrote and published his

first book of essays Counter-Statement in 1931. Most of Burke's essays in this book

focused on his early theoretical preoccupation with an "aesthetic humanism," which

equated a "natural" human tendency to take "pleasure" in satisfying psychological

"appetites" to "formal" processes found in artistic expression.[2] Burke's early work on art

as a psychological method of apprehending, filtering, and communicating reality

anticipated his later concentration on the function and competition of ideologies and their

terminologies.

Carrying on in the tradition of Aristotelian formalism and Freudian psychology,[3]

Kenneth Burke wanted to argue that there was an "aesthetic truth" located within a

"psychology of form," which created through formal tensions a device for the artist to

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[1] Wess, Robert. Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric, Subjectivity, Postmodernism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 39.

[2] Wess. Ibid. 45-46. Burke, Kenneth. Counter-Statement. 1931. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. 31, 35.

[3] Freud argued in The Interpretation of Dreams first published in November 1899 and later popularized in his work Uber den Traum (On Dreams) in 1901, with a third edition printed by 1921 and an English translation by 1914, that the dreaming human mind was a psychological process of "wish fulfillment," which incorporated a formal system of cultural symbols derivative of mythological productions carried through the ages in fairy tales, myths, legends, and folklore. Freud, Sigmund. On Dreams. 1901. Trans and Ed. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980.

manipulate by satisfying or frustrating human desires for emotional release.[4] Burke first framed this idea in "Psychology and Form" (1925) and argued that the artist's endeavor was to create and satisfy a psychological "appetite in the mind of the auditor," whereby the artist not only allowed for a "conversion" or "transcendence" of "emotion" into a highly refined and emotionally gratifying "eloquence," but more importantly, as Freud would argue in <u>Civilization and Its Discontents</u>,[5] the artist's creation of "eloquence" "added" a distinguishing (one might echo Freud and say "necessary") "factor" to life.[6] Thereby, the "end of art" and "thus its essence" was the creation of the purely psychological "need" for artistic eloquence (that something "added" to reality), which enabled on demand a creative tool to manipulate emotional stores in order to purge through formal climax an emotional release.[7]

In the essay "The Status of Art," Burke defends art against the criterion of "use," which he saw wielded by the competing ideological schools of his day ("psychology, economics, and world history") to discredit the very real and necessary function of art.[8] Burke defends art by elaborating upon two of its essential functions: 1) art is the "something added to experience" as noted above and 2) art is a "means of communication."[9] In "The Poetic Process," Burke explains the first function as derivative

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[4] Burke. <u>Counter Statement</u>. Ibid. 42, 36.

[5] Freud discussed the human creation of "illusion" as "palliative measures" and a source of "pleasure and consolation" with which to "bear" the harshness of reality. Freud, Sigmund. <u>Civilization and Its Discontents</u>. 1930. Trans and Ed. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961. 22-36. Friedrich Nietzsche framed this same argument 60 years earlier in his first work <u>The Birth of Tragedy</u> (1872).

[6] Burke. <u>Counter Statement</u>. Ibid. 31, 41.

[7] Burke. Ibid. 41.

[8] Burke. Ibid. 63, 72.

of the Freudian/Jungian psychological relocation of Platonic/Kantian Ideals from "heaven" into the human mind, whereby the function of art becomes the "inborn" "potentiality" of transforming the "basic forms" of human identification/identities (read: archetypes) into individual and collective modes of "self-expression," which are used to create and sustain meaningful applications of human effort.[10]

To return back to "The Status of Art," Burke establishes his second theme (a theme, which would come to be one of the hallmarks of his philosophy): "all competent art is a means of communication."[11] Burke treats art as another mode or vehicle that human beings have created for communicative and/or exhortative purposes. Of course Burke's assertion comes with a potent qualification: "absolute communication" is "impossible."[12] For the rest of his life Burke would go on to explain and elaborate his assertion that art is a means of communication and also his qualification that all human methods of communication are inherently flawed. These avenues are mapped in much of his later work, especially in A Grammar of Motives (1945), although he would begin his process of critical examination in some detail in the last two essays of Counter-Statement ("Lexicon Rhetoricae" and "Applications of Terminology").

But before we turn to Burke's discussion of communication in general (and of art/poetry in particular), we need to turn to Burke's early work on perspective and critical (ideological) apparatuses. Burke believed that humans develop *ways* of seeing and

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[9] Ibid. 77, 73.

[10] Ibid. 46, 48-49, 52. Burke even goes so far as to link the archetypal "nature" of artistic "self-expression" to the process of evolution (60). In Attitudes Toward History, he calls archetypal forms "strategies for living:" "The various poetic categories we have analyzed illustrate some major psychological devices whereby the mind equips itself to name and confront its situation" (43, 99).

[11] Ibid. 73. Burke would state this again in his essay "War, Response, and Contradiction" written in 1933: "Art is a means of communication" (The Philosophy of Literary Form, 235).

understanding reality and, therein, translate reality using symbol systems, which in turn form the various communicative mediums created for social networking. Burke had to work through a discussion on the *way* in which humans see reality and manipulate reality to enhance collective organization in order to, thereby, posit a foundation for his later emphasis on the importance of symbolic action.

Symbolic action would become his concept for the complicated role that human modes of linguistic communication play in the dynamics of human knowledge, social interaction, and cooperation. Human language and the elaborate critical filtration systems that they allow seem to be the distinct feature that marks the human species apart from other biological organisms on this planet. But human linguistic modes of communication, as Burke would explain, do not come without serious imperfections. Human symbol systems seem to be as functionally flawed as the critical filtering systems (ideologies) according to which they're based. Thus to perfect the means and ends of communication, as Kenneth Burke set out to do, he had to first work through the paradoxical way humans use ideological orientations to *see* and *know* what's going on outside their doors of perception. And only then could Burke critically chart *how* humans *communicate* what they think they see.

Kenneth Burke tried to chart his first theoretical course so as to explain the function and dysfunction of ideological orientations and their communicative terminologies in his second major book <u>Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose</u> (1935). It is in this work where Burke examines more closely the biological grounding of ideological orientations in the light of early 20th century behaviorist psychology to point out the necessary function and usefulness of ideological orientations

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[12] Ibid. 79.

in filtering reality. However, in the course of his discussion, Burke also makes it a point to emphasize the structural flaw inherent in every ideology (a "flaw" Burke would later term in <u>Attitudes Toward History</u> as "comic"[13]). This flaw, Burke would explain, could be found within a paradox: ideological orientations are both *ways of seeing* and *ways of not seeing*.

But before we proceed, it might be useful to chart out a diagram of the theoretical progression Burke outlines in <u>Permanence and Change</u>. Burke makes no essentializing distinction between "subject" and "object," but (for the sake of argument) treats the biological subject (whether it be fish, foul, or human being) as an individual entity intimately tied to and wrapped up in the complicated tangle of physical relationships we are calling "reality."[14] This biological subject must process reality through its uniquely conditioned sensory filtration system (brain) in order to meet its biological and social needs. Burke wanted to deal with the more advanced levels of filtering and processing reality (beyond the basic filtration level of sensory perception, which all biological organisms share). Of the more advanced levels of critical awareness, two of these levels are active *processes* of critical *filtering* and *classifying*, and two of these levels are the dynamic *systems*, which *order* the critical parameters of the filtering and classifying processes.

REALITY
// (filter)
Sensory Experience-Perception
// (filter)

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[13] Stephen Bygrave wrote of Burke's term "comic," "comedy is always something which is won from conflict. That is to say, the term implies something resolved rather than the movement of resolution" (<u>Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric and Ideology</u> 16-17).

[14] In terms of motivational "fictions," the human being as an individual "agent" or "subject" is one of the those fictions that Burke believed we must live by, for by no other fiction can the *oughts* of "freedom" and "action" be made possible within our determined socio-historical and environmental contexts.

1) Criticizing-Interpreting Sensory Experience (process)
    |
2) Ideological Orientation (system)
    // (filter)
3) Criticizing-Interpreting Ideological Orientation
    (process)
    |
4) Ideological Orientation of Ideological Orientations
    (system)[15]

Burke's objective in <u>Permanence and Change</u> was to introduce his theory of a

"methodology of criticism,"[16] which he proposed as stage 4 above. His premise was that

human ideological orientations and ideology-as-cultures are all flawed in that they

functionally serve to see the world in one particular way and are, thereby, disfunctionally

blinded and cannot see the world in any other way. Every ideological position is

functional but in many ways limiting and, thus, potentially dysfunctional. Therefore,

Burke proposed that the human species (as the only biological organism with the

necessary tool of language required to think about how we process reality) needed to

extend its scope and create a "criticism of criticism" by which to evaluate each perfected

ideological perspective that human beings have created in order to integrate them all into

a larger context of human motivation.

Burke's larger emphasis was to extend what we know of the process of negotiated

integration of rival factions, which we see in the formation of individual ideological

orientations (I = We's), in order to identify the conflict of competing ideologies within

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[15] As Burke writes in <u>The Philosophy of Literary Form</u>, all charts are "approximate" or "approximations to the truth" (7, 108) and thus our chart here is merely for "conveniences of discourse, for analytic purposes" (37) a simplified way to size up how ideologies work, and how Burke proposed his "criticism of criticism" would work to evaluate ideologies. Each level is a theoretic proposition separated into a place marker for our purpose of explaining how these discursive levels are supposed to operate. I am not presenting a biological or psychological framework of the human mind.

[16] Kenneth Burke. <u>Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose</u>. 1935. 3rd Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 18.

cultures so as to demystify all ideologies through identifying each as functional and dysfunctional in turn, and thereby, unify them through an extended critical circumference (this process would come to be called a "Sociology of Knowledge" in Burke's later work). Understanding that all ideological orientations are inherently flawed, Burke breaks with the tradition of Western Humanism and does not offer yet another ideological orientation as *the* ideology, but instead pushes humanity to extend its scope and create a functional synthesis out of all ideological frames of reference in order to privilege not *one way of seeing*, but *the process of how human beings see* their world so that, somehow, through a greater knowledge of this seeing-naming-knowing process, a new awareness of the relation between the individual's processing mind and the reality it processes could be made manifest. For in effect, the "subject's" mind is a part of the "objective" reality outside the human doors of perception and cannot be separated under the Western "subject-object" ontological dualism without disturbing the ecological relationship between organisms and their contextual environment. Kenneth Burke wanted to reground the ontological discussion of human nature by discussing it through the flawed symbolic/linguistic filtration systems of epistemology: a discussion less about *being* (ontology) and more on how we *talk* (rhetoric) and, thereby, *know* (epistemology) about being.

In the chart above, reality is the complex tangle of matter and motion existing "outside" of (but not apart from) an individual's perceptual doors. Biological organisms react to, and interact with, the influences of the "external" environment. Biological organisms with nervous complexes and brains filter reality so as to better react and interact with reality's demands (Sensory Experience-Perception). Human beings have

developed by far the most complex "filter system," which (as the diagram above demonstrates) not only filters sensory perception, but also interprets it through language so as to form judgements. These judgements are then used in reacting to, and in interacting with, the determinations of the external environment (level 1, *Criticizing-Interpreting* Sensory Experience). Human brains perceive reality and then criticize and interpret reality based upon the ideological apparatus of the particular human being's mind (level 2, Ideological Orientation).

Burke's proposition was that existing ideological apparatuses were flawed and needed to be filtered through yet another critical and interpretational process (levels 3 and 4) based upon a knowledge of other existing ideological frames of reference and also an extended scope, which would enable more generalized identifications: *the biological* (the human species), *the ecological* (the tangled relational web of biological organisms) or *the global* (the broad range of human cultural apparatuses) are a few of the more *generalized scopes* that Burke proposed.[17] This "criticism of criticism" would be the cornerstone of Burke's Dramatic philosophy and would come to be the focus of Burke's two later masterpieces <u>A Grammar of Motives</u> and <u>A Rhetoric of Motives</u>. Burke offers, as Hugh Duncan explained, a "methodology, a *way* of thinking, and of testing our thinking, about *how* we act as human beings."[18]

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[17] Burke had an awareness of the growing importance of "Ecology" as an emerging school of thought and of the early articulations of the "laws of ecology" as an arch biological ground to human activities. In a footnote in <u>Attitudes Toward History</u> Burke notes, "Among the sciences, there is one little fellow named Ecology, and in time we shall pay him more attention. He teaches us that the *total* economy of this planet cannot be guided by an efficient rationale of exploitation alone, but that the exploiting part must itself eventually suffer if it too greatly disturbs the *balance* of the whole...[Ecology is] a higher lever, where considerations of balance count for more than considerations of one-tracked purposiveness" (pg. 150).

[18] Duncan, Hugh. "Introduction." <u>Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose</u>. Ibid. xliv.

3. PERSPECTIVE BY INGONGRUITY

Burke begins his endeavors in <u>Permanence and Change</u> with a chapter entitled

"Orientation." The first subheading "All Living Things Are Critics" is followed by this

sentence: "We may begin by noting the fact that all living organisms interpret many of

the signs about them." Burke proceeds to separate the uniqueness of the human situation

by adding: "Our great advantage over this sophisticated trout would seem to be that we

can greatly extend the scope of the critical process."[1] But the human situation also has a

unique drawback embedded within our evolutionary advance:

> The very power of criticism has enabled man to build up cultural
> structures so complex that still greater powers of criticism are needed
> before he can distinguish between the food-processes and bait-processes
> concealed beneath his cultural tangles. His greater critical capacity has
> increased not only the range of his solutions, but also the range of his
> problems. *Orientations can go wrong...When criticism can do so much
> for us, it may have got us just to the point where we greatly require still
> better criticism.* Though all organisms are critics in the sense that they
> interpret the signs about them, the experimental, speculative technique
> made available by speech would seem to single out the human species as
> the only one possessing an equipment for going beyond the criticism of
> experience to a criticism of criticism...*we may also interpret our
> interpretations* [my emphasis].[2]

Burke identifies the wary trout, who has *learned* to occasionally recognize food from

bait, and separates this fish from the human being who has developed a much more

complicated bait-avoiding learning process through language. However, Burke warns

that human beings have also created for themselves through language a new set of

entanglements in which to get caught and, therefore, he argues that there needs to be a

roadmap of sorts designed to get human beings through their critical systems of

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[1] Burke. <u>Permanence and Change</u>. Ibid. 5.

interpretation so as to efficiently satisfy their biological-social needs in an ever changing environmental context.[3]

The focus of Permanence and Change settles on "the devices by which we arrive at a correct orientation" because these devices "may be quite the same as those involved in an incorrect [orientation]." Burke elaborates the point that "meaning" is created by human beings "in accordance with the contexts in which [humans] experience it," but complicates the matter by acknowledging, "the words themselves" will have "derived their meanings out of past contexts."[4] An ideological orientation is a dynamic process which has created and articulated a "selection of means" in response to a particular circumstance in time, but as Burke reminds us, "the problems of existence do not have one fixed, unchanging character" so what was useful and "correct" in one instance may be a hazard and "incorrect" in another.[5] Ideological orientations are created to meet specific environmental conditions for a specific time and fail when they are extended past the particulars they were designed to meet. This can create an inherent problem since the

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[2] Ibid. 6.

[3] Burke elaborates on the complications of language in Attitudes Toward History: "What does it mean to be a talking animal [human being]? What are the advantages, *and the possible risks*, of this particular resourcefulness? To what extent does language free us, and to what extent enslave us, even divorce us from our 'home' in nature" (355)? Burke would comment on the invention of linguistic constructs (taking a passage from Engels) and qualify them as "natural:" "thought and consciousness 'are the products of the human brain,' and 'man himself is a product of Nature.' Hence 'the products of the human brain, being in the last analysis also products of Nature, do not contradict the rest of Nature but are in correspondence with it'" (A Grammar of Motives 201). However, Burke would come to call human created constructs a "second nature" by which he meant a humanly constructed environment that has a life of its own and becomes itself another determining context (A Grammar of Motives 109). "Money" and the "monetary motive" would be one of the central humanly constructed "second natures" that Burke would focus on throughout his career (A Grammar of Motives 92, 130).

[4] Ibid. 7.

[5] Ibid. 9-10.

linguistic structures of past contexts (embedded with past value judgements) are the only tools with which to evaluate a new environment and create a new ideological orientation.

The past (in the form of memories) informing our interpretations of the present are part of the human brain's ability to extend its limited and conditional orientations so as to be able to predict the unpredictable changes in our contextual environment. On the basis of past experience, ideological orientations come to form a "basis of *expectancy*" in order to recognize and react to different situational contexts that may arise in the future: "orientation is thus a bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they may be." Ideological orientations *add to* descriptions of "how the world is" (in the same way art brings the "something added") with "implicit judgments" about "how the world may become" and also "what means we should employ to make it so."[6] This addition to our sensory data's limited description of "what is" becomes a unique tool for the harvest of *motivational* crops affecting "what is" in an effort to create the "what ought to be" (but motivational value judgements can also become a liability as they interfere with our honest appraisals of reality).

For by mixing the expectant "what ought to be" within our critical filtration of "what is," we can lead ourselves to dysfunction and error. In short, ideological orientations are a tool for more effectively read the deterministic demands of reality in an effort to not only satisfy those demands, but to also alter those demands so as to begin to shape a new reality through motivated *action*.[7] Ideologies uniquely endow human beings

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[6] Ibid. 14.

[7] Burke explains this idea a bit further in chapter two by writing: an orientation involves "a vocabulary of ought and ought-not" and also "a schema of serviceability" recognizing the "good" and the "useful"..."otherwise put: the signs of experience are oriented with reference to tests of service and disservice (benefit and danger)." Ibid. 21-22.

with the power to *act* upon and change the face of reality, but this tool can also confuse

the nature of reality ("what is") with personal or inherited expectancies of "what ought to

be." This confusion can, in turn, create new complications that interfere with an honest

appraisal of the reality outside our doors of perception, and this can lead to a certain

blindness, which incapacitates human action. We will return to the clouding and

confusing of the "is" with the "ought" later.

Burke explains the process of reading the environment through ideological

orientations as a "rationalization," which he distinguishes from the pejorative usage given

to the word by Freudian psycho-analysis: there are only rationalizations, Burke argues,

for "one school's reason is another school's rationalization...Yet, what is any hypothesis,

erected upon a set of brute facts, but a rationalization."[8] *An ideological orientation is a*

rational process by which sensory perception is interpreted within a critical framework.

Any *functional* meaning derivative of a critical framework is as equally valid as any other

because meaning is posited by the human being onto reality,[9] and hence, all ideological

meanings assigned to reality are linguistic and metaphorical concepts used only to

describe reality, and as such, they should not be confused for reality itself:

> Stimuli do not possess an *absolute* meaning...Any given situation derives
> its character from the entire framework of interpretation by which we
> judge it. And differences in our ways of sizing up an objective situation
> are expressed subjectively as differences in our assignment of
> motive...The relationships are not realities, they are interpretations of

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[8] Ibid. 11, 20, 23.

[9] Burke was not a complete relativist. He discussed the gradations of function behind many ideological orientations in most of his works in order to assert that certain ideological orientations are more useful guides than others in appraising and highlighting the particular aspects of reality. His discussion of the Pentad in light of Western philosophical schools and terminologies in A Grammar of Motives is perhaps the best case in point.

reality -- hence different frameworks of interpretation will lead to different conclusions as to what reality is.[10]

Burke wanted to highlight the constructivist nature of ideology and the meanings they bring so as to be able to move from a description of its uses and its dangers into a further phase of how ideological orientations are *communicated* through distinctive terminologies, whereby they become disseminated into the public sphere and hoisted up as a cultural way of life (culture-as-ideology).

But before we proceed into Burke's discussion on how ideologies are communicated, we must first explain in explicit detail how ideological orientations can go wrong. As noted above, because of the shifting face of reality (changing environmental circumstances) our ideological orientations need to keep pace with their external environment or suffer inefficiency: what was useful and "correct" in one instance may be a hazard and "incorrect" in another. Burke calls this problem (after Thorstein Veblen) "trained incapacity:" "People may be unfitted by being fit in an unfit fitness."[11] Burke's criticism of criticism was designed to locate this "unfitness" and alter the ideological orientation accordingly so as to be able to meet the new environmental demands. However, through the complicated network of an established or institutionalized orientation, one may not be able to "see" the changing face of reality and thus, cannot prepare to meet it:

> If people persist longer than chickens in faulty orientation despite punishment, it is because the greater complexity of their problems, the vast network of mutually sustained values and judgments, makes it more

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[10] Burke. Permanence and Change. Ibid. 35. Burke states later in the book, "meanings and stimuli merge" in an effort to show how the linguistic situation complicated itself as our interpretations of reality become imbedded in the very fabric of our language describing reality: "the names for things and operations smuggle in connotations of *good* and *bad*" (151, 192).

[11] Ibid. 10.

difficult for them to perceive the nature of the re-orientation required, and to select their means accordingly. They are the victims of a trained incapacity, since the very authority of their earlier ways interferes with the adoption of new ones.[12]

Burke's solution was a method of "seeing around the corner," which would allow for constantly changing environments by having a flexible ideological apparatus to meet them.

Accompanying each ideological orientation is a terminology germane to its unique perspective of the world. And as exemplified in Counter-Statement, a specific terminology applied to another ideological orientation can make the orientation under the microscope seem lacking and dysfunctional because the dissecting language carries with it the unique perspective of its ideological framework, and thus also carries with it a blindness (a "trained incapacity"), which impedes its ability to recognize and appreciate other ideological perspectives. Not only did Burke want to create a criticism of criticism, but he wanted to create the communicative medium that would need to go with it, a medium that could "lie across many diverse disciplines" and "distinct ways of living."[13]

In Permanence and Change, Burke isolates the perhaps two most influential ways of seeing and communicating that human beings had yet created, which happened to be in a struggle for dominance during the later part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries: science and poetry. Science was definitely the privileged language (discourse) by the time Burke began writing and, thus, he ends the first part of his book by stating the need for a "corrective of the scientific rationalization" found only in poetry. Burke was advocating not so much a turn away from the ideology and language of science (as

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[12] Ibid. 23.

[13] Ibid. 56.

Burke's conceptual framework is heavily scientific and relies on scientific insights), but more to the point Burke believed that science needed to be complemented by the ideology and language of poetry[14] so as to frame an extended point of reference for Burke's inclusive criticism of criticism, which would lie in a "biologically grounded" dynamic centered in the blending of the scientific and poetic ideological orientations: "a philosophy, or psychology, of poetry...an *art of living*."[15] This art of living that Burke proposed can be seen as the necessary corrective to some of the pitfalls that the Post Modern predicament presented the human race.

And perhaps one of the most important discussions of the Post Modern period has been the argument over what to make of human linguistic constructions in terms of reading and reacting to the "reality" outside our doors of perception. Kenneth Burke first addressed this problem in the second half of <u>Permanence and Change</u> where he begins to deal with the language of ideology as a medium of communication. In this discussion he dwells upon one word in particular: metaphor. Framing a discussion on the idea behind metaphor, he links the ideological orientations (*how* humans see) to the linguistic

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[14] Burke understood the objective aim behind "scientific" (or "semantic") language, which was a "programmatic elimination of weighted vocabulary" (he attributes this ideal to Russell, Whitehead and Carnap): a "vocabulary that does not *judge*, but *describes*" ("Semantic and Poetic Meaning" <u>The Philosophy of Literary Form</u> 149-51). However, Burke feels that this objective is "fraudulent" because it is "impossible" (159). Burke argues that for social beings operating under social circumstances there must necessarily be a "maximum complexity of weighting" in the "word" as an "act" meeting its situation in which it will create its meaning as a "moral" or "petition" (159, 67). One can say that Burke privileges poetic language, but he acknowledges the "usefulness," albeit qualified, of the semantic, "scientific" ideal.

[15] Ibid. 66. It is this calling for a Philosophy of Poetry, which I have taken upon myself (out of Kenneth Burke's groundbreaking work) and I hope this essay reads as not only a culmination of Burke's thought, but also as a foundation for something new. Burke wrote, "A completely systematized 'poetic psychology' should form the subject of another work, though we have attempted to scatter throughout the present book many hints as to the ways in which it should be applied in our attempts to chart the civic process" (266). Burke never wrote this "poetic psychology" although his Philosophy of Dramatism comes close to the mark, especially in <u>A Grammar of Motives</u>.

constructs used to describe and communicate *what* humans see, in order to point out and talk about the derivations of *meaning* attached to what humans see.

One might say that metaphors are a streamlined version of language designed to be *conceptual simplifiers*. Words metaphorically represent realty so as to enable human beings to act in response to, or on, reality. Words in this sense are completely practical in their nature: words prepare human beings for action; in deed, words are a type of action. But problems arise where human beings forget the metaphorical nature of their language and confuse words and concepts *as* reality:

> We find our way through this ever-changing universe by certain blunt schemes of generalization, conceptualization, or verbalization -- but words have a limited validity. Their very purpose being to effect practical simplifications of reality, we should consider them inadequate for the description of reality as it actually is.[16]

Ideology can become privileged and, through the passage of time, be held as *the* ideology and so too can language become privileged and taken for granted as *the* language representing what is assumed to be *the* ideology, wherein, delusions of grandeur create idolatrous verbal constructions worshiped as *the* reality. Many of the political-cultural debates within the socio-historical contexts of Post-Modernism, Post-Colonialism, and Neo-Liberal Globalism have been, as Burke called them, "pseudo-problems"[17] where each side argues over whose concept is *the* correct[18] representation of reality, while unbeknownst to most of the participants was the fact that *no* human conception is, or will ever be, *the correct representation of reality*, and that all we have are practical metaphors

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[16] Ibid. 92.

[17] Ibid. 93.

[18] I use the word "correct" with connotations of "usefulness" as Burke was preoccupied (in a great many of his books) with the established metaphor of "use" as a value determination.

enabling us to privilege certain selections of reality so that we may act and live. In addition to this, as Burke highlights within his criticism of criticism, one needs to be able to not only see the faults of his/her own orientation, but one must be able to use and appreciate multiple points of view, multiple ideological orientations, to be able to accurately get a sense of the complexity of realty and thus have an extended vocabulary to discuss and communicate that complexity in order to more rationally and comprehensively act.

Burke explains metaphorical thinking and speaking as a "perspective by incongruity," which he takes from a discussion on Nietzsche and Spengler. All language is metaphorical and through the privileging of certain ideology-as-cultures over others, we have come to find certain languages and certain metaphors held up as *the* description and explanation of reality. Burke, taking his cue from Nietzsche, basically says that if one wants to think outside of a given explanation of reality, outside of a given ideology-as-culture, then one must challenge the language of that ideology by finding new metaphors that will create new perspectives. Perspective by incongruity becomes a way to "violate" a given truth by seeing the reality behind ideologically charged words and, thus in this space, allowing one to see reality in a different way, whereby one could then develop a different metaphorical linkage in order to introduce a new ideological perspective.[19]

Burke wanted to call this process of finding new ideological perspective a "rebirth" or a "reorientation" and in one passage he describes this process in a language of Biblical proportions:

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[19] Ibid. 90. Burke comments, "Nietzsche knew that probably every linkage [established metaphor] was open to destruction by the perspectives of a planned incongruity" (91).

Even if one ascribes the rise of an orientation to its usefulness, one cannot conclude that it necessarily serves the ends of use. It may survive from conditions for which it was fit into conditions for which it is unfit (*cultural lag*). And its fossilized existence may be prolonged, after it has become dangerous to the social body as a whole, if some group which profits by it controls the educative, legislative, and constabulary resources of the state (*class morality*). The members of a group specifically charged with upholding a given orientation may be said to perform a *priesthood function*...The decay of a priesthood...leads to a division between priests and prophets. The priests devote their efforts to maintaining the vestigial structure; the prophets seek new perspectives whereby this vestigial structure may be criticized and a new one established in its place...The desire to recharacterize events necessarily requires a new reading of the signs...the backward-looking of the "prophets" is coupled with a new principle of interpretation, a new perspective or point of view, whereby the picture of "things as they *really* are" is reorganized. We found our critical systems upon prophetic reference to the past...Indeed, what could *discovery* be but *rediscovery*?[20]

Burke aligns himself with a class of progressive "prophets, " thinkers I would associate with the likes of Emerson, Marx, Nietzsche, William James, and G. B. Shaw, who all challenged the status quo with rival perspectives and new orientations (what Burke would later call "heresies" and "rival orthodoxies"). The prophet looks back into the past to reorient the foundations of the present with a new perspective to build a new orientation on which to lay the groundwork for a progressive future. But again, Burke was not looking to just replace a rival ideology with his own "new" ideology, but he was looking to find a larger scope that could negotiate and integrate the already established ideology-as-cultures under a transcendent ("bridging") purpose.

Burke's criticism of criticism would be his first expression of that transcendent purpose:

The discordant "sub-personalities" of the world's conflicting cultures and heterogeneous kinds of effort can be reintegrated only by means of a unifying "master-purpose," with the logic of classification that would

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[20] Ibid. 154, 179-81.

> follow from it. The segregational, or dissociative state cannot endure --
> and must make way for an associative, or congregational state.
>
> A sound communicative medium arises out of cooperative
> enterprises. And the mind, so largely a linguistic product, is constructed
> of the combined cooperative and communicative materials. Let the
> system of cooperation become impaired, and the communicative
> equipment is correspondingly impaired, while this impairment of the
> communicative medium in turn threatens the structure of rationality
> itself.[21]

Burke is explaining the intimate linkage between ideology, communication, and the

environmental context that gives birth to both and his thesis leads to a tangled mess of

casual effects: conflicting ideologies are affected by conflicting terminologies, which are

affected by conflicting cultures, which are in turn affected by conflicting subcultures and

individuals, which are themselves affected by conflicting ideologies and conflicting

terminologies. A vicious cycle if there ever was one. Burke wanted to believe there was

a way out of the conflict, a way beyond reactionary thinking, by way of a dialectical

synthesis. Burke wanted to find a scope large enough to transcend and to "bridge" the

agon of history (where conflict often becomes protracted and bloody).

His solution was an emphasis on cooperation. His extended scope based upon a

criticism of criticism would be charted and expressed in such a way so as to unite the

conflicting points of view through a new language of cooperation. However, in larger

"world renewing" terms, Burke believed that some cooperative action must come first,

and thereby affect a cooperative language and that language would in turn affect the

human frameworks of rationality, and further, those human frameworks of rationality

(ideology) would in turn affect the broader course of human action. In short, it would

take a new act of cooperation to form a new language of cooperation. The "new" act that

Burke saw in the works on the stage of history (an act, which he believed would be the

necessary step for the progression of the human species,) was a brand of communistic organization expressing itself through Marxist socialism. But the word communion/Communism and the concept behind it became overshadowed in the mid-twentieth century by the failed experiment of the Soviet State. Thus the events of the twentieth century came to complicate and haunt Burke's hope for a new act of cooperation to spark a "world renewal." He would have to settle for a more localized new act: symbolic action.

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[21] Ibid. 163.

4. EMERGENT COLLECTIVISM: ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AND

A WIDENING OF SCOPE

In 1953 Burke mentions in an afterward to <u>Counter-Statement</u>, "Curriculum

Criticum," the "unfortunate" circumstances surrounding the development of the idea of

"communion" in the early part of the twentieth century. Burke was an early supporter of

communism, perhaps in part because he had a romantic "poetico-political" utopian bent

after the likes of Coleridge and Southey.[1] But his radical associations with Marxist

endeavors and Soviet political philosophy came to hurt him in 1952 when the University

of Washington's administration refused Burke a position in the English department

because, as Robert Wess has written, "Burke's activities in the 1930's made him too

subversive."[2] Thus Burke, a year after this setback, appreciated with irony his radical

ideas in <u>Permanence and Change</u> and in preparation for a second edition, deleted the first

edition's advocacy of communism in favor of the more general idea of cooperation

through language.[3]

But even in Burke's explicit support of Socialist endeavors, he never was a "party

man."[4] He used Communism as he used a whole host of other social, political, and

artistic texts. He remained engaged, but aloof (in a statement reminiscent of Henry David

Thoreau):

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[1] Burke. <u>Counter-Statement</u>. Ibid. 215.

[2] Wess. <u>Kenneth Burke</u>. Ibid. 56, "footnote 3."

[3] Wess. Ibid. 59.

[4] Frank Lentricchia wrote, "To stand with the intellectual left in the United States in the early 1930's was to stand in a place where Burke's kind of Marxism could be received only as heresy -- as the very discourse of excrement" (<u>Criticism and Social Change</u>, 22).

> I am not a joiner of societies. I am a literary man. I can only welcome Communism by converting it into my own vocabulary...My book will have the communist objectives, and the communist tenor, but the approach will be the approach that seems significant to me.[5]

For Burke, Communism came to mean simply "communion," which in his "Dictionary of Pivotal Terms" meant "the interdependence of people through their common stake in both co-operative and symbolic networks:"[6] in short, a "society" or a "community." For Burke, communion seems but an ideal human organization of relational identity fostering both individual and social needs. It was not until Attitudes Toward History (1937) that Burke switches focus a bit to dwell not upon his ideal of communism, but upon the inescapable reality of conflict and thus, the challenge incumbent on every human society to create approximations of the ideal ethic of "communion."[7]

Attitudes Toward History explores the actual state of human affairs through the agon of history by focusing on the competition at work within the idea of "identity." As already alluded to, identity (as a product of ideology) becomes a process of hierarchizing competing we's into an I: "The so-called 'I' is merely a unique combination of partially conflicting 'corporate we's'...Sometimes these various corporate identities work fairly well together. At other times they conflict."[8] Burke seemingly wanted to take identity away from the individual and make it solely a process of identification and participation

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[5] Burke, Kenneth. The Selected Correspondence of Kenneth Burke and Malcolm Cowley: 1915-1981. 202. qtd. in. Wess. Ibid. 60.

[6] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. 1937. 3rd Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 234.

[7] Burke explains in retrospect his projects of Permanence and Change and Attitudes Toward History in relation to Plato's Republic and his Laws as the "ideal" conforming or coming in league with the "actual" (Counter-Statement, "Curriculum Criticum" 216).

[8] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 264.

in the collective.[9] Classic identifications like "God, nature, community, utility, history or the self" become ways to link an individual into the collective "totemistic identification" of the group he or she belongs to (or wishes to belong to).[10] Identity became tied to an acceptance of the existing symbol systems and ideologies driving a particular culture. To have an identity one must choose among the available selections that any given society has to offer and accept the one that fits.

But implicit with a sense of identity comes the ability to "change identity," to reappraise and re-hierarchize the conflicting we's into a new I, to bring about a "rebirth," to Change identity so as to "see around the corner" and meet the new needs of a new environmental context: "and each change of 'situation,' in this purely physical sense, would require a reorganization of the mind."[11] Thus, in historical epochs of "transition" the "problems of identity become crucial."[12] To situate a change in identity, one has to reject in total, or in part, the existing symbol systems and ideologies driving a particular culture to re-constitute the "substance" of that culture, the underlying ideological foundation, in order to make the way for the new.[13] But this process of change, as Burke explains in Attitudes Toward History, must confront the old, established identifications of a culture through a series of maneuvers in the space between *acceptance* and *rejection*.

In a sense, as Burke argues in another paradoxical position, every acceptance of one ideological orientation is a rejection of another: every acceptance is a rejection and

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[9] Ibid. 263, 266-67.

[10] Ibid. 271.

[11] Ibid. 268-69, 318.

[12] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 307.

[13] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 41.

every rejection an acceptance.[14] This sets up an ever-conflicting battle between orthodoxy and heresy, which, in shorthand, Burke called a "'stealing back and forth' of authoritative symbols,"[15] by which he meant a never-ending process where established and dominant symbols of authority are over and over subverted and re-constituted, re-substantiated, in a process of continual rebirth so that new individuals and groups of people can meet the changing demands of new environmental contexts. Heresy then becomes "one strand in an orthodoxy,"[16] one of the conflicting we's in the dominant I, and history is the scene wherein the process of stealing back and forth of authoritative symbols and the ensuing constitution and reconstitution of ideologies-as-cultures takes place. In a sense, there is no stability of ideological orientation in any cultural identity. There is only a permanence in change as the symbolic figurehead of orthodoxy, the established "I," vies with different emergent heresies and slowly evolves to meet the changing contextual environment (sometime accepting heretic points of view, sometimes crushing them, but in each confrontation the orthodoxy changes or evolves through the conflict).

And in this sense, the "birth" process shapes the materials at work within the "rebirth" process or rather they are both at work together within the larger, *evolving* process of history. There is, as Burke explained, a "goes before" and a "comes after" as the "basis" of all ideological-orientations and ideologies-as-cultures.[17] What "goes before" is in essence the "earning" of the what "comes after" or, to put it in another way,

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[14] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 30.

[15] Ibid. 141.

[16] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 113.

[17] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 125.

one must prepare and do the foundational work in order to guide and deliver the full maturity of a new establishment. One must earn the right to use the tools of the past in order to lay the foundations of the future.

If one were discussing the promotion of a heresy that is vying with a dominate orthodoxy, the heretic must create a solid foundation within the orthodoxy to subvert it, re-substantiate it, and thereby convert the orthodoxy after his/her heretic point of view. Or, in an even more monumental move, the opportunity exists to create "the new," a rival orthodoxy. But one must complete the revolutionary foundations of the "goes before" in order to present the "comes after" of the new ideological position, with which to then set up against and challenge the established orthodoxy. Burke's emphasis was that one must *earn* the right to develop and present a new or heretical ideological perspective. The new comes at no small cost.

Every ideology earned its right to exist through a concerted effort to meet the needs of the constituency and the environment that birthed it. For what are orthodox ideological-orientations or ideologies-as-cultures except once viable and "strategic" answers to a particular environmental context that have come to be institutionalized. In this sense, heresies and rival orthodoxies represent a new critical awareness of a new environmental context that must be "answered" and met. Any ideological-orientation or critical perspective is a "strategic answer," a "strategy for encompassing a situation," an "answer or rejoinder to assertions current in the situation in which it arose."[18] Ideological-orientations meet the situation, the scene, the environmental context in order to frame a conceptual and linguistic response for individual and collective purposes. Therefore, when the scene changes and an established, institutionalized ideological-

orientation becomes no longer functional then one must "throw off old and deceptive modes of identification and take on new ones."[19]

For within all ideological-orientations there are programmatic sets of motives tied to the linguistic seeing-naming-knowing process, and "implicit in our theory of motives is a program of action."[20] Therefore, a new environmental context demanding new actions to meet it would necessarily demand a new theory of motives, which would substantiate a new or revised ideological-orientation. But the question remains, how to do this? As discussed earlier, ideological-orientations and ideologies-as-cultures tend to solidify and institutionalize (Burke calls it "bureaucratization ") and, thereby, resist change. How can people be taught to undo this solidification process in order to keep a vital and open perspective? How to ease or break through the often violent conflicts arising from heretic re-evaluations of orthodox positions?

Burke's solution was one of "transcendence," bridging, and acceptance. He proposed a scheme wherein existing orthodox positions could be held, but manipulated through an upward move. Burke did not advocate a "reversing" or "debunking"[21] of a person's or group's ideological perspective, but instead offered a widening of scope, which would necessarily modify the provincial prospective through a new relational identification grounded in a larger, wider contextual scope:

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[18] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. I, 109.

[19] Ibid. 308.

[20] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 92.

[21] Burke was critical of liberal "debunking" methods whereby a critic, "in order to shatter his opponents' policies, adopts a position whereby he could not logically advocate a policy of his own," and thus has to sneak through the back door to gradually take back those ideas that would be saved. Burke writes, "There is no need for all this overt throwing-out and covert taking back. People, taken by and large, are acting reasonably enough, *within their frame of reference.* This frame of reference may not be large enough to

> In men who have been trained to sectarian thought, too simple an attempt to reverse the direction of their thought becomes confusing. They are threatened with demoralization, in that the simple reversal of sectarianism is *opportunism*...we are trying to suggest that only by the adoption of a wider frame (essentially "comic") can this problem be met actively, positively. The comic frame relieves the pressure towards opportunism by broadening, or maturing, of sectarian thought.[22]

The loss of an ideological perspective can easily create a nihilistic opportunism predicated on an ethos of survival by any means, and this ideological state is explicitly "anti"-social. In order to circumvent that risk Burke proposes a wider frame of acceptance, which could incorporate existing ideological-orientations and broaden their perspective through a new contextual scope that would necessarily include multiple ideological perspectives covering the same ground. It is in this space of *overlap* (perspective by incongruity) where ideological perspectives stretch to fit and account for the complicated nature of a larger, "ultimate" reality. It was Burke's intention that through seeing the same ground, the same "real" space, marked with overlapping linguistic names and ideological meanings that somehow a broader awareness, a new consciousness, would take hold so as to be able to distinguish and separate the "real" situation from the divergent and conflicting interpretations of that situation. Much like the process behind learning multiple languages, one cannot help but distinguish the analyzed object or scene apart from its various linguistic/cultural translations.

Thus Burke presents his criticism of criticism as a heightened state of "maximum consciousness" whereby people could "be observers of themselves, while acting..."

> It considers human life as a project in "composition," where the poet works with the materials of social relationships. Composition, translation,

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encompass all the important factors operating today. Hence, they need a *still wider* frame of reference (Philosophy of Literary Form, "Debunking" 171, 188).

[22] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 101-02.

also "revision," hence offering maximum opportunity for the resources of criticism.[23]

It would be through an awareness of the "translative act" of ideological perspective that one could appreciate the different translations of reality through different ideological-orientations, and thus, through a new extend scope with a new "transcendent" language, one could thereby "adopt" a new, extended point of view (a criticism of criticism) that would, by verbal means, present divergent ideological perspectives in a way, whereby, they would cease to be in conflict and could merge as multiple (contrary, but not necessarily conflicting) ideological expressions of the same reality.[24]

Burke first articulated this new extended point of view as "Dramatism," which was in essence a "calculus -- a vocabulary, or set of coordinates" with which to study the human condition in order to "distinguish motivational elements," "convey comprehensively or get at the basis of" human action, and thereby, to accurately chart and name "what is going on."[25] This calculus first took expression as five terms (to be discussed in the next chapter): act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Burke's fundamental approach was that all ideological-orientations and ideologies-as-cultures are rational charts of meanings designed to meet specific circumstances, and in this sense all ideological perspectives are neither right nor wrong, they are but "relative approximations to the truth."[26] Burke's "dramatic perspective" was his expression of a criticism of criticism by which one could analyze any competing ideological-linguistic representations of reality in order to explain how each was a "relative approximation to

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[23] Ibid. 171, 73.

[24] Ibid. 336.

[25] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 105, 106, 113-14.

the truth" of any given situation; how each was both a *seeing* and a *blindness*; how each was both *functional* and *dysfunctional*. And Burke did not believe that his particular expression of a criticism of criticism, his dramatic perspective, was the only critical perspective possible. But he did believe it would work effectively, that is could see beyond the ideological pitfalls of trenchant symbol systems.[27]

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[26] Ibid. 108.

[27] Ibid. 124.

5. CHARTING THE DRAMA: *A GRAMMAR OF MOTIVES*

Burke created his philosophy of "Dramatism" as a poetic way of sizing up reality

through the terms of "action" rather than "knowledge."[1] Action seemed to him a much

wider scope of reference because it does not make epistemological claims of truth or

falsity, reality or fiction, but instead presented an act as a "situation" in order to talk about

what happened and *why*. In this sense, the epistemological process is but a particular

application of the more generalized human activity of creative expression through

language (what I define in other books of mine as "poetry"), and thereby, becomes itself

an act to be analyzed and discussed. Burke seems to be burrowing into the very root of

epistemological pretensions in order to highlight the highly subjective and selective

verbal action, the *symbolic action* at the heart of every claim that purports to represent

"what is."

The metaphorical perspective of drama and poetry combine to present the creative

activity of life as an artistic collage[2] of "what is," "what was," and "what will be." The

creation of ideology is explicitly an art, the art of living, and thus as Burke argued, the

metaphor of poetry would be the "best guide (indeed the only conceivable guide) in

shaping the new pieties of living:" "the ultimate metaphor for discussing the universe and

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[1] Burke. "On Human Behavior Considered 'Dramatistically.'" Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 274.

[2] Levi-Strauss in The Savage Mind (1966), Hebdige in Subculture and the Meaning of Style (1979), and Hawkes in Structuralism and Semiotics (1977) all discuss the magical process of creative assembly ("bricolage") by which "primitive" minds respond to and classify their world. It is a poetic process that is complicated but not outgrown by the "civilized" mind, and thus, the art of bricolage becomes the creative process of the human mind, which guides and assembles our various ideological formations. Burke was wise to see the similar "rational" processes at work in both the "primitive" mind of pre-history and the less "primitive" mind of modernity.

man's relation to it must be the poetic or dramatic metaphor...the metaphor of the poetic

or dramatic man can include [all other perspectives, ideologies] and go beyond them all."

> Since social life, like art, is a problem of appeal, the poetic metaphor
> would give us invaluable hints for describing modes of practical action
> which are too often measured by simple tests of utility and too seldom
> with reference to the communicative, sympathetic, propitiatory factors that
> are clearly present in the procedures of formal art and must be as truly
> present in those informal arts of living we do not happen to call arts.[3]

Life is an art and the human mind and body negotiating and participating in the

complexities of reality become the *ultimate art*: the art of living, the art of being. Burke's

dramatic metaphor seeks to read life and human action as the artistic expression of the

human species building itself out of itself and its environment in the midst of the

"eternally unsolvable Enigma," which is the "abyss" of reality.[4]

Thus every ideological orientation under the gaze of the poetic mind-frame

becomes a "strategy," a "subterfuge to which the poet or thinker must resort, as he

organizes the complexity of life's relationship within the limitations imposed by his

perspective."[5] Every human being selects a "magic" with which to transform reality into

a manageable whole: "The choice here is not a choice between magic and no magic, but a

choice between magics that vary in their degree of approximation to the truth."[6] Above

all, the poetic perspective apprehends magic as magic and discusses the multiform of

human endeavors with an honesty and a wisdom, which understands all knowledge, all

verbal constructions, and all metaphors as circumspect, fallible, and tentative. Thus we

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[3] Burke. Permanence and Change. Ibid. 268, 263-64.

[4] Ibid. 272.

[5] Burke. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 106.

[6] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 6.

as human beings must have the *humility*[7] to say "*it is*" and "*it is not*," to say "*as if,*" and then to plead our case and our lives as a viable way (method) by which to live.

Competing ideologies and cultures under the poetic metaphor become less combative and more argumentative, and Burke's most famous mythic metaphor, the "unending conversation," presents the agon of history, the human condition, in a more conciliatory and civil frame of reference:

> Where does the drama get its materials? From the "unending conversation" that is going on at the point in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.[8]

A conversation without beginning or end where no one can make authoritative judgements about origins or ultimate purposes: there is only the discussion of the now, the blending of the immediate past and the immediate future in the blur of the moment. Such is Burke's metaphor for historical construction and reconstruction of the human drama. The materials that we use to apprehend the discussion, the very language and terminology we participate with, are determined by the past direction of the conversation. But where the drama can go no one can say for sure.

Within this evolving universe of a dramatic conversation there is a give and take between the "comes before" and the "follows after," between the determinations of the

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[7] Burke. Permanence and Change. Ibid. 272. Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 41, 344.

past and the possibility of the future," between the language and metaphors we have and the language and metaphors we want. It is in this "motivational jungle" where we as human beings can make approximations, observations, and determinations, but we must remember one "basic proposition" as to the nature of this dramatic game: "anybody can do anything for any reason."[9]

Thus we find Kenneth Burke in his later career develop the Pentad into a set of coordinates able to locate and evaluate any situation in the human drama without pretension or ideological pretext. His preoccupation involves a sociological discussion of situations and/or events in order to talk about what happened and why. But instead of an objective description of what happened, it is more a philosophic discussion of how different sets of subjective, motivational interests (ideologies) *describe* and *judge* a situation or event in terms of particular ideological concerns:

> In any term we can posit a world, in the sense that we can treat the world *in terms of* it, seeing all as emanations, near or far, of its light...Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is a reduction. Its scope and reduction become a deflection when the given terminology or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it is designed to calculate.
> Dramatism suggests a procedure to be followed in the development of a given calculus, or terminology...to observe...the relation between representation and reduction in the choice and development of a motivational calculus.[10]

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[8] Burke. The Philosophy of Literary Form. Ibid. 110-111.

[9] Burke. "The Seven Offices." Attitudes Toward History. Ibid. 353.

[10] Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. 1945. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. 105, 59-60.

In a 1965 essay "Terministic Screens," written 20 years after <u>A Grammar of Motives,</u> Burke synthesizes the above discussion of reflection, selection and deflection into the heart of his Dramatic philosophy:

> Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality..."terministic screens" direct the attention...We *must* use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another...And now where are we? Must we merely resign ourselves to an endless catalogue of terministic screens, each of which can be valued for the light it throws upon the human animal, yet none of which can be considered central? In one sense, yes. For, strictly speaking, there will be as many different worldviews in human history as there are people.[11]

Burke is ever aware of the infinite variety of ideological perspectives and how certain orientations inevitably come to dominate public discussions of reality (such seems to be an unchanging aspect of the human condition). Burke's Pentad is a set of coordinates meant to break down and analyze the dominant public discussions of reality in order to highlight functionality/dysfunctionality, to determine ideological and terminological value judgements, to locate the motivational factors grounding discussions, and also to break down the practical/programmatic purposes directing these discussions. In essence, Burke's Pentad is his methodological criticism of criticism designed not so much to disparage or denigrate ideological orientations, but to evaluate and, thereby, to encourage honest appreciation of their functionality, and also to invite modifications based upon any discovered dysfunction.

But before we look farther into Burke's discussion of the Pentad, we must follow him through a couple of prefatory avenues, which he used to contextually *ground* his

discussion of ideologies at work. The first foundational ground that Burke introduces is the paradoxical term of "substance." He locates this term through a discussion of Locke and Spinoza and approaches it as a relational or contextual idea through which all ideological trajectories emerge. A substance is a "contextual reference" to a thing's environment in order, through a negative discussion of what a thing *is not*, to determine what a thing *is*. This leads to the "*inevitable* paradox of definition" based upon Spinoza's paradox of contextual definition: "all determination is negation;" "every positive is negative;" "to define a thing in terms of its context, we must define it in terms of what it is not."

> The word "substance," used to designate what a thing *is*, derives from a word designating something that a thing *is not*. That is, though used to designate something *within* the thing, *intrinsic* to it, the word etymologically refers to something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it. Or otherwise put: the word in its etymological origins would refer to an attribute of the thing's *context*, since that which supports or underlies a thing would be a part of the thing's context. And a thing's context, being outside or beyond the thing, would be something that the thing is *not*.[12]

Burke's emphasis spotlights the fact that all substantial groundings of ideological orientations take place on ambiguous contextual determinations, which if broken down and analyzed with an honest and critical eye could be terminologically made to confess that the substance at hand both *is* and *is not* what it claims to be.[13]

Thus substance as a grounding term is in effect a contextual determination or location of a specific discussion by coordinates of origination, placement, and trajectory. A "familial" or "tribal" identification forms a line of "biological descent" whereby the

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[11] Burke, Kenneth. "Terministic Screens." 1965. Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966. 45, 50, 52.

[12] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. Ibid. 24, 25, 23.

substance is derived from "maternal or paternal sources;" a "contextual" or "geometric" definition "stresses placement," "an object placed in its setting, existing both in itself and as part of its background," and also "participation in a context;" and finally a "directional" determination suggests a trajectory not so much concerned with "where are you from?" or "who are you?" but the purposive "where are you going?"[14] Burke's Pentad seek out the "system of placement," or substance, of any given ideological orientation in order to "generate" or "anticipate" the "various classes of motivational theory" inherent in every ideological grammar.[15]

The other introductory discussion that Burke offers before he puts his Pentad to work is that of how to locate and clarify the ambiguity in the formal relationships found between conceptual terms. Burke's Pentadic analysis is specifically looking for *"terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise"* so that he can locate the "system of placement," the "formal interrelationships" among the terms by "reason of their role as attributes of a common ground or substance."[16] Even more specifically, Burke is looking for those dialectical or dualistic ambiguities manifested in a verbal dynamic where a pair of terms serve as rivals (such as good/evil, white/black) in describing the substance of certain ideological perspectives. Such "contrasted" pairs inevitably hierarchize "one latent or covert, the other patent or overt," which, through a focus on one being substantially "intrinsic" and the other substantially "extrinsic,"

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[13] Ibid. 52.

[14] Ibid. 26-32.

[15] Ibid. xxiii.

[16] Ibid. xviii, xxiii, xix.

presents a "shifting stress" whereby one side is proclaimed "the essence of the pair."[17] Burke's eye was looking, in his case especially, for the "action/motion" (action/state, action/passion, action/passive) pair: for the proclaimed "essence" of a dialectical pair will be the one that performs the dramatic/symbolic action.[18]

But accurately appraising a dramatic situation and locating the terminological ambiguities and hierarchies within an ideological description is a difficult, if not sometimes impossible, job. To further refine his Pentadic coordinates Burke suggested that perhaps the best way to apprehend the complexity of reality was to combine the 5 terms of the Pentad into ratios. Burke first suggested 10 ratios (scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose) where each ratio would serve as "principles of determination."[19] He later modifies his ten ratios into twenty because the ratios "could be reversed" because of the inevitable privileging one side of the pair over the other (*scene-act* or scene-*act*). Thus he concludes, "A ratio is a formula indicating a transition from one term to another. Such a relation necessarily possesses the ambiguities of the potential, in that the second term is a medium different from the first."[20]

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[17] Ibid. 34, 35, 46, 47.

[18] Burke predates Derrida's discussion of a "signature-event" and a "signature-form" signifying the event, whereby, (to use a Burkian term) the "constitution" of a substance, (Derrida's "metaphysical concept") becomes the "hierarchy" and "order of a subordination" built out of a "systematic chain" of "predicates:" one term is privileged as the "essence" of the two bases upon an older order of ideological substantiation. This process of "mystification" (as Burke sometimes referred to it) needed to be, according to Derrida, "deconstructed" so as to "put into practice a reversal of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system" so as to "give to everything at stake in the operations of deconstruction the chance and the force, the power of communication." Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context." Limited Inc. Trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mahlman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1977. 20-21.

[19] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. Ibid. 15.

[20] Ibid. 262.

This is enough to lead us into a discussion of Burke's Pentad and how it acts as a system of coordinates to map the motivational jungle of *linguistic representations* of dramatic situations. In order to chart the grammatical descriptions of the human condition, Burke devised his Pentad out of an old Latin scholastic formula: "who, what, where, by what means, why, how, when."[21] By asking these questions of any linguistic representation of a dramatic act one could "bring out the strategic moments of motivational theory" and "illustrate the Grammatical scruples" of the ideological ground underlying the terminological selection:

> What is needed is not that we place ourselves "above" the controversies. Rather, we should place ourselves *within* them, by an understanding of their essential grammar.[22]

Burke's Pentad was designed to get inside the grammatical structural of ideological terminologies, not to "debunk" them, but in order to see how they work (or don't work) in their selection, reflection, and deflections of reality.

To do this, Burke takes each one of his Pentadic terms and pairs it with an ideological "representative example," which is his book <u>A Grammar of Motives</u> takes the form of Western schools of philosophy/psychology: scene/materialism; agent/idealism; agency/pragmatism; purpose/mysticism; act/realism. By analyzing these ideologies, these "philosophies" and "philosophic languages," Burke tries to bring out the "continuities in psychological terminology" so as to "locate the *discontinuities*, and thereby be able to know just how religions and secular, ancient and modern, psychologies do square with one another."[23] And his purpose is not to "merely summarize and report

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[21] Ibid. 228.

[22] Ibid. 67, 268.

on past philosophies," but rather "to show how certain key terms might be used to 'call the plays' in any and all philosophies."[24]

Burke uses his Pentad to step into the ideological orientation of a particular *way* of living and seeing the world. Philosophical schools (a refined and organized version of what we are calling *ideologies*) are methods (acts) of human living: *hodos, dike, tao, yoga*. They represent a cognitive and linguistic "way," a path across some ground.[25] And thus, any particular philosophical school (ideology) also implicitly or explicitly corresponds with a practical application or "pragmatism" of its orientation: "In one sense, there must be as many 'pragmatisms' as there are philosophies. That is, each philosophy announces some view of human ends, and will require a corresponding doctrine of means."[26]

Burke admonishes his readers to be wary of the incongruity between the dramatic way, act, or method propounded by an ideology and its linguistic/theoretical "doctrine of means." For every philosophy, as a linguistic expression of an ideological orientation, is a "step away from" the dramatic truth of the situational act:

> We shall be reminded that *our instruments are but structures of terms, and hence must be expected to manifest the nature of terms.* That is, we must always be admonished to remember, not that an experiment flatly and simply reveals *reality*, but rather that it *reveals only such reality as is capable of being revealed by this particular kind of terminology.*[27]

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[23] Ibid. xvi, 127, 269.

[24] Ibid. 201.

[25] Ibid. 15, 69.

[26] Ibid. 275.

[27] Ibid. 230, 313.

The terms used to describe and locate the act are themselves only capable of *selecting* the particular explanation of reality that they were designed to *reflect*. Thus Burke is always aware of the inevitable *deflection* of reality that takes place in any ideological (rhetorical)[28] description of reality.

For as Burke summarized: "In any term we can posit a world, in the sense that we can treat the world *in terms of* it, seeing all as emanations, near or far, of its light."[29] All ideological languages and terminology are necessarily a reduction of reality to the metaphorical significance of the representative symbols constituting an ideological set of values. Terminologies are used to name and order reality into a generalized schematic, which serves as the basis of a constituted ideology; the substantiation of a way of life:

> Any terminology of motives reduces the vast complexity of life by reduction to principles, laws, sequences, classifications, correlations, in brief, abstractions or generalizations of one sort or another...To give a proper name to one person, or to name a thing, is to recognize some principle of identity or continuity running through the discontinuities that, of themselves, would make the world sheer chaos. To note any order whatever is to "reduce."[30]

Each ideological orientation orders the world a bit differently and thus selects and reflects a different portion of reality as its constitutive substance, or conversely, each ideological orientation deflects a portion of reality, and thus is blind to other ways of seeing the complex nature of continuity and discontinuity that make up the chaotic and interrelated whole.

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[28] Burke will blend the seeing-naming-knowing process of ideological orientations with their rhetorical representations more explicitly in <u>A Rhetoric of Motives</u> as we will come to see.

[29] Ibid. 105.

[30] Ibid. 96.

Languages and terminologies are metaphorical identifications putting the observed *part* of reality in terms of something else; the unknown named and defined in terms of the known. Language as metaphorical selection is a "reduction," a "lowering," a "lessening," a "narrowing" of scope to reduce the complexity of reality to a more ordered explanation in terms of a simplifying metaphor.[31] And where the multiple metaphorical explanations of varying contextual scopes overlap on the same real ground, it is often the case that the Occamite razor is put into effect to reduce the situation to the simplest and most narrow conception:

> For when two circumferences are matched, it is usually the wider set of terms that will be found to have "multiplied entities beyond necessity"…Thus, to omit a term from one's calculus of motives because, as an invariant, it can be ignored, is hardly an unreasonable thing to do.[32]

Burke admits that reduction is inevitable, but he warns against "simple motives:" "Aiming always at reduction, [empiricism] must admonish continually against the dangers of reduction."

> We should feel justified in *never* taking as its face value any motivational reduction to a "simple." As soon as we encounter, verbally or thematically, a motivational simplicity, we must assume as a matter of course that it contains a diversity.[33]

Occam's razor might be a necessary and valuable tool in breaking down the complexity of reality into manageable and ordered parts, but Burke cautions against an over-reliance on, or a naive belief in, the powers of reduction. Simplistic metaphorical scopes are useful ways of seeing reality, but they are also a potent blindness, which will fail their users in the most profound ways.

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[31] Ibid. 97.

[32] Ibid. 98-99.

Thus to keep from falling victim to our reductive scopes, Burke counsels that we continually look towards ever widening contextual circumferences to re-inform and reevaluate the accuracy and representativeness of our simplistic metaphorical explanations. For to "select a set of terms is, by the same token, to select a circumference" and Burke warns with humility that "most circumferences are felt to be, not so much wider or narrower than one another, as merely different. We might say that they mark out a circumference by spotlight, while the rest of the stage is left dark."[34] Thus any selection of circumference is an "act of faith," by which Burke meant a chosen substantiation of reality based upon subjective needs and wants.[35] This means, "the choice of circumference for the scene in terms of which a given act is to be located will have a corresponding effect upon the interpretation of the act itself."[36] Burke discusses the *choice* of circumference in terms of different historical instances where rhetorical battles emerged because of overlapping scope: instances like, Spinoza's "God/Nature," James' "Creator/Created," or the behaviorist's "human/animal." In each, one side of the dualistic relationship was held to be the representative ground for the other; for example, the behaviorist's instance that human motivation and action be discussed in terms of the biological animal.

Burke insists that reduction of scope can be misleading if it is not tempered by a "representative example." To touch upon Burke's discussion of behaviorism (which Burke believed to be an ideological orientation using an "unrepresentative" example of

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[33] Ibid. 100, 314, 101.

[34] Ibid. 90, 87.

[35] Ibid. 84.

[36] Ibid. 77.

"motion" to discuss the reality of human "action"), we find Burke sarcastically criticizing the behaviorist's scope as too simplistic (and I quote here at length):

> Animal experiments have taught us however (we should at least grant them this) that school-teachers like to send animals to school, that physical sadists who have mastered scientific method like to torture animals methodically, and that those whose ingenuity is more psychiatrically inclined like to go on giving the poor little devils mental breakdowns, ostensibly to prove over and over again that it can be done (though this has already been amply proved to everybody's satisfaction by that of the experimenters).
>
> We cherish the behaviorist experiment precisely because it illustrates the relation between the circumference and the circumscribed in mechanistic terms; and because the sharpest instance of the way in which the altering of the scenic scope affects the interpretation of the act is to be found in the shift from teleological to mechanistic philosophies. Christian theology, in stressing the rational, personal, and purposive aspects of the Creation as the embodiment of the Creator's pervasive will, had treaded such principles as *scenic*. That is, they were not merely traits of human beings, but extended to the outer circumference of the ultimate ground. Hence, by the logic of the scene-act ratio, they were taken as basic to the constitution of human motives, and could be "deduced" from the nature of God as an objective, extrinsic principle defining the nature of human acts. But when the circumference was narrowed to naturalistic limits, the "Creator" was left out of account, and only the "Creation" remained (remained not as an "act," however, but as the concatenation of motions...its treatment of motivation in terms of Stimulus and Response.[37]

Burke criticizes the behaviorists so heavily because he sees them reducing the scope of human motivations too much, and thus they seem to lose an honest appraisal of reality because they over rely on an unrepresentative example and, by extension, unsuited terms.

Burke wrote that "there are two primary generalizations that characterize the quality of motives: freedom and necessity,"[38] and over his career one can see his critical evaluation of both theology and naturalism as extended and reductive scopes of a

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[37] Ibid. 78-79.

[38] Ibid. 74.

determined necessity. Burke wanted to steer away from ideologies and vocabularies of determination because they tend to stifle a comprehensive discussion of human action, wherein freedom is a key component. Burke's Dramatism is a philosophical set of coordinates trying to elbow room for a purely "humanistic" appraisal of the human condition in all its complexity, discontinuity, and seemingly paradoxical nature; articulating both *freedom and necessity*. Thus Burke presents his own representative example of the uniquely "human" situation in terms of "action" and the rhetorical "constitution" of action. And to do this he turns to a political document that in its time sought to both free itself from the determining factors of European monarchies while working to reinforce the established ideologies of capitalism, individualism, and Christianity: the American Constitution.

6. THE RHETORIC OF CONSTITUTIONS

To those who know and study Burke's work, the one word that perhaps sums up his Dramatic philosophy would be "action," which he defines through his Dramatic lens as "the human body in conscious or purposive motion."[1] He traces his definition of action back to the ancient Greek word *poiema* (the origin of the English word for poem), which meant "a deed, doing, action, act; anything done; a poem" and also *energeia* (purposive action), the Aristotelian *actu* (*actus*), which for the scholastics allowed them to say that "existence is an act, not a thing."[2] Of course the doer of an action must be an *agent* (in the Burkian vocabulary gods being agent+ and animals being agent-), which means (in terms of the motivational breakdown between *freedom* and *necessity*) an entity that has some measure of freedom and, thus, one who can produce a conceptual/motivational purpose. For all action, even though to a degree determined by extrinsic/scenic circumstances, must at least be partially free in order to be classified as an "act."

In Burke's terminology there was a distinction between "action" and "motion;" *action* being deliberate, free, chosen, and or purposive motion while *motion* was a determined, derivative, passive, and/or mechanical exercise. The predicament of the human condition allows for a confused separation between action and motion, for all human acts are *partially necessary* (determined) and *partially free* (purposive). This means that human beings can only enact "partial acts, acts that but partially represent us and that produce but partial transformations:" "men are capable of but partial acts, acts

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[1] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. Ibid. 14, 61.

that but partially represent themselves and but partially conform to their scenes."[3] P.B. Shelley seems to capture the essence of Burke's idea in his preface to "Prometheus Unbound:" "Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors and musicians, are in one sense the creators and in another the creations of their age."[4]

Only a "God" it would seem could be capable of a "pure act," "the ultimate act," or "the most complete act,"[5] but the grandiose conceptions of "God," as Burke noted over the course of his career, were fast becoming dissolved in the reductive scope of naturalistic and scientific philosophies (ideologies), which through terminologies of determined motion did not allow for purposive action. However, Burke wanted to counter the naturalistic reduction of scope by representing the metaphorical case for the "creative" act and, thereby, to try to re-substantiate a ground for the *potential* of human action. Burke wanted to emphasize that human beings could do anything at any time for any reason, and while the nature of reality placed certain necessary limitations and restrictions on this equation it did not discount or disavow the role of purposive freedom, which sets up the "conditions of the possibility."[6]

For what the early 20th century deterministic philosophies like naturalism and behaviorism did not take into account was the idea of "attitude," which in Burke's vocabulary is the precursor for action: "Attitude as preparation for action...a kind of 'pre-

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[2] Ibid. 39, 262, 227.

[3] Ibid. 19, 83.

[4] Shelley, P. B. "Prometheus Unbound." 1818-1819. Shelley's Poetry and Prose. Ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977. 135.

[5] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. Ibid. 61

[6] Ibid. 196.

act."[7] The attitude of the agent is an "incipient act," which informs "a region of ambiguous possibilities:"

> In the traditional Aristotelian usage, potentiality is to actuality as the possibility of doing something is to the actual doing of it, or as the unformed is to the formed...Here is the moment when the "potential" in the Aristotelian sense of something that may become either this or that is converted into the potential in the mystical or mechanistic sense of the predestined or preformed.[8]

The pre-act is the nebulous stage of possibility where the act exists as an idea or a potential in the mind and body of the agent. Attitudes are those psychological ideas, ideological motivations, which lie in wait, fermenting inside the human agent, to serve as the catalyst for purposive action.

And unlike the Aristotelian concept of entelechy, whereby, "everything that comes into existence moves towards an end,"[9] Burke leaves behind a discussion of "ends" in order to make space for a discussion of "purpose." For he states that "implicit in the concepts of act and agent there is the concept of purpose," which Burke wants to place "at the very roots of knowledge."[10] Purpose becomes the "ought" implicit within humankind's description of the "is." Purpose is the ideal informing upon the failings and inadequacies of the real. Purpose is that "something added" to reality allowing for the space to say "as if," which then sets up the substantial ideational ground for an agent to use in order to act towards the imagined ends of whichever "ought" he/she would chose:

> But just as a lie is "creative" in the sense that it *adds* to reality, so there is the powerfully and nobly creative aspect of idealism, since an ideal may

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[7] Ibid. 245.

[8] Ibid. 242, 245.

[9] Burke continues his summation, " This end is the principle of its existence; and it comes into existence for the sake of this end." Ibid. 261.

[10] Ibid. 289, 291.

serve as standard, guide, incentive--hence may lead to new real conditions.[11]

An ideal is "a proposition / based on a *Possibility* / worked towards / and made a *Reality*."[12] An ideal is like the sun, to use the example of African American novelist Zora Neale Hurston who in her autobiography <u>Dust Tracks On a Road</u> wrote: "Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to 'jump at de sun.' We might not land on the sun, but a least we would get off the ground."[13] This sentiment is similar to Ralph Waldo Emerson's equation, whereby, "Fate" becomes the culmination of imposed "limitations," for limits exist in the nebulous space between the possible and the impossible and are not determined in advance: "Everything is pusher or pushed; and matter and mind are in perpetual tilt and balance, so."[14] To combine Hurston's and Emerson's metaphors together, An agent, while "fated" never to reach the sun, can use all the powers of will and ingenuity to jump "as far as possible," which in the Emersonian vocabulary would the true definition of "fate" (culmination): fate being for the human agent *as far as possible*.

Burke locates the ideal as an end purposely worked towards, but he acknowledges, as Emerson did, the limits of the real (Burke's "recalcitrance"), which allows for only "impure" motives, impure means, and impure acts: part determined and part free. Thus the ideal becomes a fiction, a magic, by which we live and mold our ways of life according to the end we would hope to achieve. Every ideological orientation

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[11] Ibid. 174.

[12] Beach, J. M. "XXX." <u>Where a Painter is a Poet</u>. Corvallis: Parke Press, 2002. 33.

[13] Hurston, Zora Neale. <u>Dust Tracks On a Road</u>. 1942. 2nd Ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984. 20-21.

draws upon the motivational power of the ideal to encourage action, however, as Burke moves into the more concrete realm of actualizing ideological wishes, the ideal must conform itself to the temporal priorities of any given situation.

Burke defines an ideal at one point as "a general direction towards which one should incline when plotting a course" like an explorer using the ideal of "north" to get to a destination:

> To be sure, it would not be "practicable" - but ideals are never practicable; indeed, they are *by definition* something that you don't attain; they are merely *directions* in which you aim. (You can't hit "North," for instance, though you may hit a target placed to the north of you.)[15]

Burke expands his definition of ideals by linking them to more material oriented "wishes." Ideals, being "something that is beyond attainment," are "terms bearing upon motivation, they contain the ambiguities of the 'substantial' and 'potential,' while wishes "refer to a state of affairs that [are] at least beyond attainment *at the time*" [my emphasis].[16] In this sense *ideals* can become *wishes* and wishes, in the socio-political realm, can become *principles* and principles enacted by a public body thereby become *laws*. It is through this process, the enactment of principles for socio-political purposes, where we find Burke's representative example for human *action*: the constitution.

A constitution is an "enactment of human wills," which (as Burke outlined) carries with it 6 "dictionary usages:"

1. The act or process of constituting; the action of enacting
2. The state of being; natural condition; structure, texture, conformation;
3. The aggregate of all one's inherited physical qualities

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[14] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Fate." 1851-53. <u>Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson</u>. Ed. Stephen E. Whicher. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957. 349.

[15] Burke. <u>A Grammar of Motives</u>. Ibid. 333, 344.

[16] Ibid. 360, 373.

4. The aggregate of mental qualities
5. The fundamental, organic law or principles of government, nation, state, society, or other organized body of men, embodied in written documents, or implied in the institutions and usages of the country or society; also, a written instrument embodying such organic law, and laying down fundamental rules and principles for the conduct of affairs.
6. An authoritative ordinance, regulation or enactment; especially, one made by a Roman emperor, or one affecting ecclesiastical doctrine or discipline.[17]

The idea informing the dramatic act of a constitution seemed to Burke to be the perfect representational anecdote for his Dramatic Pentad to explain the possibilities of human action:

> The word covers all five terms of our pentad. A legal constitution is an *act* or body of acts (or enactments), done by *agents* (such as rulers, magistrates, or other representative persons), and designed (*purpose*) to serve as a motivational ground (*scene*) of subsequent actions, it being thus an instrument (*agency*) for the shaping of human relations.[18]

Constitutions serve a pi-polar role (not exclusively antagonistic, but more dialectic in nature) in that they "substantiate an ought" ("what should be") while subsequently proclaiming an "is" ("what is"):

> Men induce themselves and others to act by devices that deduce "let us" from "we must" or "we should." And "we must" and "we should" they deduce in turn from "it is" - for only by assertions as to how things are can we finally substantiate a judgment...men's judgements are based upon assumptions as to what constitutes the scenic background of their acts. The quality of the situation in which we act qualifies our act - and so, behind a judgement, there lies, explicitly or implicitly, the concept of a constitution that substantiates the judgement.[19]

A constitution is in essence the formation of an ideological-orientation (or on the social level, the negotiations of several ideological orientations coming together to actualize an

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[17] Ibid. 323, 341.

[18] Ibid. 341.

ideology-as-culture). For a constitution to work properly (and by definition a constitution is a batch of ideals, wishes, principles, and directions worked towards) it must first lay claim to "what is," which means the constitution will rhetorically describe the "is" by clothing it in terms of "we must" or "we should."[20] This creates a motivational space, which would then allow for the purposive act, wherein, human beings first say "let us" and then (if all goes to plan) they will act accordingly. A constitution thus is a symbolical/rhetorical *plan of action*, which in creating and communicating it is an *act* and which, when followed through to the letter, becomes another *act* (one could wrangle over which act is the more important one, but we will hold off on this discussion).

Burke goes on to declare: "A constitution is a *substance* - and as such, it is a set of *motives*."[21] In the Burkian vocabulary, as we have already noted, there is no separation between the "is" and the "ought" as the human being always implicitly or explicitly expresses the "is" with the rhetorical urgency of the "ought" (even scientific or "semantic," "neutral" vocabularies cannot escape the larger contextual, rhetorical identifications). Thus a constitution as a substance is a "calculus of motives," a "terminology, or set of coordinates, for the analysis of motives."[22] *A constitution is an ideology* (an ideological orientation, framework, or system), which by its nature will filter reality and assign judgements and meanings according to its constitutional principles, its ideals. But constitutions by their nature are never this straight forward. They tend to

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[19] Ibid. 358, 336-337.

[20] Burke writes, "men's conception of motive, we have said, is integrally related to their conception of substance. Hence to deal with problems of motive is to deal with problems of substance. And a thing's substance I that whereof it is constituted. Hence, a concern with substance is a concern with the problems of constitutionality" (337-38).

[21] Ibid. 342.

mystify their constitutional principles under a "God term" ("or ultimate motivation, or substance, of a Constitutional frame"),[23] which obscures not only the divisive relation between constitutional principles, but also the "extra-constitutional" grounding of the constitution itself.
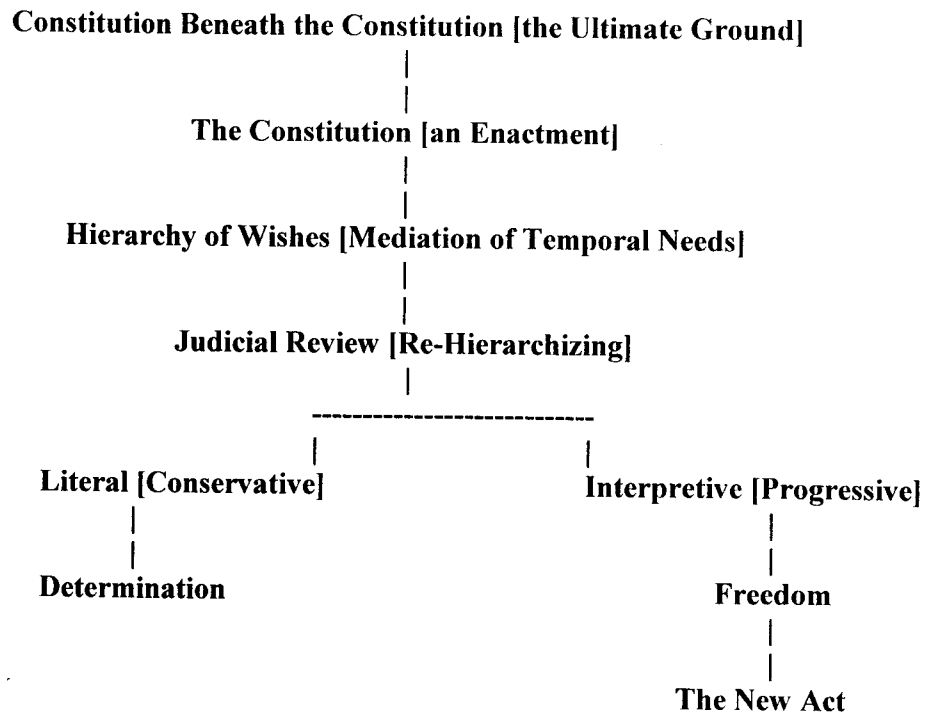
Thus to understand the true nature of a constitution (read for our purposes: ideology) one must locate the three levels of a constitutional framework: 1) the Constitution beneath a constitution (the "ultimate ground" informed by a "God" term), 2) the constitution as enactment of an "ought" by the substantiation of an "is," and 3) the hierarchy or relationship between constitutional principles (wishes) whereby the divisive conflict between wishes are continually mediated by "judicial review" in order to meet the environmental (scenic) needs of a particular historical context. It is in the final process of "judicial review" where the space to reform or reconstitute the constitution lies. It is here where the possibility of a "new act" can re-substantiate a new "is" with a "new ought." It is in this potential to change ("re-birth"), according to Burke, that one finds the dynamic center ("power"[24]) of the constitution.

For the sake of convenience, let us chart Burke's constitutional model:

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[22] Ibid. 377.

[23] Ibid. 355.

[24] Burke predates Foucault's statement that "power is everywhere" (The History of Sexuality: Vol. I, 93) when he wrote over 30 year earlier, "there is a sense in which powers are everywhere" (A Grammar of Motives, 117). For Burke "power" is a potential, a motive, a principle of action, which allows the agent to physically act through the symbolic act of motivational empowerment. On a larger socio-political level,

Constitution Beneath the Constitution [the Ultimate Ground]
|
|
The Constitution [an Enactment]
|
|
Hierarchy of Wishes [Mediation of Temporal Needs]
|
|
Judicial Review [Re-Hierarchizing]
|

| |
Literal [Conservative]   **Interpretive [Progressive]**
| |
| |
Determination   **Freedom**
|
|
The New Act

The first part of Burke's constitutional model is the "constitution behind the constitution," which is in effect the ideological or scenic (environmental) "criterion" that is "consulted" in order to draft and enact a particular constitution; for instance, the American "constitution" was a "*capitalist* constitution" meaning the ideological framework of capitalism is implicitly and explicitly informing the judgements, substances, and wishes within this political document.[25] In terms of language, Burke writes that "constitutions are of primary importance in suggesting what coordinates one will think by"[26] and thus "life, liberty, and the pursuit of property," taken from the materialist (proto-capitalistic) philosophy of John Locke, set the very language and

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power would still be those motivational forces allowing for human action, but conversely, could also take the form of motivational forces policing or restricting certain kinds of human action.

[25] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. Ibid. 363.

ideological perspective that the American founding fathers used to "create" their own constitutional substantiation. One could also mention the heavily deistic or monotheistic language of the U. S. Constitution, which refers to the "wider," "extra-constitutional" "orbit of motivation" located in the "Ultimate Scene" or "higher law" of a metaphysical substance called "God."

And it is this "Ultimate Scene" which not only serves to inform the terminology and emphasis of a particular constitution, but it also acts as a mystical unifier with which to bridge, bind and hierarchize the competing wishes contained within the document. For behind the unifying language of the constitution which acts as a "merger or balance or equilibrium among the Constitutional clauses" one finds a distinct "conflict among the clauses." For in the "realm of the practical," to "satisfy the promises contained in one clause you must forego the promise contained in another."[27] This state of affairs arises because ideals and wishes contained within constitutional documents, as they are by definition "ideal," "need not be consistent with one another." They can be, and often in fact are, "contradictory."[28]

Therefore a particular constitution tends to be a jumble of contradictory ideals or principles lumped together under the unifying language of the constitution beneath the constitution and the mystical substantiation of the "is." But whereas the principled elements within a constitution are "freely" chosen, the relationships between these principles are determined by the constitution beneath the constitution (either prior

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[26] Ibid. 367.

[27] Ibid. 349.

[28] Ibid. 374.

ideological substantiations or specific scenic demands) and/or by the prioritizing act of a

constituted hierarchy:

> There are principles in the sense of wishes, and there are principles in the sense of interrelationships among the wishes. Principles as wishes are voluntary or arbitrary, inasmuch as men can meet in conference and decide how many and what kind of wishes they shall subscribe to. But once you have agreed upon a list of wishes, the interrelationships among those wishes are necessary or inevitable...The proportional method would [] require explicit reference to a *hierarchy* among the distinct wishes. To be sure, the wishes, in their pure ideality, are all "sovereign states" or "independent individuals," all of equal importance; but as applied to practical cases some of the wishes must be more important than others...And since the Constitution itself does not specify priority among the wishes, does not state which among these equals shall be "foremost," then the Court must make these decisions for itself, its judgment being a "new act," so far as the Constitution is concerned.[29]

Constitutional principles as human "wishes" need to be prioritized based upon the

scenic/environmental needs of a particular historical context. Thus the symbolic role of

the "president" and the more active role of the "supreme court" have to take into

consideration the needs and wants of particular factions within a society in order to

prioritize which wishes will be honored in what sequence, and to make this decision the

court relies on "extra-constitutional" substantiations like legal precedence and "ultimate"

moral determinations. In some cases this can become a web of tangled interests where, to

take the U.S. abortion issue of the last 30 years, not only are there two competing

"ultimate" moral determinations (theistic concerns with "God" and the sanctity of "life"

butting heads with humanistic concerns of human "freedom" and rational choice), but

also conflicting legal precedent.

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[29] Ibid. 375, 380.

In this way both the constitution beneath the constitution and particular constitutional enactments (laws[30]) serve as "precedence" in terms of acting as "the Basis or Ground of Future Enactments." These prior enactments can serve either as guides in helping decide upon new, innovative courses of action or they can be more deterministic and "bind" a more traditional course:

> A Constitution is "binding" upon the future in the sense that it has centered attention upon one calculus of motivation rather than some other; and by thus encouraging men to evaluate their public acts in the chosen terms, it serves in varying degrees to keep them from evaluating such acts in other terms.[31]

Constitutions, as already mentioned, are specific answers to specific historical circumstances made by specific individuals with specific needs. However, constitutions inevitably outlive the specific scenic conditions they were originally designed to meet and, thus, with each new environmental context comes a new need for a corresponding "new meaning" to be given to the constitutional substantiation of wishes.[32]

In essence, what is always needed to keep a constitution alive is a *new act*. Burke makes the claim that each successive reinterpretation and re-hierarchization of established constitutional principles is by definition a new act, by which he means a new substantiation of "what is" with a new motivational decree of "what ought to be" to meet the needs of a new contextual situation. When a court arbitrates between two disputing wishes, a new act is produced through their decree that one wish is more important than the other, which re-substantiates the "law" of the land and the "constitution" of the people. And a new act can be shaped by two generalized tendencies within social

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[30] Ibid. 373.

[31] Ibid. 389, 368.

organizations and/or collective units: the "conservative" forces push for determinations of the past to influence the present wanting to keep material conditions "as they are" (tradition), while the progressive or "innovative" forces push for ideal, future wishes wanting to "change" material conditions after progressive, ideal ends (innovation).[33] A new act is forged through a myriad of competing forces, and depending on the "balance" of power among factions and special interests within the political landscape, the new act can be representative of the population it was rhetorically supposed to represent or, in a more narrow sense, it can be (and usually is) representative of the partisan factions and special interests it was specifically designed to benefit. As we shall see in the next chapter, too often rhetorical mystifications of constitutional substantiations are cloaked in unifying, generalized language when in fact, beneath the rhetorical appeal, there lie specific factional interests at play manipulating the substantiation of the "is" for a particular partisan "ought."

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[32] Ibid. 367, 361, 365.

[33] Ibid. 342, 357.

7. BURKE'S RHETORIC OF RHETORIC

Often times constitutions are clothed in a mystical language of unity and generalized wishes and, as we noted earlier, a "God term"[1] ("ultimate motivation") is introduced to obscure not only the divisive relation between constitutional principles, but also the "extra-constitutional" grounding of a constitution itself. This "ultimate motivation" is often delivered in a language of "universals" meant to speak for and benefit an "all," but behind the mystified language (rhetoric) there lies a specific symbolic action designed to benefit a select few. Both Marx and Freud solidified a tradition of "debunking," whereby, a critical orientation was used to locate and deflate the hidden interests sown inside the rhetorical mystifications of any given ideological constitution. However, as Burke points out over and over again in his career, the critical "debunking" method often displaced one set of hidden interests only to replace them with another. Burke's discussion of the role of Rhetoric (and specifically the New Rhetoric propounded in his own work and the work of William Empson) was an attempt to leave the debunking fallacy behind for an honest and in depth look at the social ("class") function of rhetorical language and its inevitable ideological bias (hierarchies with "god" terms).

Burke explicitly equates rhetoric with "word magic," but is quick to point out the purely "realistic" function of word magic in human affairs: "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols;" "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human

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[1] Burke, Kenneth. A Rhetoric of Motives. 1950. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. 276-77.

agents."[2] Rhetoric is "the art of persuasion" and it uses the tools of persuasion, identification, and communication in order to "induce action in people," "trying to *move people*."[3] And in order for one to be able to use rhetorical devices to move people one must be able to speak the language (*way*) of the audience:

> You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his...True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience's opinion in one respect; but he can succeed only insofar as he yields to that audience's opinions in other respects.[4]

And a speaker uses rhetorical devices not only to manipulate the language of the audience for the purposes of communication, identification, and persuasion, but more often than not the speaker uses rhetoric to "*gain advantage* of one sort or another."[5] Rhetoric is a tool of power (often used to mystify the sources, channels, or substantiations of power).

Burke spends over 100 pages in his <u>Rhetoric of Motives</u> (1950) covering the traditional usage of rhetoric out of the classical Western definitions of Greece and Rome through the New Rhetoric of William Empson (<u>English Pastoral Poetry</u> and <u>Seven Types of Ambiguity</u>). Burke's aim was not to present a "comprehensive survey" of rhetorical works *per se*, but to build up out of the past a "philosophy of rhetoric" to use as a functional calculus, both on "literary criticism in particular and on human relations in

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[2] Burke. Ibid. 43, 41. Burke also states: "The use of symbols to induce action in beings that normally communicate by symbols is essentially realistic in the most practical and pragmatic sense of the term" (162).

[3] Ibid. 46, 42, 41.

[4] Ibid. 55-56.

[5] Ibid. 60.

general."[6] Burke's rhetoric was meant to deal with "the possibilities of classification in

its *partisan* aspects:"

> It considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or
> become identified with groups more or less at odds with one
> another..."identification" is, by the same token, though roundabout, to
> confront the implications of *division*...Identification is compensatory to
> division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need
> for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of
> one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very
> essence...For one need not scrutinize the concept of "identification" very
> sharply to see, implied in it at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division.
> Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall.[7]

The realm of Rhetoric is the "rhetorical wrangle"[8] where the "speaker" uses "speech"

(symbolic action) to appeal to and persuade the "spoken-to,"[9] but as Burke is all too keen

to point out, our symbolic systems of speech are composed of intricate "enigmas," which

both "clarify" and "obfuscate," "express" and "conceal" the symbolized reality that we try

to communicate.[10] Thus the realm of rhetoric is a "wrangle," a "battle," where the

participants wrestle both language and each other in a continual search for understanding

(knowledge: epistemology) with which to guide a more purified (purpose: entelechy)

action (being: ontology).

Burke's rhetorical strategy is basically simple: where a symbolic act proclaims,

"neutral, no rhetoric here," Burke says, "look for its rhetoric." For Burke is skeptical of

"neutral" vocabularies because of the very fact that human beings always slip value

judgements into their language (consciously or not, directly or not). Because of this,

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[6] Ibid. 169.

[7] Ibid. 22-23.

[8] Ibid. 23, 26.

[9] Ibid. 271.

Burke admonishes people to be *honestly rhetorical* rather than *dishonestly neutral*: there will always be rhetorical "mystifications" or "eulogistic coverings" in every symbolic act. The honest thing is to be up front and to reveal as much as possible the "ultimate motivations" of our symbolic acts, but human beings (especially those in power) are rarely so honest.

It is because of the dishonest mystification of motives that "ideology" was often used by Marxists as a debunking tool to point out the "particular perspectives" of "special interests" which were rhetorically clothed in terms "universal validity."[11] Burke, on the other hand (as he did with his discussion of Freudian debunking under the terminology of "rationalizations"), basically says, all particular perspectives are "ideologies" and, therefore, all perspectives carry with them a "special interest" clothed in terms of "universal validity." The point is not to "debunk" the apparatus, but to explain its hierarchical structure and how it works.

Thus Burke's main emphasis: behind every ideological orientation clothed in a rhetorical "universal validity" is a specific hierarchy of "special interests:"

> For better or worse, the mystery of the hierarchic is forever with us, let us, as students of rhetoric, scrutinize its range of entrancements, both with dismay and in delight. And finally let us observe, all about us, forever goading us, though it be in fragments...the universal order...whereby all classes of beings are hierachally arranged in a chain or ladder or pyramid of mounting worth.[12]

As Burke explains, "the hierarchic principle itself is inevitable in systematic thought" and it is "indigenous to all well-rounded human thinking," but he qualifies these statements

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[10] Ibid. 120.

[11] Ibid. 203. Burke explains the Marxist debunking: "As a critique of capitalist rhetoric, it is designed to disclose (unmask) sinister *factional* interests concealed in the bourgeois terms for benign *universal* interests" (102).

by adding, "to say that hierarchy is inevitable is not to say that any particular hierarchy is inevitable."[13] Human beings, as we saw in our analysis of Burke's constitution, must hierarchize their wishes so as to meet the necessary demands of the *real* found in temporal circumstances and environmental contexts. Hierarchy is "inevitable" and ultimately very practical, for without gradations of value and expediency nothing "purposive" would be actualized.

And "though *hierarchy* is exclusive," Burke notes, "the *principle* of hierarchy is not."[14] This enables Burke to analyze and critique the *natural* human tendency to hierarchize and to present this process as a fact life, demystified for all to see and evaluate. For Burke argues that a demystified hierarchy is an honest hierarchy, and an honest hierarchy can be rationally argued for or against within the agon of history through the rhetorical "wrangle" of the human conversation. A demystified hierarchy becomes one discourse within the "dialectical" agon of history rather than an inflated ideology painted in terms of an "ultimate," or absolute, vocabulary somehow above or outside the conversation.[15] A demystified hierarchy becomes but a human tool used to analyze and critique reality and as such it can become an objectified agency put under the lens of the critical community in order to modify and "purify" its uses towards the unmapped ends of human potential.

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[12] Ibid. 333.

[13] Ibid. 141.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid. 187. Burke argues against "ultimate" terminologies, while at the same time discussing the "rhetorical advantages of an ultimate vocabulary" (197). As Burke explains using the example of Marxism, there is a certain motivational power found only within "ultimate" ideological vocabularies, which can use a transcendent sense of purpose to unify and inspire individual action (194-197).

Ideologies, their hierarchical structures, and their "ultimate" biases, as Burke

continually reminds his readership, are not *the* problem *per se*, nor should they be

banished or done away with as they serve vital and useful purposes for human

motivation:[16]

> And insofar as men "cannot live by bread alone," they are moved by
> doctrine, which is to say, they derive purposes from language, which tells
> them what they "ought" to want to do, tells them how to do t, and in the
> telling goads them with great threats and promises, even unto the gates of
> heaven and hell.[17]

The main problem that Burke points out is that ideological perspectives and the

hierarchical structures that hold them up are dishonestly clothed in rhetorical

mystifications, which make them seem more important (more "ultimate") than they

ultimately are. Mystified ideological perspectives misrepresent their humble role as

imperfect filtering systems. Burke wanted to take away the rhetorical boastfulness of

ideological orientations and humbly present them as a many headed process where each

ideological perspective is but one voice among a sea of voices competing for space in the

human drama of the historical conversation.

But more than this, Burke wanted to sidestep the motivational morass of

"relativism" (where ideological perspectives are treated in terms of their diversity and

variety of content) and instead, work towards a dialectical understanding found in

"relationism" (where ideological perspectives are treated in terms of relationality based

upon the *principles of ideological thinking*),[18] which lead Burke to advocate a "sociology

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[16] Burke writes, "if your method for eliminating all such bias were successful, it would deprive society of its primary motive power. For though bias is false promise, it is promise. Hence, if you eliminate bias (illusion) from men's social motives, where do you find an equally urgent social motive" (201)?

[17] Burke, Kenneth. The Rhetoric of Religion. 1961. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1970. 274.

of knowledge" (after Karl Mannheim's term in <u>Ideology and Utopia</u>). Basically, this idea

was a return to Burke's earlier criticism of criticism where ideological perspectives could

be unified and tied together via the *principles and structure* of ideological thinking rather

than the *content or vocabulary* of any one ideological system. And here I would quote at

length to let Burke describe his project of a "sociology of knowledge" in full:

> "Relativism" would merely recognize the great variety of ideological
> perspectives, would describe them in their diversity, and at best would
> look for workable compromises among them. But "relationism" should be
> able to build up an exact body of knowledge about ideologies by studying
> the connection between these ideologies and their ground.
>
> To this end, Mannheim generalized the Marxist exposure of
> "mystification" to the point where it becomes the "unmasking" of *any*
> doctrinal bias. That is, a human terminology of motives is necessarily
> partial; accordingly, whatever its claims to universal validity, its
> "principles" favor the interests of some group more than others...But each
> such limited perspective can throw light upon the relation between the
> universal principles of an ideology and the special interests which they are
> consciously or unconsciously make to serve...One might thus use
> rhetorical partisanship for dialectical operations that led towards a body of
> exact knowledge about the relation between all ideologies and the
> conditions of living out of which they arise...thereby making it possible to
> work steadily towards an increase in the exactitude of ways for
> discounting bias in views that had seemed to be universally valid...There
> is a fallacy here only if sociology is expected to provide the ultimate
> ground of motivation. Thus, the "pro-ultimate" nature of the sociological
> vocabulary should be interpreted as indigenous to the nature of sociology
> itself, which cannot figure ultimate motives, and but brings us to the edge
> of them.[19]

Burke proposes a critical process by which ideological perspectives can be demystified

and honestly evaluated in terms of their "principles" so that a systematic appraisal can

determine the uses and limitations (its way of seeing and its blindness) towards the

"sociological" end of perfecting the human tool of ideology as a critical perspective for

interpreting reality and satisfying the human being's biological and social needs. The

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[18] <u>A Rhetoric of Motives</u>. Ibid. 198.

sociological valuation of purified human motives and the possibility of human freedom skirts the "ultimate" in that it privileges the human as an "agent" (subject) who can act out of, and on, the determinations of surrounding environmental contexts and historical processes. But Burke privileges, one could argue consciously and honestly, the sociological, the human, as his "ultimate" for as he wrote in <u>Permanence and Change</u>, "by no other fiction can men truly cooperate in historic processes"[20] and, thereby, act out of a determined necessity towards a realm of freedom.

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[19] Ibid. 198-201.

[20] Burke. <u>Permanence and Change</u>. Ibid. 236.

8. CONCLUSION: A BURKEAN ETHICS

With all of Burke's talk about the possibility of action latent within every human agent he is completely grounded within a community ethic of social development and mutual responsibility: society seeks to nurture and form the individual and the individual forms his or herself out of society, whereby, the individual as a "unique," but "impure" creation (half determined and half free) becomes another "I" in the communal "we" and, thereby, modifies to a small or large extent the social identity. Burke advocates a social model based upon a similar ethic as what Martin Buber called an "I-You" relationality:

> A social relation is established between the individual and external things or other people, since the individual learns to anticipate their attitudes toward him. He thus, to a degree, becomes aware of *himself* in terms of *them* (or generally, in terms of the "other"). And *his* attitudes, being shaped by their attitudes as reflected in him, modify his ways of action. Hence, in proportion as he widens his social relations with persons and things outside him, in learning how to anticipate their attitudes, he builds within himself a more complex set of attitudes, thoroughly social. This complexity of social attitudes comprises the "self" (thus complexly erected atop the purely biological motives, and in particular modified by the formative effects of language, or "vocal gesture," which invites the individual to form himself in keeping with its social directives)...But however complicated our attitudes may thus finally become, they add up to an attitude that leads to a way of acting.[1]

Human beings are social animals in the Burkean universe. They are social animals with highly refined linguistic skills. Individuals grow into themselves by growing into their society and the "natural" end of human development would be a group of human beings firmly set within a social network whereby they serve each other in functional roles, wherein the individual on a personal level is nurtured while at the same time the individual gives back out of his/herself and furthers the ends and continuity of the group.

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[1] Burke. A Grammar of Motives. 237-38.

But Burke was very aware of the less than communal state of affairs in this world governed by conflicting interests and violent resolutions. To this post-Edenic world of the "fall" Burke proposed a "purification of war," whereby, "men may cease to persecute one another under the promptings of demonic ambition that arise in turn from distortions and misconceptions of purpose."[2] Burke instead wanted to advocate a "neo-Stoic cosmopolitanism, with ideals of tolerance" that would combat both "fanaticism and dissipation."[3] For Burke saw within the linguistic motives and ambitious strivings of the human species a prideful intolerance, which tended to idolize particular brands of ideological purpose and enslave, through the webbing of power, as many willing and unwilling victims as could be manipulated through the cultural trappings of mystified constitutional hierarchies. While a relational society is the ideal "end" of human development, society could be, and in fact is (time and time again as history makes perfectly evident), perverted by the special interests of particular factions, which exploit the social system for personal profit. Burke wanted to work against this state of affairs.

As Foucault reinforced in the History of Sexuality: Vol. I, power is "everywhere and nowhere," thus for the reformer or revolutionary there is no "center" to critique or attack. The "center" mysteriously manifests itself in a myriad of ways when particular situations unveil the workings of power and mobilized armies, police, tear-gas, a censor board, or a judicial ruling, which magically turn into a physical "force" to protect and further the ends of power. Burke's primary emphasis was on linguistic forms and the substantiation of power through symbolic action. But as Burke was quick to point out (to

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[2] Ibid. 305.

[3] Ibid. 318.

use a line from William Blake), there is no progression without contraries and power is never so simple a mechanism as to be painted in terms of "good" or "evil."

Burke was beyond simplistic valuations like that and he insisted upon a transvaluation of value, whereby, power was explained as a dialectical process of "pusher" and a "pushed against," the forces of social progressivism and the forces or social conservatism, each with a stake in the process, each with reasoned discourse to defend their agenda:

> True irony, however, irony that really does justify the attribute of "humility," is not "superior" to the enemy...True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one *needs* him, is *indebted* to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him *within*, being consubstantial with him.[4]

Society, for better or worse, is the dialectical dance between the futuristic progressive forces and the nostalgic conservative forces, and the social reformer (to enact any real change) must have the humility to see the irony of the human condition. Burke was a social reformer.and his philosophy was and is radical in its own right. Burke presents the human being as a biological animal with the unique gift of language. With this gift the human being has been able to do great things in terms of constructing symbolic meaning and systems of meaning. But out of the magic of human meaning comes the tangled web of trying to separate the layers of human judgements and values in order to distinguish between reality and our descriptions of reality.

For ultimately, the survival of the human species rests on our ability to both create and sustain our mechanisms of human meaning, while at the same time refining our ability to see reality for what it is and to recognize and meet the demands it places upon us. Burke's dramatism was a skeptical philosophy about human perspectives and the

meanings we posit onto reality. For all we can really know is what we verbalize, organize, systematize, and hierarchize in terms of *this* or *that*. But our terms are one step removed from the objective landscape outside our doors of perception. Burke asked his readers to be humble in their perceptions and experience their ideological universes as both a way of seeing and as a blindness. For in the end there is no ultimate right or wrong, truth or falsity, or utopian fable to someday come true. The human condition is a chaotic striving and bumping along as individuals create and sustain meaningful systems of interpretation and value towards the end of not only *living*, but as a great teacher once proclaimed, *living more abundantly*.

The theory of ideology that I have presented through Burke's work is a theoretical exploration of the seeing, naming, knowing process that characterizes us as human beings, the fundamental means we use to live our *human* life. One of the elemental or, to use a Burkean phrase, "constitutional" debates of our time is the question, "what does it mean to be a human being." This question cannot be answered without a detailed discussion of the evolution and functionality (dysfunctionality) of ideology. I would argue that what I have examined and theorized here in this essay as "ideology" is as close to the "center" of the *human being* as any discussion can get. For I believe that the central motivating theme behind the human experience is the idea of *meaning*. Where does it come from? What does it do? Why do we persist in using it? What are its limitations? Until these questions and more are answered in their complexity through the many systematic filters of human "knowledge" (religion, poetry, history, economics, science, evolution, etc.); until we can decipher, accommodate, and mediate peacefully between conflicting structures of meaning; until we articulate and teach "humanity" to

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[4] Ibid. 514.

our young and devise a nurturing and egalitarian social structure; until these conditions and many more are met, the need for a critical discussion of ideology and human society will go on. I hope this essay will be another cornerstone in the foundation of my lifelong commitment to this endeavor.

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