Persuasion in the Rhetorical Tradition

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The study of persuasion can be traced back to ancient Greece, the birthplace of both rhetoric and democracy. As Dillard and Pfau (2002) noted in the first edition of *The Persuasion Handbook*, Aristotle "provided the first comprehensive theory of rhetorical discourse" (p. ix) in the fifth century BCE, and persuasion was central to that theory. Yet persuasion has not always been at the center of rhetorical theory. During the Enlightenment, the scope of rhetoric broadened to include aesthetic and psychological concerns, rendering persuasion secondary to considerations of "taste" and "sympathy." More recently, narrative and dramatistic theories of rhetoric have emphasized identity or "identification" over persuasion, and some rhetorical scholars have even denounced persuasion as a mechanism of "control and domination" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 2). Still, persuasion has remained a dominant theme in the rhetorical tradition, with two broad concerns distinguishing the rhetorical perspective from more scientific or empirical approaches to persuasion: a focus on the *political* or *civic* contexts of persuasion, and an overriding emphasis on *ethical* concerns.

In this chapter, I survey the rhetorical tradition with a view toward illuminating some of the differing, even competing, perspectives on persuasion over the long history of rhetorical studies. In the process I highlight two cultural imperatives that help to account for the emphasis on politics and ethics in the Western rhetorical tradition: (1) the need to educate for citizenship, and (2) an ongoing debate over the rules or norms of democratic deliberation. In the rhetorical tradition, these two imperatives link the study of rhetoric to democratic theory, inspiring normative conceptions of persuasion that emphasize the *responsibilities* that go along with the *right* of free speech in a democracy. By surveying how rhetorical theorists historically have distinguished responsible or legitimate free speech from propaganda and demagoguery, I illuminate the intimate connections between rhetorical theories of persuasion and democracy itself.

I begin by revisiting the classical/humanistic roots of the rhetorical tradition, from the sophists of ancient Greece to the Roman rhetoricians, Cicero and Quintilian. I then sketch the history of rhetorical theory through modern times,

including the attack on rhetoric in the early modern period and the impact of the belletristic and elocutionary movements on rhetorical theory. Finally, I consider more recent developments in rhetorical theory, including the influence of Burkean "dramatism," the rise of social movement studies, and the "postmodern" challenge to the rhetorical tradition. As we shall see, many of these more recent developments have been cast as alternatives to the classical/humanistic tradition of persuasion (indeed, some have challenged the very idea of a "rhetorical tradition"). Yet despite these various challenges, the classical tradition's emphasis on the ethics of civic persuasion remains strong in contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism.

In the second section of the chapter, I reflect on the distinctive contributions of the American tradition of rhetoric and public address to the theory and practice of persuasion. Surveying the linkages between America's great experiment in democracy and evolving attitudes toward rhetoric and persuasion, I begin by recalling how the founders' constitutional design reflected a vision of a deliberative democracy grounded in neoclassical rhetorical theory. I then trace how the American rhetorical tradition evolved during the so-called golden age of American oratory, as Jacksonian democracy brought a more populist rhetorical style to American politics and the debate over slavery tested the limits of civic persuasion. I next consider the revival of the American rhetorical tradition during the Progressive Era, as new media, changing demographics, and a culture of professionalization revolutionized the way Americans talked about politics and gave rise to a new "science" of mass persuasion. Finally, I reflect on the impact of new electronic media and the relationship between television and the decline of civic discourse in the closing decades of the 20th century. I conclude with some brief reflections on the contemporary crisis of democracy in America and the efforts of a new, interdisciplinary deliberative democracy movement to revive the public sphere.

The Concept of Persuasion in Rhetorical Theory

The story of rhetoric's roots in ancient Greece has been told many times—and for a variety of purposes. For generations, that story was used to justify speech programs in American colleges and universities. At the height of the Cold War, for example, W. Norwood Brigance, one of the pioneers of the American speech discipline, invoked rhetoric's ancient roots to argue that the teaching of speech was one of the distinguishing marks of a free society. Democracy and the "system of speechmaking were born together," Brigance (1961) wrote, and since ancient times "we have never had a successful democracy unless a large part, a very large part, of its citizens were effective, intelligent, and responsible speakers." According to Brigance, there were only two kinds of people in the modern world: "Those who in disagreements and crises want to *shoot* it out, and those who have learned to *talk* it out." Brigance concluded that if America hoped to remain a "government by talk," it needed leaders who knew how to talk "effectively, intelligently, and responsibly," as well as citizens trained to "listen and judge" (pp. 4–5).

Since Brigance's day, revisionist scholars have told and "retold" rhetoric's story to advance a variety of agendas. In *Rereading the Sophists*, for example, Jarratt (1991) reconsidered the Greek sophists from a feminist perspective and concluded that they were more progressive in their thinking about "social needs" (p. 28) than most of the more prominent figures in the classical tradition. In Jarratt's rereading of the tradition, the sophists provided an alternative to patriarchal rhetoric by privileging "imaginative reconstructions" over "empirical data" (p. 13) and by broadening the purview of rhetoric beyond canonical texts. The sophists also modeled a more collaborative and democratic model of rhetorical education, according to Jarratt—one more consistent with today's best research on critical pedagogy and "social cognition" (p. 92).

The sophists were no doubt important to the rhetorical tradition. But so, too, were Plato, Aristotle, and the great Roman rhetoricians, Cicero and Quintilian. It is important to recognize that no single paradigm defines the classical rhetorical tradition. Rather, that tradition consists of ongoing debates over the philosophical status of rhetoric, the best methods of rhetorical education, and the aims, scope, power, and ethics of rhetoric—indeed, over the very definition of "rhetoric" itself. Yet even as we recognize the rhetorical tradition itself as a dynamic and ongoing set of controversies, we can identify two emphases in the classical tradition that have distinguished the rhetorical perspective ever since: (1) an emphasis on the role of persuasion in *politics* and *civic* life, and (2) an overriding concern with the *moral character* of the speaker and the *ethics* of persuasion.

The Ancient Tradition

The sophists were the original professors of rhetoric in Greece, and they initiated a long tradition of teaching speech and persuasion as education for citizenship. As Hunt (1965) noted, the original sophists were professional teachers who helped meet the need for rhetorical and civic training in Athens, and the term "sophist" initially referred to "any man . . . thought to be learned" (p. 71). Over time, however, the sophists acquired a negative reputation as arrogant and boastful—a reputation that echoed down through the centuries because of a famous dialogue written by their best-known critic, the philosopher Plato. In the *Gorgias*, Plato accused the sophists of teaching students to flatter or pander to their audiences, and Plato's criticisms so impressed succeeding generations that the sophists came to stand for a whole range of human flaws: the "false pretense of knowledge, overweening conceit, fallacious argument, cultivation of style for its own sake, demagoguery, corruption of youth . . . , and, in general, a ready substitution of appearance for reality" (Hunt, 1965, p. 69).

In the master narrative of the rhetorical tradition, Plato's student, Aristotle, rescued rhetoric's reputation by devising an "amoral" or "morally neutral" theory focused purely on *techné*, or the mechanics of persuasive speaking. Leaving ethical questions to the philosophers, Aristotle defined rhetoric as the faculty of "discovering in the particular case . . . the available means of persuasion" (Cooper, 1932, p. 7), and he recognized that this power "could be used either for good or ill" (Kennedy, 1991, p. ix). While Aristotle refrained from grand moral pronouncements, however, he did infuse his rhetorical theory with a strong *ethical* or *normative* component. Emphasizing moral character as a key element in persuasion and celebrating reasoned argument over appeals to the emotions, Aristotle's rhetoric was hardly morally neutral about what constituted responsible persuasion in civic life. Moreover, his vision of civic persuasion demanded broad learning in philosophy, history, literature, and human psychology. For Aristotle, rhetoric was not only a *moral* but also an *architectonic* art, encompassing all realms of humanistic and scientific understanding.

Similarly, Isocrates, one of the later sophists, responded to Plato's attack on rhetoric by rejecting both the empty and commercialized speech of his fellow sophists *and* the abstract philosophizing of Plato and the Socratics. Rather than mere *techné*, Isocrates viewed rhetoric as a means for educating students to "think and speak noble, virtuous ideas" and to "implement them in civic policy" (Kennedy, 1991, p. 11). For Isocrates, the ultimate goal of a rhetorical education was not to prepare students for personal success, but to train them for public service and "inspire the political life of [the] nation with a higher moral creed" (Jaegar, 1965, p. 108). The ethical and civic spirit of the Greek rhetoricians was even stronger in the writings of the Roman rhetoricians, Cicero and Quintilian. Bringing a more pragmatic, pedagogical emphasis to the study of rhetoric, the Romans added little to the Greeks' repertoire of persuasive techniques. In systematizing rhetorical instruction and grounding it in a theory

of civic republicanism, however, they painted a portrait of the ideal citizen in a free republic and upheld a high moral standard: the "common good." For the Romans, the ideal orator was not merely one with "exceptional gifts of speech," but also a "good man" with "all the excellences of character" (Butler, 1969, pp. 9–11). They considered the principles of moral conduct an integral part of the rhetorical art, not something to be left to the ethicists or philosophers.

Cicero's chief contribution to the theory of civic rhetoric was his emphasis on the practical or functional aspects of the art, which he elucidated from the perspective of a practicing orator. As the "most eminent orator of Roman civilization" (Baldwin, 1924, p. 43), Cicero aspired to restore the art of rhetoric to its exalted status in Greek civilization, and he was "influenced and guided" in this effort "by the doctrines of Isocrates," whom he regarded as the "father of eloquence" (Thonssen & Baird, 1948, p. 81). Like Isocrates, Cicero painted a portrait of the ideal orator as an engaged citizen of high moral character and broad learning, one devoted not to his own selfish interests but to the "common good." In the first book of his most important work, *De Oratore*, Cicero lamented the scarcity of great orators in his own day and blamed that problem on the "incredible vastness and difficulty of the subject" (Sutton & Rackham, 1983, p. 13). In addition to "knowledge of very many matters," Cicero's ideal orator mastered the psychology of the human emotions, stocked his memory with "the complete history of the past," and commanded a "store of precedents" grounded in both "statute law and our national law" (p. 15). Then he had to deliver all that knowledge effectively, with the voice, facial expressions, physical gestures, and the movement of the body all carefully regulated. For Cicero, true eloquence demanded training "in all the liberal arts" (p. 55), as well as mastery of the "moral science" of "human life and conduct" (pp. 50–51).

Like Cicero, Quintilian was concerned about the paucity of great orators in the Roman republic. At a time when politics and public morals in Rome had declined to a "savage low" (Murphy, 1965, p. xiii), he aspired to nothing short of a cultural revolution through rhetorical education. Quintilian's monumental four-volume work, *Institutio Oratoria* (Butler, 1969), was the "most ambitious single treatise on education" produced by the ancient world (Murphy, 1965, p. xi), and it set out a program for educating the citizen-orator from cradle to grave. More than just a handbook of rhetoric, Quintilian's *Institutio* placed at least as much emphasis on developing moral character as oratorical skills. For Quintilian, it was not enough that young men grew up to be effective orators; they also needed to be broadly educated and morally principled, capable of "analysis, reflection, and then powerful action in public affairs" (Murphy, 1965, p. xx). In the "dissolute society of his time," Quintilian's emphasis on "moral principle as a factor in education" made a most "profound impression" (Murphy, 1965, p. viii), and his portrait of the ideal citizen has been passed down through the ages in a phrase familiar to every student of classical rhetoric: the "good man speaking well."

Much of the modern scholarship on the classical/humanist tradition has emphasized the differences among these various "schools" of rhetoric in the ancient world. Yet a common thread ran through all of classical rhetoric: the need to educate for citizenship. Concerned with the practical and ethical requirements of civic life, the ancient rhetoricians aspired to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they would need to be citizens in a free society. All recognized the need for rules of civic persuasion, and they all imagined some ideal orator—a speaker who embodied civic virtue and a commitment to the "common good." As Garsten (2006) has concluded, the ancient rhetorical tradition constituted a "politics of persuasion" where both leaders and ordinary citizens possessed "a certain moral compass" that served as a check on demagoguery and allowed for "responsible judgment" in civic affairs (p. 146). It was a tradition that, as we shall see later, had great appeal to America's founders.

The Modern Era

Over the centuries, there have been a number of challenges to the classical tradition, including alternatives to its emphasis on persuasion in civic life. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the philosophical critique of the classical rhetorical tradition that emerged in the early modern era. I then take a closer look at the alternative paradigm that emerged across the 18th and 19th centuries—a period that Golden and Corbett (1968) have called one of the "most prolific eras in rhetorical history" (p. 7). During this time, British and American rhetoricians shifted the emphasis in rhetorical theory from persuasion to the aesthetic, literary, and performative dimensions of discourse, and they dramatically broadened the scope of rhetoric to include written and literary forms.

The beginnings of what Garsten (2006) has characterized as the early modern "attack on rhetoric" (p. 10) can be traced to the rise of political and religious fanaticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fearing the effects of demagoguery on public opinion, philosophers such as Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant searched for some unitary and authoritative source of public judgment to replace the everyday opinions of ordinary citizens, in effect "asking citizens to distance themselves from their private judgments and to judge from a sovereign, unitary, public standpoint instead" (p. 11). Hobbes alternative was expressed in a "rhetoric of representation"; for Rousseau and Kant the alternatives were a "rhetoric of prophetic nationalism" (seeking to "instill in citizens a prerational, quasi-religious sense of sympathetic identification with their fellow citizens") and a "rhetoric of public reason" (calling on ordinary citizens to defer to philosophers who had achieved a higher level of "enlightenment"). According to Garsten, all of these "rhetorics against rhetoric" undermined "the classical humanist tradition" by downplaying the role of persuasion and individual judgment in politics. They also contributed to an "aestheticization" of rhetoric that

transformed it into "a literary enterprise rather than a political one" (pp. 11–12).

This "aestheticization of rhetoric" was most obvious in the belletristic movement of the late 18th century. Led by Hugh Blair and George Campbell, this movement combined the study of rhetoric and "polite arts" (including poetry, drama, and even biography and history) into a common discipline, with an emphasis on taste, style, culture, and critical analysis. In his enormously influential *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1965), for example, Blair devoted only 10 of his 47 lectures to eloquence and public speaking, while he committed four lectures to "taste," four to "language," fifteen to "style," and thirteen to the "critical examination of the most distinguished *species of composition*, both in prose and verse" (Vol. 1, p. xi). For Blair and other belletristic writers, there was no real distinction between oral and written rhetoric, nor did they draw firm distinctions between expository, literary, and persuasive genres of discourse. Moreover, they believed that the same principles might guide both rhetorical practitioners and critics of public discourse.

The belletristic rhetorics represented the first real alternative to the classical tradition, as they radically expanded the scope of the discipline and elevated the importance of concepts that had been neglected by the classical rhetoricians, such as taste, style, sympathy, and sublimity. The belletristic movement also reflected some larger intellectual trends at the time, including "a pervasive enthusiasm for the newly developing empirical method, a commitment to rationalism, a curiosity to understand human nature and man's relationship to God, a preoccupation with the origin and use of language, and an appreciation of the potentialities of persuasion as a force in a democracy and in a Christian society" (Golden & Corbett, 1968, p. 7). In contrast to the classical tradition, the belletristic rhetoricians paid little attention to the canon of *invention* (Blair's *Lectures*, for example, had no separate chapters on argumentation, reasoning, or evidence). They also emphasized emotion

over reason, distinguishing between "conviction" and "persuasion" and associating the latter with the human passions. In all of these senses, then, there was clearly something "new" about these so-called "new rhetorics." Not only were they more "scientific," but also much broader in scope, embracing expository and literary forms of discourse as well as civic persuasion.

Not all modern rhetoricians shared the belletristic rhetoricians' interest in "style" and "taste"—their "aestheticization" of rhetoric. Some, like John Ward (1759), remained slavishly devoted to the classical tradition, writing monumental yet wholly unoriginal restatements of classical doctrines (Golden & Corbett, 1968, p. 7). Others responded to complaints about the decline of oratory by writing detailed handbooks on vocal and nonverbal delivery, including elaborate taxonomies of facial expressions and gestures. These modern elaborations on the canon of delivery became so popular as to constitute yet another major trend in the history of rhetoric: the "Elocutionary Movement" (Cohen, 1994, pp. 1–12). Yet by conceding concern with the substantive content of discourse to other disciplines, the Elocutionary Movement only contributed further to the marginalization of rhetoric.

In sum, the classical tradition was never supplanted entirely by the modern or "new rhetorics" of the 18th and 19th centuries. The ancients still had their champions, and the elocutionists at least preserved the study of speech as a distinctive discipline—albeit one focused narrowly on the performative dimensions of rhetoric. Most of the "modern" rhetoricians continued to acknowledge their debt to the ancients, and most still embraced the ancient view of the purposes of rhetorical education. Reflecting the spirit of Quintilian, for example, Hugh Blair argued that the goal of rhetorical pedagogy should be to prepare well-rounded, liberally educated, and morally virtuous citizens. Nevertheless, neither Blair nor any of the other modern rhetoricians treated civic discourse as the primary focus of rhetoric. Even those who did focus on argumentation and persuasion, like Richard Whately, seemed "strangely aloof" from the world of politics, making "few references to contemporary economic and political problems" (Whately, 1963, p. xii).

Not surprisingly, many of these trends became even more pronounced in the 20th century, including the blurring of the distinction between written and oral discourse, the broadening of the scope of rhetoric, and the treatment of persuasion as but one of many purposes or "ends" of rhetoric. In addition, the study of rhetoric would continue to become more interdisciplinary, as rhetorical theorists explored the connections between rhetoric and literature, religion, history, philosophy, and psychology. In the next section, I describe just a few of the most influential paradigms of contemporary rhetorical theory that accelerated these trends: Burke's "dramatism," Perlman's "new rhetoric," and the social movement and postmodern perspectives on rhetorical theory and criticism.

Persuasion in Contemporary Rhetorical Theory

Few would deny Kenneth Burke's status as the most influential rhetorical theorist of the twentieth century. Long recognized as a literary scholar, the significance of Burke's contributions to rhetoric were first illuminated by Nichols (1952), who distinguished between the "old rhetoric," with its emphasis on "deliberative design" (p. 136), and Burke's "new rhetoric" with its broader perspective on symbolic inducement. According to Nichols, the key difference between the old and the new rhetorics could be summed up by contrasting two words: whereas the key term in the old rhetoric was *persuasion*, Burke's new rhetoric emphasized *identification*, which could refer to a "deliberative device," a "means" of persuasion, an "end" of rhetoric, or even "unconscious" processes of the human mind (p. 136). For Burke, as Day (1960) later observed, identification was a "strategy," but one that encompassed "the whole area of language usage for the purpose of inducement to action or attitude" (p. 271). In other

words, as Zappen (2009) argues, Burke's "concept of rhetoric as identification" broadened "the traditional view of rhetoric as persuasion" to include virtually any means of "inducing cooperation and building communities" (p. 279).

Burke's "new rhetoric" appeared at a time of growing dissatisfaction with the constraints of the classical paradigm, and it inspired a variety of new theoretical and critical alternatives over the next half century: the narrative paradigm, fantasy theme analysis, genre studies, social movement studies, and even psychological and visual "turns" in rhetorical theory and criticism. Burke's theorizing changed the way rhetoricians thought about standards of judgment and the concept of "rhetorical effect," and it encouraged new ways of thinking about "audience"—not just as the objects of persuasion, but as active participants in the construction or constitution of meaning and identity (Charland, 1987). This *constitutive* approach represented a fundamentally different way of thinking about the purposes and functions of all sorts of symbolic action, from traditional platform speeches, to visual and nonverbal cues, to music, art, and architecture, to the rhetorics of religion and science. In the Burkean spirit, all human activity was, at some level, "rhetorical," for human beings were the "symbol-using animal[s]" (Burke, 1966, p. 3). Rhetoric, for Burke, encompassed not just persuasion but the broad range of symbolic actions that constituted the drama of human life.

The liberating effect of Burke's "dramatism" was perhaps most evident in the rhetorical study of social movements. Traditionally, rhetorical scholars were inclined to condemn radical speech as unreasonable or ineffective. "Since the time of Aristotle," as Scott and Smith (1969) observed, academic rhetorics had functioned as "instruments of established society, presupposing the 'goods' of order, civility, reason, decorum, and civil or theocratic law" (p. 7). In the 1960s and 1970s, however, rhetorical scholars sought alternatives that might make better sense out of the rhetoric of social movements. Burkean theory provided one such alternative. Focusing on the identity-building functions of movement rhetoric, Burkean theory suggested how rhetorical strategies that might seem counterproductive, irrational, or even coercive by traditional standards might serve to foster group cohesion or dramatize shared grievances. Burke, in other words, opened critics' eyes to the constitutive or "ego-functions" of protest rhetoric (Gregg, 1971, 71–91).

The study of social movement rhetoric thus redefined the "rules" of public discourse, introducing new standards that acknowledged and even celebrated the role of radical speech in a democracy. In 1968, for example, McEdwards proclaimed the "jolting, combative, and passionate" (p. 37) rhetoric of the agitator "a necessary drivewheel of a dynamic democracy" (p. 36) and celebrated both Wendell Phillips and Malcolm X as agents of positive social change. Similarly, Burgess (1968) justified the confrontational, even threatening rhetoric of Black Power activists as their "only strategic choice" and explained that "behind all the sound and fury" was an effort to "force upon the culture a moral decision" (p. 123). A few years later, Windt (1972) even proclaimed the obscene diatribes of the Yippies an expression of their sincere "moral commitments" and a necessary response to circumstances—at least as they perceived them (p. 3). In their efforts to better understand or even justify the "rhetoric of confrontation" (Scott & Smith, 1969), rhetorical scholars argued that civility and decorum too often served as "masks for the preservation of injustice," and they turned to Burkean theories of identity and dramatism to help fashion a rhetorical theory more "suitable to our age" (p. 8).

Feminist rhetorical scholars likewise have developed alternatives to the traditional paradigm. In her pioneering work on the rhetoric of women's liberation, for example, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1973) explained that "feminist advocacy" wavered "between . . . the persuasive and the non-persuasive" and called for theoretical perspectives that focused not on "public issues" but on "personal exigences and private, concrete experience" (p. 85). Other feminist theorists

have renounced persuasion altogether, insisting that the conscious intent to change others is anathema to feminist thought. "Embedded in efforts to change others," Foss and Griffin (1995) declared, "is a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" (p. 3). Foss and Griffin's alternative, the "invitational" approach, instead invites listeners "to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (p. 5). Contrasting the invitational with the persuasive, Bone, Griffin, and Scholz (2008) explain that while "the ontological orientation" of persuasive rhetoric is "the desire to move another rhetor toward accepting a particular position," invitational rhetoric aims instead to "understand the perspectives" of others and to foster "dialogue" that not only allows for "mutual understanding but also self-determination" (p. 446).

The postmodern turn in rhetorical theory might be seen as the ultimate rejection of persuasion-centered theories. Skeptical about the very possibility for human communication and understanding in the "postmodern age," these scholars generally reject traditional notions of human agency and shared meaning. They argue that "the subject of the rhetorical act cannot be regarded as the unified, coherent, autonomous, transcendent subject of liberal humanism," but rather must be viewed as "multiple and conflicted, composed of numerous subject formations or positions" (Berlin, 1992, p. 20). In addition, postmodernists view language not as a "transparent medium" or a "simple signaling device," but rather as a "pluralistic and complex system of signifying practices" that *construct* rather than reflect or simply communicate about external realities (Berlin, 1992, pp. 18–19). For postmodernists, it simply makes no sense to talk about a speaker using language to persuade a group of listeners, as rhetoric traditionally has emphasized. Indeed, some postmodernists reject the idea of a rhetorical tradition itself, insisting that all histories and traditions are "necessarily partial" and work "on behalf of some interests to

the disadvantage of other interests" (Walzer & Beard, 2009, p. 16).

Of course, not all 20th-century rhetorical theorists have rejected the classical tradition's emphasis on persuasion, civic discourse, and the ethics of speech. Most notably, Chaim Perleman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, in their influential *New Rhetoric* (1969), drew heavily on the classical tradition to develop a theory of practical or "non-formal reasoning" designed to "inform value choices and action" in law, politics, and everyday life (Frank & Bolduc, 2010, p. 145). Although Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca went well beyond the ancients' emphasis on persuasive *speaking*, their concept of a "universal audience" reflected the same concern for the moral or ethical foundations of rhetoric (Ray, 1978), and they ultimately sought to answer the same basic questions as the Greek and Roman rhetoricians: How do we distinguish "good" from "bad" arguments? What separates "reasonable" attempts to persuade from propaganda or demagoguery? What sorts of standards or "rules" of speech and debate should prevail in a free society? And how might we best educate citizens to be responsible, effective participants in the civic dialogue?

As we continue to grapple with these questions, it is useful to follow the example of Perlman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, who looked beyond the writings of rhetorical theorists and philosophers to consider how the ethical and pragmatic standards of public discourse are actually manifested in practice. In the second half of this chapter, I do just that by surveying the history and traditions of American public address in an effort to show how the "rules" governing civic persuasion have been tested and revised over the course of our nation's history.

The American Tradition of Rhetoric and Public Address

The American rhetorical tradition is a dynamic tradition marked by a series of transformative "moments"—moments when the "rules" of public

discourse changed. Those moments begin, of course, with the American Revolution itself, when America's founders created a government "of the people," despite strong fears of the power of demagogues to manipulate public opinion. A half century later, the democratization of American politics brought about a more "populist" style of political speech, yet even the so-called golden age of American oratory ultimately degenerated into demagoguery and war. After a prolonged period of political and cultural malaise, the Progressive Era brought another renaissance of rhetoric and public address, along with a revolution in the science and technologies of mass persuasion. Yet that era too ended in war and cultural decline. Through the remainder of the 20th century, political developments, new technologies, and cultural trends continued to change the character and rules of civic persuasion in America. Today, however, we still face the same rhetorical challenge that democracies have always faced: how to promote democratic deliberations that lead to sound collective decisions.

The Founders' Vision of Deliberative Democracy

The central paradox of America's constitutional tradition lies in a persistent tension between our commitment to popular sovereignty and fears that "the people" might be too easily distracted or manipulated to govern themselves. America's founders infused the concept of popular sovereignty with extraordinary meaning, creating the first government in history that derived all of its power "directly or indirectly from the great body of the people" (Rossiter, 1961, p. 241). At the same time, however, they worried that the people might too easily be led astray by "the wiles of parasites and sycophants, by the snares of the ambitious, the avaricious, [or] the desperate" (Rossiter, 1961, p. 432). This tension was evident in what Rossiter (1961) described as the "split personality" of the *Federalist* papers (p. xv): the seemingly mixed feelings about a government "of

the people" in that famous series of articles advocating ratification of the new Constitution.

This split personality is also evident in the Constitution itself, most notably in its provisions for a bicameral legislative branch. On the one hand, the House of Representatives was to have "a common interest," a "dependence on," even an "intimate sympathy" with "the people." It was to provide a "true picture of the people, possess a knowledge of their circumstances and their wants, sympathize in all their distresses, and [be] disposed to seek their true interest" (Wood, 1969, p. 515). The Senate, on the other hand, was to be more insulated from the people—a "defense to the people against their own temporary errors and delusions" (Rossiter, 1961, p. 384). Especially in foreign affairs, Alexander Hamilton (1974) argued, it was important to protect policy-making from the "prejudices," the "intemperate passions," and the "fluctuations" of the popular will (Vol. 2, p. 301). As James Madison explained in *Federalist* 63, there were "particular moments in public affairs" when the people, "stimulated by some irregular passion," would demand measures which they themselves would "afterwards be the most ready to lament and condemn." At such times, the Senate (a "temperate and respectable body") was "to suspend the blow mediated by the people against themselves," until "reason, justice, and truth" could "regain their authority over the public mind" (Rossiter, 1961, p. 384).

The founders' attitudes toward persuasion and demagoguery reflected their neoclassical rhetorical training. As Kraig (2003) has observed, the founders lived in a "rhetorical world" where a classical rhetorical education was considered necessary for civic leadership and where "statesmen were expected to be orators" (p. 3). At the time of the Revolution, historian Wood (1974) has noted, classical rhetoric "lay at the heart of [a] . . . liberal education," and the ability to deliver an eloquent and persuasive speech was "regarded as a necessary mark of a gentleman and an indispensible skill for a statesman, especially for a statesman in a republic" (p. 70). At the same time, the founders shared the ancients' fear

of deceptive or manipulative speech, and they regarded demagoguery—speech that flattered or aroused the masses—as "the peculiar vice to which democracies were susceptible" (Tulis, 1987, p. 28). Thus, they built buffers against demagoguery and public passion into the Constitution itself. Still, they still worried that, without leaders of the highest moral character, their great experiment in democracy would fail.

The neoclassical tradition remained dominant in American politics and education throughout the early republic. As the first Boylston Chair of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, for example, John Quincy Adams (1810) fashioned himself an "American Cicero" (Portolano, 2009, pp. 13–51), teaching a brand of neoclassical rhetoric specifically designed for the American political context. With a heavy emphasis on the ethical responsibilities of the orator-statesman, Adams approached rhetoric as a "system of deliberative invention and social engagement," and he had a distinctively republican "vision for the use of the art of rhetoric in moral leadership" (Portolano, 2009, pp. x–xi). Adams was familiar with Blair and other modern rhetoricians, yet he drew his teachings almost entirely from the ancients, transplanting Cicero's ideal of "statecraft and leadership, the *orator perfectus*, to American soil" (Portolano, 2009, p. 5). Drawing upon "Christian ethical touchstones," Adams' rhetoric had a certain "religious quality" that distinguished it from the classical tradition (Portolono, 2009, pp. 26–27), but he emphasized the same rhetorical and civic virtues: broad liberal learning, a commitment to reason, and a devotion to service and the public good.

Over the first half of the 19th century, political and cultural developments began to chip away at the neoclassical tradition in American politics and culture. Raising new challenges to the founders' vision, uprisings like the Whiskey Rebellion resurrected fears of demagoguery, and the rise of Jacksonian democracy in the 1830s brought populist "rabble-rousing" to the mainstream of American politics. The "rules" of civic discourse would continue to evolve through the

1840s and the 1850s, but the question of slavery would ultimately test the limits of democratic persuasion. For a time, the nation managed to defer the issue through a series of historic compromises, but Lincoln ultimately proved right: the nation could not endure "permanently half slave and half free" (Reid & Klumpp, 2005, p. 399). By 1860, the debate over slavery had degenerated into a toxic rhetorical mixture of conspiracy theories and ultimatums, and the issue would finally have to be settled not through persuasion but by force of arms.

The Golden Age of Oratory and the Limits of Persuasion

Between ratification of the Constitution and the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, new styles of public address gained favor, reflecting changing political circumstances and an expanding democratic public. Jacksonian democracy brought a more populist style to American politics, while the years leading up to the Civil War—the so-called golden age of American oratory—produced a series of great speeches and debates on the two most intractable issues in U.S. history: slavery and union. The golden age is remembered for high eloquence, dramatic debates on the floor of Congress, and universal admiration for the great orators of the day (especially the Great Triumvarite of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun). At the same time, however, it was marred by propaganda and demagoguery on both sides of the slavery issue. For some, the golden age remains a nostalgic memory, a time of "grandiloquence" when "virtuosos" like Webster demonstrated their "prudence and erudition" from the public platform and people flocked to hear serious oratory on the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits (Duffy & Leeman, 2005, pp. xi–xxv). Yet culminating in the bloodiest war in U.S. history, the golden age also might be seen as a case study in the *limits* of persuasion.

Slavery was not the first issue to threaten the founders' "great experiment" in democracy.

In 1798, the Federalist Party of Washington and Adams passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, which (among other things) made it a crime to make "false, scandalous, and malicious" statements about the government. In effect, the new legislation criminalized political opposition, creating a political backlash that helped elect Thomas Jefferson president in 1800. Some doubted that the Federalists would peacefully relinquish power, while others urged Jefferson to turn the Sedition law against its authors. Instead, Jefferson delivered perhaps the most magnanimous inaugural address in history, labeling the bitter election a mere "contest of opinion" and announcing that all Americans would, *of course*, now "unite in common efforts for the common good." "We are all republicans—we are all federalists," Jefferson intoned. "If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it" (Reid & Klumpp, 2005, p. 205).

Other threats to the founders' vision were more subtle but even more far-reaching in their implications and effects. When a trend toward presidential candidates appealing directly to the people culminated in the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, some worried that the founders' worst fears had been realized; demagoguery and mob rule would now be the order of the day. Criticizing President Jackson's bank veto message in 1832, for example, Daniel Webster complained of the president's "reprehensible means for influencing public opinion," and he accused him of appealing to "every prejudice" and "every passion" to persuade the public to a "mistaken view of their own interests" (Kraig, 2003, p. 11). However, it was Webster's own party, the Whigs, who pioneered the use of slogans, songs, parades, and rabble-rousing stump speeches in presidential campaigns. Ten years earlier, Webster had delivered what many still regard as "the most eloquent speech ever delivered in Congress" (Nevins, 1947, p. 288): his first reply to Hayne during the Webster-Hayne debate. By 1840, however, Webster found himself defending the populist hoopla of William Henry Harrison's Log Cabin campaign: "It is our duty to spare no pains to circulate information, and to spread the truth far and wide" (Kraig, 2003, p. 12).

Still, Webster continued to draw the line between such mainstream populism and the propaganda and demagoguery on *both* sides of the slavery debate. With radical abolitionists and pro-slavery zealots questioning the motives and character of their political opponents, Webster took to the floor of the Senate to warn metaphorically of the dangers posed by demonization, conspiracy theories, and other forms of radical speech. In both the North and the "stormy South," he warned during debate over the Compromise of 1850, the "strong agitations" threatened to "let loose" the "imprisoned winds" of passion and throw "the whole sea into commotion," tossing its "billows to the skies" and disclosing "its profoundest depths." Reminding the Senate of its "own dignity and its own high responsibilities," Webster argued that the country looked to the senators "for wise, moderate, patriotic, and healing counsels," and he urged his colleagues to think of the "good of the whole, and the preservation of all": "I speak to-day for the preservation of the Union. . . . I speak to-day, out of a solicitous and anxious heart, for the restoration . . . of that quiet and that harmony which make the blessings of this Union so rich, and so dear to us all" (Reid & Klumpp, 2005, pp. 387–388).

Webster's plea went unheeded, of course, and so "the war came"—as Lincoln passively recalled in his Second Inaugural Address (Reid & Klumpp, 2005, p. 461). Everyone knew that slavery was "somehow the cause of the war" (p. 460), as Lincoln noted, but the more direct and proximate cause was the widening rhetorical divide between extremists on both sides of the slavery issue. While abolitionists in the North warned of a Great Slave Power Conspiracy, Fire-Eaters in the South pledged to fight to the death to defend their way of life. Thus, the debate over slavery breached the limits of reason, compromise, and

democratic persuasion. Both sides had grown intransigent; there was nothing left to debate.

During the Civil War, Lincoln refrained from the sort of populist rabble-rousing that fueled the hostilities in both the North and the South. Lincoln reflected the populist impulses of the day, but his was a backwoods populism—a "middling style" that was "at times refined but at other times crude" (Cmiel, 1990, pp. 12–13). Lincoln used words like "howdy" and "hornswoggled," but he also *reasoned* with his audiences, engaging them on complex issues and employing archaic language, biblical imagery, and rhythmic cadences in service of lofty ideals. Eschewing the angry, vengeful populism of many of his contemporaries, Lincoln's wartime speeches soared with the eloquence of great literary works, and today we still celebrate them as examples of "the democratic sublime" (Cmiel, 1990, p. 118). Lincoln's speeches often fell on deaf ears, but they live on today as our touchstones of democratic eloquence.

As mass democracy took hold in the Antebellum Era, populist rhetoric thus appeared "in various guises," from the "rank demagoguery" of radicals on both sides of the slavery debate to the "kind of humble nobility" modeled by Lincoln (Cmiel, 1990, p. 12). During the war, of course, rhetoric gave way to the force of arms, and that eclipse of the deliberative public sphere left a rhetorical legacy of degraded and impoverished public talk. Through the trials of Reconstruction and the excesses of the Gilded Age, little of rhetorical note took place, save for the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, a president known as an "obstinate demagogue" inclined toward drunken harangues (Browne, 2008, p. 209). With the dawn of the Progressive Era, however, came another rhetorical renaissance, along with a revolution in the science and technology of mass persuasion.

The Rhetorical Renaissance of the Progressive Era

The Progressive Era is, in a sense, a political fiction. Sparked by the spread of agrarian populism in the 1890s, this era of supposedly "progressive" reform actually produced even more virulent forms of racial apartheid in the South, as well as foreign policies that were neither forward-looking nor liberal-minded. *Rhetorically*, however, the Progressive Era ushered in new ways of *talking* about politics and social reform, and it eventually gave rise to a new "science" of mass persuasion that revolutionized American politics. Progressives often disagreed over specific policies, and they had very different ideas about what "progress" meant. Yet by inventing new ways of speaking and new forums for democratic deliberation, they revitalized the public sphere and returned *ethics* and *civic responsibility* to the core of the nation's rhetorical tradition.

For many progressives, the essential problem of the age was not poverty, nor government corruption, nor even the industrial monopolies, but rather what John Dewey (1991) would later call "the problem of the public": the need for improvements in "the methods and conditions of debate, discussion, and persuasion" (p. 208). In an increasingly complex world, Progressives feared that powerful special interests had supplanted the voice of the people, and they embraced a variety of "practical measures to increase the quantity, quality, and inclusiveness of public deliberation" (Levine, 2000, p. xiii). Progressives launched a "social centers" movement that opened school buildings to town meetings and debates, and they founded many of the civic and voluntary associations that still exist today. Progressives staged community forums in settlement houses, and they revived the Chautauqua Movement to educate farmers and other rural folk. In small Midwestern cities, they appointed Civic Secretaries to organize public meetings and debates, and they invented school newspapers and student governments to teach young people about politics. Meanwhile, debate and forensics clubs flourished in colleges and universities, and the University of Wisconsin even established a Department of Debating and Public Discussion to promote off-campus public debates on the income tax, woman suffrage, and other issues (Hogan, 2010, p. 439).

The result was what Robert Kraig (2003) has dubbed the "second oratorical renaissance"—an era in which oratory "that advanced issues and ideas became a more important part of the political landscape than it had been for a generation" (p. 99). In political campaigns, on the lecture circuit, and in a variety of crusades led by reform-minded politicians, oratory and debate once again became central to American political and social life. Again there were great debates in Congress, and during this time, the presidency became "a mighty platform for oratorical leadership" (Kraig, 2003, p. 1). Most important, ordinary citizens once again became involved in civic life, in the process learning "the necessary skills of a democratic public: how to listen, how to argue, and how to deliberate" (Mattson, 1998, p. 45). The Progressive Era, in short, was most rhetorical of times.

Yet some of the central terms of the Progressive Era—organization, efficiency, rationality, expertise, and science—also contained the seeds of a very different view of persuasion in a democracy. This view, rarely expressed early in the era but clearly manifested after World War I, was more distrustful of ordinary citizens—and of democracy itself. Convinced that many citizens lacked sufficient virtue and knowledge to discern the "public good," some even pushed for literacy tests and tougher voter registration rules in the name of "good government"—that is, as "progressive" reforms. This view of democracy—the view that an enlightened public opinion had to be directed or even manufactured from above—did not emerge out of some reactionary backlash against progressive reform. Rather, it was implicit in the writings of some of the leading progressive thinkers, including the young Walter Lippmann. In his 1914 book *Drift and Mastery*, for example, Lippmann (1961) proclaimed the "scientific spirit" the "discipline of democracy" (p. 151), and he argued for government guided by experts rather than public opinion—an anti-democratic sentiment that would reach full flower during World War I.

President Wilson's Committee on Public Information (CPI), of course, was the most obvious manifestation of this anti-democratic impulse.

Headed by progressive journalist George Creel, the CPI saturated the popular media with pro-war rhetoric, in the process pioneering many of the modern techniques for manipulating mass opinion. With its "calculated appeal to emotion," the CPI aroused public opinion to "white hot" intensity (Vaughn, 1980, pp. 235–236), and in the process, it radically changed prevailing understandings of mass persuasion and public opinion. Instead of a rational and freely deliberating body, the CPI encouraged a new view of the public as "a passive object to be manipulated by mass propaganda" (Mattson, 1998, p. 115). After the war, Edward Bernays and other veterans of the CPI would carry that view into civilian life, arguing that "efforts comparable to those applied by the CPI . . . could be applied with equal facility to peacetime pursuits" (Cutlip, 1994, p. 168). The result was a whole new industry of "scientific" propaganda, advertising, and public relations. The rhetorical renaissance of the Progressive Era had given way to a new age of "scientific" persuasion and "opinion management."

Amusing Ourselves in the Age of Television

The emergence of a new "science" of mass persuasion in the 1920s was followed by one communication "revolution" after another. First radio, and then television vastly expanded the reach and impact of mass media, and with each new technology came optimistic predictions of a democratic revival. Like most new technologies, for example, television was at one time hailed as a magical new tool of civic deliberation—a technology that could inform and inspire the citizenry with news and "public interest" programming and even provide a way for citizens to "talk back" to their leaders. Instead, of course, it quickly became a "vast wasteland," in the famous words of former FCC Chairman Newton N. Minow (2009, p. 347)—a landscape dominated by mindless entertainment with little serious attention to news and public affairs.

Neil Postman's critique of television exposed the fallacy underlying the early optimism about television's democratic possibilities. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985), Postman argued that the problem was not that there was too much "junk" on the tube; rather, it was that television, *as a medium*, was inherently incapable of hosting serious discussion and debate. According to Postman, television was "at its most trivial" and "most dangerous" when its aspirations were high—that is, when it pretended to be "a carrier of important cultural conversations" (p. 16). On television, any attempt at "serious" speech was destined to fail, for "sustained, complex talk" simply did not "play well on television" (p. 92). As a visual medium, television was better suited to conveying images than arguments, and it implied a different epistemology—and a different "philosophy of rhetoric"—than print. Under the "governance of television," the "generally coherent, serious and rational" discourse of the print culture inevitably became "shriveled and absurd," reducing public deliberation to "dangerous nonsense" (pp. 16–17).

Rhetorical scholars have elaborated on Postman's critique by illuminating *how* television has truncated and trivialized our public discourse. Noting that "dramatic, digestive, [and] visual moments" have largely supplanted "memorable words" in our political consciousness, Jamieson (1988) argues that television redefined "eloquence" itself by elevating a more intimate, even "effeminate" style of speech over the "manly" and rational oratory of the golden age. "Unmoored from our own great literature and from the lessons of history" (p. 241), Jamieson argued, we now deem "eloquent" those speakers who are adept at relating personal stories or dramatic vignettes. Rather than marshaling arguments and evidence, today's most celebrated speakers talk in sound bites and anecdotes, wearing their emotions on their sleeves and exploiting the intimacy of television with personal stories. Ronald Reagan paved the way for this transition to a more emotional and "intimate" style of public discourse, as Jamieson noted. Since Reagan, however, this style

has become the norm, depriving citizens of the substantive discourse they need to form sound political judgments.

Put simply, television has "dumbed down" American politics. And the result, as Al Gore argued in his campus best-seller, *The Assault on Reason* (2007), is clearly evident in our political discourse. As Gore wrote, it "simply is no longer possible to ignore the strangeness of our public discourse" (p. 3). The proliferation of "superficial, emotional, and manipulative appeals" (p. 104)—not just on television but throughout our public sphere—points to a "systematic decay of the public forum" (p. 10), and that bodes ill for the future of our democracy. Robert D. Putnam (2000) agrees, pointing to evidence that fewer and fewer Americans are participating in the "everyday deliberations that constitute grassroots democracy" (p. 43) and labeling the decline of civic engagement and public deliberation in America a "tremendous civic plague" (Putnam, 1997, p. 35). Fortunately, this "plague" has not gone unnoticed by scholars, educators, philanthropists, and others concerned with the health and vitality of our democracy. In the conclusion to this chapter, I will touch on some of the ways the deliberative democracy movement is fighting back, and I will suggest how scholars of rhetoric and persuasion might be part of that effort.

Conclusion: Rhetoric, Persuasion, and the Revival of American Civic Culture

The study of persuasion has a long and illustrious history in the rhetorical tradition. Born of the need to educate for citizenship, rhetoric traditionally has been concerned with the techniques and ethics of *civic* persuasion—with an emphasis on the *responsibilities* that accompany the *right* of free speech in a democracy. Today we have a pressing need to revive the spirit of that classical tradition, particularly its emphasis on the responsibilities of citizenship and the ethics of speech. As more and more citizens have

become spectators rather than participants in civic life (National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998), our public discourse has been hijacked by professionally managed advocacy groups employing appeals shaped by polling and focus groups. Special interests now take precedence over the "common good." In other words, we now live in a "diminished democracy," as Harvard political scientist Theda Skocpol (2003) has argued, with ordinary citizens squeezed out of the public sphere by partisan ideologues and professional propagandists.

How can we fight back? We can begin by reminding our students and fellow citizens of the critical role that speech, argumentation, and persuasion play in the politics and policy-making processes of our democracy. We also can revive the classical tradition's emphasis on the habits and skills of engaged citizenship, teaching our students what it means to be a good citizen and an ethical communicator. Additionally, we can continue to write about the rights and responsibilities of free speech in America, and we can contribute to ongoing scholarly conversations about hate speech, fear appeals, and other techniques routinely employed by demagogues and propagandists. Finally, we can recapture the *public* spirit of both the classical tradition and the land-grant movement of the 19th century, recommitting ourselves to educating for citizenship and promoting what Garsten (2006) has called a healthy "politics of persuasion" (p. 14).

A healthy politics of persuasion is one in which ideas are tested in public discourse. In a healthy politics of persuasion, reasoned argument prevails over appeals to fears or prejudices, and diverse perspectives and opinions are encouraged and respected. In a healthy politics of persuasion, public advocates aspire neither to manipulate nor to pander to public opinion, and those who refuse to deliberate in good faith are relegated to the fringes. In a healthy politics of persuasion, citizens are educated to listen carefully, think critically, and communicate responsibly. In a healthy politics of persuasion, citizens have a sense of civic duty, but they also *choose* to participate because they know their voice matters.

A healthy politics of persuasion is not just a relic of the ancient rhetorical tradition. It is also the vision of today's "deliberative democracy movement"—a loose coalition of scholars and practitioners aspiring to a "deliberative renaissance" not just in the U.S. but around the world (Gastil & Keith, 2005, pp. 14–18). Bridging disciplinary divides, the deliberative democracy movement has inspired an explosion of scholarship over the past two decades, including theoretical reflections on democratic deliberation (e.g., Bohman, 1996), historical studies of particular eras (e.g., Mattson, 1998), and studies of deliberation in specific contexts, like school boards (Tracy, 2010) and town hall meetings (Zimmerman, 1989). Deliberative democracy scholars have championed "deliberative polling" (Fishkin, 1991) and "deliberative elections" (Gastil, 2000), and Ackerman and Fishkin (2004) have even proposed a new national holiday—Deliberation Day—for citizens to come together to discuss "the choices facing the nation" (p. 3). Within the deliberative democracy movement, there is considerable enthusiasm for a return to "a more local, popular democracy, reminiscent of the New England town meeting" (Keith, 2002, p. 219), and there is at least "cautious optimism" about the potential for new technologies to promote engaged citizenship and more robust deliberation (Anderson, 2003). In the final analysis, however, a healthy deliberative democracy—a healthy "politics of persuasion"—rests on the same foundation that it always has: an educated citizenry with the habits and skills of engaged citizenship.

For the deliberative democracy movement, the democratic crisis in America is both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in reviving the spirit of the classical rhetorical tradition—particularly its emphasis on the *ethics* of speech and the *responsibilities* of citizenship—in a culturally diverse and technologically advanced society. The opportunity lies in the collaborative possibilities; not only has the deliberative

democracy movement brought together humanistic and scientific scholars in communication studies, but it also has inspired collaborations between communication scholars and historians, philosophers, political scientists, legal scholars, and information technologists. Civic literacy, which Milner (2002) defines as the knowledge and skills citizens need "to make sense of their political world" (p. 1), is not within the domain of any one discipline, nor is the broader mission of the deliberative democracy movement. Rebuilding our deliberative democracy requires contributions from across the academy, and it should be part of the mission of every college and university, particularly public and land-grant institutions. As the great 19th-century philosopher William James (1982) said, the "civic genius" of a people is demonstrated "day by day" in their speaking, writing, voting, and "good temper," in their refusal to tolerate corruption or be persuaded by the demagoguery of "rabid partisans or empty quacks" (p. 73). With all due respect to Stanley Fish (2008) and others who urge us to avoid all things political, we have an obligation to help our fellow citizens reclaim their democracy. Students of rhetoric and persuasion have an important—indeed, a crucial—role to play in that effort.

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