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Connecting Burke and Levinas: A counter to the rhetoric and ethics of expediency

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CONNECTING BURKE AND LEVINAS: A COUNTER TO THE RHETORIC AND ETHICS OF EXPEDIENCY

A Thesis

Presented to the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the current rhetoric of expediency in the United States and the expedient ethical perspective it fosters. It argues that the competitive rhetoric of corporate America has not only invaded every sector of society, but that it has caused untold human suffering by promoting what has become a mind-set, an expedient ideology. In the first two chapters, I suggest two different ways of combating the expedient mindset: speaking out, and looking in. Focusing mainly on recommendations and suggestions from Burke in Chapter One, I suggest the "lexicological response" as a way to legitimately "speak truth to power." I also attempt to address the need introduce a more focused discussion on other ways to counter expedient rhetoric. Relying heavily on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas in connection with Burke's rhetorical theory in Chapter two, my goal is to highlight a way to view the other through the "empathic frame," which I argue is a sure way to counter expedient rhetoric both externally and internally. Chapter three combines these two ideas of speaking out and looking in an attempt to get beyond what Burke calls "mere relativism" in postmodern thinking, and introduces to the conversation the idea of the self as a container of both conscious and unconscious rhetors, the dissociated self, and the associated self respectively. However, the theme throughout is use of the "empathic frame" as a way to identify with the other, thereby offering a solid counter to the rhetoric and ethics of expediency.

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For Lily

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RHETORIC OF EXPEDIENCY AND THE LEXICOLOGICAL RESPONSE

Rhetoric and ethics have long shared a complex relationship. In ancient Greece, differences concerning the place of the good, the true, and ethics or "right acting" in the study of rhetoric were on opposite ends of the spectrum. Plato believed transcendent truth exists and is not only accessible but that "...the philosopher's task is to help others remember..." the truth hidden in their own minds, and that "since this process of inquiry takes place through verbal exchange, the definition of rhetoric's proper province is central to Plato's understanding of knowledge" (Bizzell 81). He also believed that rhetoric should be employed only in search of what is True, and although rhetoric did become a key subject for Plato, his main concern was distinguishing the difference between "true and false rhetoric" (Bizzell 28). The Sophists saw things differently, believing that it is impossible for humans to "obtain absolute knowledge, and consequently concerned themselves only with probabilities, which Plato regarded as mere appearances of the truth" (Bizzell 81).

Those who came after, particularly Cicero and Quintilian, continued to explore the problem of the place of ethics in rhetoric introduced by the arguments that went before. For instance, according to Kenneth Burke, Cicero, in the first book of *De Oratore,* recalled a "mythic stage" when "right acting and right

speaking were considered one" citing Homer's education of Achilles. He continues stating that "...[Cicero] notes regretfully the sharp dissociating of action and speech whereby the Sophists would eventually confine rhetoric to the verbal in a sheerly ornamental sense. And following this, he notes further detractions from the dignity of rhetoric caused by the dissociating of rhetoric and philosophy" (*Rhetoric* 59). This "dissociating of rhetoric and philosophy," will become a key point of discussion in chapter three of this thesis; however, for now it is important to continue the discussion of the historical perspective on the connection of "rhetoric and philosophy," or more specifically, the place of philosophy in rhetoric.

In his commentary on *De Oratore,* Burke goes on to say that Cicero blamed Plato's Socrates for the "detraction from the dignity of rhetoric" and he points out the irony in that ultimately, "...the Socratic attempt to make systematic allowance for the gradual increase of cultural heterogeneity and scientific specialization was blamed for the very situation which had called it forth and which it was designed to handle" (*Rhetoric* 59-60). According to Burke, then, Cicero accused Socrates for the development over time of a complete dissociation of philosophy and rhetoric. "Rhetoric suffers from the division, Cicero notes, because a distinction arises between "wisdom" and "eloquence" which would justify the Sophists' reduction of rhetoric to sheer verbal blandishments" (60). Whether Cicero's assessment of Plato's Socrates is correct or not, (and whether Burke's interpretation of Cicero is correct or not), a distinction between wisdom and eloquence has always been at the crux of the problem of the place

of ethics in rhetoric, and Quintilian, like Cicero, devoted much of his life to addressing the issue.

Quintilian's main interest in rhetoric was in teaching others, from birth to retirement, to become not only good orators but also good people. His focus was pedagogy of two kinds: rhetoric *and* philosophy. According to the editors of *The Rhetorical Tradition*:

> Quintilian's insistence that the good speaker be a good man is usually cited as the only important idea for which he might claim originality. Yet, in its broad outlines, this idea is already familiar from Plato's *Phaedrus,* Isocrates' *Antidosis,* and Cicero's *De Oratore.* As historian of rhetoric James J. Murphy explains, some scholars have noted that Quintilian does differ from his rhetorical predecessors in his much more detailed attention to pedagogy. The *Institutes* gives advice on the development of a good man who speaks well, from his birth through his early education, apprenticeship, mature career, and dignified retirement. (Bizzell 360)

More than this Bizzell goes on, "Quintilian's focus on lifelong development of the orator" has "theoretical implications" that his predecessors did not seem to recognize. His main goal was not just to teach an orator to become well–rounded through an exhaustive study of philosophy. He was far more interested in *application* of that philosophy. He would have been the first to agree with Burke's

condemnation of the "...empty accumulation of facts [...] where, if 'Knowledge is power,' people 'get power' by gaining possession of its 'insignia'" (*Attitudes* 170). According to Bizzell, "Quintilian recommends that the orator study philosophy...," however, "... [he] wishes to call attention not just to the quantity of an orator's reading, but to the sincerity with which he applies the ideas to life" (360). In today's technological world, access to knowledge of all kind lies at our fingertips, yet our advances in technology seem to have done little to increase our ability to treat each other ethically, especially in the world of economic advancement. In fact, in that area, just as in the days of the Great Depression, the only ethic to be found today seems to be the ethic of expediency. Steven B. Katz suggests this present time of deep strife is directly related to the rhetoric and ethics of expediency, and it is a time when it would serve us well to reconsider the perspectives of Cicero and Quintilian.

In his moving article "The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust," Katz argues that the unthinkable acts committed against the Jewish people by the Third Reich during WWII were the result of "a political and technological blindness deliberately created in and through rhetoric" (269). He describes in detail how the deliberative rhetoric of an entire nation became so distorted that it opened the door for the absolute devaluation of human life and allowed for the insane strategy of the "final solution." Katz states "...Hitler combined the ethic of expediency embedded in rhetoric with technology to create the *ethos* of Nazi Germany" (269; emphasis in

the original). His article is a warning that we should question whether the current ethic of expediency promoted by a highly competitive and technical corporate world has once again embedded itself in our deliberative rhetoric. Katz also suggests that we should ask ourselves whether the philosophies of Cicero and Quintilian could be put to good use in addressing "the whole panoply of ethics" in every area of the work we do (272).

Quintilian's idea—that the well–trained rhetorician attempting to apply some form of moral philosophy to life is better for society than the well–trained rhetorician who just wants to win the argument—will guide this thesis. Specifically, in this thesis I will explore how the moral philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, his concept of absolute responsibility to the other, and his "elementary truth" that we all suffer, might be applied to Kenneth Burke's concept of examination of motivation in order to counter the current ethic of expediency, which, according to Katz, can no longer go unchallenged.

Katz's article is based on an actual memo submitted to a high–ranking SS officer about how to modify trucks used to pack in and gas people. Its content is shows only a deep concern about how to get the job done in the most expedient way. Katz says, "...this memo from the standpoint of technical communication, argumentation, and style [...] is an almost perfect document" (256). It is an almost perfect example of expedient rhetoric and ethics *along with being* a horrendous testimony to how low humanity can sink when other human beings are seen as objects. And it helps to define how the terms "expedient rhetoric" and

"expedient ethics" will be used throughout this thesis: mainly as any rhetoric or ethical stance that discounts the humanity of the other. "What concerns me most here," Katz says about the memo, "is how, based on an ethic of expediency, rhetoric was made to serve the holocaust" (257).

In a similar vein, what concerns me most in this thesis is how the primary rhetoric of our everyday culture--forensic rhetoric (speech concerning past action), epideictic rhetoric (speech intended to strengthen shared beliefs about the present state of affairs), and deliberative rhetoric (speech defining actions to be taken in the future)--have all fallen heavily under the control of institutions that promote and serve a highly competitive mindset. The next step up from this competitive mindset (as has been proven in financial markets recently) is the expedient mindset, which considers any move as fair in the game as long as it serves one's goal in the competition. Although I am not suggesting that where we are in the United States at the present moment means we are soon heading for another time of mass extermination, I am suggesting that one can hardly turn a blind eye anymore to the mass suffering of so many people in this country due to expedient rhetoric and ethics. This thesis will explore the idea that postmodern relativism has contributed to the end of philosophy in rhetorical conversation and it will suggest that an unwillingness to even discuss certain terms like "truth" has helped expedient rhetoric and ethics take hold in our culture. It will also suggest ways to bring philosophy back into the discussion

Katz says, "I think it can be asserted without too much argument that the *telos* of life in the United States is economic progress. In the United States, success and happiness, both personal and communal, are measured in monetary terms. In a capitalistic culture, it is 'economic expediency' that drives most behavior" (270; emphasis in original). Katz wrote his warning over ten years ago, and I would argue that things have only gotten worse. I also suggest that, with "economic expediency" driving behavior throughout the last century in this country, we are now reaching a point of critical mass in which our general culture respects only one kind of rhetoric really: the kind that agrees competition has always been good, that competition is good now, and that competition will serve us well in the future. Almost nowhere do we find rhetoric in the general culture of the United States that points to our highly competitive society, which led to a highly expedient mindset on Wall Street, as being the cause of the economic collapse we are now witnessing.

The rhetoric and ethic of expediency promoted by a highly competitive and technical corporate world has had a devastating impact on everyday rhetoric in the United States. The "American Dream" has become an American nightmare by a self–serving ideology concerned only with the quickest route to revenue. The rhetoric created by this mindset degrades the value of human existence and causes an any–thing–goes–in–the–game perspective, especially in our corporate and financial institutions. This competitive rhetoric of capitalism has become our cultural language, embedded from top to bottom.

To begin with, contemporary America is awash in media control that barrages us with the idea that we have no choice but to accept the expedient mindset. Back in October of 2006, media mogul Roger Ailes, had one goal in mind: "I want Fox News Channel to be the dominant source of news in America and around the world" (Gold L.A. Times E5). Who can doubt that he succeeded? Not only does this self-proclaimed "fair and unbiased," network run by "a canny former GOP operative" hold the attention of a majority of Americans with its coverage, but its broadcasters mirror the "competitive, pugilistic spirit" of its founder. Fox News has turned itself into a highly successful propaganda machine for corporate America that peddles the expedient ideology of competition wholesale. And this same ideology has infiltrated our culture in a myriad of ways.

One can hardly watch a conventional TV show, listen to a conventional radio program, or watch a conventional movie without the message of competition finding its way in somewhere. Everywhere Americans are sold the "Bring–it–on" attitude, and we live in an age when we are expected to accept this pugnacious stance as not only just–the–way–it–is, but also as just-the-way-we-like-it. I suggest that the nationwide promotion of "out-wit, out-last, out-play" rhetoric, and the expedient ethic it fosters, has contributed to the economic collapse we've witnessed in the United States, and that it has also been a major factor in the economic disparity that now exists. The disproportion of wealth between classes has become so great that there is now the beginning of a groundswell of support for a movement aimed at combating this expedient

mindset of greed. The economic structure of corporate capitalism, which fosters competitive rhetoric and practices through its anti–social institutions, is under attack. To engage in the battle for change, we need ways to object, to dissent peacefully, and because of its significance to this need, I intend to feature Burke's essay "The Poetry of Action."

In *Permanence and Change,* Kenneth Burke combines linguistic and sociological theory, a merger that would come to play a central role in developing his system of Dramatism. The chapter "Poetry and Action" introduces the result of this merger--a theory on how we might practically interpret human existence. It also encompasses how Burke proposed to defend a cooperative, participant society against the expedient rhetoric of his time, a time in America much like today, when an ultra–competitive-anything-goes economic structure promoted expedient rhetoric at every turn. Burke calls his theory the "poetic psychology," and he stresses its importance as a counter to "...institutions serving an anti–social function":

> 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. What we wish to emphasize now is the fact that the poetic metaphor offers an invaluable perspective from which to judge the world of contingencies. (266)

Talking about the contingencies forced upon society by the "poetaster," Burke further states that the perspective provided by "the poetic metaphor" enhances the civic process by "...emphasizing the *participant* aspect of action rather than its *competitive* aspect, hence offering a prompt basis of objection when the contingencies of our economic structure force us to overstress competitive attitudes" (266; emphasis in original). Confronted every day with the rhetoric of our own ultra–competitive society, we too need an angle from which to respond without ourselves becoming ultra–competitive. It is my intention to address such an angle—an idea for adopting a rhetoric designed to counter competitive attitudes that allows the participant to remain unidentified with external strife, thereby remaining free of internal strife. However, it is first necessary to address Burke's "poetic metaphor" further, not only because it lays the foundation for this idea, but also because it is so relevant to the current wave of economic and political rhetoric in America, a rhetoric that fosters competition and consequently the ethic of expediency.

Burke is convinced that the poetic metaphor has a *timeless value,* and he proclaims its indispensability: "The conclusion we should draw from our thesis is a belief that the ultimate metaphor for discussing the universe and man's relations to it must be the poetic or dramatic metaphor" (263). He says the poetic psychology can encompass all other ways of seeing man, from the "political being of Aristotle" all the way to "Nietzsche's metaphor, man as warrior" (264). And he adds that it can "go beyond them all" (264). Finally, he tells us the poetic

metaphor offers encouragement, even hope in moments of abysmal angst stating, "And even if we are led to fear that this drama is essentially tragic, the poetic metaphor reminds us that in a perfect tragedy there is 'catharsis,' hence we may be heartened to inquire what form this catharsis may take" (266). With such a strong recommendation from Burke, it is no wonder we find in the poetic metaphor, as defined in *Permanence and Change,* a foundation for countering the "cult of dominance" in the 21st century and the competitive actions and attitudes caused by their rhetoric.

Even though Burke would indeed have much more to say about the subject in later years, his concept of the poetic metaphor as outlined during the Great Depression is particularly relevant for fostering cooperative civic interaction and countering expedient rhetoric in today's America of protracted recession. And it does so first and foremost by showing us what it means to act with "style." "For style," Burke proclaims, "is an elaborate set of prescriptions and proscriptions for 'doing the right thing'" (268). This definition could be construed as a form of the rhetorical principle of kairos, but it can also refer to the principles found at a certain level of being—a level of being that Levinas would say was under the influence of the "conscience morale." In this sense, it is an inner place, "...a state-of-being-without-offense" (note 2, 269) Burke says, a state of being that, at the very least, precludes perpetrating blatant harm on others, and at best, is absolutely in tune with the other, for from it springs "...a constant meeting of

obligations..." (note 2, 269), in regard to the other, "...a repeated doing of the 'right thing.'"

However, Burke adds the following caveat to his simple definition of style as "doing the right thing": "—and when an individual cannot "justify" himself by the spontaneous use of such 'congregational' responses, he is driven all the more intensely to attain his justification through 'segregational' acts and attitudes" (268). What follows in his discussion of style clearly illustrates the relevance of his theory of the poetic metaphor in relation to the current and transparent rhetoric of competition and conquest.

In the days of the Depression there existed an overabundance of self–proclaimed corporate marketeers who were completely out of touch with what it means to do business through "congregational responses" to the needs of society. Success back then became "...identical with conquest," *exactly the opposite* of what Burke refers to as "an era greatly marked by style and rite," one in which "we 'succeed by acquiescing to its many non–competitive ways of being 'right.'" And what follows is a statement made by Burke in the 1930's about the robber–baron mentality that could easily be applied to the expedient rhetoric of Wall Street manipulators today: "At present, such modes of ingratiation are reduced to a minimum. And what remnants of style we have, are converted by class prerogatives into a purely *invidious* label, a way of suggesting superiority rather than of affirming solidarity" (268). I am here immediately reminded of the arrogance in the rhetoric from a certain faction on the far right who repeatedly

claim that obscene wealth is not held in contempt, but rather seen as a shining example of what all Americans aspire to obtain. While it is hard to imagine a claim that would work better for the provocation of animosity or resentment, this presumptuous style of rhetoric does illustrate nicely the disconnect between those blinded by their perceived superiority and the common person.

In such times, Burke says, the "poetic or humane sense" of the word "utility" loses its meaning, which "...has a much broader range then is suggested by the restrictions which the industrial economist places upon the term" (269). Here Burke refers to capitalists whose hands twist the meaning into a perspective that imposes on a culture "...rigors which even the most primitive societies were spared" (269). Their narrow meaning of the term "utility" undermines or discredits even simple acts of kindness, and they scoff at 'doing the right thing' at as a sign of weakness. "The cult of dominance," degrades the utility of style into forms of "...abnegation and resignation," which, Burke says, "...a combative society would probably describe as mere cowardice" (269). Burke's description of the industrial economist's mentality of the '30's is indistinguishable from the corrupt corporate capitalist mindset that caused the recent collapse of the American economy and the deep ongoing recession. At both points in our history combative and unscrupulous financiers tended to see "doing the right thing," or any form of what Burke calls "self–interference," as the weakness of cowardice, if they thought of it at all.

In a profound way, Burke's poetic metaphor is a call to "do the right thing," but it is also a call to action. "An ethics involves one ultimately in a philosophy of *being,* as opposed to a philosophy of *becoming...*" he says, reminding us that a philosophy of being *is not* a "...philosophy of passivity, or acquiescence." Rather, "...one may also 'resign' oneself to struggle." As symbol using animals it is dictated, we must act, and if our actions are to foster "...the establishment of decent social or communicative relationships," Burke claims, "...one may hold that certain historically conditioned institutions interfere with" such relationships. He also says that "...one may further hold that certain groups or classes of persons are mainly responsible for the retention of these socially dangerous institutions" adding finally, "...a philosophy of being may commit one to open conflict with any persons or class of persons who would use their power to uphold institutions serving an anti–social function" (271; emphasis in original).

It is with this idea in mind that I would like to illustrate a way to respond to expedient rhetoric through a personal story. I call this tactic the lexicological response, and although it may not always be effective, its main asset lies in its ability to allow one to engage in countering expedient rhetoric while remaining reasonably objective. In a classroom, at the Master's level, I once heard a student bring up a conversation she'd had with one of her friends from — and she air–quoted — "the ghetto." She said they were relaxing one evening engrossed in a quiet conversation, and her friend musing allowed in wonder said, "Why do so many of us, once we make it, become Republicans?"

My classmate said she didn't waste a second to respond, telling her friend, "I don't know about anybody else, but I know with me it's because I had to fight my way to get where I am. Hey! I had to scratch and crawl and struggle the whole way, and I figure now that I got mine, well baby, you get yours, but don't you go expecting no help from me!" All the while her index finger waved back and forth as if it too was saying "no way baby."

I replied—loud enough for the rest of the class to hear—"That's selfish."

Nobody jumped in to sing the chorus of that song with me. My statement fell flat and was generally ignored as the conversation drifted on to a new topic, although I did feel some energy that seemed to indicate silent agreement with what I'd said. A short while later the class ended and I was feeling a little alone, but I certainly wasn't concerned about being judged as combative, or of being in an identity/difference relationship with the woman.

At that moment in time I wasn't interested at all in taking up an offensive position against her, and I was not preparing to argue in defense of any particular philosophical perspective; I was simply stating fact because, in this instance, *the woman had defined herself.* And she defined herself in front of the entire class. In other words, at that moment in time, she put herself in the embarrassing position of being the living breathing definition of the term "selfish." It couldn't have been clearer, and this is why I believe it is possible to experience relative peace internally through non–identification with one's own beliefs while objecting to another's obviously anti–social rhetoric.

America is awash in the ideological rhetoric of "I've got mine now you get yours," and all institutions founded on it serve what Burke might call an anti–social function. We live in a time when it is extremely important to put the discussion of the expedient mindset—which, like disease, can afflict any race, color, or gender—firmly on the table. It is truly a time to judge people by the content of their character. All over the news recently, we have been told that the Occupy Movement has changed the national conversation over corporate power in America, and that movement is working on a strategy to combat the rhetoric of expediency, with its key god–term, or perhaps I should say godless term: "Greed."

My suggestion of using the lexicological response to greed–driven rhetoric is just that—a suggestion as a small–scale tactic in this upcoming strategy, a tactic to be used on appropriate occasions, in what appears to be shaping up to be a long and drawn–out battle. The main reason I endorse it is first and foremost because I believe adding it to the new conversation born of the movement could lead to other ideas for tactics to counter expedient rhetoric. The point here is that if we want to keep this "changed conversation" moving, then we need to discuss all available avenues of combating expedient rhetoric.

The lexicological response has the virtue of allowing participants in the fray to at least feel clean after confrontation, even though there is no guarantee they will remain totally unscathed. If we have lexicology to back us up in our assessment of others, which really amounts to nothing more than simply pointing

out how others assess themselves, then we can object to anti–social behavior cleanly. It would at least keep the user ethical in the moment. From this perspective, effectiveness does not matter so much as one's own position in the argument, and the lexicological response serves to help one maintain an ethical grounding.

Burke asks, "If a man takes great pains to obtain the approval of his group, does he not thereby give evidence that he *needs to be approved?*" (*Permanence* 81; emphasis in original). It is this idea of how we "give evidence" of where we stand through our rhetoric that lies at the root of the lexicological response. If the cliché of "speaking truth to power" can easily be undermined by the postmodern idea that truth is always already elusive due to the conditional nature of existence, then we need something that will help us to look for the truth under all conditions. There can be no better place to look for the definition of truth than at the rhetoric a person uses in the moment in relation to the lexicon.

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, during a Senate floor speech, recently said that "a troubling emergence in the last year of politics...is really this rhetoric that in my opinion seeks to divide Americans against each other." He then went on discussing a "theme out there" that lays the blame on the "greedy" for so many Americans being "worse off," losing their jobs and homes, and if employed, making less money for more work. He said what we really need to do is put the blame for the disparity in wealth where it belongs--squarely on the Administration. He then ended his speech with the statement "...we have never

been a nation of haves and have-nots. We are a nation of haves and soon-to-haves" (4). Senator Rubio, at that moment, through his own rhetoric, became the living definition of "delusion." He was delusional because his belief in a country of "haves and soon–to–haves" was based, by his own admissions, on a false reality. The obvious question here is how can so many financially suffering Americans be seen as a "soon-to-haves"? Informing this politician that the juxtaposition of his declarations defines the word "delusion" would be, in a tangible way, speaking truth to power.

Another advantage of lexicological response to expedient rhetoric is that people using this tactic could never be accused of an ad hominem fallacy in their argumentation. Use of the lexicological response draws attention to the rhetoric of a person and looks at how that rhetoric would be defined according to the lexicon. Saying "that's selfish" to my classmate was not a personal attack against her, just as saying "that's delusional" to Rubio would not be a personal attack against him. With the lexicological response, rhetoric, actions, and behavior are indeed judged; however, we are not doing the judging. Through their own rhetoric and actions, people judge themselves, and people using the lexicological response to the rhetoric of expediency would be acting responsibly *and ethically* on a case-to-case basis. They would be acting responsibly because (successful or not) they would be involved in countering anti–social behavior in general, and they would be acting ethically because (successful or not) they would be

assisting the perpetrators of such behavior to see how their own rhetoric is harming not only others, but also themselves.

Chapter one has attempted to address the importance of recognizing and acting on the fact that in today's America the wolf of expedient rhetoric is clawing at the door. It has also suggested one idea that could offer a tactical advantage for objecting to ultra–competitive anti–social rhetoric. It made an effort to encourage discussion *of any kind* in the direction of the "new conversation" initiated by the Occupy Movement in America. The following chapter will leave the rhetoric of expediency found in the "...Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare–ups of the Human Barnyard" (Burke *Rhetoric* 23), and look at rhetoric from a completely different angle—primarily the perspective of "intrapersonal relations."

Chapter two will discuss both the "associated" and the "disassociated self" and how "man uses his rhetoric on himself" (Fogarty 323), particularly to identify with various "frames." However, the main subject of this chapter will be recognizing and utilizing internal rhetors who promote empathy toward the other. I will also suggest that this practice has always been humanity's primary method for countering the rhetoric of expediency—by countering that rhetoric internally. To develop this position, I will enlist the aid of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas in conjunction with the work of Kenneth Burke.

CHAPTER TWO

COUNTERING INTERNAL EXPEDIENT RHETORIC THROUGH THE EMPATHIC FRAME

Daniel Fogarty, after close counsel with Burke during the time when Dramatism was in its final development, wrote an article titled "Kenneth Burke's Theory." In the first paragraph, he states:

> According to Burke, man pours all his energies into establishing and maintaining his personal world of hierarchic order. His survival depends on it. And rhetoric is his specific means of seeking or keeping that order. Not only in *intrapersonal relations, where man uses his rhetoric on himself, where he holds inner parliament as both speaker and hearer,* but in his interpersonal relations.... (322/323; emphasis added)

It is interesting that Fogarty's article *begins* with reference to the esteemed place held by "intrapersonal relations" in Burke's theory. This idea--that "...man uses his rhetoric on himself, where he holds inner parliament as both speaker and hearer"--will be a primary focus of this chapter. I will also focus on the idea that the conscious selection of certain "centers," or "sub-personalities," can lead to viewing life through certain "frames" that offer a way to counter the expedient rhetoric one uses on oneself.

While drafting his article, Fogarty had many discussions with Burke about how Burke formulated the ideas for his "pentad." During one such conversation, Burke pointed to the use of a "...symposium type of inner personal discussion [...] a five– or six–man discussion group, taking all the speaking parts himself until he has sifted the best resultant formulation of the idea in question" (326). The procedure seemed necessary for Burke, says Fogarty, because Burke believed "...that any one statement or point of view was necessarily only part of the attainable truth" (326). Fogarty goes on to relate how his friend described his methodology as a "symposium kind of dialectic" in the following quotation directly from Burke: "Ideally, all the various 'voices' are partisan rhetoricians whose partial voices 'competitively cooperate' to form the position of the dialogue as a whole (a position that transcends all the partial views of the participants, though there may be a Socratic voice that is *primus inter pares)'"* (326). These "partisan rhetoricians" I see as Burke's associated self. They are associates of one another because they have a common goal in mind. They are partisans in an inner parliament because they are intent on cooperating with each other--even though with seemingly competitive arguments--to attain the common goal of the best possible understanding of the subject at hand. And they are obviously the reason why Burke chose to use the word "we" rather than "I" throughout his writing.

It seems clear that Burke's internal "partisan rhetoricians" are theorists of identification and persuasion and would also have to be individual internal

"rhetors" (one who identifies or attempts to persuade), otherwise how could they argue their respective points? Burke was obviously aware of this; however, he was also ever and deeply aware of the dissociated self. This dissociated self is comprised of competing internal rhetors with no conscious common goal ("rival factions" Burke calls them), and their use of an internal rhetoric of expediency, particularly in relation to others, will also be a major concern of this chapter.

Since I agree with Fogarty when he says, "For Burke, the whole range of (symbolic) activity, from a man's inner, subconscious conflicts to the highest kind of conscious abstraction, is rhetoric" (325), when I use the term "internal rhetoric" in this chapter, I will be referring to *everything.* Gut feelings to the most easily understandable symbolic activity, everything that passes through our consciousness or our subconscious, all ethical considerations, all body language and reactions. Everything we do internally as symbol using animals for the purpose of identification or persuasion will be considered internal rhetoric. This term will also be considered synonymous with inner "symbolic action" since regarding symbolic action "—the issue for Burke is *meaning or purpose*, not consciousness or awareness of acting as such (Crusius, *Kenneth Burke* 165; emphasis added). Essentially, since rhetoric is seen as anything done to identify with or persuade, and symbolic action is seen as anything done with meaning or purpose, throughout chapter two, "internal rhetoric" and "inner symbolic action," will be interchangeable.

This chapter will pay particular attention to "recognizing the humanity of the other" and becoming an observer of one's symbolic action regarding the other through what I call "the empathic frame." This frame, based on compassionate consideration of the other, incorporates two of Emmanuel Levinas's key concepts on humanity, and I will suggest that putting these key concepts to use as guiding principles during observation of one's internal symbolic action in relation to the other can help to create and maintain identification with the other thereby offering a highly effective counter to the rhetoric and ethic of expediency.

Levinas views these two concepts as elementary truths or fundamental realities, and for their use as principles in the empathic frame I've labeled them "The Absolute Value of the Other" and "Inexorable Being and Consequent Suffering." However, prior to defining these two principles of the empathic frame, a look at Burke's comic frame and Levinas's main philosophical tenet is in order. Since the empathic frame and the comic frame both suggest "centers" from which to observe the self, a look at Burke's comic frame will help clarify certain terms relative to the empathic frame. And, since Levinas petitions for a "philosophy that lives," defining his "one big thing" will help to illustrate the foundation of the empathic frame.

Burke's comic frame is an *internal* way of seeing things. According to Burke, we live in two different worlds simultaneously: the external world of the event, and the internal world of the self. This is always the case, and a comic

frame of motives, according to Burke, can show us "how an act can 'dialectically' contain both transcendental and material ingredients, both imagination and bureaucratic embodiment, both 'service' and 'spoils'" (*Attitudes* 167). Or, he says, the comic frame can create "a well–balanced ecology" in the individual who employs it. He sees the comic frame as necessary if one hopes to "accumulate at least a minimum of spiritual resources," and calls it a "*method of study* (man as eternal journeyman)" (170; emphasis in original). Burke finalizes his view of the comic frame as follows: "In sum, the comic frame should enable people *to be observers of themselves, while acting.* Its ultimate would not be passiveness, but *maximum consciousness"* (171; emphasis in original). One would 'transcend' himself by noting his own foibles. He would provide a rationale for locating the irrational and the non-rational" (171; emphasis in original). With the term "*observers of themselves"* Burke directly addresses an internal perspective, a view of the inner self.

Burke adds an interesting note to this citation, and it has to do with "the irrational and the non-rational." In it, he illustrates how the rationalist can only see a world of rational and irrational. But just as the tree sprouts leaves the mind engages in non-rational "mental processes" to keep itself alive, and as Burke puts it "...we question whether social integration can be accomplished without them." Social integration here can only mean that on an individual level one must recognize as generally harmless the wanderings of one's own mind in order to function effectively on a social level. The implication is that it is questionable if

society itself could survive without well-integrated individuals, and if wandering "mental processes" are seen as simply non-rational rather than irrational we are less apt to judge ourselves harshly or attempt to automatically eliminate inner symbolic activities. "...Instead," Burke says, "We merely, as rational men, 'watch' them, to guard ourselves against cases where they work badly. Where they work well, we can salute them, even coach them" (171). In the end, this perspective of "non-rational" rather than "irrational" helps one to be a more objective observer of oneself. Obviously, to "watch" these non-rational mental processes means prolonged observation. However, a quick glance can also be of service. Through relaying his thoughts on the observation of non-rational symbolic actions, Burke suggests not only an objective, but also a positive way to make an ethical choice concerning the usually unnoticed internal rhetoric that influences us.

If it is true that "everything is rhetoric," that the "whole range of symbolic activity is rhetoric," that even the absence of response is rhetoric, then everything that goes on in our *inner* world is *internal* rhetoric. Certainly, if language is symbolic action, then one's internal rhetoric in the form of language sets much into motion. However, language, inner talking, and thought obviously cannot be considered the *only* form of internal rhetoric or symbolic action. In "The Poetry of Action" Burke says:

> We also recognize a symbolism of posture, gesture, and tonality, a purely mimetic symbolism, such as we find not only in formal modes of expression like the dance, but also in our spontaneous

> mind-body correlations between mood and appearance. It is to be seen, for instance, in the erectness that goes with defiance, anger, and confidence, or the skeletal droop that goes with dejection, or the great variety of symbolic acts which psychologists have noted in the conduct of both normal and abnormal persons. (*Permanence* 253)

Here Burke recognizes as symbolic action anything that can evoke external "spontaneous mind-body correlations," so internal rhetoric would also have to include images, which are usually metaphorical in nature, and certainly emotion, which is often the sole catalyst for both inner talk and imagery. The term "internal rhetoric," then, would have to encompass *everything* going on internally that causes identification with one particular center rather than another; and observing internal rhetoric would have to include *noting everything*, including external body reactions to internal stimuli.

Viewing the self through the comic frame automatically puts one in a center, an internal rhetorical position, a "sub-personality," that allows for a reaction to a situation far different from a center visited, and identified with, while viewing life through the dramatic frame. Burke calls this, taking the "gloomy route." The inner rhetors, which belong to different "sub-personalities," found while using the comic frame are much better equipped to meet the challenges of coping with everyday life, and consequently the comic frame is arguably one of the greatest resources we can employ as a "salvation device" (Burke, *Attitudes*

171). However, it is the intention of this thesis to explore a different kind of frame, a frame that looks out from a center based on compassion—the empathic frame. And although like the comic frame, this frame hinges on people being "observers of themselves while acting," or people practicing observation of their internal rhetoric, the goal is not personal use as a salvation device, but rather personal use as a counter to the rhetoric and ethic of expediency.

If considering Burke's comic frame assists in defining certain terms relative to the empathic frame, considering Levinas's "one big thing" should help to illustrate its foundation. Simon Critchley, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas,* tells us that "Levinas's one big thing is expressed in his thesis that ethics is first philosophy, *where ethics is understood as a relation of infinite responsibility to the other person*" (6; emphasis added). He later states that Levinas, prior to lecturing at the Sorbonne in the '70's, was fond of repeating the phrase "philosophy is the science of naiveties," or, as Critchley explains, "Philosophy is the *work of reflection that is brought to bear on unreflective, everyday life*" (7; emphasis added). Combining these two definitions of how Levinas viewed "ethics" and "philosophy" produces the following definition of the phrase "ethics is first philosophy": *The relation of infinite responsibility to the other person is first the work of reflection that is brought to bear on unreflective, everyday life.* This "work of reflection"--construed as conscious attention from a compassionate center directed toward our internal rhetoric in order to identify with other people--is the foundation of the empathic frame. And the empathic

frame is meant as a direct counter to the internal rhetoric that leads to an ethic of expediency.

Critchley directly addresses Levinas's overall perspective on the ethic of expediency when he states, "Levinas's point is that unless our social interactions are underpinned by ethical relations to other persons, then the worst might happen, that is, the failure to acknowledge the humanity of the other" (13). Throughout history, the roots of the ethic of expediency have been fed by "failure to acknowledge the humanity of the other," and we can safely assume that the type of "ethical relations" Levinas refers to depend upon a philosophy that not only lives "...as an act or practice..." (Critchley 9), but also consistently reflects empathic judgment towards the other. Levinas not only believed in a philosophy that lives, he defined as fundamentally "ethical" each "...event of being in relation with the other..." (9). However, due to the ever-changing landscape of personal human relations a philosophy that lives and ethical relations based on empathic judgment will never be secure. Therefore, they both hinge on continual examination of internal rhetoric concerning the other through a frame based on compassion and a belief in the other's fundamental value. Put another way, examination of internal rhetoric, if it is to be done through an empathic frame, would need to be done in the context of two of Levinas's fundamental truths--that human life has an absolute value, and that since there is no escaping being, we all suffer.

One key component, indispensable for the empathic frame, is the idea that human life has an absolute value, and Levinas views this concept as a fundamental truth. He shows us how the "separate existence" of the self "is possible *only because* the Other also exists" (Davis 44; emphasis in original). This fundamental truth is often considered for selfish reasons; for example, the expedient business person who *does* realize his or her existence depends on others, yet views them as valuable only in the same way a tool or commodity is considered as valuable—as a resource for amassing monetary gain or power. However, seen in a different light the absolute value of others is vital to the empathic frame. If we owe our existence to others then we have an automatic obligation to others, and Levinas calls that obligation "absolute responsibility."

Just as the absolute value of human life is a given for Levinas, so is our absolute responsibility, and in his idea of singularity we find a solid principle for the empathic frame. Diane Perpcich, in *The Ethics of Emanuel Levinas*, describes this principle when she tells us that according to Levinas "The other signifies outside of any horizon or contexts. She is a being who 'counts as such'" (44). The other has value whether or not I ascribe value, or for that matter whether or not any other being ascribes value. Taking this idea to heart increases the prospects for compassionate and productive examination of our internal rhetoric due to the fact that the other's singularity represents a polar opposite to the ethic of expediency, which in direct contradiction to Levinas's

view demands that we ignore the humanity of other people in order to use them as a means for personal or professional advancement.

Levinas's other fundamental reality that being is inescapable, which causes, in a word, suffering, offers the other component or guiding principle of the empathic frame. According to Perpich, "Levinas maintains that certain philosophically neglected experiences, such as insomnia, fatigue, and suffering, are... uniquely disclosive, though what they reveal is not our finitude but the 'elementary truth' that being *is* and there is no escaping it" (33). Even though connecting the ideas that the other has absolute value yet is born into a realm of suffering brings with it an irony worthy of consideration through the comic frame, it is certain that this thing that we all share--suffering—is vital for the formation of an empathic frame. Keeping this "elementary truth" in sight while examining our internal rhetoric concerning the other can automatically induce the empathic frame since it almost forces sincere empathetic judgment. And, as is painfully clear through the expedient actions of "the cult of dominance," empathetic judgment, especially toward the working class, has become a rarity in the "free" marketplace.

Levinas calls this idea of inexorable being with its consequent suffering an "elementary truth," and even armed with the arguments of post-modernity, where there exists no universal truth, it's hard to dispute his claim that if you are a symbol-using animal, you suffer. This is not the way he puts it, however, the idea is the same by virtue of the fact that we *are* animals. We cannot escape "being"

and therefore we cannot escape suffering. The physicality of "being," or being bound to a human body, causes us all suffering on a physical level, and possessing a brain capable of using symbols brings its own unique forms of suffering on the emotional and psychological level. It truly is hard to argue against this claim, yet this "elementary truth," as unsettling as it might be, can be utilized in efforts to identify with the other, particularly if the other suffers in a way we ourselves have experienced firsthand.

It is now possible to refine the principles or components of the empathic frame--*The Absolute Value of Human Life* and *Inexorable Being and Consequent Suffering*—by refining the definition of Levinas's "one big thing," specifically, what he means by the term "responsibility." Earlier, analyzing Critchley's account of Levinas's "one big thing" produced a definition of "ethics is first philosophy" that read: *The relation of infinite responsibility to the other person is first the work of reflection that is brought to bear on unreflective, everyday life.* However, a closer look at the term "responsibility" will change this definition, a change that directly effects how the principles of the empathic frame are viewed. Levinas's perspective of "responsibility" is far different from the common meaning associated with the term, especially what "is expressed in the well-known dictum 'Ought implies can'" (82); it is also considerably different from every other aspect of the standard meaning given the term, in that for Levinas, responsibility is seen as going "beyond what it is possible to do" (Perpich 83).

Essentially, Levinas views "responsibility" as an appeal from one's moral conscience and Diane Perpich gives us a reliable explanation as to how his perspective of the term is a "calculated inversion of the standard account" (83). She tells us that for him, "[to] be infinitely responsible is to be ever on call, always at one's post, impaled upon one's obligation, never quits with it, never with an option to take a day or an hour or even a minute for one's own cares" (84). This seems like an intimidating declaration. However, we find on its heels the announcement that "[when] Levinas uses the term 'responsibility' in the period of *Totality and Infinity* it is more akin to the idea of a moral conscience than to the discharge of a specific duty, though the latter notion plays a secondary role" (88). And this is the statement that calls for an alteration of the previous definition of "ethics is first philosophy"--an alteration that clarifies the principles of the empathic frame because it shows they are actually parts of "a moral conscience."

Taking Levinas's view of "responsibility" into account calls for the final definition of "ethics is first philosophy" to read--*The relation of infinite moral conscience toward the other person is first the work of reflection that is brought to bear on unreflective, everyday life*. This presents an impossible situation because no matter how deep our reflection, or how sensitive to the other's situation we become, an "infinite moral conscience," will always leave us thinking "I could do more," or as Levinas puts it, "This receding of the goal in the very measure one approaches it is the life of conscience [*conscience morale*]" (Perpich 88). However unattainable though, *pursuit* of the "infinite moral conscience" offers a

solid approach to the empathic frame as a center in that it helps us realize the elementary truth that "being *is* and there is no escaping it." In fact, using the principle of *Inexorable Being and Consequent Suffering* while examining internal rhetoric is tantamount to listening to the appeal of moral conscience, for as Perpich states in her summation of a passage from *Totality and Infinity,* "One can hear the other's cry as a cry for aid only within an already ethical orientation—that is, from the perspective afforded by moral conscience" (90).

Likewise, pursuing Levinas's view of "responsibility" helps us to realize the fundamental truth that the other has intrinsic value because viewing the other from "...the perspective afforded by moral conscience" is also equivalent to using the principle of the *Absolute Value of Human Life* for the purposes of internal inquiry. This type of "orientation" is exactly what Levinas is talking about when he refers to the necessity of "social interactions ...underpinned by ethical relations to other persons." *Avoiding* "failure to acknowledge the humanity of the other" hinges on pursuit of moral conscience regarding the other. To understand its position as a principle in the empathic frame, and its importance as a counter to internal expedient rhetoric toward the other, one needs only to contemplate briefly the lack of value placed on humanity by those who employ only the rhetoric and ethic of expediency. Through sociopathic tendencies, or motivations based solely on self-interest and void of empathy of any kind, they assign very little value to others, save using them for gain of one kind or another. Not surprisingly, true expedient motivation--driven by an internal rhetoric that is

completely void of moral conscience--absolutely interferes with consideration of not only the other's suffering, but also his or her value as a person, and consequently, it leaves no room for empathic consideration.

Levinas's perspective of responsibility not only helps refine the principles of the empathic frame by showing they are components of moral conscience, but it also fundamentally changes the idea of "infinite responsibility" to the other. "Responsibility" can now be seen less as a solemn or severe commandment, something that *must* be done, and more as the simple truth that we live through conscience and that conscience is inexhaustible in two ways. First, one way or the other, beyond choice, good or bad, we will always have an "ethical orientation" toward others, and second, moral conscience will always recede "...in the same measure we approach it." And, although Levinas's view on responsibility does offer a more refined understanding of the principles of the empathic frame, the question that now arises is how to come up with a practical method for application of this frame based on his theory that "ethics is first philosophy"—a theory often criticized, and perhaps misunderstood, as perfectionist. For an answer to this question, we can look back to Burke, who ironically claims that one of humanity's chief features is its penchant for being "rotten with perfection."

At first glance, Burke and Levinas appear to be polar opposites regarding the term "perfection," and this holds true in many areas. However, these two men are very close in several of their core beliefs, and I intend to explore some of

these beliefs in chapter three to more fully address the empathic frame as a tool for countering the rhetoric and ethics of expediency. But for now, it is important to consider one of Burke and Levinas's biggest connections—the ethical moral orientation of humanity—because Burke's take on the subject leads to a methodology for implementing the empathic frame.

It has already been noted that Levinas defined as fundamentally "ethical" each "...event of being in relation with the other..." (Critchley 9), that he believed we are always, one way or another, in an "ethical orientation," with the other. An identical statement could be made about Burke, for he himself claims that "[action] is fundamentally ethical, since it involves preferences. [...] The ethical shapes our selection of means. It shapes our structures of orientation, while these in turn shape the perceptions of the individuals born within the orientation" (*Permanence* 250). According to Burke, from the time we are born we are shaped by ethical considerations. "There are no negatives in nature," he states, "and...this ingenious addition to the universe is solely a product of human symbol systems" (*Language* 9). In fact, he consigns the existence of humanity to our natural connection with the negative when he tells us that human interaction has *always been* moral interaction, although he does have difficulty proclaiming the negative as an invention of man stating "...it might be more accurate to say that language and the negative 'invented' man" (9). In any case, William H. Rueckert states that the "moral-ethical" is for Burke "...the primary underlying motive or set of motives that activates all men'" (48). Here Burke not only agrees with Levinas

that moral conscience is inescapable, he also claims that it is the underlying motivation "that activates all men." Looking from here to Burke's views on examination of motivation not only highlights another connection with Levinas, but also suggests a practical method for application of the empathic frame.

Burke's concept of examination of motivation falls right in line with Levinas's idea that *the relation of infinite moral conscience toward the other person is first the work of reflection that is brought to bear on unreflective, everyday life*. In "the Question of Kenneth Burke's Ethics," Timothy W. Crusius offers not only an outline of what Burkean ethics might look like, but also specific instructions on how we might progress in "...the work of reflection." Or, for use in the empathic frame, how we might examine our internal rhetoric to discover how it leads to various motivations in connection with others.

"Instead of wasting time pursuing abstractions like the Right and the Good," he says, "we must flesh out, be as concrete and detailed as we can, about an ethics based on understanding ourselves as 'symbol-using animals." He goes on to say, "[if] we can't learn to recognize and control our symbol-driven motives, how can we be ethical?" (4). Nobody lives in a vacuum. Consequently our "symbol-driven motives" are almost always connected in some way to other human beings. In his discussion of Burke's ethics, Crusius's words, as simple as they may sound at first, are just as exacting as those of Levinas when he talks of "...going beyond what it is possible to do." However, his words also offer a strong

suggestion as to how we might go about examining our internal rhetoric, and the motivation it creates, through the empathic frame.

To be as "concrete and detailed as we can" means something. It means when engaged in reflection on our internal rhetoric concerning the other we should refrain from vague generalizations and record exactly what is witnessed. When viewing the internal places we consistently visit while considering the other, and listening to the rhetoric we consistently employ in our internal relations with others, we must be specific. The words "concrete" and "detailed" mean that attention must be paid to all places, all rhetoric, particularly the cynical rhetoric in those dismal inner places that can, if not brought up to a conscious level, cause us to completely identify with and wallow in a variety of negative states, especially if we were "born within the orientation" of enjoying negative, dramatic rhetoric—the orientation of the dramatic frame. "Concrete" and "detailed" implies impartiality or at least some form of detachment during examination of internal rhetoric. And for use in the empathic frame, these words mean a sense of honest objectivity concerning one's inner treatment of the other. They mean truth with oneself about one's internal rhetoric, attitude, and motivation when it comes to the other. Recognizing that we need to be "as concrete and detailed" as we can about our "ethical orientation" toward others is the first step in "fleshing out" our *reflection that is brought to bear on unreflective, everyday life* suggesting small steps are necessary to build on Levinas's foundation.

In his essay, "Kenneth Burke's Theory," Daniel Fogarty states that in Burke's thought there is "an essential connection between language and the nature of man," and that man "translates with the help of his symbol-making power," everything, and "always in terms of the order he is building. For Burke, the whole range of this activity, from a man's inner, subconscious conflict to the highest kind of conscious abstraction, is rhetoric" (325). The concern here is our internal rhetoric and the order *it* is building. The concern is how our internal rhetoric "shapes our selection of means"—how it creates our "structures of orientation" towards the other, and since examination of internal rhetoric is truly an autonomous activity, it is fitting to look at Burke's discussion on "Identification and the 'Autonomous'" for information on moving beyond the first step of recognizing what we need to do to build on Levinas's foundation.

Opening his discussion on "Identification and the 'Autonomous'" Burke states, "As regards 'autonomous' activities, the principle of Rhetorical identification may be summed up thus: The fact that an activity is capable of reduction to intrinsic, autonomous principles does not argue that it is free from identification with other orders of motivation extrinsic to it" (*Rhetoric* 27). He then goes on to explain how "[the] human agent, *qua* human agent, is not motivated solely by the principles of a specialized activity," offering as an example the "shepherd *qua* shepherd" who, acting for the good of the sheep in a protective manner, may also be "identified" with the business end of selling them at the market. He continues from another angle with an explanation of how "the

principles of the autonomous activity can be considered irrespective of such identifications...," by calling attention to how a "specialized subject" taught in the same classroom to two different students can, later in their lives, be incorporated in completely different manners. However, with the following statement, Burke enters an area of autonomous activity that clearly illustrates practical examination of inner symbolic action in relation to the other:

> Carried into unique cases, such concerns with identifications leads to the sheer 'identities' of Symbolic. That is, we are in pure Symbolic when we concentrate upon one particular integrated structure of motives. But we are clearly in the region of rhetoric when considering the identifications whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class. (27-28)

Defining "pure Symbolic" in the above passage forces consideration of the Symbolic *qua* Symbolic, or the Symbolic as being Symbolic, in which case if we are "in pure Symbolic," then at the moment of concentration on a single "integrated structure of motives," we *are* the Symbolic, for, according to Burke, only our species has the ability to produce the Symbolic. However, practically speaking, it doesn't matter how the phrase "in pure Symbolic" is perceived because one thing is certain. We *are not* "in the region of rhetoric." And, if we are not "in the region of rhetoric," then we are not attempting to persuade ourselves of one thing or the other and we are not identified with one thing or the other, except, of course, the "pure Symbolic." In this state, we are objectively

concentrating on "one particular integrated structure of motives." We are objectively analyzing one area of internal rhetoric. It is this idea of objective observance of a single "integrated structure" that proves most useful for application of Levinas's basic belief that we need to reflect on "unreflective, everyday life." Levinas's "one big thing" supplies the tall order, while Burke, advocating small steps toward that tall order, gives us solid directions for progress, directions that call for objectively addressing our "integrated structures" of motivation one by one.

The implication of Burke's idea concerning zeroing in or shining a light on "one particular integrated structure of motives" is that we do, in fact, possess many integrated structures of motives. To begin addressing this idea, so important to examination of internal rhetoric through the empathic frame, we need look no further than to the above briefly mentioned quotation concerning the "region of rhetoric." Burke states "...we are clearly in the region of rhetoric when considering the identifications whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class. 'Belonging' in this sense is rhetorical" (*Rhetoric* 28). One of the most interesting ideas produced by considering this subject of "belonging" in a rhetorical sense to a group is that it can be applied to different inner structures of motives. Looking at some of these structures as 'rival factions,' trying to deal with the stresses of everyday life and producing their own special brands of symbolic action in us, furthers the groundwork for shining a light on one single structure.

According to Rueckert "Burke and others" tell us that "the self, some mysterious and irreducible core of being, some changeless yet changing identity, is, in its growth, constantly subjected to radical pressures from within and without in the form of biological and neurological changes..." (43). These radical pressures spare none, particularly during times like these when the rhetoric and ethics of expediency run rampant, and just as in Levinas's "fundamental truth" that we all suffer we find here ample reason to believe that in one degree or another we all must live with a certain amount of neurosis due to suffering. Addressing the subject of neurosis, Burke states, "[rhetorically], the neurotic's every attempt to legislate for his own conduct is disorganized by rival factions within his own dissociated self" (*Rhetoric* 230). One need only reflect with sincerity back to a 'bad day' ruled by 'rival factions' of the dissociated self to appreciate that they are structured through their own particular rhetoric, they are many, and they are motivated. There is also a consistency to their structure that is noticeable over a period of time.

Of further interest in this area of looking at structures of integrated motives as "rival factions" in the dissociated self is Rueckert's statement that "[the] self identifies with one thing or another, consciously or unconsciously; it accepts and rejects various alternatives, merges with and separates from certain things; its growth is the drama of ethical choice and its ideal is that unity of being which constitutes the forward moving self" (43). Although this entire concept would be useful in any conversation concerning the relationship between ethics and

internal rhetoric, it is the phrase "consciously or unconsciously" that is compelling when considering the "rival factions of the dissociated self." Burke would be the first to agree that we cannot leave identification with one terministic screen without coming under the influence of another, and the act of sincere reflection on one specific inner faction, and the rhetoric it uses, automatically puts us in a place of observation that is more conscious than the faction whose rhetoric we are objectively analyzing. It is more conscious by the fact that it is associating the particular faction *with* the self, seeing it as a *part of the self*, rather than going with it blindly, totally identifying with it unconsciously, and consequently believing that that faction *is* the self.

When we become observers of "rival factions" we are essentially splitting the self in two, and since the topic of this chapter is reflection on the symbolic action of internal rhetoric in order to identify or empathize with the other, it is important to discuss "the self" further. More specifically, it is important to take a look at the place we occupy while reflecting on our rhetorical positions concerning the other. Two of the aspects of the reflective attitude—objectivity and sincerity--have already been discussed, and they will be addressed more fully in chapter three. And more attention will be paid to the empathic frame of recognition that we all suffer, and that the other is a "being who counts as such." Prior to chapter three however, it makes sense to briefly discuss the postmodern concept of the decentered subject and Burke's take on the idea of "centers," since they are closely connected to the idea of reaching a specific center,

through the empathic frame, that identifies with the other and consequently acts as a counter to the rhetoric and ethics of expediency.

At the start of a concise and informative paragraph explaining Burke's relationship with postmodern theory, Timothy Crusius states, "[postmodern] thought is marked by a healthy regard for otherness, and consequently a pervasive animus toward 'centricities,' ego-, ethno-, phalo-, logo-, and so forth" (*Kenneth Burke* 138). However, there is obviously an ample supply of postmodern thinkers who steer the logical argument for the relativity-of-everything outside its practical limits because, after Crusius verifies "...the postmodern commitments of [Burke's] philosophy," he quickly adds that "Burke understands the dialectic of difference better than most postmodernists do" (138), and he goes on to explain why.

According to Crusius, Burke not only believed that "we can only encounter otherness from our own prejudices," but he also taught the common sense need to recognize just *where* the logical argument of relativism rationally ends up. Summing up Burke's perspective on the "dialectic of difference," Crusius brings up one of Burke's core beliefs: "[there] is...no escape from 'centricty' of *some kind*, as there is no escape from terministic screens *of some sort*" (138; emphasis in original). Throughout his life, one of Burke's main goals was to "purify war" with the other, to promote a "dialogue in good faith," a "successful dialogue..., a discussion that clarifies differences and discovers common ground, shared understandings..." (Crusius *Kenneth Burke* 19). Long before the quandary

foisted upon the subject by postmodern relativism, Burke knew that in order for the other and the individual to move forward toward a better life, the individual must first understand that "[decentering] is not dis-integration: to decenter is to move to a revised center." He knew that any discussion that degenerates to "mere relativism" is just so much useless circling around, and he definitely knew that "[the] question is not, Shall we have a center? but rather, What kind of center shall we have?" (138). His perspective is practical, and practically speaking, especially in regard to the other, the question, What kind of center shall I have? is of utmost importance. This question will be one of the central areas of exploration in chapter 3.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SELF: A CONTAINER OF CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS RHETORS

In this chapter, I will explore the idea of "the self" as a sort of container that releases "structures of integrated motives," consciously or unconsciously, and also the idea that to successfully counter expedient internal rhetoric we need to choose a "center" in relation to the other consciously. I will address the unconscious rhetoric jabbering away from the vast and varied dissociated self, the automatons, the robotic members of the internal cast who offer a lifetime of study, study that, according to Burke is best done sincerely, objectively, and with humor.

In a short essay titled "Dramatic and Philosophic Terms for Essence" from *A Rhetoric of Motives,* Kenneth Burke discusses two opposite ways of viewing essence — "the ancestral" and "the final." "The ancestral" perspective is based on the idea that "... a thing's essence can be translated into a temporal or narrative equivalent by statement in terms of the thing's source or beginnings..." (13). Pointing to "the final," or "the essence of a thing ...defined narratively in terms of its *fulfillment* or *fruition,"* Burke states: "Metaphysically, this formal principle gets its best–rounded expression in the Aristotelian *entelechy,* which classifies a thing by conceiving of its kind according to the perfection (that is, finishedness) of which that kind is capable" (13–14; emphasis in original). He

further states that by using this principle, "...the essence of a motive" can be determined "...naratively or dramatically (in terms of its *history*) by showing how that motive *ended..."* (emphasis in original). Or, putting it in the simplest of terms — "By its fruition, we should judge it" (14). This principle reinforces the Lexicological Response to expedient rhetoric by expanding its use beyond the immediate moment. In other words, it helps one come to terms with the reality that certain people with a very long history of spewing expedient rhetoric have "...['frozen] at a simpler stage of development..." (Burke *Attitudes* 184), and are consequently, through self–definition over years, incapable of change. Their "...attitude has attained full *rationalization*," and according to Burke, this type would have to face too much inner conflict among their disassociated rhetors to experience any meaningful change.

To offer a contemporary example: "the perfection... of which [Rush Limbaugh's] kind is capable" lies in the realm of self–destruction, or putting it in what Burke calls "temporal terms" I would say, "he will self–destruct." Just recently Limbaugh came close—once again—to destruction at the hands of his own nature by calling a young woman a whore, and the U.S. Taxpayer her unwitting pimp. It made no difference to Limbaugh that she was in reality a third-year law student arguing a case for women's health issues on the floor of Congress.

A certain irony can be found in the fact that this far–right of center Grand American Orator ("the harbinger of truth" to millions), botched his tirade while

trying to use the Lexicological Response to bolster his position. Yet, his diatribe was no more than an attempt to trick by deflection. "What does that make her?" he kept repeating, ignoring the real case the woman was making. Limbaugh twisted her argument into such outrageous terms that even his backers refused to concur with his afflicted logic that the women, by simply presenting her case, had defined herself as a whore. Limbaugh unfortunately continues on, unimpeded by conscience and recognizing only the same force recognized by his sponsors: loss–or–gain–of–revenue. Many small–minded rhetors who have "frozen in a simpler stage of development" seem to relish trying to get away with tricks like this, and Kenneth Burke is kinder than I am. I see rhetors like Limbaugh as having crystallized out at a *despicable* stage of development, and feel a very real antipathy toward them. And my antipathy gets in the way of my empathy, which has an obviously negative effect on my ability to employ the empathic frame while considering people like Limbaugh.

I am aware of the fact that the anger in the rhetoric above does not conform to the expectations we have about academic discourse; however, I have chosen not to mask the anger because my personal reaction will help illustrate Burke's suggestion that "watching" inner symbolic activity or rhetoric has practical value. Observing "sub-personalities" inclined toward anger, or for that matter, watching any negative inner activity regarding another, is pragmatic. Just becoming aware of an angry internal rhetor can oftentimes lead to freedom from it, at least temporarily. However, watching often only works for a short while, after

which another negative member of the disassociated self demands attention. Between those moments though a conscious decision to enlist the aid of members from our internal cast that view life through the comic frame can offer more than a temporary release from our self–imposed anguish by opening the door to the empathic frame. Simply put, under certain circumstances, use of the comic frame can lead to the empathic frame.

For instance, this technique (using the comic frame to reach the empathic frame) was employed during the initial stages of my own anger-laden response to Limbaugh's latest outrage. While searching for those internal rhetors who prefer to see life differently, I realized that Limbaugh suffers far more than I do, and I am happy to report that I was able set him free for more than just a moment. At the same time, I realized that he suffers more than I do because he has an "attitude that has attained full *rationalization,*" and since his being has crystallized out, it is not in his history or in his nature to acknowledge his own foibles—while I on the other hand, freely admit to many.

To speak out against disgusting rhetoric that also disturbs one's peers is easy since there is always a readily available source of uplifting moral support and even commiseration when necessary. However, speaking out against a perspective that is accepted and shared by one's peers presents a different set of circumstances, and this thesis has a special interest in one such perspective because it directly affects one of the topics under discussion, specifically finding a way to re-view postmodern relativism and the question as to whether we can

"even talk about truth." I believe this particular perspective—concerning whether we can or cannot even discuss terms such as "truth"—not only successfully puts the damper on philosophy in the rhetorical conversation, but it also impedes the conversation to the point of stagnation at times.

In the academy, "can we even talk about truth" acts as a convention, an unwritten rule that effectively blocks conversation concerning conscience. It has become an ideology in every sense of the word as defined by Burke in *Language as Symbolic Action,* when he asks:

> Do we use words or do they simply use us? An 'ideology' is like a god coming down to earth, where it will inhabit a place pervaded by its presence. An 'ideology is like a spirit taking up its abode in a body: it makes that body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in different ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it. (6)

Through the spirit of postmodern rhetoric into the air of the academy, this idea/ideology enters the minds of students unimpeded, and Barbara Johnstone sums it up in the following quote from *Discourse Analysis*:

> If all discourse is multi–voiced, the result of an endless and probably untraceable series of appropriations, borrowings, repetitions, variations on themes, then who is responsible for the truth of what gets said or written, or for the accuracy of an

interpretation? Can we even talk about "truth" and "accuracy"? (193)

I read the chapter containing this perspective during my final course; however, long before that—throughout the Master's Program in fact—I felt frustrated by the conventional "wisdom" of this postmodern ideology, which I believe has been over–peddled, oversold, and if left unchallenged will become even more dangerous.

The way Johnstone words her question the implication is clear. No, we cannot talk about "truth." No, we cannot talk about "accuracy." In fact, we cannot talk about *any* abstract human concept that defines or judges quality, and we certainly cannot talk about the place that gives birth to abstract human concepts that judge quality: the "conscience." One of the goals of this thesis is to suggest that we can talk about the place that gives birth to abstract human concepts that judge quality. And we can do it in a way that should satisfy postmodernists if we view conscience as a "center" we choose, a frame we look through in relation to the other. I believe we should also be able to figure out ways to talk about things like "truth," and "accuracy," because if we do not, then the mindset of "greed' continues to get a free ride without opposition.

During my program, I encountered many students who felt a strong allegiance to the ideology implied by Johnstone's question, so many in fact, that I wondered more than once how an idea that supposedly enhances critical thinking had become almost universally accepted. I believe one such encounter

is a particularly pertinent illustration of the difficulties *anyone* can face while trying to resist the de facto law of "No we can't" and enter into a conversation concerning 'conscience' in the postmodern classroom. It began on the list–serve Blackboard during the beginning of English 611—a study of the history of rhetoric based on the text *The Rhetorical Tradition*.

The course began with the subject of sophistry and Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* took center stage almost immediately. Over the course of several days, a large number of posts appeared on Blackboard under the heading, "Sophistry––the classical kind," and I contributed some general comments concerning my thoughts at the time on the subject.

I began by citing from a criticism of the sophists titled "Against the Sophists" by Isocrates stating, "a nutshell argument against their way of thinking claims that 'their interest was not in the triumph of justice but in making 'the worse reason appear the better'" (footnote 12, 73). I added "...that it might be kinder to say that they had a passion for cleverness rather than a passion for truth, much like participants in the modern day "adversarial trial system in the United States...." I continued by saying that although a passion for cleverness can advance both the pathos and logos of one's rhetorical presentations, it can damage the ethos of a rhetor because outside the courtroom, "in the simpler world of personal affairs, interest in cleverness above truth will eventually cause others to perceive us as unworthy of trust. And being perceived as unworthy of

trust is probably the most damaging thing one's ethos can face" (Morrow, Blackboard, Jan. 16, 2010).

A counter argument to my post claimed that I had "mentioned" Gorgias, and said his "appeal [was] not particularly appealing to the ethos." It further claimed that Gorgias's ability to deceive was vindicated because he "...effectively used it to attain students who otherwise might have remained ignorant of rhetorical approaches." However, what followed was a statement that thoroughly caught my attention. "Without such individuals," this writer claimed, "the state could not run efficiently, etc." My response to this post focused mainly on the later statement, which was when I brought the word "conscience" into the discussion.

I did start by saying that "...it is highly debatable whether a reputation for deceit is an asset to one's ethos;" however, I devoted most of my response to the idea that citizens who are well–trained in "rhetorical approaches" do not guarantee that a state will run efficiently. I suggested that our nation was not running efficiently at all, and that "some of the most rhetorically trained men and women of our day are responsible for the mess we're in right now." I said that we were full to overflowing with highly trained television news reporters who lied, well-educated corporate owned attorneys who lied, and extremely well–paid lobbyists who entertained while they lied. I was trying to make the point that "without enough attention paid to conscience, knowing 'rhetorical approaches' can be a very dangerous thing, for all of us."

Directly after my commentary, a third student joined in the conversation stating the following:

> I agree with your counter–argument and offer Josef Goebbels as one of the best rhetoricians of his time, and yet an evil, dangerous man with a hideous agenda perpetuating horrific ideas. Rhetoric without ethics, without a conscience has been and will continue to be the downfall of mankind. It is easy to follow a great orator as one is being led down a path of immorality. After all, the arguments were sound, the applause plentiful. Gerry, you are absolutely right to point out the dangers as you have. (Morgan, name changed to protect privacy, January 18, 2010)

At this point, I think a word about this respondent, Jane Morgan, is in order. Jane was born and raised in Germany and knows better than most the dangerous power of expedient rhetoric. The expedient rhetoric she is talking about—that of Josef Goebbels—was the same expedient rhetoric that led to so much grief in the life of Emmanuel Levinas, and of course, truly countless others. A mature teacher of adolescents, Jane has also seen her share of thoughtless adolescent action—the kind too quick for consultation of conscience. I honestly thought that her remarks would be the end of the conversation; however, two more comments were posted, one by the first respondent and one by me.

The first respondent had a very real problem with the way Jane and I were using the word "conscience" and clearly stated so. Her main objection was not

simply reminiscent of postmodern arguments against discussing abstract ideas like conscience—it was a textbook argument. It was a parroting of the Johnstone citation I brought up earlier, and it began with a statement about how both Jane Morgan's argument and mine "... [hinged] on the ability to prove beyond reasonable doubt that conscience is innate." It then went on to say our perspective was only *an opinion*, that there were "different views" on the matter, and that conscience was not, "as Plato would have us believe" universally agreed upon. If the respondent had just come right out and said directly, "How can we even talk about 'conscience?'" I would not have been surprised.

Since the ideas put forth in this discussion are vital to my thesis, particularly my final entry, I will cite that response in total:

> I agree with you. Conscience is a slippery word. It runs the length and breadth of human experience. There are sociopaths and psychopaths that have absolutely no conscience and could care less about things like "compassion," or "truth," and on the other end of the spectrum there are people like Mother Theresa and Father Damien, who by all reports actually enjoyed a life of service to humanity. But, the kind of conscience I'm talking about is the kind that nips at us one way or another when we know we've cheated someone, or lied, or stolen. The kind of conscience that would be expected of students—the class of people I thought we were

talking about—students, who are expected to adhere to the policy built around the "plagiarism/academic dishonesty" thing.

All I'm saying is that it is important to foster this sort of conscience in students and maybe the best way to get that point across is to try to illustrate it with something I know about myself. If I were forced to choose between being a prosecutor or a public defender, I would choose to be a prosecutor. And the reason is simple. A prosecutor has a choice about whether or not a case should be filed against someone, and so has the option to exercise his or her conscience. A public defender on the other hand, may be commanded by the court to defend a rapist he or she knows is guilty, and have no choice in the matter. But the real point is that I don't just think, or believe, or know, I understand to the marrow of my bones that an attorney who has 'justice' in mind is by far better for the human condition than an attorney who prides him or herself on winning due to skill in rhetorical moves. Take that public defender ordered to defend the rapist. How would you feel, really, think about it, if you found out that that attorney's pride was satiated by winning the case without giving a damn that a rapist went free? That's also the kind of conscience I'm talking about. The kind that is offended by injustice. By the way, where'd you hear that Plato 'would have us believe' that conscience is universally agreed upon?

Although I did not know the young woman who had a problem with the discussion of conscience at the time of our Blackboard posts, I did subsequently get to know her fairly well. We never discussed our differences, but rather talked more on a personal level with each other. We had a mutual respect for each other, and a mutual understanding that our immersion in competing ideologies was no reason to take offense. Since one of Burke's primary goals was to purify war, I think he would have enjoyed the result of our friendly conversations. She is not only a brilliant student, but also sensitive, kind, and likable—a good person.

Over twenty years ago, in *Fragments of Rationality Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition*, Lester Faigley pointed out how "The instability of the subject in postmodern theory is one aspect of the 'impasse' of postmodern theory." Clarifying this statement, he goes on to say that the cause of the impasse is due to the postmodern idea that "[the] subject, like judgments of value and validations, has no grounding outside contingent discourses" (227). Marilyn Cooper referred to this same interval in postmodern history as "a period of legitimation crisis where there is no universally accepted external authority to appeal to nor any way to establish universal or enduring values..." (150). Toward the end of the Master's program I began to understand that a renewed interest in philosophers like Burke and Levinas could spark a revival of ethics in the discussion of rhetoric, that things may be changing. However, during the program, my experience of the discussion fell more into the categories described

by Faigley and Cooper, especially that any idea concerning "judgments of value and validations" could not even be brought up.

The end of Philosophy in the discussion of rhetoric means the end of philosophy in the discussion, for the implication of the question "Can we even talk about 'truth' and 'accuracy'?" still seems to be at the bottom of the conversation. Practically speaking, from my own experience in the program, we are still at an impasse due to an idea/ideology that is meant to enhance critical thinking, yet ironically seems to be accepted without much thought at all. Many students still seem to believe that *any* conversation about abstract ideas such as 'truth,' 'accuracy,' or 'conscience' cannot even be brought to the table.

At the end of a chapter titled "The Ethical Subject," while discussing 'Ethics and Postmodern Pedagogy,' Faigley argues from the perspective of Jean Francois Lyotard:

> Bringing ethics into rhetoric is not a matter of collapsing spectacular diversity into universal truth. Neither is ethics only a matter of a radical questioning of what aspires to be regarded as truth. Lyotard insists that ethics is also the obligation of rhetoric. It is accepting the responsibility for judgment. It is a pausing to reflect on the limits of understanding. It is a respect for diversity and unassimilated otherness. It is finding spaces to listen.

"Accepting the responsibility for judgment" begs the question: from what aspect of our nature do we make ethical judgments? I submit it is the conscience, the seat of moral–ethical judgment.

Burke is well–known for his belief that language through the negative created man, and that our being is "fundamentally moral–ethical." In fact, Crusius claims "...any notion of "post ethical man" is for Burke a contradiction in terms. Individual persons may be amoral, able to resist or ignore all moral injunctions and prohibitions—we call them psychopaths—but human being would simply cease to be human being without ethics" (*The Conversation*...159). Levinas too "most assuredly" believed that "...ethics is conceived...as that which breaks with nature and is the advent of the human..." (Perpich 107). The moral/ethical is not just part of our nature; it is the result of our ability to use language, symbols—the moral/ethical *makes us what we are*. Burke also believed that "...the end of Philosophy *did not* mean the end of philosophy. Rather the "postmodern condition" is the setting of a problem, a challenge to find a way of doing philosophy in an intellectual environment fortified to resist 'grand theory' or 'master narratives'" (Crusius *Kenneth Burke* 2; emphasis added). Granted, not everyone's conscience is the same. However, if we can start looking at conscience as akin to something like the empathic frame, a center among centers to choose from, a frame among frames, then we can at least see the discussion of conscience as conforming with postmodern rhetorical theory and we can meet the challenge Burke places before us. Adding conscience in

these terms could in turn lead to discussing ethical judgment more freely. Also, if we begin looking at the "self" as a container, consciously or unconsciously releasing a variety of internal rhetors, we can begin discussing the "self" and the use of different frames or centers more easily.

With these ideas in mind, I would like to answer Barbara Johnstone's rhetorical question with a rhetorical question of my own: *Especially* in times like these, when the rhetoric and ethics of expediency persistently tries to rule our day-to-day life, how can we *not* talk about "truth," or "accuracy," or "justice," or "conscience"? Not only are our personal relations with others at stake but during this period of unbridled expedient rhetoric, the fate of our society is at stake. Looking at the self as a container that releases 'structures of integrated motives,' or internal rhetors, consciously or unconsciously, and exploring the idea that we need to choose a center in relation to the other consciously can lead to identification with internal rhetors who *desire identification with the other.* And in this area, the postmodern idea of the dissociated self supplies only half the story.

Burke, in his discussion concerning his own internal rhetoricians, clearly illustrates *associated selves within*—members of his own internal cast of rhetors bent on cooperation with a positive goal in mind. We all have such associated selves within, and not only the kind that are interested in figuring out specific problems in rhetorical theory. We also have internal rhetors dedicated to a variety of frames or centers. Some of these frames or centers we choose consciously and some we do not. People who unconsciously choose centers that know only

the language of self–interest who run into other people who are unconsciously choosing similar centers are the cause of Burke's Abyss—the totally unconscious use of language in the "human barnyard." Regarding the individual, Burke claims, a means of salvation from this Tower of Babel, lies in consciously choosing the frame occupied by rhetors who speak the language of comedy. And I suggest that regarding the other, the practice of "watching" internal rhetors, in order to make a conscious decision to go with those who identify with the empathic frame could lead to a better life for not only the other but also the individual. I would further suggest that empathic identification with the other is, and always has been, the way of forward movement in the public sphere.

In the introduction to "Peace and Proximity," the editors of *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* state that the fundamental concentration of his philosophy—the face–to–face relationship—has been criticized for having little relevance to advances in the public sphere. They say the *practicality* of his reasoning has been questioned. They say his critics have asked, "What is the relation between the face–to–face and the spheres of reason, law, justice, and universality, spheres which, in the Western liberal tradition at least, are at the basis of the political organization of society [...] In brief, what is the relation between ethics and politics?" (Perperzak 161). However, I find his critics did more than just question Levinas's philosophy as impractical. According to Diane Perpich, some attacked him by trying to upend his perspective one hundred and eighty degrees. She quotes Richard Rorty as one such critic who said that

Levinas's primary focus, infinite responsibility to the other, was actually a "...stumbling–block to effective political organization as in the sense of sin" (5). The editors' response to such critics is that

> Levinas does not want to reject the order of political rationality and its consequent claims to universality and justice, rather, he wants to criticize the belief that *only* political rationality can answer political problems and to show how the order of the state rests upon the irreducible ethical responsibility of the face–to–face relation. (161; emphasis in original)

Levinas holds great stock in the idea that the order of the state works from the bottom up and that ethical responsibility in "the face–to–face" is ultimately the key to civic progress. Burke sees it essentially the same way.

At the foundation of Burke's philosophy of Dramatism we find the absolute necessity of seeing humans as "persons acting" rather than "things in motion." However, always willing to take the other side of the argument into account he states, "Maybe we are but things in motion...I am even willing to grant that the distinction between *things moving* and *persons acting* is but an illusion. All I would claim is that illusion or not, the human race cannot possible get along with itself on the basis of any other intuition" (*Language* 53; emphasis in original). He also states, "The progress of humane enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*" (*Attitudes* 41; emphasis in original). Crusius adds to this the idea that "We can't know the Truth about

human beings. We can, however, be wise enough to see that we must picture people as mistaken rather than vicious to sustain human society. And without society, we are nothing" (*Kenneth Burke* 202). These citations clearly point to the idea that both Burke and Levinas see ethical responsibility to the other as a fundamental necessity for progress in the public sphere, and I would add, that Burke, like Levinas, devoted much of his work advocating self–reflection as a tool for discovering just what one's responsibility toward the other might be. Much of his philosophy is *directly* related to comprehending our internal motivation concerning the other. In fact, Crusius states, "[Burke's] *entire* philosophical anthropology is meant...to expose the problem of problems for symbol–using animals, how to attain a measure of understanding and control over our own symbol–driven motives" (153; emphasis in original).

The stability of the state? Ultimately, both Levinas and Burke say that it is up to us—on an individual level, which means not only work toward political progress but also more importantly, work on ourselves. According to both, we cannot take the easy way and work for advancement on the political level, the only kind of work Rorty apparently thinks is necessary. I choose to listen to Burke and Levinas, who support the idea that the real way to progress both politically and individually lies in breaking free of the dissociated self, consciously choosing a frame within, and going with those internal rhetors who talk a language different from that of self-centeredness. I choose to listen to Burke and Levinas, who advocate finding those internal rhetors who support tuning into the other,

becoming identified with the other, being empathic toward the other. And I obviously agree with Burke that we have a choice in the matter of which internal rhetors we go with.

Burke's rhetorical theory can help us see both our disassociated rhetors and our "partisan rhetors." His definition of Man is entirely devoted to the dissociated rhetors in each of us who together make up our society, the "Tower of Babel"— those who insist on the dramatic frame, which leads inevitably to the expedient mindset, the "cult of the kill." However, his references to the partisan rhetors of the associated self are less conspicuous, or esoteric in nature, as are his references of how easy it is to lose contact with the associated self. The following citation from "Rhetoric of 'Address' (to the individual soul)" is perhaps one of the best descriptions of how "watching" or becoming "observers of [ourselves]" can unearth the internal rhetoric of the dissociated self, which, by design, blocks access to the associated self:

> ...a modern "post–Christian" rhetoric must...concern itself with the thought that, under the heading of appeal to audiences, would also be included any ideas or images privately addressed to the individual self for moralistic or incantatory purposes. For you become your own audience, in some respects a very lax one, in some respects very exacting, when you become involved in psychologically stylistic subterfuges for presenting your own case to yourself in sympathetic terms (and even terms that seem harsh can

> often be found on closer scrutiny to be flattering, as with neurotics who visit sufferings upon themselves in the name of very high–powered motives which whatever their discomfiture, feed pride. (*Rhetoric* 38–39)

All my adult life I have wrestled with "psychologically stylistic subterfuges for presenting [my] own case to [myself] in sympathetic terms." In fact, the self–justification born of this practice is probably the primary blockade to accessing the comic frame, the empathic frame, or the associated self. For the purpose of clarifying one way to reach the empathic or the comic frame, a way that works for me, I would like to introduce a poem I wrote some years ago, which was re–worked for this thesis. It is about using "stylistic subterfuges" and "*becoming* my own audience." It is about "high–powered motives" set into motion through identification with my own internal rhetoric. This poem is essentially about feeding pride.

Into The Basement

And Out

Again

everybody has to go into the basement
eventually
my last trip I saw enough to last for a long time.

a ray of effort...

fell on the one born of injury who identifies with the rhetoric of fear

the one born of fear who identifies with the rhetoric of anger

the one born of anger who identifies with the rhetoric of suspicion

the one born of suspicion who identifies with the rhetoric of skepticism

the one born of skepticism who identifies with the rhetoric of judgment

the one born of judgment who identifies with the rhetoric of criticism

the one born of criticism who identifies with the rhetoric of self-satisfaction

the one born of self-satisfaction who identifies with the rhetoric of vanity

the one born of vanity who identifies with the rhetoric of pride...

And then, as always in the pinpoint beam in the basement,

the kindly judge

steps from the shadows

and points a finger directly at me and

I am criticized in the same way

I criticized the other...

"Forgive the injury"

echoes from the stairwell

as I retrace my footsteps

out of the basement

and back into the sunlight.

Earlier in this thesis, I attempted to show how implementing the comic frame could lead to the empathic frame. This poem, I believe, acts as a good example of how "watching" internal rhetors can lead to the empathic frame, which in turn can lead to the comic frame. Enough trips to the basement have taught me that when I judge another harshly, I'm usually judging only one of their unconscious rhetors—one of their internal "we's"—and that I'm taking that internal "we" as the *entire* person. I have to find a way to laugh at that and the fact that usually, I am also seeing in the other one of my own "foibles." Otherwise, I need to find a way to be happy about grumbling and stumbling around in the dark of the basement. Aside from illustrating how the empathic frame can lead to the comic frame, I think this poem also helps to illustrate one of the most important ideas in this thesis, internal "we's" who use the rhetoric of expediency.

Burke has much to say about our internal "we's," and references from two separate sections in *Attitudes Toward History* might help clarify the "we's" under discussion in the poem above. "The so–called 'I,'" Burke says, "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, with disturbing moral consequences" (264). Here, he is talking mainly of the "we's" that identify "...with some corporate unit (church, guild, company, lodge, party, team, college, city, nation, etc...." (267). These are the "we's" we identify with when, as is so often heard, we "put on a different hat" to perform some

function relative to our particular "corporate unit." However, the "we's" described in the poem are of another kind, the kind Burke addresses when he says, "For various reasons, one has many disparate moods and attitudes. These may be called sub–identities, subpersonalities, 'voices'" (*Attitudes* 184). As Crusius puts it, "The self is not sole or whole. There are many of us 'in here'" (*Kenneth Burke* 39). These "we's," these "subpersonalities," fall in two camps more or less, those identified with unconsciously, and those identified with consciously, and they inhabit two parts of the self respectively, the dissociated self and the associated self.

Members of the dissociated self can quickly and unconsciously bristle at a perceived injury, especially if that injury comes in the form of a bruise to one's deep felt identification with a particular "corporate unit." Since it is their job to speak the internal rhetoric of expediency, the rhetoric of *pure* self–interest, they are often driven by fear. And under the conditions produced by fear it is easy to identify with all sorts of internal negativity, becoming like Burke's satirist: "...the satirist attacks *in others* the weaknesses and temptations that are really *within himself*" (*Attitudes* 49; emphasis in original). Fortunately, though, Burke also reminds us that we can always consciously choose "we's" of another kind.

The following passage from "The Range of Rhetoric" is one of the most important places to encounter Burke's ideas about people being "observers of themselves" and while acknowledging a wide range of "sub-personalities," seeing that we have a choice:

> We need never deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction as a *characteristic motive* of rhetorical expression. We need not close our eyes to their almost tyrannous ubiquity in human relations; *we can be on the alert always* to see how such temptations to strife are implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships; yet we can at the same time always look beyond this order, to the *principle of identification* in general, a *terministic choice* justified by the fact that the identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression. (*Rhetoric* 20; emphasis added)

Always, Burke says, we have a choice. He also says that we can choose to "be on the alert always to see how...temptations to strife are implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships." This "strife," this "enmity" and "faction" that are "characteristic motives of rhetorical expression," and have a presence everywhere, he says, can be short–circuited by the "terministic choice" of "identifications in the order of love." He also states elsewhere that "in the unwritten cosmic constitution that lies behind all man–made Constitutions, it is decreed by the nature of things that each man is 'necessarily free' to be his own tyrant..." (*Language* 52). Commenting on this subject, Crusius defines a couple of paths that lead away from the oppressive dissociated self and toward the associated self: "To some degree we can escape self–imposed tyranny through dialogue, with its capacity to enlarge horizons and examine critically the terms we

use. We can also deliberately cultivate a number of screens, increasing our options for seeing" (*Kenneth Burke* 133). This idea of cultivating a number of screens is closely connected to consciously choosing to go with members of the associated self, for to "deliberately cultivate" anything, one needs to be conscious of what one is doing. The comic frame and the empathic frame are both conscious *terministic choices.* Individually each is only one among many ways of *seeing*, but both fall under the heading of "identifications in the order of love."

The comic frame is indirectly connected to societal salvation *through* individual salvation. Crusius tells us that "Burke advocates comedy because he believes he has good reason to fear that history has a tragic denouement, a 'repetition compulsion' requiring an endless line of victims that, short of eliminating the symbol–using animal entirely, can never absolve or cleanse" (*Kenneth Burke* 205). He later states:

> We live in a century that will certainly be remembered for slaughter and destruction on an unprecedented scale, whose narrative logic thus far turns overwhelmingly on human sacrifice and self–victimization. What hope we might have for a different story cannot but increase by a *self–consciously* comic attitude in all forms of action and interaction. (208; emphasis in original)

According to Crusius, the comic frame offers far more than implied by the label "salvation device" because even though it does act on a personal level, it ultimately serves "what hope we might have" for society in general. This puts the

comic frame squarely in the middle of "identifications in the order of love" for as one is "saving one's hide" through "a *self–consciously* comic attitude in all forms of action and interaction," one is also offering "hope" for civic progress.

Likewise, the empathic frame falls under the heading of "identifications in the order of love," only more directly. The empathic frame is a way to consciously connect with those parts of the associated self whose interest lies in identification with the other. It is a way to tune into the other and connect with compassion. And, unless we are, as Crusius puts it, "what we call ...psychopaths," we should have the ability to come up with our own empathic frame, and *it will be* just another frame. However, by its nature it will become one's own path to that part of the self Levinas calls the "conscience morale."

I believe both the comic and the empathic frames deserve what Burke would call "special favors." It doesn't matter whether one believes there are at least a couple of "absolute truths" or one is a postmodern sophist with a conscience who realizes we are in need of a "necessary fiction." Either way, one would have to agree that both the comic and the empathic frame are required for the progression of the individual and society.

Burke had no problem claiming that dramatism was "just another terministic screen," yet he also believed that "something so indispensable to explaining why we behave as we do and why we condemn certain behavior that ignores the implicit rules can surely claim 'special favors'" (Crusius *Kenneth Burke*.136; emphasis in original). Speaking of "Hitlerite Germany," a time when

the fabric of society was ripped to shreds by those who "[ignored] the implicit rules," Burke says that "impersonal terminology" promotes disaster and that it is only a step from "treating inanimate nature as mere 'things' to treating animals, and then enemy peoples as mere things. But they are not mere things, they are persons—and in the systematic denial of what one knows in his heart to be the truth, there is a perverse principle that can generate much anguish" (*Rhetoric* 32). I believe the connotations of this single phrase: "what one knows in his heart to be the truth," need to be fostered now more than ever. We need to find ways to incorporate a more personal terminology in the study of rhetoric. Without a way to openly discuss "what one knows in his heart to be the truth," without a way to openly discuss a conscious connection with the conscience, we run the risk of losing our ability to see both the suffering and the value of the other. And that, Burke claims, "can generate much anguish."

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