Rhetoric, Plurality, and Political Production

by

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Dedication

To Heather and Devyn.

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Abstract

This dissertation proposes an audience-centered political theory of rhetoric: speakers identify and appeal to the characteristics of their audiences in order to build unity behind achieving some collective project. When crafting rhetorical appeals, speakers must account for those processes that define audience members' concerns, commitments, and conceptions of self-interest. I call these processes "political production": a central, but underexamined element in how audiences respond to rhetorical appeals. Under some circumstances, as in the small and narrowly-defined political communities discussed by ancient Greek theorists of rhetoric, political production is consistent across the politically relevant audience. In plural societies, however, difference, subordination, and exclusion often cut across the politically relevant audience, rather than defining its boundaries. As a result, rhetoric can build new solidarities which, reinforced through organizing and material infrastructure, create transformative political projects.

This project utilizes a wide variety of theoretical and historical methods. In the first three substantive chapters, I rely on a combination of close readings of Attic Greek texts, conceptual analysis, and intellectual history to identify a conception of regime (*politeia*) as productive of the "available means of persuasion" in the thought of Aristotle and Plato, and to uncover Hobbes' attempt, in his translation of Thucydides, to protect political order against his original and polemical conception of subversive "rhetoric". In the next two chapters, I draw on social theoretic analysis, contemporary social science, and the history of American political thought to examine the role of rhetoric in political contexts defined by plurality and hegemony. In the dissertation's final substantive chapter, I use archive research, interviews, and my own

participant observations to apply the dissertation's treatment of rhetoric to contemporary labor organizing and movement building.

Understanding rhetoric in terms of political production contributes both to the history of political thought and to theoretically-engaged political interventions. By placing worries about rhetoric's manipulative potential in their proper early modern context, I open space for re-reading the history of political thought for other approaches to rhetoric, such as the ones that I find in ancient Athenian philosophy. Normatively-engaged accounts of rhetoric, particularly those that examine appeals to racial resentment and similar reactionary attitudes, may also benefit from a broader focus on the institutions, movements, and material conditions that enable such appeals. These aspects of political production contribute far more to the success and consequent harm of such appeals than any specific candidate or official. Finally, the project contributes to the theory and practice of contemporary politics, especially as understood through radical democratic and broadly leftist perspectives. I develop a distinction between populist strategies and other possibilities for counter-hegemonic projects, and identify ways to fit an organization's rhetorical approach to its strategy for achieving change.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation proposes a political theory of rhetoric in which rhetoric is a practice directed at unifying a speaker with some audience. Rhetoric seeks to identify what Aristotle called "available means of persuasion" that allow the speaker to call on identities or interests that audience members come to recognize as their own. Successful rhetoric involves speakers advocating a unified set of demands or objectives that, if not necessarily or obviously coherent, nonetheless make sense from the perspective of audiences who see themselves included in the broader project. This advocacy takes place across a wide variety of circumstances and contexts, and can be aimed at practically any objective. Since I focus on theorizing rhetoric as a *political* practice, I am primarily interested in rhetorical appeals aimed at creating solidarity and building power in a way that enables some kind of collective action. Such projects require audience members who either already regard such collective action favorably, or at least have needs and concerns that are important enough to motivate collective action under the right circumstances. When practiced in support of a political project, then, rhetoric at any one moment is bound up with prior and present instances of political production: systemic and interpersonal work to define audience members' interests, concerns, and values in accordance with broader political arrangements. Speakers can benefit from such political arrangements, when the speakers' objectives align with dominant patterns of political production; otherwise, speakers must seek to build alternative solidarities as a basis for further action.

Understanding rhetoric in this way raises the question of what it means to produce an audience. I turn to two concepts in the history of political thought to account for political

production: regime (in Attic Greek, *politeia*) at the center of classical conceptions of rhetoric, especially those of Aristotle and Plato, and hegemony, through the work of Antonio Gramsci, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe, for theorizing rhetoric in modern and contemporary contexts. A regime is a self-contained political order, in which the political conditions that produce citizens reliably give those citizens values and assumptions that protect and maintain the regime. Within the small and homogeneous citizenry typical of the *poleis* Aristotle and Plato considered, or with a highly stratified society with an unquestioned ideological apparatus, such a self-contained political order is possible; today, however, these parameters rarely occur. Instead, contemporary political order is always contestable, contested, and plural. As a result, political production now takes the form of rhetoric and organizing that shape contingent alliances of interests and identities, formed around a principle that gives those interests and identities a common focus. Where a regime, in the classical sense, leaves little room for rhetorical appeals that explicitly challenge or undermine it, hegemonic formations inevitably leave resources for counter-hegemonic appeals among the identities, interests, and values that any hegemonic formation leaves at the margins. In any political order that we find objectionable, then, the possibility of altering or abolishing that order depends on rhetorical practices that build an alternative solidarity on which to base collective action; in any political order that we think is worth preserving, we can only preserve it through persuading people that their needs and concerns are best met through our existing institutions and values.

For many political theorists today and in the past, rhetoric plays a different, innately dangerous role in politics. Andrew Norris accurately summarizes this pattern: “With very few

exceptions, political theory is as hostile to rhetoric as politics itself is agreeable to it".[1] This hostility often flows from the intuition that rhetoric functions by manipulating subjects who would, if left alone, have acted otherwise, coupled with the judgment that this manipulation usually leaves its subjects acting *less* correctly – whether correct action involves rational self-interest, the law of nature, or some other standard – than they otherwise would have done. The first of these points prompts a concern that rhetoric introduces unequal power dynamics, and therefore worries deliberative democrats; the second provokes specific fears of demagogy, especially for those who hope to achieve or maintain a secure political order. Simone Chambers has refined the concern with damaging power dynamics into a critique of modes of persuasion that are "monological rather than dialogical", following her reading of Plato's *Gorgias*, while, with Iris Marion Young, arguing that the standards of dispassionate reason and objective natural right often assumed by those who fear demagogy have little foundation and often reflect existing social inequities.[2] For Chambers, the solution to concerns about rhetoric's power lies in dividing rhetorical practices between those that encourage reflective deliberation among the audience and those that instead seek to mobilize the audience to follow the speaker; while mobilization is "endemic to democracy", we ought to encourage deliberative rhetorical practices and build institutions that encourage them.[3]

While Chambers seeks to critically revise deliberative democratic theory in order to make

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[1] Norris, "Rhetoric and Political Theory", in Michael J. MacDonald, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199731596.013.048.
[2] Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?", *Political Theory*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2009), 324-326; Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 64.
[3] Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere", 344.

deliberative concerns more compatible with the realities of mass publics, Bryan Garsten has argued for mobilizing partial and even factional publics as a positive good.[4] Garsten reads Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a response to the problem of "sophistic demagogues [who] invited the people to view themselves and their particular judgments as the final authority in the city."[5] On Garsten's reading, Aristotle hoped to theoretically intervene to push rhetoricians toward deliberative settings, where audience members' interests were directly implicated in the decisions at hand, and away from forensic settings, where audience members lacked such active interest in the results of judgment and therefore were more vulnerable to manipulation. Garsten sees many modern and contemporary critics of rhetoric as attempting to exclude persuasion and practical judgment in favor of objective or authoritative standards of decision-making, and portrays active, engaged political contestation as a central element of public deliberation.

Each of these attempts to rehabilitate rhetoric, however, begins by admitting to a long history of essentially accurate worries about rhetoric's political effects. Persuasion, and more broadly rhetoric, needs to be saved from its own abuses, or have its better forms intentionally emphasized over the less healthy ones. Moreover, the extant efforts to rehabilitate rhetoric assume a fundamental consistency across the history of these worries. For Garsten, Aristotle's reframing of rhetoric from a practice of swaying jury members to one's preferred outcome to a practice of advancing deliberation in the assembly provides resources for responding to Hobbes because the Athenian demagogues that Aristotle feared resembled the parliamentarians in

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[4] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[5] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, 117.

Hobbes' time in important ways.[6] Similarly, while Chambers criticizes attempts to frame critiques of rhetoric in terms of passionate rhetorical appeals and dispassionate deliberative reason, her rehabilitative approach nonetheless assimilates a wide variety of concerns about rhetoric into Plato's alleged criticism of rhetoric as monologic.

In contrast to approaches that emphasize saving rhetoric from its abuses, I develop a political theory of rhetoric without emphasizing or validating concerns of the dangers of rhetoric. I start with the idea that rhetoric, as a political practice, begins with understanding and responding to the audience. That is, speakers (or writers, or users of sign language; I use the term "speaker" to refer to a person involved in generic communication) who wish to persuade audience members to do something most accurately craft their persuasive appeals by learning what the members of their audience believe in, what counts as evidence to them, what concerns they bring to a conversation, and attempting to communicate with their audience on those terms. At the same time, people who want to observe and explain the success or failure of some persuasive appeal do best to think about the audience members' characteristics, commitments, and concerns, and how the appeal connected to those. In either case – practicing rhetoric in the moment, or analyzing it from an outside perspective – the audience's capacity to reject appeals and the historical and situational conditions that make persuasion possible weigh against the speaker's ability to craft and deliver appeals that they hope will persuade, and it is a mistake to overemphasize the speaker's capacity to influence the audience. This is especially true in relatively egalitarian conditions, such as those that obtain in those sectors of organized labor that

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[6] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, 117.

prioritize democratic member participation, the healthier and more collegial of academic workshops, and similar local organizations in which discussion or deliberation occur predominantly in a context of mutual respect and concern. Under these conditions, speakers must consider the possible negative consequences of being perceived as *trying* to control or overwhelm their audience, which can often alienate listeners because such behaviors violate the present conversational norms. They should also consider their listeners' affective dispositions, and either appeal to those dispositions (when generally favorable) or accommodate and circumvent them. When under circumstances where participants prefer clear and well-warranted argumentation in their discussions, it is often enough the case that most or all of the participants generally possess "good" arguments for their differing perspectives, and the arguments that most accurately reflect the audience's preferences and concerns will prove to be the *right* arguments.

Readers will recognize the above as a gloss on Aristotle's description of appeals to a speaker's character (ethos), the audience's affective dispositions (pathos), and reasons that the audience finds compelling (logos), along with an insistence on thinking about each of these categories in terms of the audience, rather than the speaker. This insistence on the primacy of the audience, however, may seem problematic. I began, after all, by assuming relatively egalitarian conditions, and very little political rhetoric responds to such conditions. Many speakers – at campaign rallies, protests, official candidate debates, in advertisements and on the floors of legislatures – attempt to actively exclude or avoid most or all competing perspectives, and cultivate a sanitized safe space for their persuasive appeals. They marshal whatever resources they can find in order to portray their position in the best possible light, and to build audiences that will accept their position and mobilize in support of it. To be sure, the facts that these speakers put so much effort into setting up advantageous contexts rather than trusting in their

own oratory to sway audiences, and that audience members frequently reject some or all of their appeals, suggest that both speakers and audiences have some sense of the audience's agency and the speakers' limits. The speakers nonetheless enjoy a capacity to study their audience, to plan and shape their appeals, and to wield social and political authority that is rarely possessed by ordinary audience members. On this basis, we might then assign a disproportionate power to rhetoric, return to concerns about manipulation or domination, and perhaps reclassify persuasive practices within more egalitarian circumstances as a special kind of political rhetoric or exclude those practices from the category of rhetoric altogether.

Here, however, I turn to political production, both of the audience and of the institutions and infrastructure that connect the speaker with the audience, as a starting point for analyzing persuasive practices that might seem especially asymmetrical or anti-egalitarian. Viewed from this starting point, it is of course the case that some rhetoric channels political power in harmful ways; the question, however, is what political efforts make it possible for a particular rhetorical appeal to cause harm. To take an example that I will return to at several points in the dissertation, rhetorical appeals that attempt to channel racial resentment among significant numbers of audience members, from dogwhistles and other implicit appeals to the increasingly overt racist appeals in recent politics in the United States, only prove effective if the speaker accurately identifies and targets racist attitudes in the audience. If very few or no audience members possessed the attitudes and perceived interests to which race-baiting appeals, or if through long efforts of rhetoric and organizing, a large majority of an audience learned to recognize and oppose racism in its many forms, such appeals would prove counterproductive. On the other hand, the success of racist rhetorical appeals should trouble us, not only or even foremost because of what it tells us about the character of someone willing to deploy such appeals, but

because that success evidences a failure of previous anti-racist organizing and warns of the possibility that such appeals will reaffirm and reproduce racist attitudes in the audience. In short, throughout this dissertation, I maintain that when rhetoric causes harm, it does so largely because of broader political efforts and processes that shape audiences into potential willing accomplices for speakers.

Why, then, isolate individual speakers from the audiences and systems that enable them? There are some plausible reasons to focus on speakers' behavior as individuals. For example, if we center ethical concerns when thinking about rhetoric, speakers who act in knowingly harmful ways may be ethically responsible in different ways than audience members. Similarly, when attempting to mobilize audiences who are already hostile to certain kinds of rhetorical appeals – for example, an audience that recognizes racist appeals for what they are and finds them reprehensible – the responsible speaker may be an apt target for a call to action. In terms of rhetoric's political effects, however, the move to emphasize individual speakers as potential manipulators and bad actors was a political response to the novel political problem of increased plurality in early modern Europe. As discourses of science and rationality proliferated, religious disagreements fueled conflict, and printed information spread faster and to more people, the ability to build solidarities became newly worrisome for people attached to existing – and rapidly destabilizing – political order. These worries, and their important origin point in the early work of Thomas Hobbes, have influenced many contemporary critiques of rhetorical practices, even when the critics prefer very different modes of political organization than their early modern counterparts. As a result, the dissertation attempts to place worries about rhetoric as a practice of domination or manipulation in their proper historical context, and recover alternative ways of thinking about rhetoric as a political practice.

The final through line of the dissertation is a concern with rhetoric as a practice that contributes to political change. Both as a scholar interested in socialist, radical democratic, and emancipatory political thought and as an activist in the academic labor movement, I start from the perspective that current political and social conditions cannot be reconciled with a concern for human freedom, dignity, or wellbeing, and that broad and deep change in these conditions is urgently needed. The harm caused by rhetoric that appeals to racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, and other forms of socially-empowered hatred has loomed over many of us while I prepared this project. It seems to me, however, that the use of rhetoric to build new solidarities and empower excluded communities is less well understood, and less effectively practiced, than either open appeals to hatred or empty appeals to a nonexistent national unity. When examining political thought about rhetoric, then, I consistently emphasize resources for building counter-hegemonic solidarities, and for identifying and overcoming obstacles to those solidarities. This emphasis has been especially significant when considering cases for applying the dissertation's theoretical claims. As a longtime member and activist in the Graduate Employees Organization, I have drawn inspiration from the union's successes, and motivation for understanding rhetoric better from the union's mistakes. It therefore seemed especially appropriate to focus on these successes and failures when applying the dissertation's theoretical framework to analyzing contemporary rhetoric.

Chapter Summary

The dissertation begins with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, in which I see an audience-centered approach beginning with his definition of rhetoric as a capacity for identifying available means of persuasion. I couple this audience-centered approach with an understanding of regimes – the political order that characterizes a given city, and around which the city is organized – as

productive in Aristotle's thought. That is, for Aristotle, the regime provides the conditions relative to which certain appeals are more persuasive and more reliable than others, so that an understanding of a city's political relationships and orientation is the "most authoritative" source of effective persuasion.[7] On such a theory of rhetoric, no art of rhetoric can be abstracted from the concrete conditions in the city some particular speaker inhabits. To be persuasive in another place or time, a rhetorician would need to inquire about the regime there, learn what sorts of people would be in the audience, and craft appeals that would fit that new and unfamiliar audience. Instead of taming rhetoric or enticing rhetoricians to practice philosophy, then, I read Aristotle as situating rhetoric within a broader understanding of politics in which regimes produce citizens and thereby reproduce themselves. For Aristotle, political production happens in the regime, in a way that excludes any substantive sense of plurality within the polis, and rhetoric functions as an appeal to already-produced listeners. While Aristotle's concept of a regime has little direct applicability today, it nonetheless grounds an approach to rhetoric that does not start from fears of manipulation and domination. It therefore makes clear that these fears do not find their origin in the nature of persuasion, but in a political theory of rhetoric that conjures and justifies them.

Having set out the basic elements of an audience-centered theory of rhetoric, I next turn to Plato, often perceived as a founding figure in theorizing rhetoric's evils. On a commonplace reading of Plato's *Gorgias*, the title character and his fellow rhetoricians lay claim to a terrifying power to influence people – the power, more or less, of a sort of supervillain – and the dialogue's

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[7] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.8.1 1365b. Perseus.

primary conflict lies in the questions of whether, and how, this power could be used justly. Under Socrates' questioning, Gorgias is unable to defend the claim that he only offers the power of rhetoric to be used for good, while Polus and then Callicles are unable to defend the claim that using rhetoric to enjoy power over others is desirable or good. After conversation breaks down, Socrates turns to crafting a myth for his interlocutors, in which the just and cleansing punishments that rhetoricians might avoid in life nonetheless purify souls in the afterlife. Socrates' conflict with Gorgias and Polus, however, repeatedly returns to the question of whether they really possess the power that they offer for sale, and Socrates never actually concedes that this power exists. Moreover, Socrates himself turns to a haranguing style, closely matching the patterns of Athenian political speech, precisely when he criticizes the greatest of Athenian politicians for making the city's people worse, instead of better. This style, which Socrates' interlocutors refer to as *dēmēgoria* (the practice of "speaking to the people", or Athenian political rhetoric), also fails to persuade Socrates' interlocutors to want to become better people, and the Platonic dialogue devoted to the use of rhetoric in public life ends with none of the participants changing their minds in response to each other's persuasive efforts. Indeed, during Socrates' oration, he tells Callicles that using rhetoric either to dominate people *or* to make them better is impossible, because speakers must first accommodate themselves to the audience before they can hope to persuade the audience of anything – if anything, a more extreme version of Aristotle's regime-based approach, in which the corrupt Athenian democracy not only produces the audience, but performs a sort of second-order production of speakers who choose to emulate their audiences. Reading the *Gorgias* as a source for the fear and mistrust of rhetoric, I conclude, suggests that people bring concerns about rhetoric to the text that they have learned elsewhere.

Where, then, did we learn to worry about the dangers of rhetoric? Chapter Four

documents a striking origin point in the early work of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes' translation of Thucydides contains a striking series of tendentious translations around the figures of Pericles and Alcibiades, each of which tends to set up these figures' perspectives as characteristically Hobbesian. Hobbes' Pericles teaches listeners to distrust the advice of orators in favor of calculating their own self-interest, informed by their own rational fear of loss and the protection that a stable and flourishing city offers from such losses. As a result, this version of Pericles takes on the role of a sovereign educator, without whose guidance the city descends into the snakes' nest of squabbling rhetoricians in the assembly. After this descent, Alcibiades comes to represent a stunningly talented and ambitious person, whose talents and ambition make him a target for the avarice and envy of others. Hobbes' highly unusual version of Alcibiades presents him as deserving better of the Athenians, and ultimately as a second mouthpiece for Hobbes' psychology, on which fear is fundamentally rational and the city's degeneration leaves only cynical self-interest as a viable option for someone like Alcibiades. Taken together, these representations of important figures in Thucydides' history set up a strange rhetorical game around the concept of rhetoric. On the one hand, Hobbes sets up the sovereign educator, and the process of correct reasoning that the educator teaches to subjects, as outside of, and indeed opposed to, "rhetoric"; on the other, "rhetoric" therefore comes to signify forms of persuasion that work outside of, and opposed to, the political order that offers the only possibility of stability and protection.

Hobbes' rhetorical strategy of distinguishing between "right reason" and "rhetoric", and persuading readers to distrust the latter, has proven tremendously influential. Together with attempts to accommodate this distrust, histories of reading that distrust into previous texts, and the choice to validate this distrust while salvaging some kind of rhetorical practice, Hobbes'

strategy is the primary foil of my argument. Nonetheless, Hobbes' fear that rhetoricians could contribute to the formation of solidarities and communities outside the sovereign political order, and thereby undermine and ultimately destroy it, points to an important discontinuity between the Aristotelian regime and the modern political community. Aristotle theorized regimes as fundamentally closed political orders, self-contained, quite capable of reproducing themselves, and most vulnerable not to contestation or mobilization from outside the approved order, but to a political degeneration in which a political community spiraled into an exaggeration of itself with the result of oppressing and alienating its own members. Hobbes perceived, however, that social and technological developments, including the sheer size of modern political communities, the speed of political writings, and the rise of new modes of political and intellectual contestation, meant that if the Aristotelian regime had ever been practical, it no longer was. Instead, political communities were becoming irreducibly plural and contested. A sovereign was needed to produce subjects capable of apprehending correct definitions and reasoning from them, so as to channel the irreducible plurality of individuals into a unified commonwealth.

I take up the development of plurality, and its implications for an audience-based theory of rhetoric, in the fifth chapter. Contemporary societies typically feature broad political contestation, based not on objective or immutable social positions but on politically constructed interests and concerns. As a result, the Aristotelian regime, challenged by Hobbes and early modern thinkers, simply does not exist as a stable foundation for persuasion in contemporary politics. Instead, when broader political conditions enable or support persuasive appeals that in turn reinforce those political conditions, this support is complex, overdetermined, and contingent. I turn to the theories of Antonio Gramsci, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe to characterize these complex political conditions, which unequally support different persuasive

appeals, in terms of hegemony. That is, the conditions under which some kinds of appeals – in today's politics, for example, those that justify and maintain inequality in terms of protecting freedom – more easily gain support reflect present arrangements of political and social resources, which themselves are the product of previous struggles. Rhetoric makes its most significant political contributions, however, when speakers seek to articulate interests, identities, and concerns so as to create new connections between people that ground solidarity and political change. Here, Laclau's and Mouffe's use of the concept of articulation to describe creating a sense of equivalence between otherwise-separate struggles, so that these struggles consolidate and grow in strength, provides an important source for my analysis of how rhetoric builds solidarity. Because rhetoric can create new relations of equivalence, it serves to actively produce political identities and movements from the irreducibly plural realm of subject positions. I draw on resources in Gramsci's thought for thinking of such rhetorical practices in an anti-elitist way, and contrast the possibility of new articulation of progressive and radical political communities with the tired and repetitious appeals to whiteness and ethnonationalism that have characterized far-right rhetorical appeals in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century.

I diagnose two significant barriers to building new solidarities across a variety of subordinated communities. First, efforts to persuade large numbers of people in a very rapid manner, as is often necessary in national electoral campaigns and similar projects, tend to gravitate toward the vocabularies and tropes that mass audiences will find most familiar. This tendency, combined with the material and political relations of racialized capitalism, forces people who want to achieve broad liberatory change to accept longer-term persuasion and organizing in order to engage in serious counter-hegemonic struggle. Second, attempts to build movements across communities face an intuition, powerfully present in contemporary politics in

the United States, that difference is divisive. I trace this intuition to a rhetorical project beginning in the work of James Madison, on which the sixth chapter focuses. I use scholarship on the American founding and an original analysis of Madison's papers to show that before and during the 1787 Constitutional Convention, Madison's treatment of the mischiefs of faction focused entirely on a struggle between the propertied few and everyone else, fitting into an economistic political sociology common to liberal-republican political thought of the period. As unexpectedly virulent Antifederalist pamphlets spread in late 1787, however, Madison broke sharply with both his previous analysis of faction and with the dominant contemporary political sociology, both of which favored his opponents in the new political environment, in favor of an analysis of factions as contingent and constructed. While Madison remained committed to the rights of the propertied minority, his rhetorical approach during the ratification debates of late 1787 and 1788 evidences a turn to the concept of "minority rights" in order to construct a concept of defensively-oriented, individualistic citizenship, distrustful of most efforts at political mobilization. This strategy aimed at protecting the rights of property, not through a principled defense of that particular political entity, but through constructing a broader set of political classes whose members would both recognize each other's formal political standing in order to protect their own, and see any faction that might represent some part of their identity as nonetheless compromising others.

Thanks partly to Madison's writings in the *Federalist* and partly to influential 20th-century appropriations of his project, "Madisonian pluralism" therefore shapes contemporary politics by portraying almost all political contestation based on advancing some group's concerns as the product of factious self-interest, and as trading off both with collective national unity and with the status of any other given set of political concerns. This rhetorical strategy has the effect of portraying most political movements that seek broad redistribution of goods or liberatory

social change as attacks on collective unity, while also portraying differences between people and groups as grounds for division between them in political contexts. The effects of Madisonian pluralism are most apparent in often-unhelpful debates around the category of identity politics, where both liberal centrists and economistic leftists reflect the Madisonian logic in their insistence that the only meaningful categories of political existence are a universal and privileged category of political agency or an ineffective mass of atomized individuals. While some academics, consultants, and labor researchers have offered an initially promising rhetorical strategy for electoral campaigns to connect demands for racial justice and working people's material needs, I contend that more protracted efforts to build and maintain solidarities are the primary task of counter-hegemonic rhetoric.

In the dissertation's final chapter, I drawn on the tools and principles developed in the rest of the dissertation to analyze the history of the Graduate Employees Organization at the University of Michigan, one of the oldest labor unions representing graduate workers in the United States and an organization in which I participated throughout my work on this project. I draw on extensive archive research and interviews with early activists in the union to uncover a strategy of articulation that the union has adopted from its origins in the early 1970s to the present. By articulating demands for justice and freedom broadly construed – most notably, racial justice and LGBT liberation – with traditional "bread-and-butter" demands under the category of "union issues", GEO has consistently maintained solidarity among its membership, and largely across the broader southeast Michigan labor movement, behind demands that might not otherwise be perceived as connected to organized labor. This articulatory strategy, however, has worked most consistently within GEO membership; to build solidarity behind its demands in broader communities, the union has often needed other organizations to repeat and affirm its

rhetoric to their own members. At its best, these other organizations gain the opportunity to radicalize those demands and solidify a broader movement. The history of GEO's 1975 strike, in which the union won a contractual provision for affirmative action and broad anti-discrimination language that (unusually for the time) covered sexual orientation, exemplifies this potential: for the anti-racist organizations comprising the contemporary "Third World Coalition", the union's affirmative action demand became "a moderate and reasonable position" on which further demands and action would extend. However, without such allied organizations, the union cannot depend on its internal articulatory rhetoric to build external support. The union's 2020 "safety strike" against the university administration's irresponsible pandemic response and overinvestment in policing shows the importance of this distinction. GEO's articulation of safety from the pandemic and from police violence succeeded in building and maintaining solidarity among union members, and in providing resources for allied organizations attempting to build momentum for racial justice on campus and in the surrounding community. GEO's rhetoric and organizing practices proved less effective, however, in persuading people who did not already support the union's demands or found themselves on the fence. The union, and similar organizations, will need to develop its rhetorical appeals and build more sustained communication with these not-yet-persuaded people and communities.

This dissertation offers good news about rhetoric, for the well-intentioned person who wishes to persuade others to join in creating lasting and badly-needed change: persuasion does not carry the risks of manipulation, trickery, and domination that we have been taught to fear. Audience members who accept persuasive appeals do so largely because of prior experiences and conceptions of their own interests and needs; to persuade them differently, one must build new relationships and organize different experiences in order to produce new political and social

expectations. To the extent that persuasive appeals harmfully channel political power, they do so because of broader social conditions that collective action can blunt in the short term and end in the long term. We need not fear supervillains wielding the power of rhetoric. The bad news, such as it is, is that we cannot hope for rhetorical superheroes. Persuasion takes a great deal of work. Appeals that have rested on past regimes, or rely now upon hegemonic forces, benefit from the invisible and often unintended efforts of all who continue to reproduce and maintain the political conditions in which they live; appeals aimed at transformative change require similar efforts, but intentional, organized, and coordinated. Recognizing rhetoric's possibilities, and its limits, begins with understanding why we have been misled in thinking about it, and what alternatives we have thus far missed in understanding it.

Chapter 2 "Available Means": Audience and Regime in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*

1. Introduction

This chapter reads the first book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a resource for an audience-centered political theory of rhetoric: a political theory of rhetoric on which speakers seek to respond to the needs and ideas of audiences in order to constitute shared identities and create solidarity. I am not going to argue that Aristotle endorses *all* of this project; in fact, the goal of constituting shared identities and solidarities goes far beyond the agreed-upon actions or decisions that I take to be the end of Aristotelian rhetoric. I will argue, however, for reading Aristotle's approach to rhetoric as focused on speakers' capacity to recognize and respond to audiences, rather than on speakers' capacity to use rhetoric to control or dominate audiences. Aristotle's theory stops at this point – that is, with persuading people to take an action or arrive at a judgment, instead of building community or solidarity – because the further steps are political background conditions, produced by a given city's governing regime and providing particularly "authoritative" persuasive resources.[8]

The *assumption* that a regime (or "constitution") reliably produces citizens whose values, perceived interests, and conceptions of a good life are consistent with the regime that produced them is not one that should come readily to those of us who live in contemporary large, diverse,

[8] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, edited by W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), I.8 1365b Perseus.

and plural societies. Such an assumption requires a much more localized society, in which the community can produce and reproduce the appropriate citizens, that is more clearly separated from its neighbors than the societies in which most of us live. One could reasonably argue that Aristotle overstated the productive role of a polis' regime even in his own time. We have a great many examples of Athenians contesting the merits of democracy itself, not to mention their own shifting democratic institutions. These examples, however, occurred in a political community that excluded women, slaves, metics (resident aliens, including people whose ancestors had not been born in Athens and who had not received a grant of citizenship from the assembly), and so on, and nevertheless had a relatively high proportion of enfranchised people compared to other Greek *poleis*. Many of the distinctions that cleave across contemporary polities instead marked the boundaries of political standing; as a result, Aristotle's expectation that the regime would shape enfranchised citizens, if overstated, was not unreasonable.

The distance between Aristotle's expectations of a regime and anything we would encounter today, however, makes his treatment of rhetoric particularly useful as a starting point for theorizing rhetoric as audience-centered. As we will see, Aristotle's regimes produce citizens for whom specific appeals are especially apt. The regime's influence is a better cue for a speaker trying to identify the "available means of persuasion" than any other source of information about the audience.[9] Studying and practicing rhetoric, therefore, is at the same time explicitly political. At the same time, consistently with Aristotle's broader commitment that *stasis*, revolutionary unrest, is practically never worth it, rhetoric finds its inherent constraints in the nature of the

[9] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.2 1355b Perseus.

political community within which one speaks. The speaker, therefore, doubly depends on the audience: not only must speakers attend to their own immediate context and the characteristics of their audiences, but they must recognize that their audiences are the products of a specific kind of political community and seek to understand the influence of that community. While this might seem overwhelming, the relatively limited variation of context, audience characteristics, and regime in any given *polis* offers a fair chance for the Aristotelian rhetorician to effectively practice such attention and recognition. While, by the end of the dissertation, I will have moved to a far more complex contemporary context, in which social movements, organizations, or political campaigns do most of the work of the "speaker", the Aristotelian model helps us theorize the interaction between speaker and audience in a clear and concrete way. For similar reasons, the Aristotelian model is also directly useful in the contemporary context if, instead of looking to mass mobilization and large-scale political efforts, we look to smaller deliberative spaces in which participants understand themselves to exist in a community that has shared goals and in which participants' standing is uncontested.

I begin this argument by briefly setting out what I take to be the audience-centered theory of rhetoric in Aristotle's work. This theory is primarily focused on deliberative contexts, because Aristotle considered these contexts to be the most valuable and important for rhetoric (and, indeed, for politics). I turn briefly to the concept of "malicious" rhetorical appeals in the first chapter of the *Rhetoric*, to illustrate why these do not match a manipulative or speaker-centered theory of rhetoric, and then survey in some detail contemporary scholarship that reads manipulation into Aristotle's rhetorical theory. I argue that this scholarship involves bringing a concern about manipulation into readings of the *Rhetoric*, and that definitions of manipulation either fail to cohere theoretically, fail to correspond to arguments and concerns expressed in the

Rhetoric, or both. To make this argument, I examine contemporary rhetorical appeals that might seem to count as manipulation, especially around attempts to summon racial resentment in support of policies that voters might otherwise reject. Finally, I substantiate and defend my treatment of the Aristotelian productive regime.

2. Availability and Interdependence

Aristotle begins the second chapter of *Rhetoric*, Book I by defining rhetoric, unambiguously and in his own voice: "Let rhetoric, then, be the capacity of observing (*theōrēsai*) in any given case the available means of persuasion".[10] I read this definition as presenting a specific relationship between speakers and audiences, in which 1) speakers want to persuade their audiences; 2) well-informed speakers recognize that successful persuasion is decided by the reaction of their particular audience, not by the speakers' ability to control their audience; 3) speakers therefore seek to understand their audiences and identify what kinds of appeals, in what vocabularies and presentational styles, are likely to be accepted as persuasive by the audience members. The available means of persuasion, then, vary across audiences, contexts, and to some extent, the commitments and histories of speakers; they are a contingent and empirical characteristic of a speaker's situation. Rhetoric is about identifying these, as Aristotle argues in the previous chapter, because it, "just like all the other arts", succeeds or fails with respect to standards established by the situation, not by the individual actor: "for it is not [the task] of medicine to make healthy, but as far as is possible, to lead toward [health], for it is possible to

[10] ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.2 1355b. Perseus. Translations from Greek are my own.

correctly treat even those who cannot recover."[11] Following Aristotle's medical analogy, speakers do not have the ability to *make* audiences persuaded, but to identify and approximate the appeals that have the best chance of being persuasive. And since audiences are composed of thinking beings, speakers are in the position of having the value of their persuasive appeals judged by others, as well as needing to anticipate and respond to those possible judgments. Audiences depend on speakers to connect audience members' concerns, commitments, and context to a proposed conclusion. Speakers depend on audiences and context for the available means of persuasion, and also on audiences' reactions and responses for a sense of whether their persuasive appeals have been successful. Rhetoric, on my reading of Aristotle, therefore functions within a relationship of interdependence.

If we think about rhetoric through the concepts of availability and interdependence, we will not tend to prioritize concerns about manipulation or domination. If I want to persuade you of something, and believe that the means of doing so is to discover connections between my goals and your commitments, desires, or identities, I might empathize with you, if I thought these connections were easy to draw. I might try to compromise, in order to connect with you more easily. I might try to frame the question so that, seeing it in a new light, you approach my goals more closely, or to reason from a shared commitment to a different position that I hope you will come to share. But each of these involve a measure of respect and understanding. To believe I could simply pull at your characteristics like a puppet's strings, I would either have to think of

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[11] καθάπερ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις τέχναις πάσαις （οὐδὲ γὰρ ἰατρικῆς τὸ ὑγιᾶ ποιῆσαι, ἀλλὰ μέχρι οὗ ἐνδέχεται, μέχρι τούτου προαγαγεῖν: ἔστιν γὰρ καὶ τοὺς ἀδυνάτους μεταλαβεῖν ὑγιείας ὅμως θεραπεῦσαι καλῶς） Aristotle, Rhetoric I.1 1355b. Perseus.

you as very shallow and not too bright, or have a remarkably expansive idea of my own superiority and wisdom, or both, such that what makes you persuadable is far more obvious and evident than my motives in persuading you. Such attitudes seem rather counterproductive, if our starting point is that persuasion depends on your reaction and that I am trying to understand how to persuade rather than pulling from a bag of tricks.

An audience-centered theory of rhetoric also makes manipulation and domination *less* a concern as our example approaches a more typical rhetorical context. As the context becomes more adversarial and as the audience becomes larger, the speaker becomes more dependent on understanding and responding to the audience, and imagined superiority to the audience simultaneously becomes less well-founded and more vulnerable to the aforementioned adversaries. Someone speaking to a friendly audience, perhaps with the benefit of some kind of recognized authority – think of a union steward speaking with active and supportive members in their own shop, a preacher speaking to a congregation, or an instructor speaking to students – benefits doubly: familiarity with the audience makes it easier to return to familiar themes and appeals that work, while the friendliness and, perhaps, authority make it less likely that someone else will be trying to identify the available means of making the speaker look like a fool.[12] The same speakers, in a convention full of labor leaders who disagree about the future course of the movement, a church in the middle of doctrinal conflict, or a panel at an academic conference,

[12] Disagreement, controversy, and various levels of dialectical engagement are all, of course, possible in these contexts, and the "adversarial" nature of a speaker's audience and context is a continuum. Many of us might have relatively happy experiences of the following sentences' more conflict-prone contexts. Nonetheless, I think the examples of contexts with relatively "friendly" and constructive disagreement, and the alternatives that tend to more destructive or at least agonistic responses, serve to illustrate the point.

have to work harder to persuade their audience members. In other words, when they might be most tempted to manipulate or dominate their listeners, they are least empowered to do so.

Audience and the Assembly

The sharpest contestation, the largest audiences, and the greatest need for rhetorical ability, of course, appear in the context of a deliberative assembly. The practice of speaking publicly in such a context (*dēmēgoria*), Aristotle insists, is "nobler and more worthy of the citizen" (*kai kallionos kai politikoteras*) than advocacy in the legal courts, and therefore central to an inquiry about the art or craft of rhetoric.[13] In the context of the assembly, it becomes clear how widely Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, on my reading, differs from the sense of rhetoric as a force of manipulation or domination that threatens individuality and public order. Here's Hobbes opining on the inconveniences of holding sovereign power in an assembly: "they are as subject to evil counsel, and to be seduced by orators, as a monarch by flatterers; and becoming one another's flatterers, serve one another's covetousness and ambition by turns."[14] Or take Madison's sneering assessment of overlarge assemblies: "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob."[15] For each of these authors, and many of their contemporaries, the specter of demagogic orators manipulating or seducing their moblike audiences was a valuable rhetorical motif that reinforced the alleged rationality, thoughtfulness, and ultimately the "non-rhetorical" nature of the modern authors' own rhetorical appeals.

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[13] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.1 1354b. Perseus.
[14] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 121/xix.8.
[15] James Madison, *The Federalist*, no. 55. The Avalon Project.

But if we think through rhetoric with Aristotle, the fear of demagogic orators is unfounded. The assembly is a space with a particularly large number of audience members, who are all invested in the results of political contestation, and therefore the potential for rhetoric being "malicious" (*kakourgon*) is far *less* in the assembly than it is in the legal courts, where jurors' own wellbeing is not so directly implicated in the verdict, and in which the audience is generally smaller and perhaps more predictable in its responses to a particular rhetorical strategy.[16] The assembly is also a space in which any individual member has at least the *de jure* capacity to be a speaker, while jurors (even Athenian dicasts, whose authority was considerably greater than today's jurors) rather passively listen to advocates' arguments. While Aristotle never explicitly points to this formal blurring of the distinction between the speaker and the audience, it nonetheless creates an additional obstacle to speakers attempting to dominate the audience. Not only must speakers attempt to understand their audience, the available means of persuading that audience, and the known and likely opposing speakers, but they must recognize that any member of the audience might have an unanticipated objection, express it, and suddenly alter the field of the discussion.

Audience and "Malicious" Rhetoric

Moreover, the gesture to "malicious" rhetorical strategies in this passage suggests a much narrower concern than the demagogic frame that modern theorists of rhetoric have so often

[16] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.1 1354b. Perseus. C.D.C. Reeve renders the passage quite bluntly: "…public oratory is less malicious than judicial oratory, because more common in its scope". C.D.C. Reeve, tr. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2018), 3. George Kennedy omits this clause on the basis that it is "probably a comment by a later reader", but if so, the comment nevertheless accurately summarizes the argument of Aristotle's previous sentences. Kennedy, tr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

returned to. In context, there are two types of rhetorical practice that Aristotle criticizes in the first pages of Book I: speaking outside the subject (i.e. making appeals that do not speak to the questions at hand), and attempting to persuade others of what is "debased" (*ta phaula*). Neither of these translate directly into manipulation. Speaking outside the subject, as Arthur E. Walzer has argued, is problematic on technical rather than moral grounds: if a rhetorical strategy is limited to *only* "persuading" an audience on some point by talking about something that is largely separate, such as by blaming a victim or attempting to develop listeners' sympathy for one's client, then the strategy amounts to an end run around the technical task of persuading listeners that one's substantive position is correct.[17] This is why Aristotle criticizes those rhetoricians who, he says, contribute nothing to the central task of rhetoric and instead seek only to prompt the most helpful pathos for their position. The practice of speaking outside the subject, where allowed, supports the "malicious" aspects of forensic rhetoric, insofar as dicasts, who have a lesser attachment to the results of a trial than assembly members have in the results of a vote on legislation, might get more involved in the theatrics of condemning an implausibly accused but unpopular defendant than in the process of carefully evaluating the facts of a case.

As for persuading others of what is contemptible, the category speaks to the intent, values, and commitments of the speaker, not to the relationship between the speaker and the audience. Aristotle introduces the concept and its condemnation parenthetically, in the context of a claim that rhetoric and dialectic argument have a fundamental similarity: "Also, one should have the capacity to persuade of opposites, just like one also does with syllogisms, not in order

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[17] Walzer, "Aristotle on Speaking 'Outside the Subject'", in Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer, eds., *Rereading Aristotle's* Rhetoric (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 40-41.

for us to do both (for one should not persuade of what is contemptible) but so that whatever is at hand may not slip past us, and so that, should someone make use of arguments that are unjust, we have the means of counteracting them [the arguments]."[18] The parallel with syllogistic arguments makes the claim clear. Given sufficiently different plausible premises, one can reason to opposite conclusions. For most audiences, some means of persuasion exist for a similar process, as when competing speakers defend the claims that, on the one hand, taxation is too low to cover popular or necessary public expenses and, on the other hand, taxation is high enough or even excessive. A strategic rhetorician will try to identify *all* of the plausible persuasive appeals, including for positions they reject; these include appeals that a particular rhetorician could not even credibly make, but that an opponent might.

Many readers of the *Rhetoric* have seen its opening chapter as particularly high-minded or even moralizing compared to the rest of Book I, let alone Book II.[19] Nonetheless, the concerns Aristotle expresses here are more serious if speakers have *less* control of their interactions with audiences, and the tone of I.1 should not be taken to imply an overriding concern with manipulation. Speaking outside the subject can only effectively persuade audiences if the audiences work under rules that permit irrelevant appeals. Aristotle mentions laws governing forums in many cities, including Athens' Areopagus, that prohibit some or all such appeals; courts today have strict rules governing relevance, and similar rules were not unknown in the ancient Mediterranean. Similarly, if there exist potential persuasive appeals for positions that a

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[18] ἔτι δὲ τἀναντία δεῖ δύνασθαι πείθειν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συλλογισμοῖς, οὐχ ὅπως ἀμφότερα πράττωμεν （οὐ γὰρ δεῖ τὰ φαῦλα πείθειν）, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα μὴ λανθάνῃ πῶς ἔχει, καὶ ὅπως ἄλλου χρωμένου τοῖς λόγοις μὴ δικαίως αὐτοὶ λύειν ἔχωμεν. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.1 1354b. Perseus.
[19] Walzer, "Aristotle on Speaking 'Outside the Subject'", 39.

speaker finds reprehensible, this suggests that no speaker can unilaterally ensure that their own position wins out. Speakers depend on audience and context.

3. Manipulation in the Contemporary *Rhetoric* Scholarship

The evidence for reading the *Rhetoric* as a resource for an audience-centered political theory of rhetoric, and therefore separately from modern concerns about manipulation, has received little attention in contemporary political theory literature. Instead, most writers have taken the *Rhetoric* as a resource for answering precisely concerns about manipulation, along one of three broad and occasionally overlapping currents: deliberative, ethical, and elitist.

Deliberative Readings: Avoiding Manipulation

First, scholars who share a broad commitment to deliberative democracy, and therefore worry that at least some rhetorical appeals threaten the project of rational intersubjective deliberation, have looked to Aristotle's work as a resource for distinguishing between rhetorical appeals that support deliberation and those that undermine it. In a sympathetic review of this project, Bryan Garsten argues for two theses that helpfully sketch its tendency: "(a) that recent efforts to integrate rhetoric into theories of deliberative democracy depend for their coherence on finding a clearer conception than we currently have of how rhetoric can influence judgments without compromising their freedom, and (b) that the extra attention Aristotelian rhetoric has received is valuable even when considering the unique challenges posed by modern

conditions."[20] Here, the generally egalitarian concern for deliberation, where the freedom of individual subjects is central, meets the use of Aristotelian thought to protect that freedom to reason. Elsewhere, Garsten has argued for Aristotelian rhetoric "as a constitutive part of deliberation" that invites individuals to direct their capacity for judgment on questions of public interest.[21] While the fear of demagogy shoots through Garsten's thoughtful and often provocative work, Simone Chambers has theorized that fear especially clearly by distinguishing between what she calls "deliberative rhetoric" and "plebiscitary rhetoric".[22] Chambers offers an account of deliberative rhetoric as a rhetoric that "creates a dynamic relationship between speaker and hearer", similarly to Garsten, and describes the plebiscitary alternative as "concerned first and foremost with gaining support for a proposition and only secondarily with the merits of the arguments or persuasion for that matter."[23] While demagoguery is a subset of plebiscitary rhetoric, Chambers fears that the broader category damages democratic societies insofar as it arouses and mobilizes existing views rather than persuading people to actively deliberate on specific questions.

Ethical Readings: Discarding Manipulation

A second approach to reading the *Rhetoric* has avoided the (rather fraught) question of

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[20] Garsten, "The Rhetoric Revival in Political Theory", *Annual Review of Political Science* 14 (2009), 160. Cf. Simone Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?", *Political Theory* Vol.37, No.3 (2009), 323-350; Bernard Yack, "Rhetoric and Public Reasoning: An Aristotelian Understanding of Political Deliberation", *Political Theory* Vol. 34, No. 4, 417-438; Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Steven Gormley, "Deliberation, unjust exclusion, and the rhetorical turn", *Contemporary Political Theory* Vol. 18, No. 2 (2019), 202-226.
[21] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, 174.
[22] Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere", 324-325.
[23] Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere", 336-337.

whether Aristotle can fairly be read as sharing a commitment to egalitarian deliberative projects, in favor of reading the *Rhetoric* as subtly pushing rhetoric into some kind of ethical framework. The primary treatment of this reading is Eugene Garver's book-length examination of the *Rhetoric* as an exploration of practical reason.[24] Garver, the only author to my knowledge to extensively develop the concept of "available means of persuasion", takes the view that for Aristotle, "rhetorical argument differs from argument in general in that rhetorical argument is essentially ethical".[25] Garver claims that cultivating the art of rhetoric, centered on making arguments including credible arguments about one's character, will tend to have the effect of producing improved moral character. Moreover, since (on Garver's reading) the rhetorician will try to identify available *argumentative* means of persuasion, while sophists focus on gaining and expanding a bag of tricks that only accidentally draw on rhetoricians' insights, rhetoricians develop a capacity that sophists only try to parasitize.

Garver justifies this reading by introducing a concept from elsewhere in Aristotle's work: a distinction between external ends, which are the things an art produces that anyone would recognize as useful or valuable (in this case persuasion), and internal or guiding ends, which are things that one recognizes as valuable because of one's training in the art.[26] For Garver, the external end of rhetoric is influencing someone's behavior; the internal end is identifying available means of persuasion, and, crucially, having identified these is a successful practice of

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[24] Garver, *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
[25] Garver, *Aristotle's Rhetoric*,
[26] Garver, *Aristotle's Rhetoric*, 28-29.

rhetoric, regardless if one actually deploys them.[27] While Garver's treatment of rhetoric differs from the deliberative theorists above, his understanding of sophists resembles Chambers' concept of plescibitary rhetoric to a surprising degree: both Garver and Chambers find fault with speakers who are concerned with "winning" and influencing behavior to the detriment of identifying and making good arguments or treating audience members as ends rather than means, respectively. Thus, for Garver, rhetoricians see manipulation as beneath themselves, and Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric invites people who might otherwise seek the quickest way to win to instead develop characteristics that support rhetorical excellence.

Elite Readings: Using Manipulation

A third group of political theorists, rejecting the idea that rhetoric could be anything *but* manipulation, have read the *Rhetoric* as a project for identifying and enabling acts of what Daniel DiLeo has recently called "benign manipulation".[28] If the first group are deliberative theorists of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the second are ethical theorists, we might describe this group as elite theorists. For many of the elite theorists, Aristotle was writing primarily to instruct his students in how to use the tools of politics in flawed cities, either for the purpose of self-

[27] By way of analogy, seeing the best moves, avoiding blunders, and accurately analyzing positions are constitutive of being a chess master. If a master-level player chooses not to play the best moves when teaching a child, or loses or draws games against players of similar or greater skill, we would not think that these events make them a bad chess player.

[28] DiLeo, "Aristotle's Manipulative Maxims", *The Review of Politics* Vol. 82 (2020), 392. Cf. Dirk Jörke, "Rhetoric as Deliberation or Manipulation? About Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and its Misuse in Recent Literature", *Redescriptions* Vol. 17, No.1 (2014), 68-85; Edward W. Clayton, "The Audience for Aristotle's *Rhetoric*", *Rhetorica* Vol.22, No.2 (2004), 183-203; Carnes Lord, "The Intention of Aristotle's 'Rhetoric'", *Hermes*, Vol.109, No.3 (1981), 326-339; Tina Rupcic, "Founding Speech: Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as Political Philosophy" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2017). A somewhat different argument that Aristotle views rhetoric as both manipulative and amoral can be found in Gary Remer, "Rhetoric, Emotional Manipulation, and Political Morality: The Modern Relevance of Cicero *vis-a`-vis* Aristotle", *Rhetorica*, Vol. 31, No.4 (2013), 402-443.

preservation or in order to impose good laws on flawed people. Scholars adopting this approach tend to describe some, usually substantial, overlap in Aristotle's and Plato's philosophical commitments, but a sharp break on the political value of rhetoric. Nearly all of these scholars take more or less for granted Plato's apparent rejection of rhetoric on grounds of manipulativeness or a monologic mode of discourse, and see Aristotle as offering a very different model.[29]

The specifics of the elitist model vary; for some, it is a specifically political model, in which rhetoric is a useful tool for "statesmen" inducing the masses (or, for that matter, selfish oligarchs) to follow the prescriptions of those with a superior understanding of the political.[30] For others, Aristotle is providing a model for philosophers and *politikoi* to act almost like public intellectuals, offering provocative and instructive appeals that shape deliberation and discourse while creating space for their fellow citizens to think with them.[31] Mary Nichols has offered a reading of Aristotelian rhetoric that is notably directed toward mutual and collective improvement, if nonetheless critical of early deliberativist treatments of rhetoric and insistent on the supremacy of political knowledge over rhetorical strategy.[32] All of the elite theorists, however, tend to emphasize two key points. First, like the deliberative theorists of rhetoric and unlike the ethical theorists, they see Aristotle's view of rhetoric as fundamentally critical of and

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[29] A notable exception is C.D.C. Reeve, who argues (primarily with reference to the *Phaedrus*) that Aristotle's rhetorical theory extends a philosophical project that Aristotle and Plato largely shared. Reeve, "Introduction", in C.D.C. Reeve, tr., *Rhetoric*, lxxxiii-lxxxvii. Lord, "The Intention of Aristotle's 'Rhetoric'", is more typical of the scholarly approach I'm discussing: for Lord, Aristotle and Plato share similar philosophical commitments, but Aristotle is more committed to seeing these philosophical commitments publicly disseminated.
[30] Cf. Lord, "The Intention of Aristotle's 'Rhetoric'", 337-339; DiLeo, "Aristotle's Manipulative Maxims", 390.
[31] C.D.C. Reeve, "Philosophy, Politics, and Rhetoric in Aristotle", in *Essays on Aristotle's* Rhetoric, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 191-205.
[32] Mary P. Nichols, "Aristotle's Defense of Rhetoric", *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 49, No. 3 (1987), 657-677.

responsive to Plato's; second, unlike either, they take Aristotle's theory of rhetoric to have been intended as a tool for those with a superior knowledge of the political to disseminate their knowledge and prudence among their less-informed fellow citizens.

Each of these projects – deliberative, ethical, and elite – offers intriguing and useful textual resources, and we have much to learn from many of the works cited above. Deliberativist readings of Aristotle have enriched thinking about democratic deliberation, especially in response to overly rationalist and exclusionary models of what deliberation should look like.[33] Ethical readings of Aristotle, particularly Garver's, offer depth to a history of practical reason, while elitist readings helpfully emphasize the connection between Aristotle's thinking about the rhetorical and the political. Nonetheless, I offer two claims about the contemporary pattern of centering manipulation in readings of the *Rhetoric*. First, there is very little evidence for reading manipulation, not only as a central concern for Aristotle, but as a central concept in his theory of rhetoric; to do so, one needs to either define manipulation in unacceptably broad terms, or to assign anachronistic concerns and concepts to the text. Second, the concern with manipulation, by emphasizing individual speakers and their behavior over context, elides a crucial connection between the *Rhetoric* and Aristotle's other work – that of the regimes that shape both speakers and audiences. I will develop these claims in the next two sections, while the following chapters will help explain how manipulation became central in scholarly treatments of the *Rhetoric* and, indeed, of rhetoric as such.

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[33] This project ultimately draws far more on radical democratic and agonist approaches to democratic theory than to deliberative approaches. Nonetheless, Chambers' "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere" and Gormley's "Deliberation, unjust exclusion, and the rhetorical turn" have been especially valuable in clarifying my understanding of rhetoric in the context of mass politics, while Garsten's *Saving Persuasion* was particularly generative for framing this project.

4. Defining Manipulation

To make manipulation (as contemporary political theorists understand it) a central concept of the *Rhetoric,* we would need a definition of manipulation that meets several criteria. First, it has to describe a relationship of power, inhabited by speakers and audiences, in which speakers possess the capability to alter audiences' behavior without similarly finding their own behavior shaped by the audience. This criterion captures the intuition that manipulation is at least primarily one-way, which drives the concern about manipulation involving the domination or corruption of audience members' choices. Second, this power relationship has to differ from the interactions involved in what Aristotle understood as *dialektikē* – shared philosophical inquiry, to which he provocatively claimed rhetoric is a "counterpart" – so that there is, indeed, a problematic concept *internal* to rhetoric for Aristotle to have had an opinion about. (We might, for analytical reasons, also want "manipulative rhetoric" to be a *subset* of rhetoric, so that the adjective modifies the noun instead of being redundant.) Third, we need examples of Aristotle having something to say about this relationship; the evidence that manipulation is a central or even important concept in the *Rhetoric* will strengthen in proportion to the role that Aristotle's opinions about it permeate the text.

DiLeo's definition of "manipulative rhetoric" provides an illustrative starting point for thinking through these definitional problems. For DiLeo, any "speech that obtains assent to a choice without threat or bargaining but through claims or argument unrelated to those by which the speaker arrived at that choice" qualifies as manipulative.[34] There are several striking

[34] DiLeo, "Aristotle's Manipulative Maxims", 379.

elements to this definition. To begin with, the listener has almost entirely disappeared from the definition, leaving only a speaker, the speaker's beliefs and justifications, and the "claims or argument" included in what the speaker says. The person from whom assent is obtained not only has nothing to contribute, but apparently offers nothing relevant to how a speaker chooses manipulative claims. Instead, manipulation happens in DiLeo's account when a speaker chooses the maxims that will push passive listeners to follow a wiser (or, in less benign cases, more foolish) policy than they otherwise would have chosen. Examining cases of alleged manipulation in a more contemporary context will help us understand why we should reject ascribing manipulation a central place in Aristotle's thought.

Case 1: Appealing to Unshared Principles

Consider a nonreligious person defending egalitarian and redistributive social policies in front of an audience composed largely of Christians, who chooses to ground their appeals in references to doing good to the least of Christ's brethren, loving one's neighbor, and similar concepts out of the Christian bible. At least some of these appeals must certainly count as manipulative for DiLeo on the basis that they involve "unrelated" arguments. A person who does not believe in the Last Judgment would never find the best or decisive reason for feeding the hungry in a parable suggesting that those who do so will be admitted to heaven at that time; a person who has no faith in the Christian god will not be swayed by being informed that loving one's neighbor is a duty second only to loving that deity. But defining the choice to appeal to the beliefs of audience members, rather than imposing one's own beliefs as authoritative, as necessarily manipulative seems extreme. We can find considerable room for an ethos of humility or respect in an attempt to connect one's own commitments, values, and intentions to those of audience members, even if there is also room for an attempt to cynically appeal to beliefs that the

speaker considers otherwise useless. When Bryan Garsten points to moments in John Rawls' late work that endorse arguing from audience members' beliefs as "a sympathetic portrayal of rhetorical argument", he makes exactly this point: even if Garsten sees manipulation as a central problem of rhetoric and I do not, we share the intuition that basing arguments and appeals on audience members' prior beliefs has no fundamentally manipulative element.[35] It is unclear whether Chambers would see this type of appeal as "plebiscitary" or "deliberative", since one could describe such appeals both as speech deployed "strategically for the purposes of winning" *and* as speech that "engages citizens' practical judgment and as such treats its audience as autonomous deliberators deserving of respect".[36] Nonetheless, a definition of manipulation including a speaker's choice to make arguments provisionally based on beliefs that the speaker does not share seems to fail condition 1 – it doesn't necessarily, or perhaps at all, involve a one-way power relationship.

Case 2: Appealing to Contemptible Attitudes

Very well, one might say, but that is an example of *arguments*. Surely maxims, statements of principle, and other appeals that tug at audience members' affective commitments, disrupt their judgment, and bypass rational deliberation count as manipulation. Let's take a case that seems particularly pressing in contemporary politics, and will recur elsewhere in the dissertation. Ethnonationalist political appeals that demonize immigrants and people of color have, for some far-right politicians, proven all too effective in mobilizing white voters' racial resentment in

[35] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, 187.
[36] Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere", 337.

support of policies that steal tremendous wealth from the working class, demolish an education system that was already none too strong, and at present, actively assist the spread of a deadly pandemic.[37] The number of Americans who recently voted for such politicians *and* are materially better off now than they were four years ago cannot be more than a small fraction of the number who did, in fact, vote for Donald Trump in 2016 and for far-right local politicians, state legislators, governors, or members of Congress then and since. Even in 2020, when Trump's reelection campaign was defeated, a large minority of voters (a higher percentage than in 2016, and a much higher absolute number of voters) either found these vicious and hateful appeals attractive enough to override whatever practical drawbacks they experienced from far-right rule, or at least did not find that these appeals overly detracted from whatever benefits far-right rule grants to them. Isn't the frequency with which white voters vote "against their own interest" evidence that racist, ethnonationalist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic appeals have successfully manipulated them?

Well, no, I don't think so. For the moment, I will leave to the side the fraught and objectionable concept of people voting "against their own interests". We can pick it up again in Chapters 4 and 5, once we have moved into the contemporary case of radical political and social plurality, and once I have assembled an appropriate theoretical framework for it. For now, I will

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[37] We should not forget the use of misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic appeals for the same purposes, but it appears that racial resentment, empirically speaking, is especially significant in support for far-right politics. See, for example, Alan Abramowitz and Jennifer McCoy, "United States: Racial Resentment, Negative Partisanship, and Polarization in Trump's America", *The Annals of the American Academy* 681 (January 2019), 137-156. Katherine Cramer has argued for a broader "politics of resentment" driving far-right mobilization and negative partisanship, but this can often operate in parallel with racial resentment specifically. Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

only argue that the relevant appeals do not count as manipulation in any politically relevant sense. Instead, when far-right politicians make hateful appeals, an Aristotelian framework captures such appeals in a *non*-manipulative frame: these appeals attempt to establish the good character of the speaker, and as such, are appeals to ethos.

Here, I am thinking of a compelling point that journalists such as Adam Serwer and Zack Beauchamp have recently made.[38] The cruelty of white supremacist appeals and violence not only builds community among some whites, but also confirms that the speaker making those appeals (or the leader taking credit for violence) is a trustworthy member of the white supremacist community. Beauchamp quotes a Trump supporter, personally harmed by interruptions in federal spending caused by a 2019 budget showdown over Trump's promised border wall, expressing her frustrations in particularly telling terms: "I voted for him, and he's the one who's doing this …I thought he was going to do good things. He's not hurting the people he needs to be hurting."[39] For this disappointed voter, the state's power to coerce and destroy has a rightful target – the racialized enemy – and a political candidate's expressions of hatred and anger toward that enemy seemed to demonstrate that the candidate had the character and commitments to correctly wield state power. With this voter finding badly-needed paychecks held up by a bumbling attempt to force Congress to fund the wall, she felt betrayed because the state was hurting her instead of the people she expected to be targeted.

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[38] Adam Serwer, "The Cruelty is the Point", *The Atlantic*, October 3, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/the-cruelty-is-the-point/572104/; Zack Beauchamp, "A Trump voter hurt by the shutdown reveals the real reason the president attracts hardcore supporters.", *Vox*, January 8, 2019, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/1/8/18173678/trump-shutdown-voter-florida.
[39] Beauchamp, "A Trump voter".

We might struggle to empathize with unhappy white supremacist voters, and the idea that anyone would see white supremacist appeals as evidence of a candidate's trustworthy ethos may shock the conscience. But where is the manipulation in this series of appeals? A speaker who genuinely shares an audience's affective experiences and commitments and offers evidence of this is providing useful information to them. If that speaker, when given power, acts in accordance with these commitments and *also* acts in ways that harm audience members, this is less a case of betrayal or manipulation than of tradeoffs. Some portion of the electoral audience is willing to vote for a far-right racist candidate whose economic or public health policies harm them; after this harm becomes apparent, it seems that some part of this audience remains willing to accept policy drawbacks in some areas in order to indulge their racism in others.

Case 1: Appealing to Unshared Principles

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audience members, even if there is also room for an attempt to cynically appeal to beliefs that the speaker considers otherwise useless. When Bryan Garsten points to moments in John Rawls' late work that endorse arguing from audience members' beliefs as "a sympathetic portrayal of rhetorical argument", he makes exactly this point: even if Garsten sees manipulation as a central problem of rhetoric and I do not, we share the intuition that basing arguments and appeals on audience members' prior beliefs has no fundamentally manipulative element.[40] It is unclear whether Chambers would see this type of appeal as "plebiscitary" or "deliberative", since one could describe such appeals both as speech deployed "strategically for the purposes of winning" *and* as speech that "engages citizens' practical judgment and as such treats its audience as autonomous deliberators deserving of respect".[41] Nonetheless, a definition of manipulation including a speaker's choice to make arguments provisionally based on beliefs that the speaker does not share seems to fail condition 1 – it doesn't necessarily, or perhaps at all, involve a one-way power relationship.

Case 3: Appealing to *Unshared* Contemptible Attitudes

We might think, then, that the strongest case for viewing racist appeals as a case of manipulation lies not in cases where an openly white supremacist and hateful candidate is mobilizing audience members' racial resentment, but in what Ian Haney-López has called "strategic racism": cases where candidates, even ones who may have been "relatively moderate

[40] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, 187.
[41] Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere", 337.

on racial issues", "intentionally sought to manipulate race as a means of getting elected".[42] If, as Haney-López has argued, this type of racial appeal succeeds in getting voters to support policies that hurt the vast majority of Americans but *especially* harm communities of color, to the benefit of a small and wealthy minority, then perhaps we could go from this example to a more coherent sense of "manipulation". We might locate the power relationship in the speaker's ability a) to recognize a characteristic of the audience that enables specific claims about trustworthiness, b) to make those claims in a misleading but persuasive way, and c) if and when these appeals succeed and result in the speaker's election to office, to govern with an agenda that may not have much to do with the crucial appeals. The rise of what social scientists variously call "implicit racial appeals", "coded racial appeals", and simply "dogwhistles" adds an important contextual element, enabling speakers to simultaneously make racist appeals and deny having done so.[43] It then follows that in the case of racist appeals, some speakers can rhetorically convey an appearance of ethical community within a white supremacist society, thereby strengthening their claims to represent a plurality of voters and gaining an alleged mandate to carry out their (largely unrelated) policy agenda.

This ugly example, however, opens a whole range of troubling theoretical consequences.

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[42] Ian Haney-López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How coded racial appeals have reinvented racism and wrecked the middle class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 35.

[43] There is now an extensive literature on strategic racism, racial appeals, and the political consequences thereof. For examples that I have found particularly helpful or provocative, along with Haney- López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, see: Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Robert E. Goodin and Michael Saward, "Dog Whistles and Democratic Mandates", *The Political Quarterly* Vol. 76, No. 4 (2005), 471-476; Jennifer M. Saul, "Racial Figleaves, the Shifting Boundaries of the Permissible, and the Rise of Donald Trump", *Philosophical Topics* Vol. 45, No. 2 (2017), 97-116; Jennifer M. Saul, "Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language", in Daniel Fogal, Daniel W. Harris, and Matt Moss, eds., *New Work on Speech Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

First, we have arrived at a concept of manipulation that satisfies our first and second criteria at the cost of making the third criterion unachievable. That is, the case of politicians using racist appeals to gain the trust of voters and enact policies of which those voters would likely otherwise disapprove seems to involve an asymmetrical power relationship and to rely on methods that differ from Aristotelian dialectical inquiry (and do not comprise the totality of rhetorical argument), but it is nearly impossible to situate such a case within a significant portion of Aristotle's intellectual and political project. This will become increasingly clear in the following sections, when we examine what Aristotle means by a regime and what work a regime does for rhetorical and political actors. For now, I will point out that the relevancy problem – that a politician can develop an ethos that is good for winning elections, then enact a policy agenda that has little to do with the election-winning appeals – depends on a framework of elective representation that one struggles to find anywhere in Aristotle's political thought.[44] In an assembly that itself decides on questions of policy, an attempt to develop trust on an irrelevant point, then sway the assembly to follow the speaker against the assembly members' better judgment, has far less traction. This would quite literally involve "speaking outside the subject", and as we have seen in Section 2, Aristotle sees this tactic as largely inapplicable to deliberative assemblies.

As a way of engaging practical and contemporary politics, manipulation of this kind also

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[44] The exception proves the rule. Steven Skultety's defense of competitive and elective institutions in "the best city" in Aristotle's thought rests on an idealized set of conditions in which virtuous citizens with exceptional political gifts compete for the trust of similarly-virtuous, but less politically gifted, citizens in deeply benign elections. Even if we grant Aristotle's "best city" as an unproblematic statement of Aristotle's political commitments *and* agree with Skultety's interpretation of that city, I think we would struggle to identify such a set of conditions anywhere in either Aristotle's political context or our own. Steven C. Skultety, "Competition in the Best of Cities: Agonism and Aristotle's 'Politics'", *Political Theory* Vol. 37, No. 1 (2009), 44-68.

leads to counterintuitive results. As manipulation, the dogwhistle exists at least somewhat in tension with the bad character of the speaker; to the extent that a speaker's racism is most personally felt and most vicious, the speaker's racist appeals are least manipulative. This resembles, yet goes beyond, the pattern of "hyper-sincerity" that Elizabeth Markovits has criticized.[45] Markovits argues that "deliberative theory as it currently stands gives us no satisfactory way to critique hyper-sincerity" and attempts to recover resources of irony, humor, and creativity from the works of Plato and Hannah Arendt and assimilate those resources into a broader and more inclusive deliberative approach. For Markovits, the problem of hyper-sincerity rests in a democratic tendency to emphasize openness, transparency, and frankness – exacerbated, perhaps, by some trends in deliberative democratic theory – that provides an impulse toward overly simplistic and often divisive rhetorical appeals. This analysis therefore focuses on how hyper-sincerity becomes a rhetorical trope and, as a result, crowds out more precise, nuanced, and thoughtful appeals; this focus continued in a more recent critique of Donald Trump's rhetorical techniques.[46] I want to draw out a different implication. It is not only that a focus on sincerity can go too far; in a comparison between two candidates who benefit from appeals to racial resentment, a personally hateful bigot and an urbane dog-whistler, the more sincere and therefore less manipulative candidate is clearly the bigot. Treating manipulation as *the*, or even *a*, central problem when we theorize rhetoric can therefore mislead

[45] Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).
[46] Markovits, "Trump 'tells it like it is.' That's not necessarily a good thing for democracy.", *Monkey Cage*, March 4, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/04/trump-tells-it-like-it-is-thats-not-necessarily-a-good-thing-for-democracy/.

when we try to apply theory to practical political problems.

Finally, and most importantly, when we describe dogwhistles and other covert or coded appeals as "manipulation" when they increase support for a politician whose policies might otherwise be unattractive, we risk emphasizing atomized interactions at the cost of recognizing the broader social, historical, and institutional conditions that give those interactions shape. I have already gestured toward this point above, insofar as the electoral system and federal representation in the United States both enable "manipulative" bait-and-switch techniques in which an elected official can successfully make representative claims on some constituents while simultaneously enacting policies of which a majority disapprove. White supremacy and high levels of racial resentment among white voters are not timeless facts, but the product of ongoing social and historical processes. Aside from late-night tweets – admittedly, a significant and disturbing exception – the crafting of political appeals most often involves extensive planning and consideration from a whole corps of public relations specialists. *Including* late-night tweets and the most wayward of hot-mic rambling, all political appeals depend on the attention, either outraged or gleeful repetition, and amplification provided by complicit mass media and some of the more engaged listeners. To depict a single politician, isolated from the institutions, collaborators, and audiences that enable them, as a titanic puppet master or terrible clown obscures precisely the elements responsible for making the politician *seem* larger than life.

The case of racist appeals, cynically offered to persuade listeners with racist attitudes that a candidate is trustworthy so that the candidate, in power, can advance an economic agenda that these listeners might not otherwise support, may be the closest thing to manipulation that we can observe in contemporary political rhetoric, although in Chapter 5, I will argue that it still does not count. Nonetheless, it doesn't meet the first condition. Even if we ignore the wide array of

individual and collective support on which they depend, speakers who adopt this strategy shift their own positions, sometimes with self-destructive consequences, to more effectively appeal to audience members. It *may* fit the second condition, insofar as there are kinds of speech aimed at persuading or changing a listener's opinion on a given subject, other kinds of speech that attempt to persuade a listener to overlook that subject in favor of other considerations, and the appeal to character tends more towards the latter. But this only shows that character-based appeals that persuade in spite of possible policy differences are a subset of the broader category of persuasive practices. I, at least, hesitate to claim that *all* such appeals manipulate. Preferring a politician that one views as trustworthy is, all else equal, a reasonable position, and making claims about one's trustworthiness therefore seems a valid form of persuasion. Finally, the case of racist appeals fails to meet the third condition: to effectually persuade audiences, speakers rely on a political mechanism that we cannot reasonably locate within Aristotle's thought. This is because Aristotle had a fairly specific concept of how persuasion interacted with broader political conditions, centered on the regime (*politeia*), and the kind of contested and overdetermined social formations we see at play in this case. A further analysis of this kind of political contestation will occur in Chapter 4, through the concept of hegemony; for now, I will develop the regime as a political unit in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric.

5. From Forum to Regime

About halfway through Book I of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle claims that that a knowledge of regimes (*politeiai*) is "the greatest and most authoritative" (*megiston kai kuriōtaton*) of all the

things that enable persuasion.[47] There is much to think through in this claim, and in the following argument, and we will return to it shortly. For now, I will simply use it to illustrate the thesis of this section of the chapter. For Aristotle, regimes are *productive*: they produce citizens whose values, perceived interests, and conceptions of a good life are consistent with the regime that produced them, and therefore to reproduce a polis that fits relatively well with the previously existing regime. It follows that the means of persuasion that are available in a democracy necessarily differ from those available in an oligarchy. Speakers do well to develop an accurate and detailed understanding of the regime governing any city in which they would like to speak persuasively; without doing so, they fail to understand important characteristics of their audiences. While rhetoric today plays a crucial productive role with respect to constructing solidarities and even new publics in audiences, as I will argue in Chapters 3 and 4, Aristotle and most other classical political theorists tended to take that productive role largely as given by regime, and therefore not usually a function relevant to rhetorical contestation.[48] While classical rhetorical theory has a category for rhetoric that reproduces audiences appropriate to a given regime – Aristotle calls it epideictic rhetoric, the rhetoric of collective praise and blame – this actually demonstrates the central role of the regime in producing "good" citizens. After all, an epideictic rhetoric that praised values antithetical to those of the polis in which the speech took place – imagine Pericles soberly explaining that the Athenians needed to ban silver money and the theater and cultivate blunt and unconsidered laconic virtue – would not be revolutionary. It

[47] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.8.1 1365b. Perseus.
[48] The exception, for Aristotle, was when faulty (*hēmartēmenai*, *Politics* 1279a20) regimes degenerate to the point of provoking revolution (*stasis*). *Politics* V.1302a24-30.

would just be a failure.

Forums, Ostracism, and Where They Come From

Two promising, if not fully developed, points in the *Rhetoric* literature support this reading of the Aristotelian regime. Each of these largely sidesteps manipulation in favor of examining the political relationships interacting with rhetoric in Aristotle's thought. First, Arthur Walzer's treatment of "speaking outside the subject", which I turned to briefly in the second section of the chapter, uses the idea of a forum in which speech takes place to develop what it means to speak to or outside the relevant subject. Walzer begins with forum as a generic category: the context of a court or a deliberative assembly or a public event, entailing the distinction between forensic, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric, respectively. This grounds a practical and substantive distinction between classes of rhetoric, as theorizing an art of rhetoric involves tailoring technique and types of appeal to the kind of forum involved. Walzer further turns to the details of the forum in a particular community: rules of evidence, regulations on subject matter and techniques, and the objectives and concerns that are characteristic of a given public space. These kinds of details connect the rather abstracted theoretical concept of a forum to the more specific concept of a governing regime. Walzer does not explore this in detail, and turns too readily to the idea of *politike* (political knowledge), rather than *politeia* (regime), as a regulator of rhetoric, which otherwise might run amok. Nonetheless, the idea of forum as producing "the character of a particular audience" is worth thinking through in more detail.[49]

While it does not extensively develop the relationship between speakers and context in

[49] Walzer, "Aristotle on 'Speaking Outside the Subject'", 51.

the way that Walzer's forum does, Ethan Stoneman's argument for rhetoric's role in the process of ostracism gestures toward the role of rhetoric within a regime.[50] Stoneman reads the *Rhetoric* together with the *Poetics* to set up the rhetoric of ostracism as a kind of "tragic catharsis" that simultaneously reinforces the bonds between citizens, protects against potential tyrants, and limits the harshness of elite conflict.[51] As a result, rhetoric, via ostracism, acquires a "capacity to clarify, and thereby affirm, the grounds for political inclusion (and exclusion)."[52] Like Walzer, and like the elite theorists, Stoneman takes Aristotle's statements that rhetoric is an "offshoot" of politics to indicate that the study and employment of persuasive speech ought to be subservient to the study and understanding of the *polis*.[53] But because Stoneman adopts a "relativistic interpretation of Aristotle's theory of constitutions", on which no possible regime has a sufficiently strong claim to justice to justify destabilizing and transforming a present regime, he rejects the elite theorists' view of rhetoric as a tool for political reformation.[54] Instead, rhetoric figures as a stabilizing and preserving force that replicates and reproduces the regime's founding principles.

I would like to emphasize and extend a specific concept from these two articles. Each treats rhetoric as responsive to the regime's *productive* role: for Walzer, the regime produces the

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[50] Stoneman, "The Available Means of Preservation: Aristotelian Rhetoric, Ostracism, and Political Catharsis", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol.43, No.2 (2013), 134-154.
[51] Stoneman, "The Available Means of Preservation", 147-148.
[52] Stoneman, "The Available Means of Preservation", 136.
[53] Stoneman, "The Available Means of Preservation",
[54] Stoneman, "The Available Means of Preservation", 140-141. Cf. Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Corruption and Justice: The View from Ancient Athens", in William C. Heffernan and John Kleinig, eds., *Private and Public Corruption* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 25-51; Saxonhouse, "Aristotle on the corruption of regimes: Resentment and justice", in Thornton Lockwood and Thanassis Samaras, *Aristotle's* Politics: *A Critical Guide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 184-203.

fora in which rhetoric takes place, and for Stoneman, the regime produces a conception of citizenship (and, by contrast, a conception of a "first citizen" who might be on the way to tyrannical aspirations) that rhetoric reinforces and reproduces. Each article, however, leaves undertheorized the intuition that regimes would have a productive role. I argue that regimes play a decisive role in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric because they produce the audiences to which speakers appeal. A democratic regime not only produces democratic audiences, but shapes more specific aspects of the audiences based on the nuance and texture of the regime prevalent in a given polis. The residents of an oligarchy owe their predispositions, biases, and values largely to the specific oligarchy in which they were raised, and it follows that attempting to speak across the boundaries of separate regimes carries a broad range of challenges.

We find the primary textual evidence for this interpretation about halfway through Book I, where Aristotle identifies a knowledge of regimes (*politeiai*) as "the greatest and most authoritative" (*megiston kai kuriōtaton*) of all the things that enable persuasion.[55] The relationship between regime and persuasion follows:

"One should not, then, leave unnoticed the telos of each regime (*politeias*), for that which approaches toward the end is chosen. The telos of democracy is freedom; of oligarchy, wealth; of aristocracy, things related to education and legal usage (*nomima*); of tyranny, self-protection. It is clear, in fact, that one should distinguish the characters (*ēthē*), legal usages, and things held to be profitable according to each telos, if indeed choices are made with reference to this. Since proofs (*pisteis*) are not only generated from logical demonstration, however, but also through the

[55] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.8.1 1365b. Perseus.

demonstration of character (because we rely on a speaker on account of his appearing to be a certain way, such as if he appears to be good or well-intentioned (*eunous*) or both) we should also have available the characters of each regime. For the character (*ethos*) that is most persuasive is necessarily that which corresponds to each."[56]

The first sentences here ride on a characteristically Aristotelian psychological premise: we choose things because we think (at some level) that those things are good for us. When we choose things *collectively* through deliberation, we do so on the basis of a shared sense of how those things are good for us collectively.[57] While this sense is far from perfect, the ruling telos ("end") of a society, corresponding to the regime, defines both the shared sense of what is good and worth striving for *and* the people who get to make decisions in the *polis*, and these intellectual and institutional conditions will correspond. As a result, arguments about the common interest that appeal to the prevailing sense of the common interest will enjoy a tremendous advantage. Second, however, the regime produces specific conceptions of a good citizen, and appeals to ethos succeed when they demonstrate that the speaker properly models these conceptions. As a result, the bulk of Aristotelian persuasion happens within and responsive to the productive work that a given city's regime does. Speakers who want to understand their audiences must begin with the study of the political systems that produce those audiences.

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[56] τὸ δὴ τέλος ἑκάστης πολιτείας οὐ δεῖ λανθάνειν: αἱροῦνται γὰρ τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος. ἔστι δὲ δημοκρατίας μὲν τέλος ἐλευθερία, ὀλιγαρχίας δὲ πλοῦτος, ἀριστοκρατίας δὲ τὰ περὶ παιδείαν καὶ τὰ νόμιμα, τυραννίδος δὲ φυλακή. δῆλον οὖν ὅτι τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος ἑκάστης ἤθη καὶ νόμιμα καὶ συμφέροντα διαιρετέον, εἴπερ αἱροῦνται πρὸς τοῦτο ἐπαναφέροντες. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.8.1 1366a. Perseus.

[57] On this premise, see, for example, Eugene Garver, "The Contemporary Irrelevance of Aristotle's Practical Reason", in Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer, eds., *Rereading Aristotle's* Rhetoric (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 57-73.

Regimes and Their Missing Pieces: A Brief Turn to the *Politics*

We should note at this point two significant deviations from the more detailed treatment of regime that Aristotle offers in the *Politics*, which he cites at the end of this section of the *Rhetoric*. These omissions, combined with the citation to the *Politics*, suggest that it's worth briefly examining what the cited passages say, and then returning to the *Rhetoric* with that information clearly in mind. First, several regimes are outright missing. The "polity" (*politeia*, implying that this form of regime is closest to what Aristotle envisions as a natural political community) in which the many rule in the interests of the entire community does not appear at any point in the *Rhetoric*; while a benevolent monarchy, in which a godlike ruler provides for the needs of all, is name-checked along with the utterly corrupt tyranny, Aristotle also includes a "kingdom" (*basileia*), in which the monarch is subject to laws, and neither monarchy nor kingdom are assigned a constitutive telos in the above passage.[58] In other words, two out of the three regimes that Aristotle apparently endorses as "correct" (*orthos*) in the *Politics* are either entirely or substantially missing from the regimes that a competent rhetorician must understand in the *Rhetoric*.

Second, Aristotle presents the third of the "correct" regimes in a decisively distorted fashion, compared to the presentation in the *Politics*: the telos of aristocracy is not virtue, but that which approximates "education and legal usage". This is quite a step down. In the *Politics*, we can find nominal aristocracies that somewhat fall short, but nonetheless "choose officeholders, not only according to wealth, but also goodness" or, allegedly like Sparta, combine regard for

[58] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.8.1 1365b-1366a. Perseus.

virtue with regard for the people.[59] These nominal aristocracies involve a synthesis of either oligarchy or democracy, respectively, with a concern for public virtue that Aristotle considers constitutive of aristocratic regimes. The closest connection between aristocracy and the "education and legal usage" formulation that I can find in the *Politics* refers not to an overarching telos, but to a kind of personal aristocratic virtue: at the end of *Politics* III, Aristotle suggests "it is on account of the same kinds of things that a man might become excellent (*spoudaios*) and that one might set up an aristocratic or monarchical city, insofar as nearly the same education and character (*ēthē*) make a man excellent and make him citizen-like and kingly (*politikon kai basilikon*)."[60] But this suggestion does nothing to establish education and character as the telos of aristocracy, and the difference between "education and character" and "education and legal usage" is substantial: one at least gestures to virtue, while the other points to norms and expectations without specific reference to virtue and justice. Instead of aristocracy signifying the rule of the actually virtuous, the aristocracy of the *Rhetoric'*s treatment of regime points to the rule of those who appear virtuous by following laws and displaying the traits of a privileged upbringing.

Elite theorist Larry Arnhart notices the first omission in his book-length commentary on the *Rhetoric*, but misses the second.[61] As a result, he misinterprets the omission in a way that has influenced later examples of the elitist reading, on which the *Rhetoric* prescribes benign

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[59] ὅπου γὰρ μὴ μόνον πλουτίνδην ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀριστίνδην αἱροῦνται τὰς ἀρχάς. Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.1293b. Perseus.
[60] …διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀνήρ τε γίνεται σπουδαῖος καὶ πόλιν συστήσειεν ἄν τις ἀριστοκρατουμένην ἢ βασιλευομένην, ὥστ᾽ ἔσται καὶ παιδεία καὶ ἔθη ταὐτὰ σχεδὸν τὰ ποιοῦντα σπουδαῖον ἄνδρα καὶ τὰ ποιοῦντα πολιτικὸν καὶ βασιλικόν. Aristotle, *Politics*, III.1288a-1288b. Perseus.
[61] Arnhart, *Aristotle on Political Reasoning: A Commentary on the "Rhetoric"* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1981, 1986), 73-74.

manipulation. For Arnhart, the aristocracy of the *Rhetoric* and the nominal aristocracy of the *Politics* are the same regime, which one can find in political practice. It follows that Aristotle's omissions simply exclude those regimes which "rarely, if ever, exist in practice" and therefore are "inappropriate subjects for the *Rhetoric*, since the rhetorician can deal with political things only as they are known from the ordinary experience and common opinions of men."[62] On this reading, Aristotelian *politikē* fundamentally accesses philosophical truth in a way that Aristotelian *rhetorikē* does not, and as a result, Arnhart suggests that Aristotle envisions an "architectonic supremacy of politics over rhetoric".[63] The conclusion that the practitioners of *politikē* are therefore also the most capable rhetoricians, and therefore that rhetoric is the tool by which philosophers improve cities and push them toward aristocracy, follows naturally enough from Arnhart's position.[64]

The gap between the aristocracy here in the *Rhetoric* and the various real and nominal aristocracies in the *Politics*, however, reaches a bit too far for Arnhart's reading to cover. One could reasonably read the shift from virtue to apparent virtue or legality as a basis for aristocracy in terms of practicality, but the further move to the appearance of legality and upbringing involves a shift away from principle entirely. The aristocracy of the *Rhetoric* has, to put it simply, ossified into a formal system in which the "best" are merely the "good" families, and in which virtue does not appear in any particularly developed way. Instead of aristocracy taking the place of the best regime that could be shaping rhetoricians' appeals, and perhaps one that the best

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[62] Arnhart, *Aristotle on Political Reasoning*, 74.
[63] Arnhart, *Aristotle on Political Reasoning*, 75.
[64] Cf. Rupcic, "Founding Speech", 142-143; DiLeo, "Aristotle's Manipulative Maxims", 384-385, 390-392.

rhetoricians might try to guide a city toward, aristocracy takes its place among the regimes that fall short in all-too-predictable ways, in which a speaker will be well advised to understand and respond to the prevailing political conditions.[65]

We can draw a stronger connection between this summary and the more extensive treatment of regime in the *Politics*, then, through Arlene Saxonhouse's critical account of justice in the latter text. For Saxonhouse, Aristotle's treatment of justice in the *Politics* is not only aporetic, developing problems without solving them, but also reveals exclusion and resulting resentment at the core of every regime, even the apparently "correct" ones.[66] Saxonhouse, with Aristotle, emphasizes a fundamental ambiguity around the concept of justice: since people can simultaneously be equals in one respect and unequal in others, any distribution of political standing and access will result in someone resentfully believing that according to the dimension they consider applicable, the regime deprives them of their rightful position.[67] This difficulty applies both to aristocracies and oligarchies, and therefore disrupts any rigid distinction between "correct" and "falling-short" regimes; the suggestion that even a perfectly virtuous monarch would, by ruling, necessarily exclude the rest of the *polis* from truly sharing in a political community disrupts this distinction further.[68] The problem of exclusion applies even more to those whose exclusion is taken most for granted. In the context of ancient Athens, we would most readily consider slaves, metics (resident aliens), and Athenian women: people who, even though they resided within the city, would not have had political standing in *any* contemporary

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[66] Saxonhouse, "Aristotle on the corruption of regimes", 186-189.
[67] Saxonhouse, "Aristotle on the corruption of regimes", 187; Aristotle, *Politics* III, 1301a. Perseus.
[68] Saxonhouse, "Aristotle on the corruption of regimes", 187, 194-195.

regime, no matter how democratic or open, because they did not count as members of the *dēmos*.[69] Any regime's claim to justice – and, perhaps, any claim to virtue – is always contestable, always contested, and fundamentally unstable.

Back to the *Rhetoric*: Aristotle's Productive Regimes

If Aristotle's most developed and considered examination of political regimes points to this instability, we have a straightforward explanation for why the brief of regimes in the *Rhetoric* simply leaves out whether a regime is truly devoted to the common good or not. Aristotle's approach to rhetoric generally *discourages* the public contestation of a regime's claim to justice, on the basis that the life of a citizen in almost any polis is better than life outside one.

The first step in crafting appeals requires the recognition that regimes have a practical, commonly perceived set of privileged traits and values, and that understanding, modeling, and appealing to these privileged traits and values is a decisive element in rhetorical practice. Politically informed rhetoricians will not stop at recognizing these contextual characteristics; they will also seek a sense of how and why the prevalent regime produces these characteristics, and likely a closer grasp on the nuances of the regime – its detailed texture, beyond its status as an oligarchy, democracy, or something else – and how these nuances affect everyday politics. By developing this awareness, speakers come to access the substantive and generally agreed on ends of a political community, whether democratic freedom, oligarchic plutocracy, or aristocratic

[69] We can see a contemporary equivalent of this kind of exclusion in the concept of "white democracy" or "*herrenvolk* democracy", in which membership in the *demos* is premised one's position in a racial hierarchy. Cf. Kenneth P. Vickery, "'Herrenvolk' Democracy and Egalitarianism in South Africa and the U.S. South", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 16, No. 3 (1974), 309-328; Joel Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

"good breeding" and legal observance, and appeal to these ends in attempting to build consensus with audiences. In Aristotle's rhetorical model, when speakers engage with audiences, they do well to engage with the regime that produced those audiences, in order to make clear that the proposed course of action will achieve approved ends and that the speakers' characters are those of good citizens.

One might think that we would want a rhetorical mode that can build movements and construct solidarities outside of the range of projects approved within a dominant regime. And yes, I think *we* would, and I turn to that approach from Chapter 4 onward. But Aristotle bites that bullet, no less in the *Rhetoric* than in the *Politics*, and insists that the central point to deliberation is preserving the existing regime: "because everyone is persuaded by the beneficial, and that which preserves (*sōzon*) the regime is beneficial."[70] Such a universal position, unattractive as it might be today, reflects the problems around political justice that I discussed above. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for someone working within an Aristotelian framework to simultaneously make the case that the present regime is so terrible as to merit *stasis* (mass rebellion) and the case that whatever future community might arise from the ashes would be enough of an improvement to make the struggle worth it. Some of this difficulty owes to the Aristotelian perspective on political community, in which the good life is only possible within a *polis*. The rest of the difficulty, however, arises from the problem of finding an audience that is enough a part of a political community for a speaker to address them in political terms, but simultaneously sufficiently alienated for a speaker to appeal to them from outside the regime. It

[70] πείθονται γὰρ ἅπαντες τῷ συμφέροντι, συμφέρει δὲ τὸ σῶζον τὴν πολιτείαν. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.8.1 1365b. Perseus.

follows that preservation, not to mention improvement, will in this framework generally depend on the extent to which a speaker can portray the relevant measures as reflecting the best aspects of the existing regime.

This should also provide us with a response to the claim, especially common among elitist readings of the *Rhetoric*, that Aristotle subordinates the rhetorical to the political in a way that makes rhetorical practice the tool of political philosophers. Aside from the problems that the *Politics* raises for anyone who wants to understand political philosophy as an agenda for implementing aristocracy, the *Rhetoric* treats rhetorical appeals as responsive not to *politikē* – political knowledge – but to *politeia*, the existing regime. To the extent that studying politics allows the rhetorician to more effectively engage in public deliberation, that study will prove helpful; to the extent that someone wants to impose their allegedly-superior knowledge of political philosophy on the masses, such a project would likely prove hubristic.

6. Conclusion: An Unsolved Problem

So far, we have the beginnings of an audience-centered theory of rhetoric, but one that relies heavily on an Aristotelian concept of a political regime for conditions that no longer obtain. Political communities today have a rather lesser capacity for reproducing a sense of a collective good and have to hold a much larger number of people together. Many of us wish to live peacefully, if not always happily, with others who have entirely different ideas of what a good life is like; we may – I think with good cause – insist on a reasonably good life for everyone instead of a particular kind of best life for a privileged few. And even those who might find an Aristotelian polis attractive will struggle to find such a community in the present moment.

In this chapter, I have tried to disrupt the idea that manipulation is a natural or

constitutive element of rhetoric by examining a classical text of rhetorical theory that does not contain a developed concept of manipulation. If this disruptive and denaturalizing argument is correct, it implies that modern scholars who find manipulation in the *Rhetoric* do so because they have brought a concept of manipulation with them from somewhere else. In the following chapters, I will trace the origins and history of the link between rhetoric and manipulation, as well as examine how we can construct an audience-centered theory of rhetoric in the world of political and social plurality, outside the ruling presence of the Aristotelian regime.

To begin with, however, I need to address whether the Aristotelian disregard for manipulation was anomalous within his own context. In particular, when we consider classical treatments of rhetoric, Plato's portrayal of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* and, secondarily, in the *Phaedrus* often seems to portray rhetoricians as malevolent supervillains. If we read Aristotle responding to this Platonic portrayal, then the Aristotelian approach to rhetoric might be an anomaly in a long philosophical attack on rhetoric. We might then be tempted to retain a strict hierarchy in which rhetoric is a second-best for people who can't follow philosophical argument, as when Amélie Oksenberg Rorty argues that "Aristotle moderates Plato's attack on the dangers of metaphors, analogies, and similes … he nevertheless thinks that metaphor and myth can serve as didactic instruments for those who cannot be persuaded by strictly logical argumentation."[71] On this argument, we would have no reason to see the manipulation-rhetoric connection as historically specific or ideological; instead, we would have considerable cause to wonder whether Aristotle's own neglect or denial of this connection was. This problem, however, will

[71] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "Structuring Rhetoric", in Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's* Rhetoric ((Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 23.

have to wait for the following chapters.

Chapter 3 Supervillainy, *Dēmēgoria*, and the Limits of Rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*

1. Introduction

Even if Aristotle theorized rhetoric as dependent on audience and regime, as I've argued in Chapter 2, the prevailing conception of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* holds that it was an important moment in Aristotle's break with the Academy. Plato, the story goes, had no use whatever for rhetoric, as anyone could tell from reading the *Gorgias*. Indeed, many scholars have attributed to Plato a theory of rhetoric that I will describe as the supervillain theory: rhetoric provides a powerful capacity for deception and manipulation, which allows for unjust rhetoricians to manipulate *doxa* (popular opinions) and thus to flatter the masses, build empires, imprison and execute philosophers, and otherwise misbehave.[72] If rhetorical supervillains often crash and burn, as Socrates depicts Pericles, Themistocles, and others doing in the third section of the *Gorgias*, this is just another case of injustice proving self-destructive. Other scholarship has revised this reading of the *Gorgias*, arguing that Socrates' objections to rhetoricians' practices in

[72] Michael Svoboda, "Athens, the Unjust Student of Rhetoric: A Dramatic Historical Interpretation of Plato's 'Gorgias'", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2007), 275-305; Andrew Norris, "Rhetoric and Political Theory", in *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, ed. by Michael J. MacDonald, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Oxford Handbooks Online; R. Bensen Cain, "Shame and Ambiguity in Plato's *Gorgias*", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* (Vol. 41, No. 3, 2008), 212-237; James Stuart Murray, "Plato on Power, Moral Responsibility and the Alleged Neutrality of Gorgias' Art of Rhetoric ("Gorgias" 456c-457b)", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* (Vol. 34, No. 4, 2001), 355-363.

that dialogue apply to rhetoric used for unjust purposes, but not against rhetoric used to, say, protect hapless philosophers in court, or to direct people to seek philosophical or medical aid.[73] In this chapter, I want to step back from the idea of rhetoric as a power that can be used well or badly, and instead to interrogate the limits of rhetoric as displayed in the *Gorgias*. I argue that the critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* serves to describe a series of limits to the potential of rhetoric and therefore provides reasons to reject the supervillain theory.

The crucial question in this chapter is the relationship between rhetoric and power. If, on something like the supervillain theory, rhetoric simply *is* power because it allows speakers to dominate or manipulate audiences through a capacity that is internal to speakers, such a capacity would profoundly constrain political institutions and practices. Rhetoric would pose a serious threat to institutions reliant on popular consent, let alone support. One could design institutions that operate rhetorically to constrain any deliberation or mobilization outside those institutions, so as to monopolize rhetorical power and wield it in service to the state. Alternatively, one could allow constant rhetorical conflict, in order to create a perpetual hostile balance of power between elite rhetoricians who struggle for personal and factional supremacy. Each of these options, like their plausible combinations, supposes that rhetoric is essentially forceful, analogous to a political weapon of mass destruction. And as we'll see in the third and fourth chapters, these options, as well as their shared theoretical foundation, are crucial for understanding the development of modern political theories of rhetoric.

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[73] James H. Nichols, "The Rhetoric of Justice in Plato's *Gorgias*", in *Plato: Gorgias* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 131-149; Devin Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias: Rhetoric, Justice, and the Philosophic Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alessandra Fussi, "Why is the Gorgias so Bitter?", *Philosophy Rhetoric* (Vol. 33, No. 1, 2000), 39-58.

Plato, however, endorses no such theory. Plato portrays the forcefulness of Athenian rhetorical styles during the Peloponnesian War, in which the *Gorgias* is unambiguously set, as contingent and counterproductive.[74] But more importantly – and largely unrecognized by contemporary scholarship – the dialogue calls into question the central claim, made first by Gorgias and then defended by Polus and Callicles, that rhetoric equates to power over audiences. Each of Socrates' interlocutors is doubly exposed: first, as engaging in a profit-seeking exercise of advertising power for sale, and second, as nonetheless dependent on their audiences, and therefore unable to wield the power they claim to possess. Socrates himself is accurately described by his interlocutors as adopting *dēmēgoria*, the practice of "public speaking" common to Athenian politicians, and his attempts to persuade his interlocutors fare no better than their attempts to persuasively defend themselves. Both the *Gorgias'* overall narrative arc and a series of specific textual elements suggest that the dialogue sets up a theory of rhetoric as an overwhelming force liable to abuse in order to discredit that theory. Instead, at least once in the dialogue, Plato has Socrates explicitly subscribe to an audience-centered theory of rhetoric on which speakers depend on audiences (and, therefore, on the political regime governing any given audience) for the resources for persuasion.

2. The supervillain theory's advocates: their motives, and their vulnerabilities

In the *Gorgias*, the eponymous rhetorician claims quickly enough that "the power of persuading through speeches" is "that which is truly the greatest good, as well as the cause of

[74] On the setting of the *Gorgias* within the Peloponnesian War, and the implications of that setting, see Arlene Saxonhouse, "An Unspoken Theme in Plato's *Gorgias*: War", *Interpretation* Volume 11, No. 2 (1983), 139-169.

freedom for men generally in their own persons and of rule for individuals in their cities".[75] Plato has Gorgias add a touch of melodrama to this claim: Gorgias mysteriously describes this "greatest good", makes Socrates ask what it is, and only then answers with considerable elaboration, including typically Gorgian alliterative flourishes and the claim that such power allows its possessor to make their doctor or trainer a "slave" (*doulon*).[76] It is already clear that Gorgias claims to have this power, as well as to be able to teach it to others, as Gorgias had provided that information well in advance of Socrates' extraction of a definition of rhetoric.[77]

It is crucial to understand the dimensions of Gorgias' claim. To say that one has the power of persuading is, in the Attic Greek of the fifth and fourth centuries, nearly the same as saying that one has the power of producing obedience: one of the verbs often translated as "to obey", *peithomai*, is simply the passive verb "to be persuaded". That Gorgias claims that this ability turns experts in other arts into one's slaves is not much of an additional stretch, considering that he claims to wield supreme authority over juries, members of assemblies, and the attendees at any other public meeting.[78] While Socrates presses Gorgias to clarify what kinds of persuasion rhetoric accomplishes, Gorgias' slightly impatient answer is understandable: "I'm talking about the sort of persuasion, Socrates, as in the courts and in other crowds (*ochlois*), just as I was saying – and it's about what is just and unjust."[79] In the first few lines of Socrates' and Gorgias' conversation, we have the supervillain theory of rhetoric (or at least a super*power* theory of

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[75] Plato, *Gorgias*, in *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet. (Oxford University Press, 1903), 452d-e. Perseus. Translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.
[76] *Gorgias*, 452e.
[77] *Gorgias*, 449a.
[78] *Gorgias*, 452e.
[79] "ταύτης τοίνυν τῆς πειθοῦς λέγω, ὦ Σώκρατες, τῆς ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ὄχλοις, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄρτι ἔλεγον, καὶ περὶ τούτων ἅ ἐστι δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικα." *Gorgias*, 454b.

rhetoric) in a clear and complete form: people who possess the art of rhetoric can alter the masses' perceptions of what is just (or normative) and what violates principles of justice, and therefore gain influence over entire *poleis*. Rhetoric persuades audiences about justice and violations of justice, and thereby gets some of its force from the powerful normative commitments that it implicates.[80] But its essence is power, in the form of moving large numbers of people to do one's bidding. And Gorgias' expansive claims about rhetoric's power are crucial to the narrative and argumentative arc of the dialogue.

Many scholars too quickly pass from questioning the power of rhetoric in favor of questions about how this power is used or, in some cases, how the power inevitably tends to be used. On this interpretation of the *Gorgias*, Socrates (and Plato) oppose rhetoric because the power that it exerts over audiences is ill-founded, based as it is on *doxa* instead of on *episteme*, and therefore tends toward manipulation and abuse of those who don't know better.[81] Socrates stipulates to the claim that rhetoric *has* power in order to argue that this power is necessarily abusive or, in a more moderate reading, consistently badly used by sophists and rhetors. Thus, for James Doyle, Socrates takes the position "that membership of *some* of these ethically-charged categories – namely *orator*, *democratic politician*, and *tyrant* – are strictly incompatible with virtue" and therefore attacks the centerpiece of Athenian political culture in the dialogue.[82]

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[80] As James Doyle correctly points out, the *persuasion* is about justice and injustice, but Gorgias never says that *rhetoric* is about these concepts. Socrates' later move to conflate these is done without Gorgias' agreement. James Doyle, "Socrates and Gorgias", *Phronesis* (Vol. 55, No. 1, 2010), 16.

[81] For examples of this move, see James Doyle, "Socrates and Gorgias", 1-25; Murray, "Plato on Power, Moral Responsibility, and the Alleged Neutrality of Gorgias' Art of Rhetoric", 360-361; Simone Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?", *Political Theory* 37:3 (2009), 326-327.

[82] Doyle, "Socrates and Gorgias", 5. Emphasis in the original.

R. Bensen Cain widens this critique to argue, in surprisingly modern terms, that "[t]he misuse of language is what makes it possible for sophistic rhetors, such as Gorgias and Polus, to mislead their listeners, hide their real views, and remain oblivious to the inconsistencies of their positions."[83] Cain's Plato has very nearly the same critique of rhetoric that Hobbes and Locke would adopt in the 17th century: rhetors abuse language to equivocate and to misrepresent, and therefore mislead their audiences.[84] Readings of the *Gorgias* along this line, as I will argue in the chapter's conclusion, tend to anachronistically flatten Plato's concerns about rhetoric in a way that makes those concerns resemble the very different theoretical interventions of early modern political thinkers. For the moment, however, I am treating them as examples of an interpretive approach to the *Gorgias* which has Plato adopting a position of inveterate hostility to most persuasive practices.

There are, of course, examples of a more moderate reading. On this reading, Socrates' hostility towards rhetoricians and sophists in the *Gorgias* does not exhaust the possibilities of rhetoric, because rhetoric is more capacious than its advocates in that dialogue seem to understand. Christina Tarnopolsky has argued that the sharp conflict between Gorgianic "flattering rhetoric" and Socratic "dialectic" early in the *Gorgias* points to a "Platonic rhetoric" that, if not comprehensively presented in the dialogue, nonetheless constitutes an alternative to the "overly adversative character of Socrates' shaming elenchus".[85] Devin Stauffer agrees that

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[83] Cain, "Shame and Ambiguity", 213.
[84] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 25; John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding, v.2* (London: W. Otridge, 1812), 42, HathiTrust Digital Library.
[85] Christina H. Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato's* Gorgias *and the Politics of Shame* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 50-62.

the *Gorgias* points to a "noble (*kalon*) rhetoric" that he identifies with Plato's broader "literary-rhetorical project", but sees Socrates' engagement of Gorgias and Callicles as less confrontational than Tarnopolsky does, in part because Stauffer reads Socrates as attempting to convince Gorgias that Gorgias' rhetorical powers should be used in defense of philosophy.[86] Similarly, Alessandra Fussi sees the "bitterness" of Socrates' "radical attack on rhetoric" as one side of a complex Platonic engagement with rhetoric, in which "the philosopher and the rhetorician may need each other more than Socrates wants us to believe".[87] While these authors recognize important complexity in Plato's treatment of rhetoric, they nonetheless also neglect the question of rhetoric's actual capacity for persuasion in the *Gorgias*.

This question is not neglected in the actual text of the *Gorgias*. Neglecting the power of rhetoric would be to render it as something like the Ring of Gyges (*Republic* II: 359a-360d): a ring of invisibility that allows readers to imagine that it's possible to practice injustice without fear of punishment and, through the course of the dialogue, consider whether acting unjustly under such circumstances would in fact be desirable. That the Ring of Gyges is fictional does not change the usefulness or value of Glaucon's hypothetical. Socrates' interlocutors in the *Gorgias*, however, are not challenging Socrates to defend justice in the abstract. Instead, Socrates is questioning his interlocutors about the nature of the skill that they advertise, which is the power to persuade audiences. It would be strange for Socrates to simply accept that this skill exists and works as advertised, or to suppose that Plato leaves readers to accept that that is the case.

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[86] Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's 'Gorgias'*, esp. 177-182. See also Nichols, "The Rhetoric of Justice in Plato's 'Gorgias'", 145-149.
[87] Fussi, "Why is the *Gorgias* so bitter?", 55.

The first and perhaps clearest indicator that Gorgian rhetoric does *not* fully possess the power that Gorgias claims to possess is the fact that the power is, in fact, being advertised.[88] That is, Gorgias (like practically all other sophists) are offering to teach their skill to paying students, and Gorgias' and his student Polus' flowery and melodramatic claims of the impressive power that Gorgias wields should certainly be understood accordingly. Indeed, the claims not only of teachers for hire, but of paid speechwriters, were generally seen as somewhat less credible in ancient Athens. Plato went to considerable effort to clearly separate Socrates from the class of sophists, who were distinguished by the practice of for-profit teaching, and there is some evidence that Socrates suffered from association with them. For example, in the *Apology* (19c), Socrates blames Aristophanes for making the Athenians think badly of him, clearly referencing Aristophanes' play *The Clouds*, which portrayed Socrates and the other denizens of the "Thinkery" as teaching paying students the skill of making wrong overcome right in the courts. While the aspect of accepting payment is nowhere in the charges, Socrates then gratuitously adds that he himself never made money by teaching like Gorgias and others did (19d-20a). His remark that "nonetheless, it seems to me a fine thing indeed, if someone might be able to teach people in the manner of Gorgias of Leontini and Prodicus of Ceos and Hippias of Elis … to persuade the youth … to associate with them, paying them money, and giving them their gratitude as well"

[88] Though this is not the main focus of her paper, Rachel Barney's description of the first section of Gorgias' speech as "The Advertisement" nicely captures the nature of Gorgias' tone and argumentative direction. Barney, "Gorgias' Defense: Plato and His Opponents on Rhetoric and the Good", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 48, Issue 1 (2010), 95-121. Devin Stauffer's recognition of "Gorgias' … related desire to expand his following of students" is also apt on this point. Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's 'Gorgias'*, 27.

can only be taken as bitterly ironic.[89]

Socrates' attempts to insulate himself from accusations of paid teaching seem to reflect a broader Athenian distrust of sophists. The sophistic practice of charging for teaching also receives a sharp rebuke in Isocrates' *Against the Sophists*, likely published around the same time as the *Gorgias*: "Most ridiculous of all, they [sophists] distrust those from whom they are about to exact payment, even though they are just about to pass on to them the knowledge of justice."[90] In other words, not only do sophists charge for their services and therefore invite distrust, but their claim – attributed to Gorgias in Plato's dialogue – that they also teach their students justice is belied by the fact that they don't trust their students to pay without setting up an escrow through a third party.[91] Indeed, Isocrates, himself vulnerable to charges of sophistry-for-hire, seems to have adopted a policy of only accepting payment for his educational services from non-Athenian students, while teaching fellow Athenians for free as a public service.[92] Later, Demosthenes had the clients for whom he wrote legal speeches lament the lack of sophistication and political acumen that, when harassed by trained and experienced legal sharks, forced them to hire Demosthenes' services in order to have a chance in the courts.[93] The extent of this distrust is not entirely clear, but it nonetheless suggests that Plato's choice to put the claim that rhetoric

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[89] "ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτό γέ μοι δοκεῖ καλὸν εἶναι, εἴ τις οἷός τ᾽ εἴη παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους ὥσπερ Γοργίας τε ὁ Λεοντῖνος καὶ Πρόδικος ὁ Κεῖος καὶ Ἱππίας ὁ Ἠλεῖος … τοὺς νέους … τούτους πείθουσι … σφίσιν συνεῖναι χρήματα διδόντας καὶ χάριν προσειδέναι." *Apology,* 19e-20a, Perseus.
[90] "ὃ δὲ πάντων καταγελαστότατον, ὅτι παρὰ μὲν ὧν δεῖ λαβεῖν αὐτούς, τούτοις μὲν ἀπιστοῦσιν, οἷς μέλλουσι τὴν δικαιοσύνην παραδώσειν…" Isocrates, *Isocrates with an English Translation in three volumes*, ed. and trans. by George Norlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), Perseus.
[91] Socrates makes the same point in the *Gorgias* at 519d.
[92] Yun Lee Too, *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates: Text, power, pedagogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 108-111.
[93] Cite.

offers power over an audience into the mouth of a paid rhetorician would have tended to make that claim less credible for a contemporary Athenian reader.

The background of Athenian distrust for sophists (and by extension, rhetoricians) also provides a contextual reason to read the *Gorgias* as directly confronting questions of rhetoric's power. This distrust would make a dialogue in which Socrates merely accused sophists of injustice largely superfluous; Athenians of the 4th century already apparently believed that sophists made the stronger argument appear weaker, misrepresented questions of justice, and therefore undermined Athenian institutions. It might be that the *Gorgias* was another attempt to convince readers that Socrates was not a sophist, and therefore retroactively justify Socrates' project by divorcing readers' perceptions of Socrates from their general distrust of sophists, much as the *Apology* passage discussed above. As we'll see later, however, the *Gorgias* actually implicates Socrates in Athenian rhetorical practices to an extent unparalleled in any other Platonic dialogue. If Athenians generally believed that sophists' rhetoric had power and that this power was prone to abuse, Plato's portrayal of Socrates confronting Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles makes more sense as an intervention *against* the untrammeled power of rhetoric. Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles *claim* to possess a capacity to commit broad injustices and to remake politics as they wish, but they are mistaken in this claim. Socrates' rhetorical appeals in favor of a concern for justice and the improvement of one's fellow citizens, if informed by a better political disposition than his interlocutors generally display, are no more successful in establishing the power of rhetoric to persuade those who do not wish to be persuaded.

The direct textual evidence for an intervention emphasizing the limits of rhetoric is dispersed, but clear. Socrates' initial questioning of Gorgias elicits the clear and developed theory of rhetoric as a superpower precisely because Socrates enquires about the limits of rhetoric's

power. To be sure, Gorgias claims that rhetoric is the art of creating persuasion, but Socrates quickly gets him to admit that other arts create persuasion to the extent that they create knowledge and that the knowledge created is action-guiding (453d-e). "Rhetoric, then," Socrates concludes, "is not the lone producer of persuasion," and since Gorgias agrees, the crucial question is "of what kind of persuasion, and about what, is rhetoric the art?"[94] We've already seen that Gorgias thinks rhetoric creates persuasion about justice and injustice, and therefore is the source of political power. And the evidence that Gorgias cites for this power is that Themistocles and Pericles convinced Athenians to militarize and build defensive fortifications, and that these constructions projects therefore happened because of the politicians, not the builders who actually carried out the projects (455e). Socrates immediately asks to hear more about the power of rhetoric, because "looking at it like that, its greatness appears like something supernatural".[95] But here, just as Gorgias begins to further expound on rhetoric's power, he catches himself, and reminds Socrates that one shouldn't wield rhetoric for purposes of injustice, and that if a student does so, that Gorgias, as the teacher, can't be held responsible. Commentators typically follow Gorgias' digression, and this digression leads away from politics and the question of rhetoric's actual power and toward the question of whether Gorgias himself is a responsible teacher of rhetoric.[96]

Gorgias' digression, however, should not distract from his attempts to get Socrates to

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[94] οὐκ ἄρα ῥητορικὴ μόνη πειθοῦς ἐστιν δημιουργός. … ποίας δὴ πειθοῦς καὶ τῆς περὶ τί πειθοῦς ἡ ῥητορική ἐστιν τέχνη; *Gorgias*, 454a. Perseus.
[95] δαιμονία γάρ τις ἔμοιγε καταφαίνεται τὸ μέγεθος οὕτω σκοποῦντι. *Gorgias*, 456a. Perseus.
[96] Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's 'Gorgias'*, 33-35, Murray, "Plato on Power, Moral Responsibility, and the Alleged Neutrality of Gorgias' Art of Rhetoric", 359-361. Cf. Doyle, "Socrates and Gorgias", 10.

admit that rhetoric is as powerful as Gorgias has claimed: "Doesn't it make everything easier, Socrates, to become, without learning anything about any other arts but this one, just as capable as the other practitioners?"[97] The fact that Gorgias goes back to insist on this point of relative capacity – which has already degraded from mastery over the practitioners of every other art to being just as good as they are – in the middle of defending rhetoricians from responsibility for abuse is telling. For the time being, Socrates follows Gorgias in examining whether rhetoric uses its great power responsibly, rather than whether the power is as great as Gorgias claims, but this is explicitly *not* a concession: "Whether the rhetor is or isn't a match for those others on account of having that skill, we'll examine later, if the argument takes us in that direction."[98] But it turns out that Socrates doesn't return to this question when speaking directly to Gorgias. While Gorgias, speaking as a foreigner, is on safe ground praising past Athenian leaders, it would be unfair or at least extremely thoughtless of Socrates to force him to admit that these leaders were less praiseworthy than initially suggested.[99] Whatever the reason, Socrates does not return to the question of Pericles' and Themistocles' worthiness until he is arguing with Callicles, and here he directly confronts the question of whether these and other politicians actually enjoyed power over the Athenian demos. Gorgias' repeated insistence that Callicles cooperate with Socrates in

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[97] οὐκοῦν πολλὴ ῥᾳστώνη, ὦ Σώκρατες, γίγνεται, μὴ μαθόντα τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας ἀλλὰ μίαν ταύτην, μηδὲν ἐλαττοῦσθαι τῶν δημιουργῶν; *Gorgias*, 459c. Perseus.

[98] εἰ μὲν ἐλαττοῦται ἢ μὴ ἐλαττοῦται ὁ ῥήτωρ τῶν ἄλλων διὰ τὸ οὕτως ἔχειν, αὐτίκα ἐπισκεψόμεθα, ἐάν τι ἡμῖν πρὸς λόγου ᾖ… *Gorgias*, 459c. Perseus.

[99] Arlene Saxonhouse has pointed out the importance of Callicles' citizenship for his ability to practice *parrhēsia* (Athenian "frank speech"), which Gorgias and Polus lack as foreigners. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 90. Otherwise thoughtful and illuminating analyses of Plato's treatment of *parrhēsia* that miss this crucial point include Sara Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 158-159 and Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 101-102.

"completing the arguments" (497b) and, then, that Socrates finish his argument even without Callicles' cooperation (506b) is perhaps best explained by Gorgias' awareness that Socrates is examining the question Gorgias had earlier brought up without putting him in an awkward position.

Socrates' harsh attack on past Athenian leaders is controversial. For some commentators, the attack is clearly excessive, while others see it as communicating a broader critique of Athenian imperialism.[100] Callicles certainly finds it objectionable, and makes a point of his dissatisfaction with Socrates' line of argument, through grudging admissions and an accusation that Socrates is just another Spartan sympathizer (515d-e). But this attack follows, not from premises that Socrates clearly endorses, but from the premise that Gorgias initially introduced and Callicles reaffirmed: politicians, in their capacity as rhetors, possess a capacity to make citizens better, and therefore can be held responsible for any failure to do so. If this power in fact exists, and Pericles and others failed to improve the Athenians in the manner that a farmer would tame animals, it follows that they were political failures. Callicles objects to this conclusion, but is either unable or unwilling to take the only logical way out: to bite the bullet and admit that rhetoric doesn't give the power to unilaterally improve or debase one's fellow citizens. Callicles' failure to find this way out is, if anything, emphasized by Socrates' repeated references to the tentative nature of the argument: the conclusion is qualified "by this argument", "if they were …

[100] Stauffer's claim that the attack is "unreasonable" represents the former perspective well. Staufffer, *The Unity of Plato's 'Gorgias'*, 152-154. I tend to favor the emphasis on these leaders' contributions to Athenian empire. See Saxonhouse, "An Unspoken Theme in Plato's *Gorgias*: War"; Svoboda, "Athens, the Unjust Student of Rhetoric", 294-295.

as you said", "it seems".[101] The blame for Athens' imperialism may or may not fall on the city's leaders; what Socrates insists upon is that *if* they had the power to do anything else, they were responsible for leading the city into its imperial phase "without temperance or justice".[102] The text of Socrates' and Callicles' disagreement makes Gorgias' insistence on the power of past Athenian politicians untenable.

3. Socrates' weaponized *dēmēgoria*

Readings of the *Gorgias* that emphasize Plato's hostility to rhetoricians and sophists, as well as those that emphasize Socrates' gestures to a "true" or "noble" rhetoric late in the dialogue, tend to neglect the extent to which Socrates in the *Gorgias* is enmeshed in the practices he appears to condemn. Socrates is accused of practicing conventional Athenian *dēmēgoria* ("public speaking") early in his conversation with Callicles, uses the term generically to refer to politicians and others who speak frequently in the Assembly, and then eventually uses the verb form for his style of "haranguing" Callicles for several Stephanus pages (519d). A series of stylistic elements suggest that Socrates is in fact mimicking, or even adopting, exactly the manner of speaking associated with Athenian assembly speeches, and that this is important for understanding the broader treatment of Athenian and sophistic approaches to rhetoric in the *Gorgias.* Plato's critique of rhetoric does not attribute rhetoric's failures to flaws in the speakers, such as the rhetors and sophists portrayed in the *Gorgias*. Instead, rhetoric's limits come from audiences and from the political communities that those audiences inhabit. Since these limits are

[101] ἐκ τούτου τοῦ λόγου; εἰ ἦσαν… ὡς σὺ φῄς; ὡς ἔοικεν. *Gorgias*, 516d-e. Perseus.
[102] ἄνευ γὰρ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης. *Gorgias*, 519a. Perseus.

largely constitutive of rhetoric – if one were not seeking to persuade an audience, one's speech would not be rhetorical – Plato indeed has a sharp critique of Athenian rhetoric. But I will argue in this section that the critique applies to Socrates (as portrayed in the dialogue) as well as to his interlocutors.

Socrates' status as a *dēmēgoros* ("popular speaker", in the sense of someone who speaks in the assembly) in the *Gorgias* is quite surprising. Plato only rarely uses the term, in any of its verb or noun forms. In the *Apology*, the verb form *dēmēgorein* appears once (36b) in a list of the many Athenian public activities that Socrates habitually neglected. Elsewhere, Plato generally treats "public speaker" (*dēmēgoros*) and "rhetor" as interchangeable in Socrates' vocabulary (*Protagoras*, 329a). The example Socrates gives of such a person in that passage is, unsurprisingly, Pericles, and Socrates is complaining that public speakers are so good at delivering their speeches that "when questioned even briefly, these rhetors stretch their speech again over the full-length course", a complaint implicit in his similar demand of brevity from Gorgias (449a).[103] Nowhere outside the *Gorgias* does Plato even approach suggesting that Socrates qualifies as a *dēmēgoros*, and in the *Laws* (908d) the *dēmēgoroi* appear alongside generals, tyrants, witches, and sophists among the evildoers that spring from the ranks of the impious. Contemporary and later usages generally lack this negative connotation, but don't fit any better with the character of Socrates as usually described by Plato or other contemporaries. Aristophanes uses *dēmēgorein* in the *Ecclesiazusae* to refer to *any* kind of public speaking, as do Isocrates and Demosthenes, and later usages in the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus,

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[103] καὶ οἱ ῥήτορες οὕτω, σμικρὰ [329β] ἐρωτηθέντες δόλιχον κατατείνουσι τοῦ λόγου. Plato, *Protagoras*, in *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet. (Oxford University Press, 1903), 329a-b. Perseus.

Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and Cassius Dio generally follow this pattern. Aristotle's use of *dēmēgoria* (e.g. at *Rhetoric* 1354b) to refer to the class of rhetoric we generally translate as "deliberative", contrasting with "forensic" rhetoric (*dikanikē*), theorizes the common non-Platonic usage in which the term refers to the practice of speaking in the *ekklesia* in general, and Socrates was well known for avoiding that practice. It is therefore unsurprising that Christina Tarnopolsky takes Callicles' accusation that Socrates is a "popular speaker" as potentially devastating to Socrates' integrity, and also seems to see the accusation as false.[104]

But, at least as far as the *Gorgias* is concerned, the accusation is *not* false, insofar as Socrates eventually admits during one of his long monologues that "truly you've made it necessary for me to harangue (*dēmēgorein*) you, Callicles, since you refused to answer".[105] Indeed, not only does Socrates seem to confess to the accusation, but the rhetorical style he adopts is aggressive and even overbearing. Consider a longer section of this monologue, which immediately precedes Socrates' "confession":

"For I notice that whenever a city lays hands on one of these political men for their wrongdoing, they are violently upset and complain loudly about their terrible suffering: after all the good they've done for the city, now they're unjustly ruined by it, or so they say. But the whole thing is a lie. No leader of a city could be ruined unjustly by the very same city that he rules. The same risk is run, both by the pretended statesmen and by the sophists. For even the sophists, who are otherwise so wise (*sophoi*), do this one strange thing: they say they're teachers of virtue, but they're always accusing their students of injuring them, since after being hired,

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[104] Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 102.
[105] ὡς ἀληθῶς δημηγορεῖν με ἠνάγκασας, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀποκρίνεσθαι. *Gorgias*, 519d. Perseus.

their students cheat them of their fees and otherwise don't show any gratitude for the good they've done them. Now what logic could possibly be more illogical than this lawsuit? These men, having been made good and just, indeed after having all their injustice chiseled out and replaced with justice, now do the injustice they no longer know how to do. Doesn't that seem strange to you, companion?"[106]

Let's begin by recognizing the substantive parallel between Socrates' mockery of sophists complaining at being defrauded by those whom they taught to be just and Isocrates' observation that the sophists of his (and Plato's) day would set up escrow systems to avoid being defrauded, which we saw on page 8. Plato has Socrates saying things at this point in the dialogue that could reasonably be attributed to relatively thoughtful sophists of Plato's own time. Similarly, when Socrates suggests that Callicles' love of Demos (both a person of that name, and the Athenian demos) stunts Callicles' ability to think and act philosophically, he is using a play on words that Aristophanes had used in *The Knights* to attack Cleon, and which had previously appeared in the work of Euripides. Stylistically, however, Socrates' polemic has very little in common with the way that Isocrates or Demosthenes or other fourth-century rhetoricians chose to present themselves. Instead, it's a cutting parody of Gorgias' preferred alliteration, which favored plays on words and the repetition of similarly-formed words for emphasis, that also tracks with the

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[106] αἰσθάνομαι γάρ, ὅταν ἡ πόλις τινὰ τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀνδρῶν μεταχειρίζηται ὡς ἀδικοῦντα, ἀγανακτούντων καὶ σχετλιαζόντων ὡς δεινὰ πάσχουσι: πολλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ τὴν πόλιν πεποιηκότες ἄρα ἀδίκως ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς ἀπόλλυνται, ὡς ὁ τούτων λόγος. τὸ δὲ ὅλον ψεῦδός ἐστιν: προστάτης γὰρ πόλεως [519ξ] οὐδ᾽ ἂν εἷς ποτε ἀδίκως ἀπόλοιτο ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς τῆς πόλεως ἧς προστατεῖ. κινδυνεύει γὰρ ταὐτὸν εἶναι, ὅσοι τε πολιτικοὶ προσποιοῦνται εἶναι καὶ ὅσοι σοφισταί. καὶ γὰρ οἱ σοφισταί, τἆλλα σοφοὶ ὄντες, τοῦτο ἄτοπον ἐργάζονται πρᾶγμα: φάσκοντες γὰρ ἀρετῆς διδάσκαλοι εἶναι πολλάκις κατηγοροῦσιν τῶν μαθητῶν ὡς ἀδικοῦσι σφᾶς αὐτούς, τούς τε μισθοὺς ἀποστεροῦντες καὶ ἄλλην χάριν οὐκ ἀποδιδόντες, [519δ] εὖ παθόντες ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν. καὶ τούτου τοῦ λόγου τί ἂν ἀλογώτερον εἴη πρᾶγμα, ἀνθρώπους ἀγαθοὺς καὶ δικαίους γενομένους, ἐξαιρεθέντας μὲν ἀδικίαν ὑπὸ τοῦ διδασκάλου, σχόντας δὲ δικαιοσύνην, ἀδικεῖν τούτῳ ᾧ οὐκ ἔχουσιν; οὐ δοκεῖ σοι τοῦτο ἄτοπον εἶναι, ὦ ἑταῖρε; *Gorgias*, 519b-d. Perseus.

intensely declarative, harsh style common to Pericles' successors in the Athenian assembly. As Brad Levett has pointed out, Socrates uses Gorgianic repetitions (a technique called polyptoton) in his "someone who does *x* is an *x*-er and therefore knows about *x*" formulation earlier in the dialogue, where he forces Gorgias into an apparent contradiction about the epistemic limits of rhetoric.[107] This formulation gains much its persuasive force, in Attic Greek usage, from an alliterative and conceptual repetition. Here, however, Socrates' approach is far more harshly parodic, as he uses these repetitions to *undermine* the validity of sophists' rhetoric: these wise men (*sophistai*) are normally *so* wise, but for this bit of absurdity, their argument (*logos*) could not be more illogical (*alogōteron*), and so on. The other half of Plato's stylistic maneuver, the close resemblance to the rough-edged polemic of wartime Athens, requires a bit more unpacking.

Athenian political contestation, like contestation in most collectively governed polities, was never a gentle affair. As Ryan Balot has shown, the personal risks of voicing one's own opinions in the assembly meant that not only did Athenians pride themselves on the contribution of democratic deliberation to their own personal courage, but it also took personal courage to engage in democratic deliberation.[108] Balot has argued that the long arc of Athenians' "ideology of democratic courage" was one that constructively incorporated many of the critiques and regimes that challenged it, and over Athens' history as an independent and collectively-governed polis, Balot's argument has much to recommend it. However, the *Gorgias* discusses a much shorter period of Athenian politics, in which Athens' wartime disasters were accompanied by a

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[107] Levett, "Platonic Parody in the *Gorgias*", *Phoenix* 59:3/4 (2005), 216-218.
[108] Ryan K. Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47-73.

steady degeneration in democratic life. Arlene Saxonhouse's argument that the *Gorgias*' narrative takes place (impossibly, but also significantly) across the entirety of the Peloponnesian War is helpful here.[109] As Thucydides tells the story, wartime Athens went from considering both interest and justice and blaming necessity for its occasional lapses, to narrowly avoiding atrocities in accordance with its assembly's best judgment of its own interest, to openly victimizing others against its own interest, and finally ended up turning on its own public servants in patently self-destructive ways.[110] If Socrates' interlocutors move from conversing with him to declaiming, threatening, and eventually refusing to do anything more than snipe at him, with Callicles managing both of the last two, Socrates gets more punchy and snide over the same timeframe, and his sarcastic and invective-laden attack on Athenian politicians, sophists, and Callicles is the culmination of this trend. In other words, Socrates' rhetorical tactics during the dialogue seem to mirror a pattern of increased hostility in Athenian political discourse during the war.

Socrates' one-time-only status as a *dēmēgoros* may be his best chance at persuading Callicles, a Peloponnesian War hardliner and lifelong admirer of Pericles, to reconsider his commitment to political power above everything, since this rhetorical move brings Socrates into precisely the political and rhetorical dimensions with which Callicles is most familiar. At the

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[109] Saxonhouse, "An Unspoken Theme in Plato's *Gorgias*: War", *Interpretation* 11:2 (1983), 142-145.
[110] This reading of Thucydides as telling a story of Athens' downfall, tracing from early defenses of Athens' behavior, through the Mytilene Debate, the Melian Dialogue, and the Sicilian Expedition, to the execution of Athens' generals over Socrates' obstruction, is not uncontested. Readers of Thucydides and Plato, including Saxonhouse, "An Unspoken Theme", 167-168, Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis*, and Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias*, often concur with this tragic reading. However, see Svoboda, "Athens, the Unjust Student of Rhetoric", 294-295, for an argument that Thucydides' history is premised upon "realpolitik" and "moral ambivalence" and therefore cannot be tragic in that sense.

least, this maneuver displays much more attentiveness to the conditions under which Callicles might be persuaded than we see from Socrates earlier in the conversation. Consider the conclusion of the first of Socrates' lengthy fables (493d), when he asks if he's persuading Callicles through the use of a fable, Callicles confirms he's unlikely to be persuaded through that or similar fables, and Socrates turns immediately to a new, but similar, fable. At this earlier point, where Socrates' fables are functioning as arguments from analogy, the focus is on finding arguments that will compel Callicles to admit that Socrates is right, and when Callicles suggests that this is not an effective way to persuade him, Socrates steamrolls ahead. The attempt to adopt characteristically Athenian *dēmēgoria* suggests that even though Socrates' new rhetorical strategy is overtly hostile and involves some degree of browbeating, the overall strategy is still closer to being capable of persuading Callicles.

The turn to *dēmēgoria* causes problems for existing readings of Plato's treatment of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*. Two readings, Devin Stauffer's and Christina Tarnopolsky's, are especially relevant here, because each plays up Plato's concern with a noble rhetoric that would be an alternative to the depicted practices of Socrates' interlocutors. Stauffer has argued that the overall arc of the *Gorgias* has Socrates trying to persuade Gorgias to participate in a "noble rhetoric" that would defend philosophy as Socrates practices it, in large part by defending his own philosophical practices from Callicles and people like him.[111] On Stauffer's reading, Socrates' *logos* of the afterlife (which most readers of the *Gorgias*, against Socrates' insistence, describe as a myth) is an example, albeit a flawed and incomplete one, of such a noble rhetoric,

[111] Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias*, 126-127, 177-180.

and Socrates' earlier engagement with Callicles is meant to dismantle Callicles' intellectual resources. Gorgias cooperates, at least partially, with Socrates, by repeatedly urging Callicles to continue a conversation that Callicles no longer wishes to engage in; if Socrates is occasionally harsh or overbearing in his interactions with Callicles, it is simply to expose the importance of the conflict between Socrates and Callicles and to demolish the latter's critique of philosophy. Socrates' goal, at least with respect to Gorgias, is to build a relationship rather than to demolish a way of life, and Stauffer sees Socrates' conversation with Gorgias as demonstrating the need for an enriched understanding of justice rather than portraying Gorgias as a buffoon or a con man.

Christina Tarnopolsky's reading of the *Gorgias* portrays Socrates' questioning of Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles as a scathing challenge to sophists' way of life. On this reading, while Socrates' "shaming elenchus" calls his interlocutors to account, it does so in a way that is too harsh, alienating, and fails to persuade interlocutors to improve themselves.[112] In contrast, a Platonic "respectful shame" that mobilizes Gorgias' epideictic abilities as well as Socrates' critical questioning would more effectively summon one's listeners to take inventory and potentially improve themselves.[113] After all, if a student has submitted a severely flawed paper, there is a tremendous pedagogical difference between "don't submit a paper that does x, y, and z again" and "I think you can do better in x, y, and z areas" or "make a better argument for x, y, and z claims": the latter accompany the (potential) shame that someone might experience when their work is criticized with encouragement and respect, which are of course absent from the first example. Tarnopolsky suggests that Plato's "use of myth" in the final pages of the *Gorgias* offers

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[112] Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 144-145.
[113] Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 145-146.

audiences an opportunity to expand their conceptual horizons and marks a crucial turn in Plato's works from depicting Socratic dialectical strategies to original Platonic insights, which are often critical in their appropriation of Socrates.[114] Thus, Plato partly breaks with Socrates' austere insistence on harshly examining the beliefs and souls of the people around him in order to open possibilities of persuading readers to *want* to examine themselves.

While both of these thoughtful and sharply different treatments of the *Gorgias* are helpful in other areas, each has real shortcomings in accounting for Socrates' turn to *dēmēgoria* in addressing Callicles, especially from 515-520. Stauffer's view that Plato has Socrates trying to build a partnership between Socratic philosophy and Gorgianic rhetoric does not explain why Gorgias and other sophists come out even worse than Callicles does in these blistering remarks; if Callicles is the one whose heroes are being torn down, Gorgias is the only one of the sophists bundled up with the condemned politicians who is a spectator to his own demolition. Similarly, it is hard to read Socrates as seeking assistance in a potential future trial when he repeatedly dismisses the idea that he should learn to help himself in such straits. Tarnopolsky's implication that Socrates is not in fact engaging in *dēmēgoria* follows from her connection of Socratic shaming with the practice of elenchus: Socrates most harshly shames his interlocutors in the *Gorgias*, on Tarnopolsky's reading, when questioning them, and Plato's introduction of a nobler rhetoric and "respectful shaming" contrasts with Socrates' practice of exposing his interlocutors' errors through interrogation. But the most searing passages of the *Gorgias* immediately precede the epideictic myth, when Socrates' rhetoric most closely resembles Athenian wartime

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[114] Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, 46-48, 50-59, 145-147.

dēmēgoria and he indicts nearly every major political figure of the past century of Athenian democracy. If Plato depicts Socrates as overly harsh in this dialogue, this harshness matches with Socrates at his most Athenian.

One way forward in understanding Socrates' *dēmēgoria* in the long third section of *Gorgias* might be to compare it to Socrates' unusual suggestion to both Polus and Callicles that harsh corrections occasionally serve the cause of making a soul more just. This suggestion, which differs from Socrates' insistence elsewhere (cf. *Republic* I, 335e) that justice does not involve harming people, combines with Callicles' overall recalcitrance to imply that Socrates is engaging Callicles in a way that Callicles might recognize as a harsh (if not entirely unfair) correction. Socrates is serving Callicles a bitter medicine, and Callicles is rejecting it. The bitter medicine of Socrates' demegoric attack on his interlocutors may, in this respect, resemble the more common Socratic practice of harshly questioning other interlocutors. Here, I am thinking of Jill Frank's recent argument that the Socratic *elenchos*, while not physically violent, nonetheless contains a substantial element of browbeating when Socrates attempts to tame Thrasymachus in *Republic* I, or aggressively dismantles other interlocutors' views.[115] Frank offers the provocative suggestion that Plato portrays incomplete and controversial arguments so as to illuminate a possibility of "persuasion in the middle voice": a grammatical ambiguity in Attic Greek that provides for a listener to be persuaded by a speaker either without much personal agency (the passive voice) or with the listener's active engagement and assent (the middle voice).[116] This might occur through analogy, or through a conversational mode focused more on mutual

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[115] Jill Frank, *Poetic Justice: Rereading Plato's* Republic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 123-127.
[116] Frank, *Poetic Justice*, 127-135.

construction of an agreed-upon position than on elenctic demolition; it might simply involve an overall ethos of respectful engagement of audience members. In any of these cases, the mutual rejection of these possibilities by the characters of the *Gorgias* illustrates the inability of rhetoric to force agreement where listeners insist on disagreeing.

4. The limits of rhetoric in the narrative of the *Gorgias*

Whatever else we have to say about the atypical persuasive methods that Plato depicts Socrates engaging in during the *Gorgias*, these methods do not persuade any of the dialogue's characters. Gorgias, who had perhaps played a role in keeping the conversation going earlier over Callicles' irritated objections, disappears from the final pages of the dialogue; Polus, much earlier. Socrates' batlike friend Chaerephon, presumably still present, has contributed nothing for practically the entire dialogue. Callicles does not speak after agreeing to hear Socrates' final speech, although unlike the other two interlocutors of the dialogue, he is at least still being directly addressed during the speech. There is no reason, however, to suppose that Callicles adopts a life of philosophy in response to Socrates' appeals. Instead, where Plato's aporetic dialogues generally end up with the participants admitting that their previous efforts were unsatisfactory and they have more to do, the ending of the *Gorgias* is unusual both in Socrates' high level of confidence and in his isolation from his interlocutors.

It will not do to explain Socrates' isolation by saying that his attempts to copy his interlocutors' methods are inapt or artless, and that he therefore embarrasses himself to no purpose. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates' speeches are well tailored to the various styles he adopts and, overall, competent and occasionally elegant. The myth that spans the last five pages of the dialogue is one of the finest examples of epideictic rhetoric (rhetoric that attempts to persuade about what is praiseworthy and blameworthy) to be found in classical Athenian texts. The

blistering polemic of 515-521 may not be particularly pleasant, but it is certainly well-composed, as are the fables Socrates uses to argue against Callicles from analogy. Indeed, Plato may have rested his thumb on the scale, as some scholars believe Gorgias' responses to Socrates' questions to be a caricature or at least transparently illogical, and Polus is hardly an able student in his awkward and overblown channeling of Gorgianic rhetorical stylings.[117] Socrates' claim that rhetoric is a "knack" rather than an "art" (463b) compounds the insult Plato offers to contemporary rhetoricians: not only does Plato depict Socrates as a more capable orator than one of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean's most famous rhetoricians and that rhetorician's student, but Socrates claims that rhetoric isn't worth learning and, implicitly, that he's outperforming his interlocutors without any particular effort. And yet, in terms of its immediate effect on the audience Plato depicts, Socrates' rhetorical display achieves next to nothing. This is more telling than we usually realize.

It surprises nobody that Gorgias (in the dialogue) or his overenthusiastic and imperfectly competent student Polus fail to convince Socrates of their expansive claims. Plato hardly ever has Socrates learn much from his interlocutors, and paid rhetoricians are not the interlocutors one would expect to successfully persuade Socrates of anything. It is similarly unsurprising that Callicles fails, at least on Plato's terms, to demolish Socrates' entire way of life. But it's incongruous for Socrates to so thoroughly fail to persuade any of his interlocutors. Compare *Republic* I, where Thrasymachus' objections, which are not altogether unlike Callicles', are more than overcome; Thrasymachus quietly and helpfully participates throughout the rest of the long

[117] Cf. Levett, "Platonic Parody in the *Gorgias*", 216-218; Barney, "Gorgias' Defense: Plato and His Opponents on Rhetoric and the Good", 97-98.

conversation. In that part of the *Republic*, Socrates' methods are his usual: he establishes that Thrasymachus' conventionalist understanding of justice is incoherent, invites Thrasymachus to help discover what justice actually is, and moves on. Here, Socrates goes to much more effort, adopting a broad range of the rhetorical styles available to his contemporaries, and accomplishes far less.

This pattern makes very little sense if the *Gorgias* is a dialogue about the proper use of rhetoric, or about whether rhetoric is simply worthless or capable of pointing to justice. In either of these cases, Plato would be depicting Socrates' speeches as an *alternative* to the problematic and objectionable ones of his interlocutors, and one might expect Plato to portray a superior alternative in a superior light. But, in terms of the result, he doesn't. Confronted with interlocutors no more daunting than elsewhere (*Republic* I, *Protagoras*, etc.), Socrates does less well by employing this alternative "nobler" rhetoric. But if the *Gorgias* is a dialogue that primarily points to rhetoric's limitations, if the *Gorgias* sets up the supervillain theory, not to portray Socrates as a heroic opponent of supervillains, but to expose the hollowness of rhetoricians' entire claim to power, the failure of Socrates' rhetorical appeals is not only a natural way for Plato's narrative to end. It's very nearly necessary. If Socrates questioned Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, demonstrated that their claims didn't stand up to dialectical scrutiny, and proclaimed the rhetoricians defeated, Plato would have set up rhetoric as a mirror universe version of philosophy. Philosophers would deal strictly in truth, justice, and beauty, goateed rhetoricians would deal strictly in trickery and domination. The idea of a rhetoric that serves justice rather than ignoring it would be absurd, because rhetoric would be banished on principle from questions of justice.

Put another way, I am arguing that Plato's critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* is far deeper

than generally recognized. Instead of focusing on whether rhetoric is being used well or badly, Plato cuts all the way down to the question of whether rhetoric in fact grants speakers the kind of power that he has Socrates' interlocutors advertise. Once *that* claim is demolished, then rhetoric, whether directed to just or unjust ends, is dependent on the audience and therefore on the regime rather than on the speaker's own capacity for domination. And Plato attributes exactly this conclusion to Socrates at 513b-c:

"If you expect that anybody in all of humanity can give to you an art which will create great power for you in the city, while you remain unlike its regime (*politeia*), either better or worse, it seems to me you're not rightly advised, Callicles. ...Whoever can most completely make you like [the Athenian people] is the one to make you a rhetorician and a statesman, at least the sort of statesman you want to be, because everyone being addressed with the words they're accustomed to hearing is delighted, but vexed by those meant for foreigners."[118]

No rhetorician can bridge a sufficiently fundamental disjuncture between their own commitments and those of their audience. Socrates cannot dominate Callicles through rhetorical superiority; no matter how genuine the appeal to share a commitment to justice, the appeal relies on consent or at least cooperation to be effective. And by centering the incompatibility of Socrates' dialectical practice with Athens' spokesman in the dialogue, Plato demolishes rhetoric's access to domination and thereby excuses Socrates' failure to pursue the means of legal self-

[118] εἰ δέ σοι οἴει ὀντινοῦν ἀνθρώπων παραδώσειν τέχνην τινὰ τοιαύτην, ἥτις [513β] σε ποιήσει μέγα δύνασθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει τῇδε ἀνόμοιον ὄντα τῇ πολιτείᾳ εἴτ᾽ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον εἴτ᾽ ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, οὐκ ὀρθῶς βουλεύῃ, ὦ Καλλίκλεις … ὅστις οὖν σε τούτοις ὁμοιότατον ἀπεργάσεται, οὗτός σε ποιήσει, ὡς ἐπιθυμεῖς πολιτικὸς εἶναι, πολιτικὸν καὶ ῥητορικόν: τῷ αὐτῶν γὰρ [513ξ] ἤθει λεγομένων τῶν λόγων ἕκαστοι χαίρουσι, τῷ δὲ ἀλλοτρίῳ ἄχθονται, *Gorgias*, 513b-c. Perseus.

defense.

5. Conclusion: The genealogy of the rhetorical supervillain

Re-reading the *Gorgias* as an inquiry into the limits of rhetoric has a significant impact on how we can understand the role of rhetoric in political theory and practice. Aristotle's famous claim that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic, discussed in the previous chapter, is neither a straightforward repudiation of Plato's condemnation of rhetoric nor an attempt to define rhetoric in terms that constrain rhetoricians to standards of good behavior. Instead, it is primarily a methodological difference. Where Plato is carrying out a rather sharp-edged attack on sophists under the guise of a dialogue about the nature of rhetoric, Aristotle is attempting to define the terms on which a practice called "rhetoric", which we all agree is about persuasion in some sense, can be understood as a mode of intellectual endeavor. This re-reading of Plato's critique of rhetoric is therefore helpful for a relatively narrow project of trying to understand the work of ancient Greek philosophers more nearly on its own terms. But it has much broader political implications. If Plato is not in fact the theoretical origin point of the perspective that sees rhetoric as a uniquely damaging political practice, it is exceedingly difficult to find such origins elsewhere in classical political thought. Other critics of specific Athenian, Hellenic, or later, Roman political practices never suggest that rhetoric as such is the problem with those political practices. Instead, they see certain types of rhetorical practices as symptomatic of flaws in the political orders – the regimes – that they are criticizing.

In our contemporary political vocabulary, however, there is a very common usage of "rhetoric" that is not only strictly pejorative, but also simultaneously fearful and dismissive. To be rhetorical, on this usage, is both to fail to be intellectually rigorous – even to be anti-intellectual – and to threaten or disrupt the established and approved political order. We have an

idea of rhetoric as a tool of political contestation that is much closer to the one that (Plato's) Gorgias held than the one that Plato and Aristotle held: rhetoric produces the domination of audience members' passions and judgment. If this idea was not well regarded in classical political thought, what made it so much better regarded in much of our contemporary political thought? In the following two chapters, I argue that early modern political thinkers decisively broke with the ancients on the scope and capacity of rhetoric because this allowed for opposing "rhetoric" and "manipulation" to the concept of the instrumentally rational individual that was so crucial to their new political visions.

Chapter 4 Calculative Self-Interest, Fear, and Sovereignty: The Rhetoric of Hobbes' Translation of Thucydides

1. Introduction

This chapter uncovers a series of surprising and unconventional renderings in Thomas Hobbes' translation of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. These renderings, which center on the figure of Pericles and, to a lesser extent, Alcibiades, are symptomatic of a sophisticated and original Hobbesian engagement with the relationship between rhetoric, political order, and self-interested individuals, and Hobbes' engagement with these questions also carries broader significance for how we understand the role of rhetoric in modern political thought. Hobbes' Pericles directs his listeners to distrust rhetoricians engaged in political contestation in favor of their own calculative self-interest, inward-focused affective states, and consequent reasoning along the lines of Pericles' instruction. Along these lines, Hobbes sets Pericles up as a kind of sovereign educator: Pericles' education of the Athenian audience allows for temporarily overcoming the limits of collective deliberation by uniting them in the individual calculation of self-interest. A surprising parallel emerges in Hobbes' depiction of Alcibiades, who emerges as a sort of failed sovereign, consistently presenting Hobbesian psychological and political insights but without the standing or the political success required to unite and educate a city. Finally, by directing readers to learn from Thucydides, Hobbes also plays a role as a political educator who guides readers to reason from the correct premises that he himself has

provided. Hobbes' complex strategy allows for modeling a rhetorical appeal that reinforces sovereign authority and political order, denies the rhetorical status of this appeal, and portrays rhetoric that undermines political order as manipulative, self-serving, and representative of the entire category of "rhetoric". This rhetoric *about* rhetoric goes much further than the pattern in *Leviathan* that Bryan Garsten has described as "a rhetoric against rhetoric".[119] That is, Hobbes goes beyond directing his considerable persuasive skills toward frightening readers away from oratory as such, adopting a more complex strategy of persuading readers to discriminate between Hobbes' invented rhetorical categories. Hobbes is therefore committed to theorizing both an instrumentally rational individual subject and a new understanding of rhetoric as a manipulation of such subjects.

To develop Hobbes' commitments at this point in his long intellectual career and the translation strategy that he adopted to further these commitments, I begin by situating this paper in the wave of recent scholarly interest in Hobbes' translations of Thucydides and other works. Where most recent scholarship focuses on three prefatory notes to the translation, I emphasize Hobbes' renderings of the translation itself, which, while less explicit or argumentative than the prefatory notes, nonetheless comprise the "Thucydides" from whom Hobbes directed his readers to learn. Next, I analyze Hobbes' renderings of Periclean rhetoric in the opening books of the *History*, Thucydides' commentary on Alcibiades, and Alcibiades' combined apologia and

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[119] Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 25. On the modes and sophistication of Hobbes' rhetorical appeals, see Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Ted H. Miller, *Mortal Gods: Science, Politics, and the Humanist Ambitions of Thomas Hobbes* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011); Timothy Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

strategic advice to a Lacedaemonian audience and identify clear through lines that match Hobbes' own philosophical commitments, while differing from Hobbes' renderings of similar and even identical phrasing elsewhere in the *History*. These through lines evidence not only Hobbes' sympathies, but also a strategy of drawing readers toward those sympathies by emphasizing Pericles' wisdom, downplaying Alcibiades' flaws, and warning of the dangers of assemblies and rhetoricians. Finally, I connect the rhetoric of Hobbes' Pericles and Alcibiades to Hobbes' broader engagement with the relationship between rhetoric, politics, and philosophy. Hobbes' strategy in preparing and publishing the translation clarifies the role of eloquence in his political project. Rather than distinguishing between "good" or "bad" rhetorical techniques on the basis of the technique or of the substance of the appeals, Hobbes' critique of rhetoric targets the use of eloquence to extend or deepen a commonwealth's plurality, while reserving a role for practically any technique of persuasion as long as it elevates and secures the authority of the sovereign.

2. Translating Thucydides: Hobbes' Constraints and Opportunities

As the first work Hobbes published under his own name, the translation of Thucydides has received a steady increase of scholarly attention as a resource for understanding the early intellectual development of an important early modern philosopher and political theorist.[120]

[120] Arlene Saxonhouse has argued that Hobbes authored much of the *Horae Subsecivae*, published anonymously in 1620. Hobbes also wrote a Latin poem, *De Mirabilibus Pecci*, in the late 1620s, but this poem was not published until 1636. His translation of Thucydides is therefore the first published work he publicly claimed. See Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Hobbes and the 'Horae Subsecivae'", *Polity* 13, no. 4 (1981): 541-567, https://doi.org/

Rejecting an earlier tendency to downplay the translation's significance for Hobbes' broader intellectual projects, scholars have drawn on three prefatory notes to the translation – a dedicatory letter to Hobbes' student William Cavendish, the third Earl of Devonshire, a preface titled "To the Readers" explaining the value of Thucydides' history and describing the supplementary maps and notes, and a biographical introduction titled "On the life and history of Thucydides", henceforth "the Life" – and these notes' implications for the translation's role in Hobbes' broader intellectual project and in the early modern politics of translation.[121] Many of these analyses have relied on a binary set of possibilities: either Hobbes published, in Kinch Hoekstra's words, "a full and faithful translation", or else he engaged in a wholesale transformation of "his Thucydides into a thoroughgoing Hobbesian by selection and construal."[122] The latter possibility overstates the case of Hobbes' Thucydides, although Hobbes' translation of a highly condensed version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* probably does count as such a

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10.2307/3234640; Noel B. Reynolds and Arlene W. Saxonhouse, eds., *Three Discourses: A Critical Modern Edition of Newly Identified Work of the Young Hobbes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3-21. For critical reviews of the attribution to Hobbes of the *Horae*, see John C. Fortier, "Hobbes and "A Discourse of Laws": The Perils of Wordprint Analysis", *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 4 (1997), 861-887, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1408310; Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7. Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes*, 53-57, suggests that Hobbes played a "secretarial" role akin to a modern ghostwriter.

[121] Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, 229, 246-249, downplays the significance of the translation and assigns it to an early "humanist" phase in Hobbes' intellectual development. Scholarly treatments of the translation as a robust political or philosophical work include Ioannis D. Evrigenis, "Hobbes's Thucydides", *Journal of Military Ethics* 5, no. 4, 303-316, https://doi.org/10.1080/15027570601037749; Kinch Hoekstra, "Hobbes's Thucydides", in Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199791941.013.26.; Timothy Burns, "Hobbes and Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Thucydides, Rhetoric and Political Life", *Polis* 31 (2014): 387, https://doi.org/10.1163/20512996-12340022; Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes*; Alicia Steinmetz, "Hobbes and the Politics of Translation", *Political Theory*, February 2, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0090591720903393.

[122] Hoekstra, "Hobbes's Thucydides", 549.

drastic transformation of the original.[123] The former, however, neglects the influence of translators' political and intellectual commitments on their choice of language, as well as suggesting a moral dimension to the act of translation that may not readily apply.

Robin Sowerby's paper-length analysis of Hobbes' translation, the earliest of which I am aware, takes Hobbes' renderings of Thucydides' speeches to be "deliberative rhetoric at its most severely analytic and persuasive", and argues that the translation is emblematic of a broader Hobbesian practice of "employing the techniques of eloquence in the service of science".[124] Sowerby simply dismisses the possibility "of Hobbes' translation seriously misrepresenting the Greek", on the basis that "his intellectual integrity would not have allowed him to appropriate Thucydides' text to support some thesis of his own."[125] More recent studies of the politics of translation, both on translating Thucydides and on Hobbes' own career as a translator of classical texts, have complicated this account. Emily Greenwood's rich analysis of the methods and stylistic choices of Thucydides' translators has revealed a wide range in many of these choices, often connected to the cultural and political resources on which the different translators drew.[126] For example, Greenwood's own choices in her version of the horrific slaughter of Athenian

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[123] Thomas Sorell, "Hobbes's UnAristotelian Political Rhetoric", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 23, no.2 (1990), 97-98, 103-106, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237622; Ned O'Gorman, "Hobbes, Desire, and the Democratization of Rhetoric", *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 16, no.1 (2013), 4-8, https://doi.org/10. 1080/15362426. 2013. 763737. See also Don Paul Abbot, "'Eloquence is Power:' Hobbes on the Use and Abuse of Rhetoric", *Rhetorica* 32, no. 4 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1525/RH.2014.32.4.386; Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5, n.20.
[124] Sowerby, "Thomas Hobbes's Translation of Thucydides", *Translation and Literature* 7:2 (1998), 167, 165, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40339788.
[125] Sowerby, "Thomas Hobbes's Translation of Thucydides", 157.
[126] Emily Greenwood, "On Translating Thucydides", in Christine Lee and Neville Morley, eds., *A Handbook to the Reception of Thucydides* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 91-121, https://doi-org /10.1002/9781118980194.

forces at Syracuse draw on the horrors of trench warfare in the First World War, where she specifically references the work of Wilfred Owen.[127] We can compare this grim and bloody portrait of ancient warfare to 19th- and early 20th-century translations of Pericles' funeral oration, which turn the speaker into a proto-nationalist with truly overwrought appeals to a warlike and hypermasculinized patriotism.[128] Henry Jones has identified a systematic political intervention in Benjamin Jowett's translation of Thucydides, emphasizing the role of leaders in democratic cities, in keeping with the profoundly pessimistic assessment of the democratic masses' capacity for judgment that Jowett expressed in his private correspondence.[129] While most of her treatment of the Thucydides translation focuses on the frontispiece and prefatory materials, Alicia Steinmetz has pointed out that Hobbes' translation at times "gives the specific impression that words such as 'boldness' and 'modesty' merely expressed the subjective passions of those who used them".[130] Most strikingly, Alexandra Lianeri has argued that the hostility towards democratic governance that pervaded Hobbes' engagement with Thucydides shaped elite reception of classical texts and theories of collective governance for the following two centuries.[131]

Each of these engagements with the politics of translating Thucydides helpfully identify

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[127] Greenwood, "On Translating Thucydides", 114.
[128] Sowerby, "Thomas Hobbes' Translation of Thucydides", 163-164 describes these translations as "lyrically patriotic", which is perhaps too sympathetic.
[129] Henry Jones, "Jowett's Thucydides: A corpus-based analysis of translation as political intervention", *Translation Studies* Vol. 13, No. 3, 333-351, https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2020.1732230.
[130] Steinmetz, "Hobbes and the Politics of Translation", 9-10. Cf. Raylor's characterization of Hobbes rendering of Thucydides' method of recounting speeches as a "rather curious mistranslation". Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes*, 82.
[131] Alexandra Lianeri, "Translation and the Establishment of Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth Century England: Constructing the Political as an Interpretative Act", in Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, *Translation and Power* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 1-24.

strategic interventions in the act of translation, without attempting to explicitly evaluate whether these interventions cross a threshold of impugning the translator's integrity or faithfulness. This scholarly nuance is particularly appropriate when examining translations of Thucydides. Thucydides' own remarks at the beginning of the *History* are worth quoting: "I made each of the speakers say what it seemed to me the various occasions demanded of them, keeping as closely as possible to the overall intention of what they really said."[132] Scholars differ as to the precision with which Thucydides adhered to what was really said, the balance between the original speakers' intent and Thucydides' judgment of the rhetorical necessities the speakers faced, the implications of Thucydides' composition of key speeches for his historical project, and many further questions that this passage raises.[133] The complexities of Thucydides' own presentation of these speeches, and the tensions he faced in presenting these speeches, make it inevitable that translators would differ substantially over correct renderings, and that these differences might well communicate something important about the translators' commitments and agendas. As the first person to translate Thucydides into English from the original Greek, Hobbes had an almost unique opportunity to present an influential rendering of Thucydides that was consistent with

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[132] Thucydides, *Historiae in two volumes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1842), 1.22.1. Perseus. ὡς δ᾽ ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ᾽ εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.
Translations are my own, except where otherwise stated.

[133] Recent scholarship in which these questions are active and productive includes Sara Forsdyke, "Thucydides' Historical Method", in Sara Forsdyke, Edith Foster, and Ryan Balot, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Antonis Tsakmakis, "Speeches", in Sara Forsdyke, Edith Foster, and Ryan Balot, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Kinch Hoekstra and Mark Fisher, "Thucydides and the Politics of Necessity", in Sara Forsdyke, Edith Foster, and Ryan Balot, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Gottfried Mader, "Demagogic Style and Historical method: Locating Cleon's Mytilenean Rhetoric", *Rhetorica* 35, no.1 (2017), 1-23; Odysseus Makridis, "The Austere Demagogue: Thucydides on the Uses and Abuses of Periclean Rhetoric", *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 19 (2011), 268-284; C.M. Fauber, "Hermocrates and Thucydides: Rhetoric, Policy, and the Speeches in Thucydides' 'History'", *Illinois Classical Studies* 26 (2001), 37-51.

Hobbes' commitments and agenda.

The question, then, is where to find the evidence of Hobbes' commitments and how those commitments found a voice in Hobbes' Thucydides. So far, the scholarship on this text has focused mostly on Hobbes' prefatory comments, with occasional general analyses of the translation's tone or references to relatively isolated choices of terms. But might Hobbes have had a more specific idea of how readers should learn from Thucydides? We should not expect any positive lessons to be learned from "the demagogues" whose "crossing of each other's counsels" resulted in "the damage of the public".[134] Hobbes would have no interest in contemporary scholarship on the lessons of Diodotus, for example, because in his view, the Mytilene debate is an example of undisciplined glory-seeking squabbles over the approval of the multitude.[135] Similarly, Hobbes repeatedly (and reasonably) centers Thucydides' narrative and the political opinions that he attributes to Thucydides on Athens, while presenting Thucydides as anticipating and rejecting Aristotelian political typologies. While Thucydides "least of all liked the democracy" and had no patience for "the authority of the few", he most "commendeth" the Athenian government "when Peisistratus reigned, (saving that it was an usurped power), and when in the beginning of the war it was democratical in name, but in effect monarchical under

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[134] Hobbes, "Life". Perseus.

[135] Recent insights that Hobbes would disregard may be found in: Laurie M. Johnston, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 104-116; Clifford Orwin*, The Humanity of Thucydides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 146-162; Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Athenian Democracy: Modern Mythmakers and Ancient Theorists* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 72, 75-78; Susan Bickford, "Emotion Talk and Political Judgment", *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 73, No. 4 (2011), 1025-1037; Joel Alden Schlosser, "'Hope, Danger's Comforter': Thucydides, Hope, Politics", *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 75, No.1 (2012), 169-182; Edward M. Harris, "How to Address the Athenian Assembly: Rhetoric and Political Tactics in the Debate About Mytilene (Thuc. 3.37-50)", *The Classical Quarterly* New Series, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2013), 94-109.

Pericles."[136] This says a great deal more than might be apparent. Those familiar with Aristotle's political typologies, as many of Hobbes readers were, would readily have noticed that Hobbes reduces Peisistratus' tyranny to the specific fact of "usurped power" and otherwise collapses Peisistratus' and Pericles' rule into examples of monarchy. In keeping with his own royalism, Hobbes offers only the barest lip service to Athenian "mixed" government under the Five Thousand, immediately after sharp attacks on both democracy and oligarchy and immediately before emphasizing Thucydides' sympathies for "the regal government". Athens is the city of primary interest to the reader, Hobbes makes clear, and of the Athenian leaders and political figures, the only one to receive any explicit praise in the prefatory materials is Pericles. Timothy Raylor accurately summarizes the tone of the prefatory comments, as well as the margin notes to the translation, when he comments that "[w]ith the sole exception of Pericles, there is no place in Hobbes's Thucydides for the honest practitioner of public eloquence".[137]

Hobbes directs attention to Pericles' role in the History in the "Life", both explicitly and by contrast with the competing Athenian rhetoricians whom he connects to his parliamentarian nemeses. In discussing Thucydides' early life and education, Hobbes emphasizes the fact that Thucydides' teacher in philosophy also taught Socrates and Pericles. Hobbes' comment that "in those days it was impossible for any man to give good and profitable counsel for the commonwealth, and not incur the displeasure of the people" clearly refers to the end of Pericles' career, and explaining Thucydides' preference for history over direct political engagement in

[136] Hobbes, "Life". Perseus.
[137] Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes*, 81.

terms of Pericles' eventual loss of support ties the two figures together.[138] Similarly, Hobbes emphasizes Cleon's responsibility for banishing Thucydides. Since Cleon began his political career as one of Pericles' foremost political opponents and quite possibly the instigator of Pericles' prosecution for misusing public funds, this again emphasizes a biographical connection between Thucydides and Pericles.[139] I therefore begin my examination of Hobbes' translation with his treatment of Pericles, who stands as the kind of sovereign monarchic figure who Hobbes could reasonably have endorsed as a guide to the fractious and competing Athenian multitudes. Alcibiades enters the reading later, but not because Hobbes ever explicitly praises Alcibiades in the prefatory notes. Instead, during the period of political deformation after Pericles' death, Hobbes presents Alcibiades as a tragic parallel to the former leader of the Athenians.

3. Periclean rhetoric and self-interest

Pericles' funeral oration is hardly the first place in which a contemporary reader would look for a political vision of calculation and self-interest. After all, the final section of the speech begins in roughly the following way in practically all recent renderings:

"Do not consider mere arguments about profit. Anyone can wax on about these, even though you yourselves know no less than he does about the benefits to be gained by bravely

[138] Thomas Hobbes, "On the life and history of Thucydides", in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Thucydides* (London: Bohn, 1843). Perseus.
[139] Plutarch mentions Cleon as the first of three possible prosecutors of Pericles identified by historians of the 4th century BCE. Plutarch, *Pericles*, Ch. 35.3. Perseus.

resisting the enemy. Instead, gaze daily on the city's real power, and become her lovers . . ."[140]

Here, on the other hand, is Hobbes:

"And for you that remain, you may pray for a safer fortune, but you ought not to be less venturously minded against the enemy, not weighing the profit by an oration only, which any man amplifying may recount to you that know as well as he the many commodities that arise by fighting valiantly against your enemies, *but contemplating the power of the city in the actions of the same from day to day performed and thereby becoming enamoured of it.*"[141]

Hobbes' rendering shifts the passage's tone in two important ways, compared to recent renderings and to today's scholarship on the passage. First, Hobbes' Pericles emphasizes the practical calculation of power and interest over appeals to affect and the implication of an erastic relationship between citizen and city. Second, Hobbes has Pericles frame this calculation not in terms of collective deliberation, or even as an instruction for the audience to accept Pericles' judgment as their own, but instead as a call for individuals to cultivate a capacity for their own calculation of their interests. Taking these shifts together, Hobbes sets up Pericles as an educator of both the Athenian audience and Hobbes' own readers, directing both audiences to abandon the counsels of orators in favor of calmly calculating what actions advance the self-interest of

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[140] Thucydides, II.43.1. Perseus. σκοποῦντας μὴ λόγῳ μόνῳ τὴν ὠφελίαν, ἣν ἄν τις πρὸς οὐδὲν χεῖρον αὐτοὺς ὑμᾶς εἰδότας μηκύνοι, λέγων ὅσα ἐν τῷ τοὺς πολεμίους ἀμύνεσθαι ἀγαθὰ ἔνεστιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὴν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμένους καὶ ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς…
For consistency with other recent translations, compare: S. Sara Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 68; Martin Hammond, trans., *The Peloponnesian War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Jeremy Mynott, trans., *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On the significance of Pericles' speech as a vision of Athenian democracy, see Ryan Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25-46.
[141] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 2.43. Perseus. Emphasis is mine.

individual audience members. In this section, I draw on Sara Monoson's reading of the passage to sketch an influential contemporary account and develop the two ways that Hobbes' rendering shifts the passage away from this scholarship. I then address Sowerby's claim that the overall tone of Hobbes' rendering represents a broader translation strategy, providing evidence that Hobbes translates Periclean rhetoric differently from other orators in the *History*, such as Cleon.

As Sara Monoson has argued, Pericles' appeal carried powerful cultural connotations that combined an invocation of citizens' need for the city with an appeal to make difficult choices on the city's behalf.[142] By identifying service to the city with the role of *erastēs*, Pericles draws on the norms of Athenian masculinity in a way that appeals to all male citizens and emphasizes the importance of political unity. Since Athenian masculinity (*andreia*, which literally meant "manliness" but was the most common term in Attic Greek for "courage") required a daring willingness to expose oneself to danger, Pericles' appeal is particularly appropriate for his wartime agenda. Finally, and crucially for Monoson's reading, Pericles' reference to the erastic relationship emphasizes "relations of mutuality" that both offer a unique vision of individual contributions to a healthy *polis* and suggest a sort of balance and self-restraint that would have advanced Pericles' policy of limited "defensive" war. This reading also fits with the prior sentence, in which Pericles wishes to direct the audience's attention away from someone who would merely speak of the "advantages" to be procured from defending the city in war.

Hobbes' rendering, however, carries very different political implications. Hobbes begins to de-emphasize the erotic and affective ties in this appeal with the highly unusual choice to

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[142] Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 68-90.

translate *theômênous* ("gazing on") as "contemplating", which in a similar participial form would be *theôreoménous*. While the latter word – in Attic Greek – derives from the former, the two are distinct and there is no textual basis for conflating them. It is unlikely that Hobbes simply missed the standard translation here. As Sowerby has argued, Hobbes' translation from the Greek is strikingly competent on both literary and stylistic levels, particularly compared to previous translations that had relied overmuch on Latin versions of the text.[143] It is also implausible to read "contemplating" as carrying the normal force of the Greek term. While there is evidence of a usage of "contemplate" in a visual sense in English from the 16th century onward, even that sense of the word carries an abstracted and often intellectual force.[144] Elsewhere in the *History*, Hobbes' uses of the noun form "contemplation" emphasize a calculative consideration of factors that ought to inform a decision or action. To the extent that contemplation involves affective factors, the affects involved are treated as data for calculation, rather than themselves action-guiding.[145] Similarly, Hobbes' uses of the verb "contemplate" elsewhere in his work are strictly intellectual.[146] In one of *Leviathan*'s most famous passages, Hobbes has people "taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest,

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[143] Sowerby, "Thomas Hobbes's Translation of Thucydides", *Translation and Literature* 7:2 (1998), 147-169.
[144] For example, the Oxford English Dictionary cites uses of "contemplate" to describe astronomical observations (1533) and God's consideration of the works of creation on the seventh day (1605); the latter, by Francis Bacon. "contemplate, v.1". OED Online. September 2020. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/11125 (accessed December 06, 2020).
[145] Cleon: "in contemplation of (*tēi gnōmēi,* "keeping in mind") what you were near suffering…requite them now accordingly". Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 3.40.7. Perseus. The Plataean delegates urge Sparta to exercise "a moderate compassion" on their city "in contemplation (*katanoountas*) not only of the greatness of the punishment but also of who we are that must suffer and of the uncertainty where calamity may light, and that undeservedly." Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 3.59.1. Perseus. Hermocrates: "In contemplation (*gnontas*) whereof, we ought…to return again into amity". Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 4.61.2. Perseus.
[146] Hobbes, in "The Authors Preface" of *De Cive*: "Other [pre-Socratic] philosophers in the mean time, to the advantage of mankind, did contemplate the faces, and motions of things; others, without disadvantage, their natures, and causes." Hobbes, *De Cive* (London: R. Royston, 1651). Constitution Society.

which they pursue farther than their security requires".[147] Here, the misaligned object of calculation – the libidinous attachment to one's own power, which distracts from seeking peace – leads to the war of everyone against everyone in the state of nature, where Pericles' audience would have been well directed to contemplate the *city's* power, and therefore to restrain themselves and follow Pericles' war policy.

We therefore have a clear pattern of usage, in Hobbes' terminology, that points to Pericles telling his listeners to carefully and coldly consider the city's power, the effect of that power on their own well-being, and therefore to devote their energy to securing the city that protects their own lives and flourishing. Since *theômênous*, as Monoson has pointed out, carries in this context an erotic connotation, Hobbes' rendering intellectualizes Pericles' appeal. Hobbes' rendering of *ergôi* as "in the actions of the same", rather than idiomatic "real" or "genuine" that the reference to "deeds" generally suggested in Athenian rhetoric, tends also to suggest a cold analysis of Athens' capabilities. And similarly, the unconventional attachment of "daily" to Athens' actions rather than to the act of beholding the city suggests, in Hobbes' rendering, that the audience need only make up their minds about the city's worth, rather than making a habit of devotion to the city. This tendency to intellectualize and de-eroticize Pericles' appeal continues at the end of the phrase, rendered by Hobbes as "becoming enamoured of it" rather than "becoming her lovers". Here, Hobbes neuters the feminine adjective *autên*, further disembodying Pericles' appeal and creating intellectual distance between the audience and the object of their commitment.

At the same time, Hobbes individualizes the target of Pericles' appeal by emphasizing a

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[147] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 75.

call for citizens to displace the appeals of orators in favor of their own calculative contemplation. My translation above, like many other translations since Hobbes', contrasts the possibility of making lengthy calculations about the self-interested reasons for fighting for Athens with Pericles' appeal to create embodied and erotic ties to the city's wellbeing.[148] In other words, I see Pericles directing the audience's attention to the city's power and imperial excellence in hopes that these will instill affective ties in the audience, beyond the simple calculation that a Peloponnesian victory would probably be bad for most individual Athenians. Hobbes, instead of contrasting self-interested calculation with a focus on collective excellence, contrasts the choice of *personally* calculating the benefits of attaching oneself to a powerful entity likely to win its current conflicts with trusting an orator's assessment of these benefits. In other words, Hobbes' translation has Pericles' funeral oration reminding his audience of truths that they could determine for themselves and urging the audience not to trust others to do that work for them. For Hobbes, properly calculating self-interest requires a distrust of anyone who would tell an audience to accept something without properly demonstrating it.

One might suppose that these renderings are characteristic of Hobbes' broader style, instead of a focused approach to translating Periclean rhetoric. Robin Sowerby has argued that Hobbes' adoption of "rhetorical restraint" in his translation of Thucydides, in which "the appeal is always primarily to the intellect", points the way to a Hobbesian project of "employing the techniques of eloquence in the service of science."[149] Sowerby's conclusion, provided one

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[148] Cf. Benjamin Jowett, trans., *Thucydides translated into English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881). Perseus. Richard Crawley, trans., *History of the Peloponnesian War* (London: J.M. Dent, 1910). Perseus. Hammond, *The Peloponnesian War.* Mynott, *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*.
[149] Sowerby, "Thomas Hobbes's Translation of Thucydides", 162-165.

substitutes for "science" a term more appropriate to Hobbes' commitments in the late 1620s, is not far off the mark. But in focusing primarily on the funeral oration, Sowerby misses that Hobbes' preference for calculative, intellectual phrasing is not uniformly expressed in key orations from the *History*. For example, Hobbes presents Cleon's diatribe against Mytilene in its full polemical color. Cleon accuses his listeners of "becoming softened" (*malakízesthai*) without earning any "favors" (*chárin*) from their allies.[150] While this language can be read as sexual innuendo in English, their force in Attic Greek is considerably more explicit. Hobbes preserves this in his rendering of Cleon's speech, in which the *ekklêsia* "are *softened* thus to the danger of the commonwealth not to *the winning of the affections* of your confederates".[151] This already differs from the way Hobbes intellectualizes the erotic metaphor that I've discussed above, from the end of Pericles' funeral oration. But in fact, Hobbes translates the very same Greek word differently when he encounters it in the funeral oration.

Pericles celebrates Athenians' moderation as follows: "For we love beauty, yet with simple tastes, and wisdom, yet without softness."[152] Here, Pericles is responding to a critique of Athenian norms, on which an excessive focus on art and philosophy could leave them unable to compete with the austere physical training of Spartan hoplites. For Pericles, the crucial point here is that a robust intellectual life does not trade off with physical courage or competence. As elsewhere in Pericles' speeches, Hobbes' rendering entirely changes the force of the metaphor when the last phrase becomes "yet without mollification of the mind." Here, Hobbes not only

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[150] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 3.37. Perseus.
[151] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 3.37. Perseus.
[152] *Historiae* 2.40: φιλοκαλοῦμέν τε γὰρ μετ᾽ εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας. Perseus. Jowett translates *malakías* as "loss of manliness"; Mynott as "effete".

removes any hint of the sexual metaphor involved, but also suggests that the moderation Pericles is describing is between mental exercise and mental exhaustion, rather than between wisdom and strength. The key virtue that Periclean rhetoric encourages, on Hobbes' interpretation, is mental flexibility that allows individuals to rationally determine what is in their own self-interest, which produces military and civic strength insofar as such strength protects the interests of individuals.

An important consequence of Hobbes' Periclean rhetoric is the proper situating of honor-seeking and glory-seeking behavior within the wartime polis.[153] Given Hobbes' tendency to suppress erotic and affective aspects of Pericles' rhetorical appeals, it is striking that references to honor and glory pervade the passage: being "sensible of dishonour" aided the "valiant men" who died to secure the city's power; their contribution was "most honourable"; "their glory is laid up upon all occasions both of speech and action to be remembered forever."[154] Far from warning against pursuing glory in wartime, Hobbes' Pericles specifically urges his listeners to imitate these glorious predecessors. It turns out, however, that the sort of glory that Pericles' listeners have to look forward to is quite consistent with the broader objectives of calculative self-interest and political order. As recent commentators have pointed out, Hobbes' assessment that a certain level of glory-seeking is characteristic of humans, due to the connection between honor and power, is tempered by two other considerations: the possibility of educating individuals about the possible and desirable kinds of glory through the sovereign's instruction, and the possibility of aweing them and curbing their ambitions through the power of the

[153] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.
[154] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 2.43. Perseus.

commonwealth.[155] Each of these considerations appears in the rhetoric of Hobbes' Pericles. The only kind of honor or glory worth seeking, on an individual level, is dependent on the city's victory and prosperity. It is not only the case that glory and honor only obtain because of the judgments of others, but also that *martial* glory and honor depend entirely on the individual's contribution to collective success. Where the competition of orators for the multitude's affections brings civic danger with success, the efforts of soldiers, Hobbes' Pericles makes clear, bring the city's salvation. As a result, Hobbes has Pericles draw on what Hobbes and Thucydides agree to be the fundamental human desire for honor, and indeed use that desire as a part of the self-interest that the listeners must calculate.

With the central Hobbesian virtue – the cultivated capacity for self-interested calculation – in mind, a brief return to the beginning of this section is in order. The cumulative effect of Hobbes' rendering of these passages of the funeral oration is to quiet the distinction between individual profit and the collective good of the city, while introducing a distinction between being guided by an "oration" that lacks epistemic authority and being guided by Pericles' advice to examine the effects of the city's power on the individuals' well-being. Hobbes' Pericles advises his listeners to disregard rhetoricians, on the basis that rhetoricians possess no worthwhile knowledge that the listeners, "who know as well as [they]" the profits of victory, lack. This is not self-deprecation. Pericles, in Hobbes' presentation, is protecting his political leadership by speaking directly to the people while simultaneously isolating them from those

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[155] Cf. Gabriella Slomp, "Hobbes on Glory and Civil Strife", in Patricia Springborg, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's* Leviathan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181-198; Tracy B Strong, "Glory and the Law in Hobbes", *European Journal of Political Theory* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2017), 61-76.

rhetoricians, such as Cleon, who would undermine it. Put another way, Hobbes has Pericles draw a distinction between "rhetoric", which Pericles' rivals use while seeking power and glory, and Pericles' instruction of the audience in the principles of right reason. This highly original distinction connects rhetoric with domination, and the monarchic instruction of Pericles with sovereign guidance for the calculative and rational individual subject.

4. Periclean rhetoric and civic unity

While the former connection proved very productive for Hobbes' project and others, the latter connection between rational and calculative self-interest, monarchic instruction, and civic order is highly unstable. Hobbes' Pericles strengthens this connection by emphasizing individual calculation as an essentially political act, as well as by arguing that individual self-interest can only be advanced through political unity. These elements are especially clear elsewhere in the *History*, when Pericles encourages the Athenians to choose war over retrenchment at the end of Book I and when he defends his war policy shortly before his death late in Book II. In these passages, Hobbes finds powerful resources for appeals to self-interest while emphasizing the role of collective power in securing self-interested citizens from external threats. For example, Hobbes repeatedly renders Pericles' references to slavery as an alternative to Athens' continued dominance in terms of becoming "subject". The first instance involves a refusal to comply with Peloponnesian demands, on the basis that "a great and a little claim imposed by equals upon their neighbours before judgment by way of command hath one and the same virtue, to make subject

(*doúlōsin*)."[156] At stake here is a move from a very personal threat – Pericles telling the Athenians that they must choose war or slavery – to the threat of the status of "subject", which is an exclusively political concept in Hobbes' vocabulary. This allows Hobbes to create a narrative parallel, where one might not otherwise exist, between Pericles warning the Athenians that the Peloponnesians intend to "make [them] subject" at 1.141 and Pericles describing the choice to end the war as a choice to "be subject" (*hupakousai*, literally to "give ear to" the enemy) at 2.61.

One can imagine a very different narrative parallel emerging from Pericles' claim (at 1.141) that the Spartans seek to enslave the Athenians (omitted at 2.61, in favor of the milder term *hupakousai* to describe the cost of defeat and retrenchment) and his claim at 2.61 that the Athenians' spirits are brought low by their recent military reverses because "that which is unforeseen and unexpected and furthest outside calculation enslaves the mind."[157] Reading the speeches together this way would suggest that in the earlier speech, Pericles is attempting to outrage his audience at the thought of being enslaved, as part of a broader strategy to gain support for war. In the later speech, his audience is already angry *at him* and he uses calmer language to cool them down, cause them to reflect on what he sees as the basic soundness of his war strategy, and retain his political influence in Athens. A note of petulance shows through in Pericles' snappish accusation that his listeners' minds are enslaved, as well as his repeated reminders to the Athenians that they voted for the war measures they now disapproved of. One could read these passages as tragically exposing the flaws in Pericles' audience, as Thucydides

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[156] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 1.141. This is not simply an idiosyncrasy; Hobbes translates the same root elsewhere in terms of slavery.
[157] *Historiae* II.61: δουλοῖ γὰρ φρόνημα τὸ αἰφνίδιον καὶ ἀπροσδόκητον καὶ τὸ πλείστῳ παραλόγῳ. Hobbes: "For that which is sudden and unexpected and contrary to what one hath deliberated enslaveth the spirit".

seems to when reflecting on Pericles' life in the following passage, or as evidence of the problems with both Pericles and his audience that Socrates identifies in Plato's *Gorgias*. Hobbes' rendering goes beyond this critical aspect by presenting Pericles as a voice of reason at all times, flattening the variations in tone, affect, and vocabulary across Pericles' speeches. As a result, the Athenian audience becomes more inconsistent and unreasonable than would otherwise be the case.

Hobbes' rendering sharpens Pericles' discussion of collective power and its challenges. By phrasing the threats to Athens in terms of threats to Athens as a political unit, Hobbes' Pericles makes collective action seem easier, or at least necessary, for his fellow Athenians while heightening the perceived difficulty of collective action among Athens' enemies. Thus, Pericles claims that the Peloponnesians' greatest weakness in fighting Athens is that

"inasmuch as not having one and the same counsel, they can speedily perform nothing upon the occasion; and having equality of vote and being of several races, everyone will press his particular interest, whereby nothing is like to be fully executed. For some will desire to take revenge on some enemy and others to have their estates least wasted. And being long before they can assemble, they take the lesser part of their time to debate the common business and the greater to dispatch their own private affairs. And everyone supposeth that his own neglect of the common estate can do little hurt and that it will be the care of somebody else to look to that for his own good, not observing how by these thoughts of everyone in several the common business is jointly ruined."[158]

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[158] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 1.141.

This criticism of the Peloponnesian alliance ought to apply even more severely, on Hobbes' terms, to the Athenians themselves. After all, the Athenians have many political counselors, have equal voting rights among thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of Athenians, and disagree on the amount of damage to their "estates" that they are willing to tolerate. The crucial link that makes the Athenians' deliberations temporarily less disastrous than Pericles expects their enemies' deliberations to be, at least for Hobbes, is Pericles himself, who repeatedly summons the Athenians to more unity than they otherwise would be capable of. When Hobbes' Pericles maintains that "a private man, though in good estate, if his country come to ruin, must of necessity be ruined with it; whereas he that miscarrieth in a flourishing commonwealth shall much more easily be preserved", Hobbes ends up attributing to Pericles the temporary ability to unite Athenians' disparate interests through convincing them that those interests can only be achieved through a continued commitment to the Athenian commonwealth.

Rendering Pericles' rhetoric as an appeal to calculative self-interest means that political unity depends on a stable relationship between self-interest and the commonwealth. Hobbes' renderings of Periclean rhetoric reinforce this relationship. Pericles consistently disciplines Athenians' sense of fear, teaching them to avoid that which most threatens their wellbeing and to manage risk rationally. The worst evil an Athenian can face, Hobbes' Pericles instructs them, is the disintegration of the city that allows them to live flourishing lives. Only the city's power stands between Pericles' listeners and destruction. Their courageous service to the city is therefore an act of rational self-defense, and they should look to the threat of political subjugation, which would remove the commonwealth's aegis from above them, as a guide for policy.

5. Fear, self-interest, and Alcibiades' Hobbesian insights

For Hobbes, any politician without Pericles' manifest superiority is sufficiently equal to other politicians that a struggle for public preeminence is risky and even hubristic.[159] As a result, in Hobbes' rendering, Alcibiades emerges as a unique character in Athenian politics after Pericles' demise. Alcibiades' brazen self-centeredness, if less praiseworthy than Thucydides' own withdrawal from politics, nonetheless allows for pithy expressions of self-interest outside the context of what Hobbes calls Pericles' monarchy. Hobbes moderates Thucydides' criticism of Alcibiades from the latter's first appearance in the *History* by distinguishing between the masses' justified distaste for Alcibiades' extravagance and personal irresponsibility and what Hobbes portrays as their unjustified fear that Alcibiades desired a tyrant's power and prestige. Later in the translation, Hobbes' Alcibiades takes a position of epistemic authority before a Spartan audience that resembles the authority Hobbes' Pericles held over the Athenians. In this position, Alcibiades turns out to offer a strikingly Hobbesian perspective on fear, self-interest, and military psychology.

Early in the debates over the Sicilian expedition, where Thucydides introduces Alcibiades, both Alcibiades' great talents and his essential untrustworthiness emerge:

"The masses feared him on account of the magnitude (*mégethos*), both of the lawlessness (*paranomías*) of his way of life, and the ambition (*dianoías*) that guided everything he did, as if he desired a tyranny, and so set themselves against him. Because of this, although he managed the war forcefully (*krátista*) on behalf of the *demos*, his private habits offended each of them and

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[159] Cf. Hobbes' argument from "natural" equality in *Leviathan* XIII.1-2. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Curley, 74-75.

they turned to others, and thus, not long after, ruined the city."[160]

While Thucydides believes Alcibiades' generalship offered Athens' best chances at an aggressive war policy, it is crucial to note that he treats the Athenians' grievances as legitimate. Thucydides treats Alcibiades' lawlessness as genuine, not as the allegations of political rivals that Pericles suffered from at the end of his life. Similarly, he attributes Alcibiades' every action to the guiding force of an overwhelming ambition, making him at least resemble an aspiring target. While the Athenians' distrust had tragic consequences, these consequences flow in part from the mistake of putting the war policy in his hands to begin with.

For Hobbes, however, Alcibiades' downfall stems largely from demotic envy of his genuine greatness:

"For most men fearing him, both for his excess in things that concerned his person and form of life and for the greatness of his spirit in every particular action he undertook, as one that aspired to the tyranny, they became his enemy. And although for the public he excellently managed the war, yet every man, privately displeased with his course of life, gave the charge of the wars to others, and thereby not long after overthrew the state."[161]

By splitting the overreach of Alcibiades' life into "excess" in his personal habits but genuine "greatness of spirit" in his public actions, Hobbes partly delegitimizes the fear that Alcibiades secretly craved tyranny. The rendering of *dianoias* as "greatness of spirit" further

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[160] *Historiae* 6.15: φοβηθέντες γὰρ αὐτοῦ οἱ πολλοὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς τε κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα παρανομίας ἐς τὴν δίαιταν καὶ τῆς διανοίας ὧν καθ᾽ ἓν ἕκαστον ἐν ὅτῳ γίγνοιτο ἔπρασσεν, ὡς τυραννίδος ἐπιθυμοῦντι πολέμιοι καθέστασαν, καὶ δημοσίᾳ κράτιστα διαθέντι τὰ τοῦ πολέμου ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστοι τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν αὐτοῦ ἀχθεσθέντες, καὶ ἄλλοις ἐπιτρέψαντες, οὐ διὰ μακροῦ ἔσφηλαν τὴν πόλιν. Perseus.
[161] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 6.15. Perseus.

suggests a natural superiority that bore out in Alcibiades' public acts, instead of a fundamental desire for superiority guiding Alcibiades' plans and decisions.[162] In the following sentence, Hobbes alters the contrast between Alcibiades' actions in private (*idía*$_i$) and on behalf of the people (*dēmosía*$_i$), which offers a parallel with the causes of the Athenians' fear, to instead emphasize that the Athenians' dissatisfaction with Alcibiades stemmed from individuals' private, or insufficiently public-minded, judgments of his behavior. The Athenians are therefore largely to blame for alienating him, and in so doing, for the overthrow of the state.[163]

This is not to say that Hobbes uncritically endorses Alcibiades. His rendering of Alcibiades' various speeches echo aspects of his rendering of Pericles', as when Alcibiades defends his excessive expenditures on Olympic teams and the arts on the grounds that "to strangers this also is an argument of our greatness."[164] Where Hobbes' Pericles called on Athenians to recognize the relationship between Athens' power and their own self-interest, Hobbes' Alcibiades claims that he performs the vital civic role of making Athens look powerful. But not only does this assessment imply that Athens' power is debatable (at the same time as Alcibiades calls for an incredibly ambitious and costly military adventure!), it highlights the extent to which Alcibiades' ambition is only accidentally connected to Athenian success. Similarly, where Pericles defended his wartime policies by appealing to collective interests,

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[162] Cf. Mynott ("ambitions"); Hammond ("huge ambition"). Even Jowett, who often follows Hobbes quite closely, renders *dianoias* as "far-reaching purposes". Compare also Aristotle's virtue of "greatness of soul" (*megalopsuchia"*).
[163] C.D.C. Reeve, "Alcibiades and the Politics of Rumor in Thucydides", *Philosophic Exchange* 42:1 (2011), 8-11, argues for a reading of Alcibiades very similar to the one I attribute to Hobbes. Steven Forde, *The Ambition to Rule* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 72-75, takes Thucydides as at least somewhat sympathetic to Alcibiades in that Alcibiades' character and talents offered Athens its best chance at victory later in the war.
[164] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 6.16. Perseus.

Alcibiades defends himself by chiding the Athenians for their envy and telling them that they will be proud of him after he dies.

Hobbes praises Alcibiades with faint damnation. Hobbes paints democratic political contestation with the broadest of brushes, condemning all Athenian political figures after Pericles as petty self-promoters whose policy disagreements are mere interpersonal squabbles. The wisest response to such a political degeneration and the threats that it poses to competent potential leaders, on Hobbes' view, is the response he attributes to Thucydides: engage in politics only as one is obligated, and quietly write history and political advice instead. Someone with Alcibiades' ambitions, however, could not accept such a withdrawal. Instead, Hobbes portrays Alcibiades as having learned all the lessons from Pericles that his ambition could permit. Hobbes' Alcibiades understands the extent of the backbiting, envy, and mistrust to be directed at anyone of his talents, as well as the overall degeneration of Athenian politics. As a result, Hobbes' Alcibiades presents a different and more cynical version of calculative self-interest, along with a series of characteristically Hobbesian psychological insights.

Alcibiades' unexpected Hobbesian insights are particularly evident in his speech to the Spartans, explaining why they should accept him as a useful advisor because – not in spite – of his willingness to betray Athens. His sharp and elegant synthesis of fear and reason, as well as his sweeping redefinition of the love of one's city, deserve particular attention. The first of these, found in his strategic advice to the Spartans, connects Hobbes' presentation of Periclean calculation with his later direct appeal to fear in *Leviathan* and elsewhere. According to Hobbes' Alcibiades, the Spartans should invade and fortify a key location in Attica because this tactic is:

"a thing which the Athenians themselves most fear, and reckon for the only evil they have not yet tasted in this war. And the way to hurt an enemy most is to know certainly what he most

feareth and to bring the same upon him. For in reason a man therefore feareth a thing most as having the precisest knowledge of what will most hurt him."[165]

This claim involves translational moves of the kind we've seen already and a broad and characteristically Hobbesian psychological claim. The renderings of *saphōs* (generally "clearly" or "distinctly") as "certainly" and of *punthanomenos* ("learning" or "finding out") as "to know" tend toward a tone of epistemic certainty that matches Hobbes' later intellectual tendencies. They also have the rhetorical function of emphasizing Alcibiades' authority as a strategist and informant, because only a high-ranking Athenian defector could claim "to know certainly" the Athenians' greatest fears. In the same way that Hobbes' Pericles establishes a relationship of epistemic sovereignty over the ekklesia, Hobbes' Alcibiades sets himself up as authoritative over his Spartan listeners.

The deeper connection between fear and knowledge or reason is also worth examining. Alcibiades' argument for the value of his inside information can be read in a fairly minimalist sense of psychological warfare: exploiting an enemy's fears in some way is likely to accomplish more than the direct material results of the attack would otherwise have done. Here, the psychological value of fear is doing all the work for Alcibiades – inflicting the Athenians' worst fears on them will be useful because it would be terrifying, and therefore hurt the Athenians worse than if they simply calculated the damage caused by another Peloponnesian incursion into Attica. The connection between fear and strategy is a negative one; exploiting an enemy's fears

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[165] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 6.91. Perseus. Mynott: "The surest way to hurt your enemies is to identify clearly the things they most dread and then inflict those on them, since naturally everyone knows precisely what their own worst terrors are and fears them accordingly."

is the surest way to cause harm because the enemies know their own fears, while they may not know what their true strategic weaknesses are. Alcibiades, on this rendering, may well be mobilizing the Spartan perception of Athenian politics as unwise, overreaching, and prone to departures from well-informed strategic thinking.

Hobbes, however, has Alcibiades taking Athenian fear as strategically valuable instead of as psychologically valuable, and therefore has Alcibiades suggesting that fear reflects" one's actual knowledge. Knowing an enemy's worst fear is "the way to hurt an enemy most" – not the "surest" way, as most other translators render it – because the enemy has private knowledge of what is actually harmful to them and their fears reflect this knowledge. Alcibiades' insight is valuable to the Spartans because it makes this private knowledge indirectly available. Hobbes further reinforces this move toward reading fear as rational when he renders *eikos* ("naturally" for Mynott), which generally identifies an assertion as plausible, as "in reason", implying that rather than being merely reasonable (permitted by reason), the connection between knowledge and fear is *required* by reason. Alcibiades' psychological argument contains implicit premises that Hobbes would later explicitly defend in *Leviathan*, along with the argument that costs and benefits are necessarily subjective, such that one's perception and fear of harm are not only private, but correct by definition.

Alcibiades' discussion of the love of one's city (*philópolis*), in Hobbes' rendering, is less a redefinition of Pericles' call for public sacrifice than a restatement of the commitment to calculative self-interest that Hobbes attributes to both Pericles and Alcibiades. Alcibiades offers two main defenses for his trustworthiness, asking his audience neither to consider him a traitor nor to mistrust him as a fugitive. First, he argues that he cannot be blamed for having fled to

Sparta, because the blame falls on "the malice of them that drave me out.[166] The Spartans and their allies, in a moment of intense sophistry, are not Athens' worst enemies – the Peloponnesians "have hurt but your enemies", while the Athenians who drove Alcibiades out "made enemies of friends" and therefore have become their own worst enemies. Second, Alcibiades contends, it will not do to condemn him for a lack of patriotism simply because he intends to help the Spartans "pull down the power of the Athenians both present and to come". Instead, he says that his behavior demonstrates his genuine love for Athens:

"I love not my country as wronged by it, but as having lived in safety in it. Nor do I think that I do herein go against any country of mine, but that I far rather seek to recover the country I have not. And he is truly a lover of his country not that refuseth to invade the country he hath wrongfully lost, but that desires (*epithumeĩn*) so much to be in it as by any means he can he will attempt to recover it."[167]

It's easy to read Alcibiades' redefinition of the love of one's city as a larger-than-life version of a homicidal stalker, in large part because his willingness to destroy the city if he can't have it displays exactly those characteristics.[168] Most translations reinforce this reading by emphasizing the political aspects of what Alcibiades lost: Alcibiades loves that he "once enjoyed the privileges of a citizen" (Jowett) or even that he "was secure in [his] role as a citizen" (Mynott), and indeed the phrase *all' en hō asphalōs epoliteúthēn* strongly suggests that citizenship and the consequent potential for rulership are crucial in Alcibiades' calculus. Having

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[166] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 6.92. Perseus.
[167] Hobbes, *English Works: Thucydides*, 6.92. Perseus.
[168] Jowett's gloss on this passage conveys exactly this sense, but without any hint of irony.

been rejected by the city on account of his disposition toward tyranny, Alcibiades seeks to guide the Peloponnesians to victory, reduce Athens to servitude, and take his place as the newly installed tyrant of Athens. However, Hobbes plays up Alcibiades' claimed defensive motivations. Alcibiades valued life in Athens because he had "lived in safety", erasing the political connotations of a verb (*politeuomai*) that invariably denotes living *politically*. As a result, what is "lost" to him when he fled prosecution is less his chances of ruling Athens than the home that (on Hobbes' rendering) he genuinely tried to defend. In Hobbes' rendering, Alcibiades may have had a tragic or self-destructive conception of his self-interest, but his *apologia* to the Spartans shows the consequences of political circumstances that divorce the self-interest of people like Alcibiades from the well-being of the polity they inhabit.

6. Conclusion: Hobbes' rhetorical model and its significance

A strategy of modeling a less conflict-producing, more stable rhetorical practice through translation is far less direct than the styles and methods Hobbes would later adopt. Nonetheless, the commitments that guided Hobbes in the renderings he selected for this translation are surprisingly consistent with those he expressed in the 1640s and 1650s. The concept of fear as a uniquely rational affect, the commitment to encouraging calculative self-interest in order to restrain ambition and glory-seeking behavior, and a tendency to blame civil conflict on the competitive and powerful few all appear in *The Elements of Law* and *Leviathan,* as well as in *Behemoth* in a somewhat different format. Both the differences in intellectual and persuasive method and the continuities between the commitments that guided these texts offer valuable insights into the treatment of rhetoric in Hobbes' work, as well as exposing tensions within the modern project of divorcing "public reason" from other sorts of rhetorical appeals. Hobbes' use of the translation, and especially of the figure of Pericles, offers an underappreciated approach to

resolving the tension between the use and condemnation of eloquence in early modern political thought. First, by displaying the damage that eloquent glory-seekers could do even in a relatively homogeneous ancient democracy, the translation warned of the still greater dangers of unconstrained rhetoric in a modern, increasingly plural commonwealth. Second, the sovereign figures standing above the bickering demagogues of Hobbes' Thucydides suggest a response to the problems of plurality: uniting the diverse interests and concerns of citizens under the education and power of a sovereign ruler. Third, however, without the discursive and material resources from which later modern critics of "rhetoric" benefited, the translation's project of distinguishing between rhetoric in the service of sovereignty and rhetoric that dislocates the joints of the body politic reveals not only its own rhetorical dimensions, but those of similar projects.

The danger that rhetoric poses to the commonwealth, as seen in the first section of this paper, looms over Hobbes' prefatory comments to the translation. The much later statement, in Hobbes' prose autobiography, that he "decided to translate [Thucydides], in order to make him speak to the English about the need to avoid the rhetoricians whom they were at that time planning to consult" says much about the urgency with which Hobbes regarded his intervention, the breadth of the response required, and the limited resources he possessed at the time.[169] The opportunities for Hobbes' contemporaries to manufacture controversies to suit their own ends, however, were if anything considerably broader and more frequent than those available to

[169] Translated in Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric,* 230. Steinmetz, "Hobbes and the Politics of Translation", 6-7, offers an excellent analysis of a similar statement in Hobbes' verse autobiography, as well as of similar implications in the Thucydides translation's frontispiece.

Thucydides' contemporaries. While political prosecutions for "impiety" were not unknown to ancient Athens, the religious aspects of civil and interstate conflict in 17th-century Europe have no adequate parallel in Thucydides' time.[170] Other causes of conflict, if familiar to Thucydides and his contemporaries, were nevertheless exacerbated through the increased size and complexity of the rising nation-state, increased literacy and the printing press, and similar factors. Hobbes would, in his mature political thought, conclude that the plurality of interests and conceptions of the good meant that the only interest that truly unites humans is the avoidance of violent death. Rhetoric, as a practice of connecting listeners' interests and commitments to create a new and contingent solidarity, threatened to empower conflicting factions. In providing a classical portrait of the dangers of rhetoricians and factional conflict, Hobbes' Thucydides translation was an attempt to forestall this threat.

The sovereign figure of Pericles, and the flawed but decidedly Hobbesian figure of Alcibiades, also provide important continuities between Hobbes' Thucydides and the later philosophical treatises. In each case, Hobbes relies on an authoritative figure to provide unity and overcome otherwise-dangerous divides in the body politic. In the case of the translation, however, the rhetorical appeal to accept sovereign authority comes from the mouth of a sovereign figure rather than from Hobbes, a mere philosophical counselor. Pericles' education of the Athenians not only directs the reader to cultivate the ability to calculate self-interest and warns against accepting the advice of parliamentary rhetoricians, but also offers an image of

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[170] The obvious example, in this context, is the prosecution of Alcibiades, but the phenomenon was rather broader and continued for many years. See L.-L. O'Sullivan, "Athenian Impiety Trials in the Late Fourth Century B.C.", *The Classical Quarterly* Vol. 47, No. 1 (1997), 136-152 for a survey of the later proliferation of politically-motivated impiety prosecutions.

what a Hobbesian monarch could accomplish – not to mention the reminder that such a ruler could offer even more, without having to worry about backbiting from people like Cleon. And at the same time, the figure of Hobbes' Alcibiades warns that in a less stable political environment, the most gifted of citizens are forced to become dangerous. This combination of calculative self-interest and correctly calibrated fear, channeled through the authority of a sovereign political figure, was further reinforced by Hobbes' emphasis on the value of Pericles and repeated instructions to the readers to learn from the translation in the prefatory notes. Hobbes sets readers up to learn from him without, at this point, taking credit for teaching them. Much like a subject that, as a member of the Leviathan, has access to the principles and definitions that enable correct reasoning, the reader is enabled to reason correctly from the evidence that Hobbes provides in the translation.

What makes this reasoning correct, though? The attempt to persuade readers to accept an authoritative standard and reject orators' appeals to do otherwise, of course, is hardly unique to Hobbes. Recent literature on early modern political thought has emphasized the rhetorical dimensions of early modern authors' political interventions. Aside from the extensive literature on Hobbes' rhetorical theory and practice already cited here, scholars have directed new attention to the role of rhetoric in the work of John Locke and Immanuel Kant.[171] Far more than in the

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[171] Torrey Shanks' argument for the influence of Epicurean materialism on Locke's political thought, and consequently for a deep commitment to persuasion and rhetoric "as figural and creative language", has been very helpful in formulating a distinction between rhetoric as it was *used* by early modern political thinkers and how it was *talked about* by the same thinkers. Shanks, *Authority Figures: Rhetoric and Experience in John Locke's Political Thought* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), ix. On the role of rhetoric in Kant's work,

past, scholars recognize the concern for persuasion within the political appeals these authors crafted. But there is an important difference between how political actors *use* rhetoric and how they *theorize* rhetoric, and if someone theorizes rhetoric as a set of harmful or dangerous practices while carefully writing persuasive appeals, this is worth further investigation. For Locke and Kant, and for some of their successors, one might explain this by saying that Locke's characterization of rhetoric as "a powerful instrument of error and deceit", or Immanuel Kant's as "the art of using the weakness of people for one's own purposes", reflect a set of concerns about a specific mode of persuasion that can be avoided while remaining attentive to style, clarity, and persuasion.[172] But the rhetoric of *Leviathan*, as well as in some of the sharper passages in the *Elements of Law*, does not fit with these concerns.[173]

The rhetoric of Hobbes' Thucydides, even if its essential components work through sovereign figures, functions primarily as an attempt to remove resources for those who would defend robust political contestation and persuasive practices that compete with those Hobbes endorses. In this way, it is analogous to Hobbes' move to put competing perspectives into the mouth of "the Foole" or into the category of "absurditie" in *Leviathan*, and to later theorists' move to create sharp distinctions between rationalistic projects and "rhetoric" and relegate the

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Scott Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014) is one of the most extensive and generative revisionist readings. See also Stroud, "Kant, Rhetoric, and the Challenges of Freedom", *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 18 (2015), 181-194, https://doi.org/10.1080/15362426.2015.1081528; Michael Clarke, "Kant's Rhetoric of Enlightenment", *The Review of Politics* 59, no.1 (1997), 53-74, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500027157; Don Paul Abbott, "Kant, Theremin, and the Morality of Rhetoric", *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40, no.3 (2007), 274-292, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655277.

[172] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Curley, 25. John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding, v.2* (London: W. Otridge, 1812), 42, HathiTrust Digital Library. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), trans. and ed. Paul Guyer, 205.

[173] On the moments of sharp polemical rhetoric in the *Elements*, see Miller, *Mortal Gods*, 126-130.

latter to the realm of deceit and manipulation. Each of these moves attempts to make the favored mode of persuasion natural and universal by excluding alternatives from consideration, and each does so without closely engaging those alternatives on their own terms. Where the later theorists seem more self-contained in this exclusion and lack of engagement, we should attribute the relative ease with which they accomplished their respective moves to the increased strength of discourses of science, instrumental rationality, and methodological individualism during the second half of the 17th century and the 18th century.

Hobbes had to accomplish a similar task with fewer cultural and intellectual resources; for his Thucydides, he did not even have geometry to fall back on. As a result, the tenuous and contingent aspects of his rhetorical appeal to sovereignty show through. The attempt to rhetorically distinguish between sovereign authority and "rhetoric" appeals not to geometric proofs, "right reason", or the laws of nature and nature's god, but to the rhetoric of a first citizen whose leadership ended in failure and grief. As a result, a tragic note sounds through the translation's political intervention. It warns the reader of the consequences of rejecting sovereign authority and embracing rhetoricians' appeals, but where the theoretical artifice of *Leviathan* and the legalistic and rationalistic appeals of Hobbes' successors build mutually exclusive monuments to a universal and rigid political order, Hobbes' Thucydides offers only the fragile and ultimately fallen figures of a lonely statesman and his terribly brilliant, terribly flawed following act. This earliest attempt to marginalize rhetorical appeals occurring within a sovereign political order prefigures a characteristic pattern of such projects, in which contestation at the margins tended to become struggles over first principles, and rhetoric therefore did the ground-up work of constituting a new solidarity or public capable of protecting itself from its foes. Instead of excluding rhetoric from a stable political order, Hobbes' project pushed rhetoric

toward the revolutionary fringe. Hobbes' Thucydides inaugurated an early modern project to poison the well of rhetoric, persuading generations of political philosophers and statesmen that rhetoric as Hobbes' predecessors understood it was fundamentally misleading, pernicious, and productive of conflict. But neither Hobbes, nor his successors, nor the politicians that became their students could stop returning to the well to drink.

Chapter 5 Rhetoric as Counter-Hegemonic Articulation

1. Introduction

This chapter examines rhetorical practices under conditions of political and social plurality, as have generally prevailed since Hobbes' time. The political significance of rhetoric, and its potential for transforming rather than reinforcing existing political conditions, depends on whether, and to what extent, it refigures existing identities and relationships in order to create new political possibilities. I classify rhetorical appeals in terms of whether, and to what extent, they attempt such a transformative engagement with the audience. On this basis, I begin with four broad categories of rhetorical appeals:

1) Minimally, speakers can craft an *accommodating* appeal, attempting to demonstrate a fit with an audience's perceived predispositions such that the audience accepts the speaker or the speaker's proposed project. This strategy, which often involves pandering but does not have to, attempts to use existing, recognized political conditions on the speaker's behalf rather than challenging those conditions at all.
2) Speakers can also deploy a *coalitional* appeal, trying to persuade diverse audiences that their separate interests temporarily align, in order to build a broader alliance aimed at achieving some common goal. Coalitional appeals take audience members' current perceived interests for granted, even when speakers hope to connect those

interests to advance a new or unexpected agenda.

3) Speakers who want to substantially transform existing political conditions will find that they must persuade diverse and heterogeneous audiences that their separate discontents with present political arrangements are equivalent in some sense and therefore grounds for a shared political project. When speakers attempt to accomplish this through a *populist* appeal, they make disparate struggles equivalent based on a *negative* relationship of opposition to a common obstacle.
4) Speakers can also attempt to create equivalence by introducing a new *positive* dimension on which they hope to build solidarity. Here, *articulatory* rhetoric introduces a principle that, while marginal to the present sense of political contestation, nonetheless connects struggles in a way that challenges the prevailing common sense.

These four broad categories of rhetorical appeals illustrate two things about the theories of rhetoric engaged in the previous chapters: their historical value, and their present inadequacy. The first two categories correspond with an Aristotelian theory of rhetoric as I described it in Chapter 2. Accommodating appeals, by fitting the speaker to the audience, gain their political leverage through understanding the specific audience and the regime that produces that audience and others like it. Coalitional appeals presume a level of diversity that we would not expect within the political class of an Aristotelian polis, but this kind of diversity certainly occurred among the representatives of different poleis or within political communities extending beyond a single city and the immediately surrounding farmland. The third and fourth varieties of rhetorical appeals, however, presume a level of political contestation foreign to the Aristotelian regime, at which the most central characteristics of a community's political order become vulnerable. This

level of contestation prompted Hobbes to distinguish between "non-rhetorical" rhetoric protecting that political order and rhetoric challenging it, but as we've seen, this distinction did more to fuel attacks on the rhetoric of one's opponents than any substantial recession of rhetoric from political practice. To accurately theorize rhetoric operating at this sharper level of political contestation, we need to move from the vocabulary of the Aristotelian regime to a set of concepts appropriate to the modern and contemporary political landscape.

This chapter therefore moves from rhetoric responding to the characteristics of a stable regime to rhetoric that both responds to and attempts to alter conditions of *hegemony*. By hegemony, I mean a contingent alliance between interests and identities, centered on a principle that, by constructing those interests and identities as naturally connected and mutually reinforcing, has effectively defined the common sense of political contestation around them. Following the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, I see hegemony as simultaneously produced by and prompting practices of *articulation*. [174] An articulation connects conceptions of interests, values, and material needs in order to make otherwise-separate struggles equivalent, and therefore to build broad, shared political movements. Practices of articulation produce hegemony by, over time, successfully connecting struggles and making them mutually intelligible so that the struggles become generally recognized as legitimate and, therefore, shape and direct relevant institutions and behavior. At the same time, hegemony, precisely by virtue of privileging the interests and identities that it includes, constitutes others as marginalized and

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[174] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (New York: Verso Books, 2001). I take seriously Mark Wenman's argument against treating "Laclau and Mouffe's work as a coherent unity." Wenman, "Laclau or Mouffe? Splitting the difference", *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 29:5 (2003), 581-606. Where Wenman's argument substantially affects my reading, I make clear which author's work is most relevant to my argument.

therefore constantly offers the possibility of articulation of those marginalized elements. An articulation that has succeeded in altering the common sense at some prior point, and therefore presently serves to maintain it and to justify a broader political order, is a "hegemonic articulation"; one that alters the common sense in favor of a new or different political order is a "counter-hegemonic articulation". [175]

Based on this terminology, this chapter identifies two basic tensions in rhetorical practices based on the shift from regime to hegemony as a basic condition for political action. First, with respect to the relationship between speakers and audiences, speakers can adopt a conciliatory or a confrontational orientation. That is, they can attempt to match their appeals to audience members' existing predispositions, interests, and values; this may make their short-term position stronger, but may also involve compromises of principles or of long-term goals that the audience does not already share. Alternatively, speakers can challenge audiences to strive for goals or adopt principles that they otherwise would not, but doing so can be difficult, and requires persuading audience members to understand themselves differently. Generally speaking, accommodating and coalitional appeals are "conciliatory", and populist and articulatory appeals are "confrontational". Second, with respect to broader political conditions, speakers can follow an opportunistic strategy, which attempts to draw on a favorable set of conditions in persuading an audience, or an organizing strategy, where they attempt to build some or all of the audience into a force capable of creating favorable conditions. Generally speaking, accommodating and populist appeals are "opportunistic", and coalitional and articulatory appeals are "organizing". In

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[175] The term "counter-hegemonic" to describe struggles against the present hegemonic system comes from Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (New York: Routledge, 1998, 2003), 35.

this chapter, then, I argue that articulatory appeals are particularly valuable, and indeed indispensable, for people who seek to build emancipatory movements on the basis of a counter-hegemonic articulation.

I begin the chapter by drawing on Laclau's and Mouffe's work to develop rhetoric as a practice of articulation and comparing this rhetorical mode to others. I extend their account of articulation to develop an audience-centered theory of rhetoric as a practice of building solidarity, enabling new possibilities for political strategies of articulation. I argue that articulatory rhetoric engages in hegemonic politics, while coalitional rhetoric does not and cannot. At the same time, I defend my distinction between articulation and populist political logics, on the basis that while "left populism" as advocated by Laclau and Mouffe necessarily contains an articulatory dimension, this dimension originates in the left's historical and present position outside the hegemonic formation, rather than in the core logic of populism.

The following section of the chapter puts the logic of hegemony into conversation with empirical findings in political science. I draw on Adam Berinsky's analysis of opinions that polling undermeasures to show that latent discontent and even clear preferences for political change, when marginal to the current hegemonic formation, only become politically relevant when people gain access to a discursive framework for expressing their needs and demanding that their needs be met. I also engage with literature on dogwhistling and other racist political appeals to show that generations of right-wing political appeals have relied on a tired set of discursive tropes coupled to a still powerful set of racist, colonialist, and capitalist material conditions. Taken as a whole, this section demonstrates the value of counter-hegemonic rhetorical articulation in two ways. On the one hand, it shows that by offering a compelling framework for demanding change, speakers can activate otherwise-silent voices and connect

them with each other. On the other, it provides an account of why Laclau's "construction of a people" – the primary and central articulatory task of left populism – is unique to left populism in the contemporary political moment: the right wing already has a conception of "the people", largely unchanged for at least a century and a half, which is unacceptable to those who seek emancipation across all forms of subordination.

In the final section, I turn to the work of Antonio Gramsci to find resources for the counter-hegemonic use of rhetoric. I draw on Gramsci's treatments of oratory, journalism, and organic intellectuals to develop an anti-elitist conception of rhetoric, on which persuasion depends not only on close attention to building solidarity within the audience, but also on a collective process of identifying, refining, and crafting persuasive appeals. I also read the concept of a war of position in terms of a contest over rhetorical terrain. That is, suppose a set of identities, interests, and material arrangements connected within a hegemonic articulation, and others that are marginal or excluded under the present hegemonic conditions. I then read the war of position as a contest over whether counter-hegemonic efforts will successfully assimilate or redefine enough of the former elements, in addition to the latter, to secure broad political support. As a result, I conclude that counter-hegemonic projects must find ways not only to connect marginal positions, but to find ways to seize and repurpose aspects of the present hegemonic articulation.

2. Rhetoric as Articulation

At the time of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and since, the dominant example of articulation was the neoliberal articulation of "economic freedom", in terms of the freedom to achieve and enjoy unequal access to material resources, to "democracy" understood in terms of Cold War anticommunism. Right-wing rhetoricians who successfully redefined the common

sense along these lines – Laclau and Mouffe consistently reference Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as the propagandists of a discursive formation originating in the thought of F.A. Hayek and Milton Friedman – found that a further chain of equivalence connecting economic freedom and anticommunist defenses of liberal democracy to a reactionary backlash against movements to liberate people of color, women, and LGBT people proved valuable in gaining electoral support.[176] In the decade after Reagan and Thatcher, the Anglo-American center-left largely failed to contest this articulation. Instead, it agreed that there was no alternative to subordinating liberal democracy to the market logic, and either feebly contested or outright abetted the right wing's culture war narrative justifying reactionary backlash.[177] Laclau's and Mouffe's perceptive analysis of the neoconservative articulation, the neoliberal discourses that it extended and empowered, and the feckless attempts of center-left parties to accommodate this articulation remains one of the most insightful and generative attempts to theorize Anglo-American political developments in the late 20th century. Their prescription to attempt a counter-hegemonic articulation of many struggles against subordination, rather than to accommodate the hegemonic articulation that maintains those subordinations, remains accurate. Having a theory of rhetoric that explains how to unite struggles is a crucial element in advancing such an articulation.

Coalition, Articulation, Populism

Articulating a new arrangement of democratic elements into a common struggle is not the

[176] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 169-175.
[177] Anna Marie Smith's comment that "political leaders such as [Bill] Clinton merely deploy small-scale tactical maneuvers within an already hegemonized space" nicely summarizes the narrowness of the center-left response. Smith, *The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, 176.

only theoretically important interaction between rhetoric and agonist logics, and the principles and methods used for consolidating the common struggle have far-reaching implications for the struggle's development. For the moment, I will leave out appeals that simply accommodate audiences, as these appeals not only leave audiences' existing perceived interests unchallenged, but do not even orient audiences to broader unified political action beyond temporary support for the speaker. Of the kinds of rhetoric I have generally identified, we therefore have coalitional rhetorics, populist rhetorics, and articulatory rhetorics. To differentiate between these principles and methods, I begin by contrasting articulation as proposed by Laclau and Mouffe with methods of building a coalition via connecting already-existing interest groups. I then develop a novel distinction among the articulating principles that Laclau and Mouffe have theorized. For Laclau and Mouffe, populist projects and the possibilities of articulation have become nearly coextensive: a number of groups with unsatisfied and frustrated demands unite against the entity that they come to see as frustrating their otherwise-disparate demands, and connect their unified populist project "either by a specific democratic demand that becomes the symbol of the common struggle for the radicalization of democracy, or by the figure of a leader."[178] I propose describing as "populist" a rhetoric that constitutes the shared movement primarily in terms of opposition to an existing authority or institution, while leaving its internal unity primarily to a symbolic or personalist relationship; in this sense, the populist rhetoric uniquely foregrounds a relation of negativity by constructing the audience primarily by its frustrated demands and the

[178] Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism,* 70. Cf. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 171, on the "empty signifier" that represents a chain of equivalences that, taken together, constitute "the people" who can act together to achieve equivalent demands.

hostile entity that frustrates them.[179] In contrast, rhetoric does the work of "articulation" when a speaker successfully adds a new, positive source of unity that audience members recognize in their own experiences and needs. None of these modes of movement building necessarily exclude each other, and all have their uses. Nonetheless, I focus on articulation for two reasons: articulation is of the most interest to me in constructing a theory of rhetoric, because rhetoric does its most significant political work when it contributes a new dimension of unity, and by constituting a new basis for political unity and therefore a possible basis for a new hegemonic bloc, rhetoric in its articulatory mode offers the strongest chance of successfully contesting the existing hegemonic arrangements.

A brief example of the coalitional logic will illustrate its general characteristics and its political limitations. A few years ago, groups of NIMBY ("Not In My BackYard", i.e., opposed to development projects that would or might affect their own property values) activists and environmentalists in New Hampshire who disapproved of a new power line being built through their economic and ecological spaces, First Nations activists in the Pessamit Innu Band who opposed a hydroelectric development on their sacred lands, and graduate workers at Yale University who sought Yale's recognition of their labor union all learned that Yale's endowment managers intended to sell land that the endowment owned in rural New Hampshire to a power company, to clear a route for this power line. Yale University, then, connected these otherwise

[179] The "positive" and "negative" forms of articulation are strictly descriptive here – one creates equivalence by offering a new principle that adds to existing conceptions of interest and identity, the other by defining those conceptions in contrast to something hostile. For example, one can, by organizing antifascist solidarity and defense efforts, negatively articulate the community that one is defending – those who feel threatened by neofascist groups will recognize themselves as in community with each other to the extent that the articulatory attempt succeeds.

widely disparate groups: by forming a coalition to target Yale for public embarrassment, each movement would benefit on its own terms from ending Yale's involvement in the project. They mobilized, and they won.[180] Early on, a journalist claimed that while the coalition "may lose this battle, its very formation points to a different sort of political solidarity … emerging from the ruins of Washington, D.C.-style bipartisanship".[181] This assessment, however, simultaneously underestimated the coalition's immediate capacity and overestimated its long-term significance. While the coalition managed to successfully pressure Yale, there was no particular reason for the coalition to persist beyond its victory. Not much equivalence existed between these disparate movements' goals; indeed, under other circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine members of these movements in conflict.[182] A political project premised on mobilizing groups based on their existing interests can build unlikely allies, but without further work to transform those interests into a shared struggle, we should not expect the coalition to last. We also should not expect a coalition's members to devote much energy to rhetoric that builds connections between coalition partners; instead, their appeals will typically focus on the common adversary that unites them.

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[180] Thanks to Charles Decker of UNITE HERE 33 for this example, included in his presentation at the 2019 Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions conference, and for an open and generative exchange with me on the limits of this coalitional strategy.

[181] Sarah Jones, "A New Solidarity in the North Country", *The New Republic*, August 10, 2017 https://newrepublic.com/article/144249/new-solidarity-north-country.

[182] For example, the *New Republic* article made much of the fact that Coos County, New Hampshire (through which the Northern Pass power line was to be built) had swung from overwhelmingly Democratic to narrowly Republican in the 2016 presidential election and that many local Trump voters joined the anti-Northern Pass coalition. In 2020, however, Coos County election results continued to trend toward the Republican Party, and Trump's share of the vote in the county improved by a percentage point even while his statewide defeat was several points larger than in 2016. If Coos County's rural conservatives formed a lasting solidarity with their environmentalist, First Nations, and graduate union allies, they had an odd way of showing it.

In contrast, those involved in both populist and articulatory projects must constantly attend to their own unity, because instead of seizing upon a present alignment of existing interests against a common foe and then drifting apart as soon as a momentary victory is achieved, they need to build and reinforce the "chains of equivalence" that make them a shared movement instead of the various differently disempowered. This dependence on equivalential relations is why both populist and articulatory rhetorics formally fit Laclau's and Mouffe's definition of articulation: "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice."[183] Indeed, the "left populist" project in Mouffe's most recent work explicitly invokes a positive articulating principle: an expanded and radicalized conception of democracy that uses an egalitarian conception of citizenship to connect "the variety of democratic resistances against post-democracy".[184] The period since this work was published has brought significant defeats for many of the left-populist movements mentioned, including Podemos, Syriza, La France Insoumise, and the Corbyn-led Labour Party, and decidedly mixed results for the barely left-of-center populist elements in the Democratic Party. Still, expanded and radicalized demands for democracy may successfully articulate left-populist movements in the future.[185] Recent support for expansions of voting rights, especially in Florida and Michigan, and the surprising support of some elected officials from the Republican Party for protecting the integrity of the 2020 presidential election likely reflect the potential of

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[183] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 91.
[184] Mouffe, *For a Left Populism*, 36.
[185] For a pessimistic view of Laclau's populism in political practice, emphasizing Laclau's "hyperformal" approach, see Anton Jäger and Arthur Borriello, "Left-Populism on Trial: Laclauian Politics in Theory and Practice", *Theory & Event* Vol. 23, No. 3 (July 2020), 740-764. Cf. Smith, *The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, 177; Lasse Thomassen, "Hegemony, populism and democracy: Laclau and Mouffe Today (review article)", *Revista Española de Ciencia Política* Vol. 40 (March 2016), 161-176.

democracy as an articulating principle. Nonetheless, I read Mouffe's egalitarian "democratic demands" as combining two logics that I will try to disambiguate: an articulatory logic dependent on a positive principle capable of constituting a new hegemonic alliance, and a populist logic that opportunistically responds to a political crisis by connecting that crisis to a common foe and uniting otherwise-disparate elements against them. Differentiating between these equivalential logics will enable me to show that Laclau's "construction of a people" is the first task of a Left politics not because it is populist, but because it is on the Left and therefore requires a new and emancipatory conception of a unified people.[186]

It is obvious that appeals that add a new substantive term unifying otherwise-disparate elements in the audience modify the identity of those elements. When climate activists and prison abolitionists argue that ecological catastrophe and the carceral state have a common origin – racialized and colonialist capitalism – and, therefore, that ending these can only be achieved as part of an anticapitalist transformation of economic relations, this new moment of solidarity alters the identity of anticarceral and environmentalist demands. An anticapitalist account of prison abolition will exclude and tend to displace right-wing libertarian critiques of mass incarceration, because the latter contrast carceral violence with the alleged freedom of the market society, while the former recognizes the prison and the commodity form as simultaneous and mutually reinforcing sources of violence. Similarly, an anticarceral environmentalism will reject forms of environmentalism that blame environmental damage on overpopulation and the poor, and if articulated in terms of a materialist, anticapitalist organizing principle, it will also reject

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[186] Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (New York: Verso, 2014), 143-148.

technocratic solutions that attempt to protect compound growth and capitalist productive relations while responding to climate change.[187]

When appeals unify an audience primarily through a symbol of opposition to a powerful foe, however, these appeals modify the identity of the audience's various elements negatively. Where articulation connects via a positive articulating principle, and coalitions unite based on a temporary alignment of interests, populist appeals make otherwise-disparate elements equivalent with respect to a negative attribute: their opposition to whatever entity the populist speaker identifies as dominant and hostile. To successfully draw such a negative equivalence, populist appeals must build on advantageous political conditions: discontent that is so broad and amorphous as to open an exceptionally wide range of symbolic and rhetorical possibilities (Gramsci's "organic crisis", in which a previous hegemonic system is disintegrating, and "interregnum", featuring contestation over what will be the next hegemonic bloc), a set of relatively developed demands to be presented as unachievable under the present system, or a developed common sense of what counts as "the people", in whose name demands can be presented. Populist appeals require these broader advantageous conditions more than articulatory appeals do, because by attempting to represent the bulk of a political community in contrast to the dominant opponent, populist appeals take on a burden of directly attacking whatever is left of the present hegemonic articulation. Populist oppositional logics, when applied to strictly

[187] For examples of scholarly and political progress toward such an articulation, see Nik Heynen, "Toward an Abolition Ecology", *Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics* no. 1 (2018), 240-247; Ashley Dawson, "Capitalism's Organic Crisis", Verso Blogs, December 20, 2018, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4141-capitalism-s-organic-crisis; Elizabeth A. Bradshaw, "Tombstone Towns and Toxic Prisons: Prison Ecology and the Necessity of an Anti-prison Environmental Movement", *Critical Criminology* no. 26 (2018), 407-422.

marginal social positions, will tend to take on articulatory characteristics, as those who recognize themselves as excluded from the present hegemonic bloc search for positive principles on which to build connections with each other. Meanwhile, it is always possible to craft articulatory appeals for marginal and subordinated audiences, because any hegemonic articulation leaves space in which to construct a basis for shared struggle outside and against it.

We can see this difference in the conditions for populist and articulatory strategies with a brief reference to successful uses of each. Here, I am thinking of two cases that Laclau and Mouffe have connected with populism and articulation, respectively, and two from 20th-century U.S. politics that are immediately relevant to this dissertation. Those that Laclau and Mouffe have discussed are the Bolshevik demand for bread, land, and peace and the neoliberal articulation of freedom with economic hierarchy and privilege; the U.S. cases are the right-populist invocations of a "silent majority" and a "moral majority" from the 1960s through the 1980s, and the work to articulate nondiscrimination on the basis of race with workplace democracy in the 1930s.[188] Each of the populist moves owed much of their success to favorable political conditions in the moment. The "bread, land, and peace" demand responded to a catastrophic war policy under the tsar, the revolutionary government's intention to continue that policy, and its unwillingness to carry out dramatic programs of land reform or state provision of food in the large cities. These conditions allowed the Bolsheviks to use a simple political slogan to connect anti-war sentiment, the wellbeing of urban workers, and peasants' demand for their

[188] On "bread, land, and peace" as a quintessentially populist demand, see Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 97-98. On the use of "civil rights" to articulate workplace democracy and opposition to racial discrimination within the social liberal project, see Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

own land, and to exclude other parties as potential representatives of these unsatisfied demands. Similarly, references to a dissatisfied "majority" in the United States took advantage of divides in the previously-dominant New Deal coalition over racial justice and the Vietnam War, poor economic conditions, and hostility to projects of feminism and LGBT liberation to portray a reactionary right-wing program as representative of aggrieved white conservatives and evangelicals.

In both cases, the populist program that won broad political support also drew on long efforts to articulate marginal political positions. The "bread, land, and peace" demand sprang from struggles within the Second International to articulate anti-war struggles and anti-imperialism with the international liberation of the working class, as well as struggles within Marxist circles in imperial Russia over the correct relationship between rural peasants and urban proletarians. Each of these struggles had, during the previous decade, marginalized the Bolsheviks among other socialist parties; in the months following the February Revolution, they provided a framework for a highly successful populist demand: of the active socialist parties, only the Bolsheviks had both opposed the war and advocated for workers and peasants sharing a revolutionary struggle, offering some basis for their claim to represent both the urban proletariat and the rural peasantry. The right-wing populism of the Southern Strategy and the "moral majority", as a reactionary project, enjoyed long-term discursive resources (most significantly, languages of white supremacy and anticommunism) as well as the material support of wealthy reactionaries. Nonetheless, it had to develop and rework these resources in response to the partial successes of struggles for civil rights and social democratic reforms. Both of these populist formations, then, benefited from past articulatory efforts while also opportunistically responding to political and social crises.

Strategies of articulation, on the other hand, can – indeed, must – begin from the political margins. A political strategy that attempts to challenge the hegemonic articulation from within, as when the Anglo-American center-left tried to protect vestiges of the social-liberal welfare state under neoliberalism, cannot do much to counter that articulation or to build a new one. Indeed, while the relatively limited project of including both workplace democracy and racial nondiscrimination within the civil rights of social liberalism succeeded in building a somewhat stable alliance between labor and Black communities, this alliance altered the social liberal coalition rather than replacing it. Only the far left of the alliance – communist and socialist organizers across races and nationalities – had a counter-hegemonic strategy of uniting proletarians outside of and beyond the social liberal formation, and they did not succeed in defining the shared struggle on their terms. The neoliberals, on the other hand, explicitly challenged the articulation of freedom with equality, which had been characteristic of 19th- and early 20th- century socialism and labor radicalism and, increasingly in the 1930s and 40s, assimilated into social liberal projects. By using the market to connect freedom with hierarchy, the neoliberals reworked an old and otherwise marginal resource – aristocrats' worry, expressed most poignantly by Tocqueville, that egalitarian democrats would drag down their betters – to cleverly propose a mechanism by which rational subjects freely recognized their betters.[189] This connection of freedom with hierarchy created a productive ambiguity, which proved invaluable in achieving neoliberal hegemony. Friedman, the neoliberal theorist most explicit on these

[189] Here, I am following Corey Robin's reading of Hayek's neoliberalism, on which Hayek's "economy becomes a theater of self-disclosure, the stage upon which we discover and reveal our ultimate ends", and therefore the hierarchies produced by the market spring from our most honest and reliable judgment. Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 151.

questions, stood apart from most right-wing contemporaries in his disapproval of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation and argued that the market would tend to reduce this discrimination over time.[190] Nonetheless, as we will see later in the chapter, the attempt to connect freedom with hierarchy rather than with equality has taken its most politically powerful form when connected to a reactionary defense of all of these hierarchies.

Conciliation and Confrontation in Rhetorical Appeals

Having clearly distinguished coalition, articulation, and populism, I now have a basic framework for describing the role of rhetoric in political strategies relying on each of these modes of organizing collective efforts. Rhetoric that attempts to mobilize a coalition, like rhetoric that personally connects a speaker to a specific audience, will tend to follow a conciliatory strategy, taking as given an audience's perceived interests and preferences. Rhetoric supporting populist and articulatory projects will tend to confront certain conceptions of interest and preference in order to disrupt them in favor of a more unified movement; more broadly, such rhetoric should typically aim at encouraging political confrontation as part of counter-hegemonic projects.

Speakers trying to contribute to a coalitional strategy need not, as I have suggested earlier, spend much effort trying to unify their coalition. Indeed, these efforts could very well backfire. If someone speaking on behalf of a coalition attempts to define the coalition in terms that some coalition members think excludes them, this appeal may well alienate those members

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[190] For a partial statement of this position, see Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 2002), 21.

and reduce the coalition's effectiveness. This kind of rhetorical problem is well known to constructivist theorists of representation, who have argued that the validity of any particular representative claim – any attempt to assert that some group of people is the constituency of some political actor, who acts on their behalf – is up to the judgment of the relevant constituency, who can after all decide whether or not to accept the self-described representative's portrayal.[191] It follows that to the extent that a political group follows a coalitional strategy, rhetoric's most obvious uses lie in intra-coalition bargaining, in which members try to persuade each other to cooperate on demands that aren't immediately relevant to their perceived interest or even to trade off some interests for apparently more important ones, and in efforts to portray hostile candidates and programs as threatening to coalition members. Often, the *rhetorical* aspects of coalition building differ little from simple appeals to audience members' existing preferences: the fundamentally Aristotelian model in which speakers attempt to select arguments about their intellectual credibility, affective appeal, and trustworthiness that appeal to common dispositions within the audience.

Thinking about the problems of movement building through a rhetorical lens therefore reveals the practical problems that coalitional strategies pose to counter-hegemonic movements, particularly on the left. Because the logic of coalition takes audience members' interests as given and static, people who are institutionally or socially disadvantaged have few options to explicitly

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[191] Cf. Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Saward, "Shape-Shifting Representation", *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 108, No. 4 (November 2014), 723-736; Lisa Disch, "The 'Constructivist Turn' in Democratic Representation: A Normative Dead-End?", *Constellations* Vol. 22, No. 4 (2015), 487-499; Disch, "Radical Democracy: The Silent Partner in Political Representation's Constructivist Turn", in *Creating Political Presence: The new politics of democratic representation*, edited by Dario Castiglione and Johannes Pollak (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 162-183; Lasse Thomassen, "Representing the People: Laclau as a Theorist of Representation", *New Political Science* Vol. 41, No. 2 (2019), 329-344.

transform their political circumstances. Political audiences shaped by a prevailing hegemonic articulation will tend to be hostile toward those whom that articulation excludes; as a result, disadvantaged speakers must adopt strange contortions to demonstrate their trustworthiness and representativeness to those audiences. A recent election for one of Georgia's seats in the United States Senate illustrates this point. Raphael Warnock, a left-liberal Black preacher and activist, faced recently-appointed senator Kelly Loeffler, a white businesswoman running as a far-right "Trump Republican". Loeffler unsurprisingly resorted to a standard set of racist appeals, dogwhistling to a longstanding conservative paranoia about radicalism in the Black evangelical church and activist communities. Warnock's campaign released ads sidestepping what they described as inaccurate smears in favor of depicting Warnock walking a beagle puppy. Scholars of racial politics in the United States, such as Hakeem Jefferson and Christina Greer, immediately recognized and explained the ads' strategy. In Jefferson's words, the ad was "meant to deracialize Warnock with this cute 'white people friendly' doggy".[192] In one sense, the ad therefore performed a basic task of political rhetoric: instead of reinforcing the opponent's rhetorical frame by denying Warnock's alleged radicalism or attempting to justify it, it portrayed Warnock as friendly and suburban, and therefore a safe candidate for middle-class white voters. In this capacity, the appeal was tactically sound and probably contributed to Warnock's victory. In another sense, however, the Warnock ad demonstrates the limitations of rhetorical strategy in

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[192] Hakeem Jefferson (@hakeemjefferson), "Hot take I'm pushing in the politics group chat", *Twitter* November 24, 2020, https://twitter.com/hakeemjefferson/status/1331343005140226048. Cf. Michael Tesler, "Raphael Warnock's Dog Ads Cut Against White Voters' Stereotypes of Black People", *FiveThirtyEight* December 15, 2020. For an account of "racial distancing" as a broader strategy that Black political candidates use in these contexts, see Lafleur Stephens-Dougan, *Race to the Bottom: How Racial Appeals Work in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

contexts where political actors cannot (or choose not to) directly attempt to change audience members' predispositions. Responding to dogwhistled racist appeals with a "deracializing" deflection implies two judgments about the audience: that the audience is receptive to implicit racist appeals if those appeals are left unopposed, and that direct opposition to the content of those racist appeals will not successfully persuade the audience.[193] To try and build a sufficient electoral coalition, the Warnock campaign made an understandable choice to accommodate an audience's indefensible attitudes rather than confronting them.

Unlike coalitional rhetorical strategies, rhetorical strategies of articulation or populism directly confront hegemonic conditions (or at least a partial and tendentious portrayal of hegemonic conditions) and therefore open new political possibilities. These strategies can occur at a wide variety of levels. I have already discussed Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of the neoliberal articulation, connecting the freedom to enjoy unequal distributions of goods and privileges to a conception of "democracy" stripped down to representative electoral systems, and the CIO's articulation of workplace democracy and racial nondiscrimination as "civil rights". In Chapter 6, we will see James Madison's articulation of the "wealthy minority" of landowners and bankers in the early United States to the concept of "a minority", like any other numerical minority, rather than the concept of economic privilege, allowing for a defense of this minority's

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[193] Those familiar with Tali Mendelberg's groundbreaking work on implicit racial appeals will recognize that the Warnock campaign's assessment matches Mendelberg's on the efficacy of unopposed racist dogwhistling, but not on the optimal response, which Mendelberg sees as naming the implicit appeal and making it explicit, so as to invoke norms against racial appeals. Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Some evidence suggests that Mendelberg's findings on the optimal response no longer hold, partly because the line between explicit and implicit racial rhetoric has considerably eroded since. See Nicholas A. Valentino, Fabian G. Neuner, and L. Matthew Vandenbroek, "The Changing Norms of Racial Political Rhetoric and the End of Racial Priming", *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 80, No. 3 (July 2018), 757-771.

rights against hypothetically-dominant majority factions. And in Chapter 7, I will describe and analyze an articulatory strategy adopted by the Graduate Employees Organization at the University of Michigan in order to connect racial justice and LGBT liberation as "union issues", which has provided a valuable resource to organized graduate workers and also faced limitations when applied to broader social mobilizations. These examples operate on very different scales, but in each case the ability to redefine the frontiers of political contestation significantly altered following struggles.

These examples – from Madison and Reagan to the CIO, GEO, and Warnock – illustrate a serious problem for thinking about the role of rhetoric in counter-hegemonic articulation. There is something of a chicken/egg problem when it comes to rhetoric in electoral politics. If hegemonic conditions shape the predispositions of audience members, then people engaged in electoral politics have obvious reasons to exercise caution in how they craft appeals to potential audiences. Whatever the merits of caution, it does not tend to produce appeals that redefine the present terms of political contestation. Politicians at the national level of electoral politics are therefore among the last people we should expect to embrace new articulations – consider the local politicians and then Congressmembers who supported the CIO and NAACP in the late 1930s and early 1940s, long before the labor rights/racial nondiscrimination articulation gained the support of Democratic presidents – because national politicians depend on favorable material and political conditions for the confidence that the new articulation will serve their immediate objectives. Examples of nationally significant politicians whose primary political role is directly engaging the common sense through social media, effective use of interviews, and high-profile conflict with other elected officials prove this rule: those who keep their platforms tend to do so because of safe districts that isolate them from the downsides of national controversy. At the

same time, *conflict* is a crucial catalyst for articulation. Anna Marie Smith illustrates this in an excellent account of the role of articulation in conflicts over racial equity:

"Consider, for example, the two sides in the affirmative action debate in California during the mid-1990s. The pro-affirmative action side includes civil rights organizations, people of color community organizations, feminist groups, progressive trade unions and the AFL-CIO, student groups and small leftist organizations. On the anti-side, we have the Republican Party, neo-conservatives who oppose what they call "special rights" and "preferential treatment," antifeminists, racists who oppose the advance of people of color in any shape or form and xenophobes who see affirmative action as an incentive for non-white immigrants to settle in California. … *To the extent that we are dealing with articulation—and not just a superficial coalition—the value of each subject position in the chain is shaped by its relations with the others.* Ultimately, hegemonic articulation would occur on both a conscious and unconscious level, as anti-racism began to operate as a compelling overarching framework for identification for anti-racists, trade union militants and radical feminists alike. Wherever different subject positions are symbolically located together in opposition to another camp, such that their meanings are subsequently transformed by their overlapping identifications with partially shared sets of beliefs, then we are dealing with an articulated chain of equivalence."[194]

There are three important lessons in this explanation; one clearly intentional, the others perhaps not. First, the intentional lesson: when people involved in this struggle actually find themselves working side by side with other activists, this shared effort itself creates articulation

[194] Smith, *The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, 88-89. Emphasis mine.

on “an unconscious level” because people tend to retrospectively justify and assign value to their efforts. New organizers, in the labor movement and elsewhere, learn quickly to ask people to come do things rather than to sign papers, read pamphlets, or otherwise make theoretical and impersonal commitments. The threshold for this kind of interpersonal political education is not very high – people at rallies, on picket lines, or making phone calls tend to talk to each other and rapidly build relationships – and it quickly surpasses the official purpose of whatever collective action is going on. That is, Smith’s union militants and radical feminists will not *only* adopt a shared framework of anti-racist identification, but will also tend to take each other’s everyday concerns more seriously.

Smith’s compelling example, however, also communicates two other lessons. To the extent that these different activist groups remain isolated (for example, if the progressive union activists are primarily getting involved to punish a disliked governor or state legislature, and mostly keep to themselves), the conflict will do less to articulate interests. The inverse of Smith’s logic also holds: to the extent that various organizations and communities *fail* to effectively act together and build relationships while doing so, they will *remain* “a superficial coalition”. And for those individuals who are not already leaders or committed long-term activists in their respective organizations, rhetoric at the movement level and at the organizational level plays the crucial roles of explaining why some community is involved in a collective struggle, and why they themselves should show up with other members of their community. While rhetoric does not replace the intellectual and affective contributions of collective action, it gives meaning and sense to the choice to show up for actions on high-stakes occasions, especially for those community members who are less frequently engaged in organizing and activism. As a result, the effective rhetorical connection between communities, built by people in positions of official

leadership and in more organic and informal positions, makes the main difference between coalitional superficiality and an effectively articulated, solidaristic movement.

3. Rhetoric, the Common Sense, and Right-Wing Populism

The argument of the previous section, in which articulatory rhetoric uniquely contributes to political projects aimed at securing broad support for emancipatory social change, prompts the question of how rhetoric works to persuade people to see their political and social positions differently. Here, I am putting a central radical democratic insight, the political construction of interests, into conversation with two empirical findings in political science. I examine the "silent voices" undermeasured in opinion polls and Adam Berinsky's distinction between respondents who don't have the cognitive framework to coherently express their perspective and respondents who choose not to express their perspective due to perceived social consequences.[195] I connect these two categories of undermeasured perspectives to a distinction between subject positions that are excluded from a hegemonic articulation, and therefore require political work to newly articulate, and subject positions that are already articulated into some relation of political struggle. People in the former case especially benefit from rhetoric that makes sense of their experiences and provides a framework for political action; those in the latter must be persuaded either to abandon an existing ideological framework or to understand it very differently. I then draw on literature on dogwhistles and other racist appeals to argue that instead of doing new articulatory work, right-wing populism in the United States rides parasitically on material and

[195] Adam Berinsky, *Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Participation in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

social relations of racialized and colonial capitalism. Because these material and social relations do not offer similar support to left-wing populist projects, only counter-hegemonic articulation can build frameworks for emancipatory action at the national level.

"Silent Voices", Cognitive Complexity, and Common Sense

Consider why someone would choose not to express their opinion when asked for it. Berinsky identifies two variables – cognitive complexity and social acceptability – that, singly or together, dramatically affect the likelihood that a respondent will choose to answer "don't know" to a poll question instead of offering a substantive answer.[196] A respondent who has *no* meaningful concept of a question's content has the sort of "nonattitude" that the "don't know" response is supposed to address. Respondents also, however, sometimes have inchoate opinions that they find difficult to put into words, in which case the cognitive complexity of the response is too high and they default to "don't know"; in other cases, they realize that they have a developed, but unpopular opinion that they prefer not to offer. In either of these latter cases, the respondents have a reaction that social scientists should want to measure, but the reaction hides behind a "don't know" response.[197] The case of an unpopular opinion, which Berinsky primarily examines through the example of white poll respondents self-censoring their disapproval of busing, affirmative action, and other government programs designed to alleviate racial injustice, suggests that the threshold for these opinions finding expression is quite low. Not all cases of

[196] Berinsky, *Silent Voices*, 14-15. These findings are consistent across a variety of question formats, including open-ended questions, Likert scales and similar continuum-based formats, and multi-step questions in which respondents are given framing information, asked if they have an opinion, and then offered either a scaled question or open-ended question about that opinion.
[197] Berinsky, *Silent Voices*, 25-27, 37-39.

socially difficult responses align with the right wing in this way, and some cases of social difficulty involve more immediate or severe responses than Berinsky's example. In each case, however, respondents who choose not to answer a socially difficult question are aware of a political struggle, see themselves on one side of that struggle, and believe (reasonably or not) that identifying their position in that struggle carries a cost that they presently wish to avoid. Given a basis for more optimism, people in this position can be easily mobilized. Respondents trying to find rhetorical resources for justifying their views, on the other hand, need something more.

For Berinsky, "elite discourse" provides a valuable but double-edged service: when political elites attempt to justify their political positions, they offer resources for citizens attempting to justify their own views. The limits of "elite discourse" in Berinsky's analysis partly match the limits of rhetoric in my argument. While elite discourse "enables ordinary citizens to combine their many, and potentially conflicting, predispositions into coherent attitudes", it can only do so when "reaching individuals whose predispositions are consistent with that rhetoric".[198] That is, elite rhetoric activates existing latent support, but depends on audience members both having favorable predispositions and being willing to pass on their new outlook. Moreover, any perspectives that are excluded from elite discourse lack this cognitive scaffolding. Respondents whose perspectives are excluded therefore face disproportionate difficulties in forming, let alone sharing, coherent presentations of their perspectives. Berinsky found that this effect is particularly strong in foreign policy, where respondents depend particularly heavily on

[198] Berinsky, *Silent Voices*, 27-28.

elite discourse for the intellectual and discursive space to articulate anti-war views.[199] Berinsky has also identified a similar "exclusion bias in social welfare policy opinion", partly because of a straightforward ideological problem: respondents in favor of social welfare policies must find a way to cognitively reconcile "the conflicting values of democracy and capitalism".[200]

In each of the areas in which Berinsky argues that elites fail to provide resources for popular opinion, elites' silence protects systems of imperialism and capitalism. People with a lived experience of systemic harm need some kind of articulating principle in order to convert that experience into a coherent intervention in current political debates. It's important, however, to be clear about the potential breadth of "elite discourse", and to identify elements outside of competing electoral candidates and parties that provide these rhetorical resources. Community organizations, churches, labor unions, and academic institutions all connect participants to political themes, concepts, and commitments in specific and contingent ways. For example, in years of participating in the labor movement, I cannot count the number of times that longtime union members and officers have denounced laws that prohibit public employees from going on strike, universally insisting that restrictions on the right to strike or to picket violate union members' First Amendment rights to speech and association. I have never asked them how they came to interpret the First Amendment in this way, against a decades-long history of state and federal law and of anti-union jurisprudence. I expect, however, that more of them learned it from fellow union members defending illegal job actions – as I originally did – than from legal

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[199] Berinsky, *Silent Voices*, 107-124; Berinsky, *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 87-89, 100-110,
[200] Berinsky, *Silent Voices*, 86-87.

scholarship.[201] This brings us back to the chicken/egg problem of relying on political candidates' and prominent commentators' strategic communication for connecting marginal and excluded perspectives: to do so, they would need a reason to expect that audience members would find that perspective appealing. Indeed, in both the Vietnam War case that Berinsky identifies and the workplace democracy/racial nondiscrimination struggles that Schickler documents, "elite" officeholders introduced antiwar, pro-labor, and anti-racial discrimination perspectives into electoral discourse only after confrontation and direct action had made these perspectives broadly available to the public.[202]

Berinsky's discussion of cognitively difficult subjects illustrates the consequences of the political construction of interests. For Laclau, Mouffe, and others, the social fact of a subordinate relationship does not necessarily or immediately entail any political consequences. Instead, the move from subordination to a relation of oppression in which subordinates understand themselves and their superior(s) as antagonistic), and further to a relation of domination (in which the subordinates' illegitimate oppression becomes , and therefore candidates for a project of shared emancipation) can only be produced by political analysis and action.[203] Workers' subordination to owners and managers, while often frustrating, stressful, or even personally hostile, does not become a relationship of *political* antagonism until workers engage in collective action in order to alter or end this subordination, and labor struggles do not gain a definite social

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[201] Catherine Fisk has pointed out that the free speech jurisprudence that now protects corporate PACs and public employees who wish to freeload on collective bargaining relies heavily on precedents established by advocates for labor rights, civil rights, and the antiwar movement. Catherine L. Fisk, "A Progressive Labor Vision of the First Amendment: Past as Prologue", *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 118, No. 7 (2018), 2057-2094.
[202] Berinsky, *Silent Voices*, 107.
[203] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* 137-138. Cf. Smith, *The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, 56-57; Disch, "Radical Democracy: The Silent Partner in Political Representation's Constructivist Turn", 166-168.

character until workers connect the struggles associated with their productive role to particular sides in other contemporary struggles. As a particular subordinated role or identity becomes politically significant, the existence of political struggle also gives individual experiences new collective relevance. For example, the philosopher Miranda Fricker has pointed out that for a very long time, men engaged in harmful behaviors that the women who survived those behaviors did not have a vocabulary to describe. It was not until women who identified themselves as feminists connected these behaviors to each other as "sexual harassment" that they built the "hermeneutical resources" to build awareness of, and demand accountability for, sexual harassment.[204]

With this process of political production, in which collective identification and struggle creates the conditions for further organizing, it's worth returning to Berinsky's respondents, attempting to address cognitively complex subjects. People whose perspectives are ideologically and socially marginal face a whole series of obstacles in making their experiences politically relevant. In Berinsky's welfare example, for defenders of social welfare policies to resolve the contradiction between democratic and capitalist values, they have first to clearly identify capitalism as opposing people's material welfare, then to integrate material wellbeing into a broader sense of "democratic values". Only then is it possible to explicitly reject capitalism in favor of materially egalitarian democratic values, or even to argue for limiting and restricting capitalist economic relations in favor of social democratic redistribution. Skipping some of these steps simplifies the political cognition required to defend one's preferred position, for example

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[204] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 149-151.

by relying on affective appeals about the material suffering that social welfare policies alleviate. Such appeals, however, succeed by mobilizing a sense of solidarity among those audience members who benefit from such policies and those who do not. It should not be surprising, then, that the rhetoric of anti-welfare politicians so often aims at disrupting this sense of solidarity.

Right-Wing Populism's Anchoring Point

When right-wing politicians racialize social welfare programs and employ dogwhistles about whether welfare recipients deserve social support, one element of this rhetorical strategy should be clear from the previous section: it disrupts social democratic rhetoric premised on the shared dignity of all citizens. If politicians can persuade voters that income redistribution moves wealth from the deserving to the undeserving – an appeal which nearly always mobilizes racist attitudes – some number of voters who will eventually suffer from cuts to social welfare programs, but imagine themselves as deserving, may support these politicians where they otherwise would not. Tali Mendelberg and Ian Haney López have produced particularly extensive and generative accounts of how racist appeals shape contemporary politics in the United States, focusing on the effectiveness of relatively implicit ("dogwhistled") appeals, which mobilize racist attitudes without explicitly referring to race.[205] Here, I want to focus on what the success of racist dogwhistles tells us about the audience for such appeals and, by extension, about the strategic terrain in the United States that enables right-wing populism. First, I draw on Mendelberg's examination of the history of racist rhetoric in U.S. politics to recontextualize

[205] Mendelberg, *The Race Card*; Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

dogwhistles: instead of a new response to a norm of "racial liberalism" in the late 20th century, which sought to appeal to racist attitudes while protecting speakers from association with the worst abuses of the Jim Crow South, dogwhistles are a historically consistent fallback position in moments where anti-racist politics gain a foothold in nationwide electoral politics. Second, I argue that such appeals go beyond persuading some economically disadvantaged white voters to support electoral candidates with regressive or reactionary economic policies. These appeals also maintain and exacerbate social and economic hierarchy by developing a politics of grievance among white voters with racist attitudes, regardless of those voters' economic position or preferences, and thereby building support for increasingly open racism as a political organizing tactic. Taken together, these appeals draw on and maintain a racialized conception of the "American people" who are sovereign in the United States, offering a consistent resource for right-wing populist strategies that is not similarly available to populist projects on the left.

As a starting point, consider how little creativity is involved in the racist appeals that are now typical of far-right politicians' rhetoric. As Mendelberg has documented, the tropes involved in dogwhistling about criminality, animalistic brutality, economic deservingness, and miscegenation all date at least as far back as the mid-19th century, as the plantation aristocracy and its white supremacist allies sought to defend racial inequality in a world where slavery would not last.[206] By itself, this fact should not surprise anybody. People develop discursive resources in response to political conflict; we might expect the rise of rhetoric defending slavery and white supremacy alongside the development of abolitionism. And because rhetorical appeals

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[206] Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 28-60; Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 38-41.

target existing beliefs and attitudes in an audience to persuade those audience members to join in solidarity with some project of movement, we can expect racist appeals in the present and recent past to mobilize similar concepts and assumptions to ones in the more distant past.

The rise of explicit racist appeals using these vocabularies and tropes, however, did not win racial conservatives much more immediate success during the 1860s than such appeals did in the 1960s. Instead, white supremacists succeeded in capturing sufficient electoral support to eventually establish legal segregation and the political and civil disenfranchisement of Black citizens through what Mendelberg calls "precursors to implicitly racial rhetoric".[207] "As part of the effort to appease Republican elites", Mendelberg points out, "white southerners emphasized less the negative qualities of blacks and the imperatives of white supremacy, and began to talk more of the virtues of laissez-faire government."[208] This new turn to fiscal policy, much like comparable tax protests of the 1970s and early 1980s, targeted funding for education, accompanied efforts to criminalize Black people and exploit their labor in the prison system, and won support from the right wing of the progressive party (at the time, centrist "Liberal Republicans" attempting to restrain their Radical counterparts). Having re-established white supremacist policies as part of the hegemonic order, both Democrats and Republicans eventually converged on "perhaps the strongest norm of racial inequality ever present throughout the United States" and, from 1880 to 1930, race disappeared from national political contestation except as a rhetorical bludgeon against Populists and, later, communists.[209]

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[207] Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 49.
[208] Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 51.
[209] Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, 58.

In both the 19th and 20th centuries, then, conservative and reactionary uses of racist dogwhistles responded to movements that attempted to establish freedom and equality for Black and brown citizens, using a method that allowed politicians to avoid being dragged down with the defeated and nationally unpopular causes of secession and legally enforced segregation. To the extent that de jure racial equality constituted a norm of U.S. politics, racist dogwhistles circumvented that norm while building political resources for overturning it in connection with new conceptions of freedom. In the 19th century, the "freedom of contract" under which individual workers had no collective legal standing secured employers' bargaining position. In the 20th, what Haney López has called the "freedom to exclude" contributed to attacks on higher education, opposition to integrated schools, lawsuits against affirmative action, and widespread tax revolts; in each of these struggles, right-wing politicians connected racial resentment and the defense of white supremacy to the neoliberal defense of so-called economic freedom.[210]

Understood in these terms, racist rhetorical appeals, dogwhistled and otherwise, respond to existing racial resentment and material conditions. Speakers who recognize that some members of the electorate have already developed racial resentment, a material attachment to white supremacy, or both, appeal to these voters' prejudices and attempt to turn this connection into support for some shared project. These appeals, especially as they become more overt, alter the space of what Berinsky calls elite discourse to make latent, otherwise unexpressed racism more permissible in the public space. This process occurred in the United States between 1990 and 2020. Early in this period, Mendelberg argued with considerable empirical and experimental

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[210] Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 67-71.

support that naming racist appeals (in her terminology, making "implicit" appeals "explicit") drove down support for candidates associated with such appeals. More recently, however, this finding no longer holds; instead, while racist appeals are *more* recognizable to many people, the overall rejection of such appeals is considerably lower.[211] The Warnock campaign's choice to accommodate white audience members' troubling attitudes instead of confronting the Loeffler campaign's racist rhetorical strategy likely reflects an awareness of these unfavorable political conditions.

Recall that Berinsky's socially difficult polling questions – those that ask respondents to express an opinion that the respondents expect to be dangerously unpopular – depend not on the actual danger of expressing such an opinion, but on the respondents' subjective perceptions of risk. Racist dogwhistles benefit at multiple levels from the perception that expressing racist opinions carries a social cost. In the short term, they activate electoral support that polls often undermeasure, improving the odds for right-wing candidates. In the medium term, when racist appeals provoke justified condemnation, this condemnation serves to reinforce a sense within the audience that there *are* social costs to expressing racial resentment in public – perhaps not very serious costs for billionaire political candidates, but enough to worry most people. Not only does racist political communication directly encourage racist attitudes among some white audience members, but it also provokes a reaction that feeds a broader politics of grievance in which white

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[211] Valentino et al., "The Changing Norms of Racial Political Rhetoric", 768-769. Recently, Mendelberg and a coauthor found that white candidates have some capacity to counter racist dogwhistles through identifying their racial content, but that Black candidates are much more constrained. Matthew Tokeshi and Tali Mendelberg, "Countering Implicit Appeals: Which Strategies Work?", *Political Communication* Vol. 32, Issue 4 (2015), 648-672.

audience members (whether materially well-off or otherwise) perceive themselves as excluded, deprived, and justified in joining reactionary political projects.[212] Racist rhetorical appeals therefore not only provide models of racism in elite discourse for people who fear the social costs of expressing similar views, but offer these audience members the role of a reserve force for reactionary politics.

While the choice to deploy such appeals for personal gain is reprehensible, such appeals depend for their success on widespread attitudes within the audience and on material conditions that make scarcity and "deservingness" emotionally resonant for many audience members. Individual speakers who rely on such appeals are replaceable. In the broader political context, such speakers depend on broader social infrastructure – everything from political staff, to media networks, to relationships with other prominent commentators and individuals – to achieve mere relevance, let alone substantial influence. Focusing attention on speakers who appeal to an audience's most troubling characteristics, then, risks leaving untouched those broader characteristics as a resource for further reactionary projects, or even exacerbating them as some audience members are left to adopt increasingly extreme perspectives. Moreover, as long as a widespread attachment to racial and economic hierarchy persists in the common sense of U.S. politics, the predominant understanding of "the people" will remain one that strongly favors

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[212] The "politics of grievance" mobilizes a sense of deprivation or marginalization that generally does not correspond to any material lack. The dependence of right-wing populist politics on the politics of grievance is well documented in the United States and elsewhere. Cf. Juliet Hooker, "Black Protest/White Grievance: On the Problem of White Political Imaginations Not Shaped by Loss", *South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol. 116, No. 3 (2017), 483-504; Erica Simmons, "Grievances do matter in mobilization", *Theory and Society* Vol. 43, No. 4 (September 2014), 513-546; Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, "What Unites Right-Wing Populists in Western Europe?: Re-Examining Grievance Mobilization Models in Seven Successful Cases", *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 2008), 3-23. See also Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*. On the way that users of racist dogwhistles repurpose condemnation of those appeals as a fuel for grievance, see Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 130-132.

populist appeals from the Right and disfavors those from the Left. The task of forming a counterhegemonic formation, on which the excluded and disempowered people will reclaim power in a way that emancipates rather than cementing existing hierarchies, therefore analytically and practically precedes short-term political efforts toward specific changes.

4. Counter-Hegemonic Rhetoric

In the final section, then, I turn to Gramsci's thought for resources on the methods and strategies appropriate to counter-hegemonic rhetoric. First, I draw on Gramsci's anti-elitist sense of persuasion – both in terms of how persuasion happens, and in terms of who is capable of persuading and organizing others – to describe the work of rhetoric that provides a framework for medium- and long-term movement building. In the context of movement politics, persuasion must be dispersed through many different organizers and members. All of these individuals require a clear sense of why they are putting time and effort into collective struggle, as well as the skills and resources for persuading possible recruits and new activists to join in the effort. In this context, the movement's rhetorical efforts are channeled through a collective speaker – all of the many people who attempt to persuade on the movement's behalf – and Gramsci offers a range of resources for understanding rhetoric of this kind. Second, I read the concept of the war of position in terms of a contest over rhetorical terrain. That is, under conditions of hegemony, the present articulation of certain identities, interests, and concerns creates a defense in depth against emancipatory struggles, so that for example "the white working class" signifies an element of the electorate whose economic precarity is a resource for reaction and racist rhetorical appeals rather than for broad anticapitalist struggles. The war of position, then, signifies struggles to redefine the frontiers of political contestation in ways that outflank the hegemonic

articulation and enable counterhegemonic efforts to win sufficient support to achieve political and social victories.

Organic Intellectuals and an Anti-Elitist Theory of Rhetoric

Based on the previous sections, emancipatory uses of rhetoric require an anti-elitist conception of rhetoric for practical reasons as well as ideological ones. Politicians generally lag behind activists and organizers in articulating counter-hegemonic politics and, left to themselves, will typically accept or extend hegemonic conditions in order to garner short-term electoral support. It follows that persuasion outside of the realm of elite discourse is central to counter-hegemonic projects, because such persuasion empowers people both to resist elite appeals and to see the possibility of winning material and social goods in collective struggles. Gramsci offers several routes toward thinking about rhetoric in this way. Smith's reading of Gramsci, against Lenin and especially Kautsky, has emphasized the first of these routes: Gramsci's capacious treatment of the categories of "philosophy" and "intellectuals" portrays movement building as more egalitarian and democratic than a common scheme of "a theoretically enlightened elite bringing a deluded mass to its 'authentic' consciousness in a top-down manner".[213] Gramsci's arguments that all labor includes at least some level of intellectual labor and that everyone is in principle capable of performing the social role of "intellectual" productively muddled the categories of "intellectual" and "worker", suggesting that everyone involved in a mass party must do labor in both categories. Similarly, his insistence that a criticism of the common sense must be an immanent critique, offered from within the common sense, privileged organic

[213] Smith, *The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, 49.

intellectuals' self-generated insights while potentially grounding a much more sweeping critique of "philosophy" in an academic or formal intellectual sense. Each of these moves democratizes the tasks of studying the political situation and planning an effective response to it.

A democratized approach to a movement's ideology requires a similarly egalitarian conception of the audience's capacity for evaluating the movement's appeals. Gramsci's treatment of persuasion emphasized audience members' capacity for "chewing over" orators' statements, recognizing "the deficiencies and the superficiality" in those statements, and thereby seeing through attempts to trick or manipulate audience members.[214] As a result, Gramsci attributed popular distrust of orators and "intellectuals" to incompetence in their presentation and style, rather than blaming the masses for mistaken or inaccurate consciousness. In contrast with the "very common error … of thinking that every social stratum elaborates its consciousness and its culture in the same way, with the same methods, namely the methods of the professional intellectuals", he maintained that audiences of ordinary workers were capable of working their way to desirable political positions without relying on overly technical concepts or vocabularies.[215] This required a complex journalistic strategy that would provide multiple points of entry to leftist theory and practice, each suitable for people from different backgrounds to think through their own experiences and living conditions. Gramsci's approach parallels the maxim adopted by today's organizers to "meet people where they're at" and avoid alienating potential comrades with excessive radicalism or appeals to inaccessible theory. These outgrowths

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[214] Gramsci, "Oratory, Conversation, Culture", in David Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 375.
[215] Gramsci, "Types of Periodical", *Gramsci Reader*, 388.

of an audience-centered approach to persuasion point to the care needed in articulating a political vision that appeals to people, and because of that, to the possibility of *democratic* popular movements without a need for an elitist conception of political struggle.

As I suggested above, thinking about rhetoric in the context of mass popular movements also requires a change in how we think about speakers. Thus far, I have generally discussed speakers as individuals who are personally responsible for planning, crafting, and delivering persuasive appeals, while noting a few areas (such as the contemporary electoral campaign) in which this conception breaks down. Classical theorists of rhetoric often focused on such speakers, although even in the ancient world, paid speechwriters frequently assisted litigants in Athens and elsewhere. Most early modern theorists of rhetoric also focused on individual speakers. Even today, it is not uncommon to evaluate political speech as if it were prepared by the candidates and organizers who deliver it. But Gramsci's treatment of superficiality among contemporary orators makes a broader point about what it means to craft up-to-date, relevant appeals in his time and since. For Gramsci, orators embrace "apparently brilliant" but superficial appeals because they are in the habit of speaking quickly and extemporaneously and lack the time to carefully and strategically engage any one audience.[216] Newspapers respond to a similar logistical problem: "articles are usually written in a hurry, improvised, and are almost always like speeches made at public meetings because of the rapidity with which they are conceived and constructed."[217] When political actors communicate superficially, then, the superficiality reflects

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[216] To be clear, Gramsci's use of "oratory" and "rhetoric" refers predominantly to spoken extemporaneous communication, and leaves out communications that are prepared and edited so as to withstand scrutiny. There is therefore a terminological difference, which nonetheless allows for an audience-centered theory of persuasion.
[217] Gramsci, "Oratory, Conversation, Culture", *Gramsci Reader*, 375.

pressures that speakers face more than the innate shallowness or ignorance of the audience. Many political actors find it difficult to assemble the time and care required to craft appeals that persuade in the short and the long term, and these resources are more available to collective actors than to individuals. As a result, Gramsci's engagement with the problem of how to effectively create thoughtful, persuasive communication that supports the work of organizing mass political movements represents an important turning point in thinking about rhetoric as a collective rather than an individual practice. Improved political organization, incorporating a wide range of feedback from organizers, members, and researchers, provides more extensive resources for thoughtful and persuasive communication in proportion to the insights offered by a democratic and egalitarian set of organizing practices.

Controlling Rhetorical Terrain

In Chapter 1, I argued that Aristotle's concept of "available means of persuasion" grounded an audience-based theory of rhetoric. Aristotle's theory, in which a regime could reliably produce subjects with a similar conception of goods, loyalties, and values, and therefore a fairly consistent audience for certain types of rhetorical appeals, imperfectly describes contemporary societies in which conceptions of goods, loyalties, and values are irreducibly plural. Nonetheless, hegemony plays a similar role to regime once we recognize the pluralized and overdetermined conditions of contemporary politics. Where regimes in Aristotle's theory produced subjects in a relatively self-contained way, hegemony produces a tendentious common sense in which most people's political awareness clusters around the values and interests connected in the present hegemonic articulation. The problem of crafting rhetorical appeals that undermine the present hegemonic articulation, and finding appropriate speakers to deliver those appeals in a way that will gain support for counter-hegemonic struggle, has loomed over this

chapter. Here, I turn to Gramsci's metaphor of the war of position as a way to both diagnose the present political conditions and prescribe strategies for altering those conditions.

Gramsci used the metaphor to describe the need to overcome multiple lines of defense – the institutions of "civil society" – protecting the state from an attempt to exploit a crisis to rapidly seize state power (i.e. a "war of maneuver", in which a breach in the enemy lines can be exploited and converted into a strategic victory). In Anglo-American readings of Gramsci since Perry Anderson, the metaphor is often taken to communicate (if not perfectly clearly) conditions peculiar to the Western European context. Rather than needing to seize and redirect coercive apparatuses, movements needed to solicit and redirect popular consent in a long-term, attritional, and almost certainly electoral struggle.[218] This reading often implies that the electoral strategies pursued by "Eurocommunist" parties, if not successful, at least had the best chance of success through neutralizing some of the institutions that blocked a forcible seizure of power.[219] These readings, however, capture only part of the war of position's implications. They emphasize the way the metaphor shifts political struggles temporally, by drawing out the process of slowly accumulating popular support, but leave out a spatial change: the move from tightly targeted conflict focused on a centralized state to a dispersed conflict over "the elements of trench and fortress represented by the elements of civil society, etc."[220] Laclau's comment that the "'war of position', is, strictly speaking, a logic of displacement of political frontiers" aptly describes this spatial expansion of political struggle in Laclau's own vocabulary: the battle lines in the war of

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[218] Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", *New Left Review* 1, no. 100, 5-78.
[219] Daniel Egan, *The Dialect of Position and Maneuver: Understanding Gramsci's Military Metaphor* (Boston: Brill, 2016), 8-9.
[220] Gramsci, "War of Position and War of Manoeuvre or Frontal War", *Gramsci Reader*, 229.

position define which side in some political struggle gets to define the terms on which the struggle takes place.[221] The question of who gets to mobilize certain kinds of rhetorical resources equates, in the metaphor of the war of position, to the occupation of favorable terrain.

The consequences of the neoliberal articulation nicely illustrate the concept of favorable and unfavorable rhetorical terrain. At this time, due to the neoliberal articulation, most people understand freedom and inequality to be connected in some way: to be free means, in large part, the freedom to have more than other people do.[222] It follows that when left-liberal movements or candidates reassert a commitment to equality as such, they reinforce an existing narrative about the limitations of their position. Understood through the metaphor of a war of position, this appeal resembles delivering massive reinforcements to an isolated strongpoint, long since bypassed, and useless for staging a counterattack. It persuades nobody and motivates few; anybody who values political and social equality is already on the left. Those who think they would rather be free than equal are, if anything, persuaded negatively – they realize that the speaker is not speaking to them – while the prevailing hegemonic articulation does its work uncontested. To challenge the neoliberal articulation, speakers would have to persuade audience members to adopt a substantive connection between freedom and equality, perhaps on the basis that most of us would benefit more from the freedom to receive health care without going bankrupt than from the freedom to pay a zero-percent effective tax rate on corporate profits.

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[221] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 153.

[222] While neoliberals did not originate the idea of an ineradicable tension between equality and liberty, they redeveloped this idea and made it relevant after the socialist left had succeeded for some decades in connecting equality and liberty through the framework of proletarian struggle, and even in getting social liberals (such as New Deal Democrats) to justify economic redistribution measures as freedom-enhancing.

Such an appeal would work to re-articulate freedom with equality by directing audience members to the fact that the freedom to enjoy inequality is almost always reserved for people other than them.

Where the neoliberal articulation offers the lesson not to let the opponent define one's position, the example of so-called "identity politics" shows the importance of seizing resources from hostile forces rather than ceding those resources. While many leftists recognize the origin of identity politics among Black feminists who sought to use their lived experience as a guide to radical political interventions, many also recognize that a liberal individualist understanding of "diversity" has currently captured the language of identity in a way that excludes emancipatory practices. A fuller account of how and why the intuition that difference is divisive has spread will have to wait for the following chapter. In the meantime, we should consider whether it is strategically better to abandon the language of identity and to find a new way to talk about the lived experience of difference, or to confront this hegemonic formation and find a way to reclaim the language of identity for emancipatory purposes. To my mind, the range of identities that can coexist within the same lived experience, the ability of rhetorical appeals to reach very different identities, and the general sense that identity is a politically significant concept, all point to the conclusion that it would be unwise to abandon identity as a contested term. Instead, the point is to get at hegemony from the bottom up through transforming the common sense. And rhetoric – in this project's sense of practices of producing solidarities within audiences – is central to any attempt to transform the common sense.

Reading the war of position as a struggle over how to define the frontiers of political contestation also implies a shift in the sites of political struggle. In the previous pages, I have returned several times to the importance of experience and judgment in persuading people.

Organizers and communicators need a nuanced and accurate understanding of their audiences, not only to convince audience members to continue working toward common goals, but also to offer goals that their audience members can see as achievable and worth achieving. This kind of connection between organizers and the communities that they work in cannot fully develop in spaces defined by two- or four-year electoral cycles, especially if campaign staff turn over in every election and are only active for a few months at a time. (Since the staff of *elected* officials often serve much longer in that role, those rare elected officials who choose to support continued organizing efforts offer an especially valuable political resource.) It follows that even if electoral campaigns are instrumentally valuable in achieving emancipatory goals – and they often are – they make poor organizing spaces. Developing long-term connections between people and between their different concerns and struggles requires finding or creating spaces in which people spend time together – unions, churches, community organizations – and, in those spaces, advancing identification with counter-hegemonic projects. The moments in which rhetoric and action sharply alter "politics as usual" typically follow, and depend upon, much longer efforts to how build collective identity and will; if we want the former, we will need the latter.

5. Conclusion

The move from regime to hegemony – the move from a self-contained apparatus of political production and reproduction to an inherently contested and contestable system of claims and representations, in which people tend to understand themselves in certain ways that support a particular set of material and social relations – opens new possibilities, but not easy ones, for broad and deep political change. For those who want such change, I have argued that articulatory rhetoric – rhetoric that both challenges existing hegemonic conditions, and organizes audiences in a way that opens new modes of political production – offers a uniquely valuable way forward,

and offered some general principles about how to design and deploy such rhetoric. Change-building, counter-hegemonic, articulatory rhetoric contributes most to building solidarities that can help people free themselves under specific ideological, organizational, and strategic conditions. Ideologically, articulatory rhetoric does best when it offers a framework that helps people name their existing frustrations and suffering, imagine a world that ends that suffering, and share these new realizations with others. Organizations that want to engage in a politics of articulation do best when they build strong connections in the communities they hope to act within and craft rhetoric collectively so as to bring a wide range of experience and knowledge to their persuasive efforts. Finally, rhetoric is at its most strategically effective when it simultaneously builds solidarity and undermines opposing alliances, by reinterpreting commonly valued concepts and identities in a way that makes them protected and advanced by one's own organization and actively hindered by opponents.

Moving beyond general principles, like the above, requires more developed engagement with context, organizational capacity, and political and social history. In the context of contemporary political struggles in the United States, the observations I've offered in this chapter raise the question of how to build solidarity across identities that we have been taught to experience as fundamentally different and divided. The first step in answering this question is to examine the intuition that difference is divisive – that demands to end the oppression of some group of people can only be satisfied at the expense of others, and indeed of aggregate social wellbeing – and its origins. This, then, is the task of the following chapter.

Chapter 6 Escaping the Long Shadow of Madisonian Pluralism

1. Introduction

Contemporary conversations about the organization of democratic and egalitarian movements often take for granted the divisiveness of plural demands: either the abandonment of a class analysis threatens to irreparably rupture the possibility of mass movements, or the difficult task of connecting disparate demands and movements becomes obligatory because of the erasure of plural demands committed by class-reductionist projects. At the same time, many democratic theorists contend that political and social plurality are central to the expansion of democratic values and practices. In this chapter, however, I argue that the widely-felt connection between plurality and divisiveness is neither natural nor inevitable, but the product of what I call Madisonian pluralism: the rhetorical use of social plurality to divide populist movements against each other, thus protecting social and political hierarchy and the propertied few while appearing to protect minority groups generally. This strategy, in the thought of James Madison and since, has tended to constitute the individual as an anti-populist subject who would resist any stable identification with any broader entity other than the state. Understanding the nature and origins of this approach to pluralism should offer optimism for those of us who hope to build shared struggles around a unifying political analysis, while illuminating a history of theories of political and social plurality in which these theories often reinforce hierarchy and oppression instead of destabilizing them. Instead of understanding plurality as naturally connected to emancipation, we

must actively cultivate plurality as a constitutive element of democratic struggle.

I begin the chapter by drawing on primary sources and recent scholarship on the American founding to describe the dominant political sociology of the early United States: a fundamental tension between the wealthy few and the laboring many, mediated either through virtue and social deference in small republics, state enforcement of liberal individual rights, or the expansion of democratic popular sovereignty, depending on different political actors' other commitments. With few exceptions, both Federalist and Antifederalist writers during the debates over ratification of the 1787 constitution adopted this binary political sociology; James Madison's early writings against economic leveling reflected it, and his most developed treatment of the mischiefs of faction prior to the *Federalist*, in an October 1787 letter to Thomas Jefferson, differentiated "natural" and "artificial" sources of faction – respectively, economic differences and religious and philosophical disagreements – and gave intellectual and political priority to the former.

Madison's turn in *Federalist* 10 to religion as a consistent, parallel source of faction, and to opinion rather than opposing interests as the true origin of faction, therefore ought to provoke more curiosity than it has done. This shift in Madison's thought responded to unexpectedly virulent Antifederalist attacks on the proposed constitution as a conspiratorial effort to empower the moneyed few at the expense of everyone else, weaponizing the binary sociology in a way that made Madison's previous approach politically inexpedient. *Federalist* 10 contains three novel rhetorical moves, all of which reframe debates over whether the proposed constitution would empower the privileged few over everyone else to a question of whether the constitution would protect the rights of individuals and of numerical minorities. First, Madison used the new source of faction – differences of opinion, whether religious, philosophical, or otherwise – to

connect the concrete minority of wealthy property owners to the very concept of a minority, so that any reader who could understand themselves as part of *any* minority could see in their own political worries the dangers looming over the propertied few. Second, throughout Madison's contributions as Publius, he deployed the state as the only entity capable of arbitrating between factions, while making the personal or public virtue of elected officials irrelevant. Third, by conjuring a web of "various and interfering interests" creating factional identities in constant tension, Madison weaponized social plurality against populist impulses. Since anyone feels a number of compelling interests, Madison's rhetoric pushed readers to imagine themselves as one-person factions, cross-cut with competing identities and interests and resistant to rhetoric calling them to join broader social movements. As a result, Madison protected the rights of property, with which he was most immediately concerned, by constructing a novel frame in which the rights of the wealthiest individuals came as a package deal with the individual rights of everyone else.

Despite its anti-egalitarian origins and oppressive effects, Madisonian pluralism still looms over contemporary democratic theory in the United States, whether agonist or deliberative in its theoretical orientations. Some of its contemporary influence owes to Madison's revival, in the second half of the 20th century, by political scientists who took the rhetorical construct of a value-neutral minority group to be a political fact suitable as a jumping-off point for studying

democracy.[223] Invocations of interest pluralism and independent attempts to summon Madison as a resource for democratic projects both expose the limitations of Madison's ideas when applied to contemporary democratic theory. More broadly, Madisonian pluralism contributes to the uneven rhetorical terrain discussed in the previous chapter by representing movement building as an inherently divisive process, and thereby collapsing agonistic rhetoric oriented toward building liberatory movements and antagonistic rhetoric oriented toward reinforcing (or achieving) social dominance. While I discuss the role of rhetoric in overcoming Madisonian pluralism more fully in the following chapter, I conclude by identifying some promising recent attempts to rhetorically connect identities that it otherwise divides.

2. The Few and the Many in the Early Republic

Scholars have recently taken an interest in democratic voices during the American founding, including among Antifederalists.[224] Such voices typically phrased their demands in terms of the rightful rule of the many in a republican society. A compelling, if late, example is William Manning's attack on the national government of the late 1790s. Manning targeted the

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[223] See, for example, Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956). Much later, Dahl adopted a more explicitly critical treatment of the sexism and racism endemic to Madison's political vision, while arguing that Madison eventually accepted majoritarian principles that were compatible with (some) minorities' rights. Dahl, "James Madison: Republican or Democrat?", *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 3, No. 3 (September, 2005), 439-448.

[224] On a broad tradition of democratic thought and dissent in the early United States, see Robert W. T. Martin, *Government by Dissent: Protest, Resistance, and Radical Democratic Thought in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2013) and Dana D. Nelson, *Commons Democracy: Reading the Politics of Participation in the Early United States* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). For scholarship developing democratic voices specifically among Antifederalists, see Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); David J. Siemers, *The Antifederalists: Men of Great Faith and Forbearance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Michael J. Faber, "Democratic Anti-Federalism: Rights, Democracy, and the Minority in the Pennsylvania Ratifying Convention", *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 138, No. 2 (April 2014), 135-162; Michael J. Faber, *An Anti-Federalist Constitution: The Development of Dissent in the Ratification Debates* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2019).

"Few", those who could live off of the proceeds of others' labor, on behalf of the "Many" who labored to sustain both themselves and the few.[225] Manning's insistence on universal manhood suffrage, free public schooling for all children, and even the broader attempt to connect farmers and urban wage laborers, all resembled the democratic movements of following decades more than they resembled even most radicals of the late 18th century. Manning's political sociology, on the other hand, was far from unique. Here's Alexander Hamilton, relayed through Madison's notes of the Constitutional Convention:

"In every community where industry is encouraged, there will be a division of it into the few & the many. Hence separate interests will arise. There will be debtors & creditors &c. Give all power to the many, they will oppress the few. Give all power to the few, they will oppress the many. Both therefore ought to have power, that each may defend itself agst. the other. To the want of this check we owe our paper money, instalment laws &c."[226]

Here, as with many thinkers affiliated with the "Few", Hamilton assumed that the social power of wealth is meaningless without the protections of political institutions, and that the wealthy faced imminent threats without an energetic national government to protect their rights. The basic social model resembles Manning's: a perpetual tension between haves and have-nots, in a society that treated political contestation as a fundamental right of citizens, requiring further institutional protections for one's preferred faction. Nearly all Antifederalist authors, and most Federalists, shared the same model. And until late November 1787, so did James Madison.

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[225] Manning, *The Key of Liberty: The Life and Democratic Writings of William Manning, "a laborer", 1747-1814*, Michael Merrill and Sean Wilentz, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[226] Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, vol. 4, January 1787–May 1788* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 187-195. National Archives/Founders Online.

Antifederalisms and the Binary Sociology

The binary Few/Many sociology defined the rhetorical terrain that nearly all Antifederalist writers sought to seize in their opposition to the proposed constitution. This sociology stretched across the divisions between Antifederalists, whether we adopt Saul Cornell's typology of "elite" and "popular" Antifederalists with the latter subdivided into "middling" and "plebeian" elements, David Siemers' adaptation in which the most hostile plebeian writers became "virulent", or Michael Faber's move from class backgrounds to ideological vocabulary, in which "Rights Anti-Federalists", "Power Anti-Federalists", and "Democratic Antifederalists" adopted different intellectual foundations for their political appeals.[227] Antifederalist elitists like Arthur Lee, Richard Henry Lee, and Mercy Otis Warren argued that the small, allegedly weak House of Representatives would throw off the balance of democracy and aristocracy, creating a recipe for oppression and conflict.[228] Smaller republics, at or even subdivided below the state level, could preserve both the superiority of the so-called "natural aristocracy" and the proper deference of the many, who would recognize the natural aristocrats of their own communities. Substantial electoral representation for the masses, in the form of a much larger House of Representatives or state legislatures that retained a level of power closer to that under the Confederation, would ensure that the social power of the natural aristocracy would be checked by the political power of the masses. Centinel, one of the most prolific and probably the most sophisticated of the Antifederalist radical democrats, had no

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[227] Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 79-83; Siemers, *The Antifederalists*, 18-20; Faber, *An Anti-Federalist Constitution*, 25-26. This development of difference among the Antifederalists reacted partly to Herbert Storing's attempt to identify points of unity. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[228] Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 68-71.

patience for this balancing act. For Centinel, the proposed federal constitution was a reaction against democratic local and state governments, attempting to restore aristocratic privilege and concentrated wealth. Later in Centinel's writings, he would point out that the new Massachusetts constitution reflected a similar process: the "men of property and rank", afraid of losing their dominion over poor farmers and laborers, had seized upon Shays' so-called rebellion to consolidate their own power.[229]

Centinel used the binary sociology to create a particularly developed and radical perspective on the social antagonism between laboring masses and greedy aristocrats.[230] His commitment to a single axis of social antagonism, however, proved entirely compatible with the recognition of a variety of specific modes of oppression. Centinel's attacks on slavery, in which the proposed constitution protected "an odious traffic in the human species", serve as a particularly compelling example.[231] In Centinel's radical democratic imaginary, the oppression of slaves functioned in parallel to the oppression of free workers. "Slavery", he asserted with some foundation, "has its advocates among men in the highest stations", and the protections of slavery and the three-fifths compromise owed to the great power of the very wealthy in southern states compared to the more democratic northern ones.[232] The possibility of an overbearing national government with limited popular representation also threatened religious freedom far more than state governments did: "in the state of Pennsylvania, [Quakers] form so considerable a portion of

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[229] Centinel XV, in Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 197.
[230] Cf. Faber, "Democratic Anti-Federalism"; Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 99-105; Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 63-68; Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 140-141.
[231] Centinel III, in Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, Vol. 2, 160.
[232] Centinel III, in Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, Vol. 2, 160.

the community, as must ensure them great weight in the government; but in the scale of general empire, they will be lost in the balance."[233] As a result, no significant expansion in the national government's reach could coincide with popular self-rule; local and state governments could respond to the will of the local people far better than a tiny legislature located far away. In each of these cases, the few benefited from oppressing, and permitting the oppression of, many different sorts of people. Centinel hoped that popular mobilization would hold the few back.

Contemporary theorists who see social plurality as naturally emancipatory might also be surprised by the Antifederalists' most innovative theorist of economic diversity. The author who wrote under the name Federal Farmer adopted a concept of representation prioritizing diverse economic roles: "a fair representation", Federal Farmer insisted, must "allow professional men, merchants, traders, farmers, mechanics, etc. to bring a just proportion of their best informed men respectively into the legislature".[234] As Cornell has pointed out, this allowed Federal Farmer to democratize political virtue: we can find the quality of being best informed in the inhabitants of any of these economic roles, and honest advocacy takes precedence over perceiving a numinous public good.[235] Pluralizing the "few" and the "many" into a range of economic orders, while retaining the dominant economic focus of Antifederalist sociology, allowed Federal Farmer to defend political equality without endorsing any sort of economic leveling. Indeed, Federal Farmer's first letter echoes a common Federalist concern: "commercial and monied men, who

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[233] Centinel III, in Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, Vol. 2, 160.
[234] Federal Farmer II, in Herbert J. Storing, ed., *The Anti-Federalist: Writings by the Opponents of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 43.
[235] Cornell, *The Other Founders*, 97.

are uneasy, not without just cause, ought to be respected".[236] This, however, remains possible in a political system that allows for equal representation for all, and Federal Farmer worried that the new Constitution would put that representation out of reach.

While connecting economic diversity to political stability, Federal Farmer reacted with horror to the removal of religious tests and the supremacy of Congress over modes of congressional elections: "it can be no objection to the elected, that they are Christians, Pagans, Mahometans, or Jews; that they are of any colour, rich or poor, convict or not: Hence many men may be elected, who cannot be electors."[237] Combined with the possibilities of first-past-the-post elections or multi-member list elections, either of which might allow for unknown or untrustworthy candidates, Federal Farmer expected the new constitution to enable new and frightening social cleavages that would disrupt the balance of economic interests, likely to the advantage of the wealthy few. To avert these dangers, Federal Farmer concluded, the proposed constitution would require an amendment to establish "the qualifications of the electors and of elected", a strict limit on the population of congressional districts, and a clause leaving all other regulations to the state legislatures, or at least establishing the supremacy of state legislatures in regulating the election of their own federal-level representatives.[238] Such amendments would ensure that local electorates, guided by consistent racial and religious restrictions on eligibility, would select representatives that matched the economic interests prevalent in their small, homogeneous districts. In short, Federal Farmer's appeal to a diverse range of economic interests

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[236] Federal Farmer I, in Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*, 34.
[237] Federal Farmer XII, in Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 295.
[238] Federal Farmer XII, in Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist,* Vol. 2, 301.

assured the stability of local *herrenvolk* republics, unlike Centinel's radical democratic politics, which integrated commitments against slavery and for the protection of religious minorities into the more common binary sociology.

Madison on the Few before Faction

Scholars have often neglected James Madison's writings between the "Memorial and Remonstrance" and the *Federalist.*[239] Instead, most read Madison's thought in the *Federalist* with his later published writings, in order to track the development of the ideas that he chose to share with the public, or in comparison with the thought of Alexander Hamilton, with whom he fell out precipitously in 1791. Two recent intellectual biographies of Madison have recognized the development of a concept of faction in Madison's correspondence, his unpublished essay on the "Vices of the Political System of the United States", and his convention speeches.[240] Each of these, however, miss a crucial shift in Madison's treatments of the problem of faction. Prior to *Federalist* 10, written and published in late November 1787, Madison never stepped far outside

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[239] Scholars emphasizing the Madison-Hamilton connection and the immediate context of the *Federalist* include John G. Grove, "*The Federalist* on the Public Will: The Split Personality Revisited", *Polity* Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 2019), 95-125; Woody Holton, "'Divide et Impera': 'Federalist 10' in a Wider Sphere", *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2005), 175-212; James Yoho, "Madison on the Beneficial Effects of Interest Groups: What Was Left Unsaid in 'Federalist' 10", *Polity* Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer 1995), 587-605. On reading the *Federalist* contributions through Madison's later thought, see Colleen A. Sheehan, *James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Greg Weiner, *Madison's Metronome: the Constitution, Majority Rule, and the Tempo of American Politics* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012); S. Adam Seagrave, "Madison's Tightrope: The Federal Union and the Madisonian Foundations of Legitimate Government", *Polity*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 2015), 249-272; Weiner, "James Madison and the Legitimacy of Majority Factions".

[240] Noah Feldman, *The Three Lives of James Madison: Genius, Partisan, President* (New York: Random House, 2017), 114-118; Jack N. Rakove, *A Politician Thinking: The Creative Mind of James Madison* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 67-94. Rakove has earlier read Madison's "Vices" with *Federalist* 10, but without recognizing the shifts in Madison's rhetorical strategy through 1787. Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 46-56.

the binary Few/Many sociology of his contemporaries. Once he developed the mischiefs of faction as a diagnosis for the dangers of this social antagonism, his conception of faction remained fundamentally economic until his writings as Publius.

Madison's fears of the widespread adoption of paper currency and a potential agrarian law pervaded his correspondence before, and his remarks during, the 1787 Constitutional Convention. On these issues, he took a more aggressive and intellectually sophisticated approach than most of his peers. Gordon Wood has diagnosed early American elites' fear of paper money in terms of a limited understanding of the new political economy: the possibility of a fluid currency system, determined by capital flows and calculated investment rather than the gentry's "proprietary wealth and the social identity and influence that stemmed from that wealth", threatened "the only social order they could conceive of".[241] Wood is not wrong to assess some of the gentry, particularly those conservative Antifederalists who feared that the new constitution would *enable* paper money and other leveling projects, in this way. But he underestimates the degree to which the younger Federalists – not only Hamilton, but also Madison and some of his Virginia colleagues and friends – were out in front of this trend.[242] Madison's entry, with James Monroe, into land speculation in New York demonstrates a sophisticated sense of political economy as early as the summer of 1786. Short of funds to expand their land purchase, the two agreed that Madison would ask Thomas Jefferson to secure a new loan from French banks. Madison's dense analysis of how population, land development, and the money supply would

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[241] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1992), 251-252.
[242] Wood recognizes Hamilton's early and cold analysis of the "engrossing motive" of self-interest, but takes Madison and others as continuing "to hold out the possibility of virtuous politics". Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 253.

affect the investment is worth quoting at some length:

"For the prospect of gain … we calculate on the present difference of price between the settled and vacant land far beyond any possible difference in the real value. …there is little doubt that by taking a larger quantity, still better bargains may be got. This comparative cheapness proceeds from causes which are accidental & temporary. The lands in question are chiefly in the hands of men who hold large quantities, and who are either in debt or live in the city at an expence for which they have no other resources or are engaged in transactions that require money. The scarcity of specie which enters much into the cheapness is probably but temporary also. … The same vicicitude which can only be retarded by our short lived substitutes of paper will be attended also by such a fall in the rate of exchange that money drawn by bills from Europe now and repaid a few years hence will probably save one years interest at least…"[243]

Here, Madison says that the land he and Monroe wish to buy is underpriced because the land is undeveloped (but will be developed soon), and the owners are cash-poor and likely to accept a low price. But he is also arguing that an overall constriction in the money supply has deflated land prices, that as the money supply readjusts and expands (partly due to possible expanded issues of paper currency), the resulting inflation will partly counteract interest rates, and therefore, that now is the time to engage in large-scale land speculation. This sophisticated analysis of the economic situation goes well beyond the reflexive revulsion at paper currency and debt relief that Wood ascribes to the propertied gentry of the new United States and suggests a previously unrecognized engagement with the principles of political economy.

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[243] "To Thomas Jefferson, August 12 1786", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 98. I have removed pervasive italics marking words that Madison had encoded with the cipher he and Jefferson frequently used in correspondence.

Madison's land venture came with a commitment to protecting the legal and political connections of property owners. Earlier in the letter quoted above, he had warned Jefferson that aside from currency depreciation (inflation), paper currency was also "producing the same warfare & retaliation among the States as were produced by the State regulations of commerce".[244] A few months later, writing to James Monroe, Madison condemned

"the current [maxim] that the interest of the majority is the political standard of right and wrong. Taking the word 'interest' as synonymous with 'Ultimate happiness,' in which sense it is qualified with every necessary moral ingredient, the proposition is no doubt true. But taking it in the popular sense, as referring to immediate augmentation of property and wealth, nothing can be more false. In the latter sense it would be the interest of the majority in every community to despoil & enslave the minority of individuals; and in a federal community to make a similar sacrifice of the minority of the component States."[245]

Here, Madison had a clear sense of the threat posed by the stable majority of the less wealthy to the minority of the wealthier. At this time, however, he presented this threat as equally applicable at the state and federal levels.[246] An extended republic would provide no relief from oppressive majorities, at this point in Madison's thought, and the possibility of principled moral deliberation remained as a possible restraint on majority oppression. His hopes for principled deliberation as a check to redistributive movements cratered, however, after George Washington described the objectives of Shays' Rebellion: "They are determined to annihilate all debts public

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[244] "To Thomas Jefferson, August 12 1786", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 95.
[245] "To James Monroe, October 5 1786", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 141.
[246] It is also worth noting that the "rights" of the minority in this case involved, in part, the rights of settlers in the western part of Virginia (what would eventually become Kentucky) to further invade Native land.

& private, and have Agrarian Laws, which are easily effected by the means of unfunded paper money which shall be a tender in all cases whatever."[247] Madison opposed these objectives – the "improper or wicked" projects named in *Federalist* 10's penultimate paragraph – as strongly as Washington did, but with "every thing … not yet right in [Massachusetts]" as late as March 1787, Madison's only remaining hopes fell on the upcoming convention.[248] Any new constitution, he hoped, would include the "federal negative" – the federal government's ability to veto any act of a state government – so as to "restrain the States from thwarting and molesting each other, and even from oppressing the minority within themselves by paper money and other unrighteous measures which favor the interest of the majority."[249] Here, again, Madison discussed oppression in material terms that favored the propertied class. His solutions, however, included neither the extended republic nor a theory of social plurality. At this point, Madison's only reason to expect the federal government to better protect the wealthy minority was that minority's superior access to federal office.

Faction in the Early Drafts of *Federalist* 10

Madison began to conceptualize majoritarian oppression in terms of faction, and the remedy in terms of an extended republic as early as April 1787, when he prepared a document listing the "Vices of the Political System of the United States". Early in the document, Madison resurrected the fear that he had expressed to Jefferson a year before, that economic leveling

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[247] "From George Washington to James Madison, 5 November 1786," *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-04-02-0299.
[248] "To Edmund Randolph, March 11 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 307.
[249] "To Thomas Jefferson, March 19 1787", *Papers of James Madison,* Vol. 9, 318. Madison would spend a great deal of effort to convince Jefferson of the federal negative's necessity, while failing to convince either Jefferson or the convention.

measures "may likewise be deemed aggressions on the rights of other States", and therefore warrant federal intervention on that principle.[250] Later on, however, under the heading of "Injustice of the laws of States", Madison introduced factions for the first time by that name:

"All civilized societies are divided into different interests and factions, as they happen to be creditors or debtors – Rich or poor – husbandmen, merchants, or manufacturers – members of different religious sects – followers of different political leaders – inhabitants of different districts – owners of different kinds of property &c &c."[251]

Four of the seven causes of faction, in this version, were strictly economic, and the only concrete example of oppression was Rhode Island's policy of paper money. Religion, "the only remaining motive" to self-restraint beyond the inadequate restraints of enlightened collective interest and public opinion, was not to be trusted to cure faction. Nonetheless, Madison only referred to religion as a source of factional oppression in a strictly speculative manner: "it may become a motive to oppression as well as a restraint from injustice".[252] The extended republic appeared for the first time as Madison's preferred solution to the mischiefs of faction, "because a common interest or passion is less apt to be felt and the requisite combinations less easy to be formed by a great than by a small number."[253] Unlike earlier commentaries, Madison now classified elections that could "most certainly extract from the mass of the Society the purest and noblest characters which it contains" as a mere "auxiliary desideratum", compared to the more

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[250] "Vices", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 349.
[251] "Vices", *Papers of James Madison,* Vol. 9, 355.
[252] "Vices", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 356.
[253] "Vices", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 357.

effective structural approach of extending the republic.[254]

The same approach to faction appeared in a letter to Washington (April 16, 1787), as well as in Madison's comments during the Convention.[255] On June 6, defending the popular election of the first branch of Congress, Madison spoke to the evils of faction, mentioning religion once, in the same terms as in the "Vices", and economic oppression repeatedly and concretely: "Debtors have defrauded their creditors. The landed interest has borne hard on the mercantile interest. The Holders of one species of property have thrown a disproportion of taxes on the holders of another species."[256] The very next day, Madison repeated the same concern in supporting popular elections to the Senate, plus another warning on the evils of paper money.[257] Madison cited the same abuses as his reason for opposing the New Jersey Plan (June 19), accepting a term for senators as long as nine years (June 26), and opposing property in land as a qualification for officeholding (July 26, on the basis that small indebted farmers were more at fault for the "unjust laws of the States" than anyone else).[258] Madison's comments on a long term for senators, hopefully "a portion of enlightened citizens", again rehearsed the standard list of economic distinctions ("In all civilized Countries the people fall into different classes … creditors & debtors, farmers, merchts. & manufacturers. There will be particularly the distinction

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[254] "Vices", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 357.
[255] *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 9, 383-384. Mary Sarah Bilder has convincingly argued that Madison altered his convention notes after the fact, largely to make them a more credible record of the convention. However, these alterations do not appear to change the tone or substance of the quotations I have selected. See Bilder, *Madison's Hand: Revising the Constitutional Convention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
[256] "Popular Election of the First Branch of the Legislature, June 6 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 33.
[257] "Election of the Senate, June 7 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 39-40.
[258] "Reply to the New Jersey Plan, June 19 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 58; "Term of Senate, June 26 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 76; "Qualifications for Holding National Office, July 26 1787), *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 117;

of rich & poor."), omitting religious and philosophical differences entirely. He warned that an "increase of population will of necessity increase the proportion" of wage laborers who, under "the equal laws of suffrage", would gain power and increase the danger of "agrarian attempts" and similar enactments "of a leveling spirit".[259] Only the extended republic and counter-majoritarian federal institutions would protect the rights of property owners.

The same theme recurs in a lengthy letter that Madison wrote to Jefferson, defending not only the actual text of the proposed constitution but Madison's failed proposal for the federal negative. Here, Madison distinguishes between "natural distinctions" – economic distinctions between rich and poor, subdivided by type of property and status as debtor or creditor – and "artificial ones", including "differences in political, religious or other opinions, or an attachment to the persons of leading individuals".[260] Here, again, the only reference to religious oppression as such appears in Madison's justification for the claim that "the inefficacy of [religious] restraint on individuals is well known."[261] Barely a month before *Federalist* 10, Madison's treatment of faction remained economic in its foundations, with other sources of faction merely "artificial". Indeed, his focus on the economic causes of political conflict had intensified, as he had now introduced the concept of "natural" and "artificial" social distinctions for the first time, assigning analytical and political priority to the former.

3. Factions of One: The Rhetoric of Madison's Anti-Populist Pluralism

Published six weeks before *Federalist* 10, in early October of 1787, Federal Farmer's

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[259] "Term of Senate, June 26 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 76-77.
[260] "To Thomas Jefferson, October 24 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 213.
[261] "To Thomas Jefferson, October 24 1787", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 213.

criticisms of the proposed constitution probably reached Madison in time for the latter to consider them. Writing to George Washington from New York, Madison remarked that "The Newspapers here begin to teem with vehement & virulent calumniations of the proposed Govt. … chiefly borrowed from the Pensylvania [sic] papers" suggests that Madison was familiar not only with Mason's comments, but probably with Centinel's and Federal Farmer's as well.[262] An October 21st letter to Edmund Randolph probably references the writings of Brutus, first published only three days earlier, and Centinel and Federal Farmer had then been in the papers for nearly two weeks.[263] Federal Farmer had argued that competing economic interests would stabilize small republics, while a national government would empower the wealthiest at others' expense. Other Antifederalists' "vehement and virulent calumniations" accused the convention delegates of plotting to secure oligarchic wealth and power. That Madison and Hamilton, like other delegates, had explicitly committed to securing the property rights of the wealthy made refuting this accusation no easier, but still more important.

But how? As we have seen, Madison's writings up to this point had all focused on exactly these property rights. He had just developed a concept of "natural" and "artificial" distinctions between persons in a society, with analytical and legal priority to the former. This approach would accomplish little when attempting to secure support from a broader public, instead of from one of Madison's closest and most likeminded allies. Strategy and context therefore pushed Madison to connect the propertied minority's protection to the protection of other minorities for

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[262] "To George Washington, October 18 1787", *Papers of James Madison* Vol. 10, 197. Each of these attacks on the proposed constitution were first published early in October of 1787, and enjoyed wide reprinting.
[263] See Hutchinson and Rachal, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 200n4.

the first time. The sudden appearance of religion as a parallel source of faction, coupled with Madison's repeated insistence on the durability and severity of economic disparity as a source of faction, grounded his first rhetorical move to justify the countermajoritarian institutions of the new constitution. Pairing religion with economic difference as durable sources of faction, and grounding each in innate differences of opinion and intellect, allowed Madison to fold the propertied minority he sought to defend into an endless array of minority interests, all equally subject to majority oppression and equally deserving of state protection. With the turn to religion offering a promising opportunity to divide Antifederalists and distort their positions, Madison then targeted Antifederalist elitists by emphasizing the state as the sole mediator of factional conflict and guarantor of minority rights, pushing back against both the politics of local virtue and against a trust in enlightened statesmen. Finally, Madison's treatment of endless "various and interfering interests" used the innovative concept of social plurality to press readers to consider the conflicting interests in themselves, turning readers toward single-person factions: self-interested individuals who would distrust rhetorics that constituted solidarities outside of the unified nation-state.

Move #1: Religion, Opinion, and the Endless Proliferation of Minority

For those of us who have read, re-read, and perhaps taught *Federalist* 10 for years, the repeated gestures to religion as a motive for factional oppression fit a familiar story about Madison's political thought. The origins of faction lie in humans' fallible reason, combined with the freedom to exercise it, resulting in differing opinions. Opinions and passions "have a reciprocal influence on each other", and moreover, people *also* have material interests stemming

from the "diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate".[264] On this introduction, we would expect religious and philosophical differences to drive factional conflict with equal strength to class differences, and so we feel no surprise when, in the following paragraph, we find faction's "latent causes … sown in the nature of man", and the proximate causes beginning with the "zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points…".[265] We should, however, recognize how new this terminology was in Madison's thought. Madison's interest in religious factions originated during the exceedingly rapid production of *Federalist* 10.[266] That Madison had less than a week to write *Federalist* 10, prepared an essay in which much of the argument repeated his earlier notes, and yet reorganized that essay to foreground and emphasize the novel religious faction, shows the new importance he assigned to pluralizing the sources of faction.

Nor could Madison have simply recycled his first engagement with religious liberty.[267] In the "Memorial and Remonstrance", Madison suggested that factional strife among religious sects, far from a natural consequence of religion, originated in the impulse to mix religion and government. The proposed religious assessment, he contended, would "destroy that moderation

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[264] Madison, *Federalist* 10, *Papers of James Madison*, 265.
[265] Madison, *Federalist* 10, *Papers of James Madison*, 265.
[266] As the editors of Madison's *Papers* comment, "Hamilton apparently did not ask [Madison] to join the enterprise until the middle of November, perhaps as late as the seventeenth, the day the Virginian returned from a trip to Philadelphia. The following day he [Madison] confided to Washington his probable involvement in the publication, and shortly thereafter (22 Nov.) his first contribution to *The Federalist* appeared." Hutchinson and Rachal, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 259-260.
[267] On Madison's understanding of religious freedom, see Thomas Lindsay, "James Madison on Religion and Politics: Rhetoric and Reality", *American Political Science Review* 85, no.4 (1991), 1321-1337; Robert W.T. Martin, "James Madison and Popular Government"; Mark David Hall, "Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance, Jefferson's Statute for Religious Liberty, and the Creation of the First Amendment," *American Political Thought* 3, no.1 (2014), 32-63; Ralph Ketcham, "James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and the Meaning of 'Establishment of Religion' in Eighteenth-Century Virginia", in T. Jeremy Gunn and John Witte, eds., *No Establishment of Religion: America's Original Contribution to Religious Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158-179.

and harmony which the forbearance of our laws to intermeddle with Religion has produced among its several sects."[268] Without the meddling of state power, religion would tend toward harmony, and having achieved it, would maintain it indefinitely. While the Madison of 1788 might have used the language of faction to describe a coalition of religious leaders (mostly Episcopalians and Presbyterians), uniting to ensure that each of their sects received the favor of state funding, the Madison of 1785 appealed to the will of the majority, arguing that "the representation must be made equal, before the voice either of the Representatives or of the Counties will be that of the people. …Should [the former] disappoint us, it will still leave us in full confidence, that a fair appeal to the latter will reverse the sentence against our liberties."[269] This Madison, happy to appeal to popular deliberation, has little in common with the author of *Federalist* 10 warning that neither collective deliberation – "a body of men, are unfit to be both judges and parties, at the same time" – nor "enlightened statesmen", who "will not always be at the helm", would protect from factious majorities.[270]

While Madison's immediate agenda and rhetorical methods in the *Federalists* differed greatly from the "Memorial and Remonstrance", one of his opponents was the same: Patrick Henry, the driving force behind the "General Assessment" that would have established state funding for churches in 1785, also led the Antifederalist efforts in Virginia. Some Antifederalists did defend religious difference. We have already seen Centinel's concern for Quakers and other religious minorities as the new aristocracy's likely victims, and Brutus referenced "the rights of

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[268] "A Memorial and Remonstrance", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 8, 302.
[269] "A Memorial and Remonstrance", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 8, 303-304.
[270] Madison, *Federalist* 10, *Papers of James Madison*, 266.

conscience" as among the natural rights that "are of such a nature that they cannot be surrendered".[271] But in addition to Henry's preference for a state establishment of Christianity, we have also seen Federal Farmer's bigotry which, when it appeared in early 1788, would illustrate the most exclusionary elements of Antifederalist thought.[272]

The move to pluralize the causes of faction and, therefore, the motives for oppression, then, built on a characteristic Federalist tactic – portraying Antifederalists as partisans of economic leveling, possibly closet Shaysites – to paint Antifederalists as advocates of majoritarian tyranny generally.[273] Where advocates of local government and state sovereignty valued responsiveness to the community's needs, Madison made this responsiveness seem threatening. Bringing religion into the frame, along with occupation and other sources of economic competition, pushed readers to consider the ways that they might find themselves in the minority, subject to others' power, rather than the ways that the proposed constitution would move power away from them. Moreover, some readers might recall the very real connections between *some* Antifederalists and religious establishment, further building the case that

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[271] Brutus II (November 1, 1787), in Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 373. So unassailable were these rights in Brutus' political imagination that he omitted them entirely from his proposed bill of rights which, later in the essay, focuses on civil rights strictly understood.

[272] Federal Farmer's bigotry may represent a counterthrust to *Federalist* 10, insofar as it articulated religious tests (an obvious, if implicit, target of *Federalist* 10) with prejudices that Federal Farmer expected readers to feel.

[273] Cornell, *The Other Founders,* 153-154, 156. This is far from the only distortion of the Antifederalist position that scholars have long recognized in Madison's writing and in the writings of other Federalists. Terence Ball accurately characterized Madison's dichotomy between direct democracy, which approximately one Antifederalist actually supported, and an extended republic with a strong national government as a "red herring". Ball, "A Republic – If You Can Keep It", in Ball and J.G.A. Pocock, eds., *Conceptual Change and the Constitution* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 143-145. See Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 78-79, on the single Antifederalist writer ("A Farmer") who can plausibly be described as a partisan of direct democracy. As David J. Siemers has pointed out, even the term "Federalist", seized by advocates of a national government, was fundamentally redefined – and the term "Antifederal", applied to any of their opponents, "indicated that the person was against something commonly accepted as a great strength of the American system." Siemers, *The Antifederalists*, 5; see also Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 65.

Antifederalism and factional oppression opposed the Federalist project of protecting minority rights. In each of these cases, the rhythm of alternating between religion and other opinions, on the one hand, and the economic disputes that Madison explicitly privileged, on the other, both reassured audience members who most shared Madison's economic agenda and pushed other readers to see themselves protected by the same institutions that protected the wealthy. Madison reclaimed the ground of individual rights for the Federalist project by assimilating the concerns of elite property holders, which everyone agreed the proposed constitution would protect, into new concerns which more readers could recognize as their own.

Move #2: Institutions over Virtue

Madison's first move lumped the Antifederalists that Saul Cornell has described as "middling" – Federal Farmer, Brutus, and others who worried about national power's effects on the middling sort of farmers and business owners – in with the "plebeian" radical democrats, then implied that all were partisans of majoritarian oppression. In his second, he targeted Antifederalist elitists by marginalizing the role of personal and public virtue in preserving liberty and prosperity.[274] This allowed Madison to emphasize the relationship between individuals and the state at the cost of other forms of political identity.

In a parallel to the way that Hobbes' Pericles instructed individuals to eschew orators in favor of their own calculations of self-interest, Madison, as Publius, consistently emphasized the fallibility and unreliability of enlightened political leadership. Indeed, such leadership recedes from the realm of possibility as Madison's contributions to the *Federalist* progress. In *Federalist*

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[274] Footnote people who still think Madison's Publius has a theory of virtue, as opposed to Madison.

10, "enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm".[275] We might think they sometimes will be, but references in the rest of the essay focus heavily on the negative: "men of factious tempers", "unworthy candidates", "factious leaders" all haunt popular government.[276] In *Federalist* 37, Madison suggested that nobody was really up to the task of crafting a durable constitution, and that if the proposed constitution proved worthy, its success reflected divine intervention.[277] And in *Federalist* 51, Madison conjured a decidedly Hobbesian state of nature to describe, in decidedly un-Hobbesian fashion, the reality of any society in which political leaders' authority remains unchecked: "In a society under the forms of which the stronger faction can readily unite and oppress the weaker, anarchy may as truly be said to reign as in a state of nature, where the weaker individual is not secured against the violence of the stronger…"[278] In this sketch of human nature, grimmer and less forgiving than that of *Federalist* 10, the idea of enlightened or benevolent rulers appears nowhere in the essay. Instead, the only check on elected representatives' selfishness and ambition depends on the countervailing ambitions of their rivals.

With political minorities defined in numerical terms rather than by their substantive interests, wealth, or power, and with enlightenment or public-mindedness marginalized in favor of constrained self-interest among politicians, Madison did much to defend the proposed constitution from Antifederalist charges. He presented a government that would protect all groups that might otherwise find themselves unable to protect themselves at the state and local level. He defended against charges that the proposed constitution was the product of an

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[275] Madison, *Federalist* 10, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 266.
[276] Madison, *Federalist* 10, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 268, 269.
[277] Madison, *Federalist* 37, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 364.
[278] Madison, *Federalist* 51, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 479.

aristocratic cabal not by appealing to the wisdom of the virtuous framers, but by arguing that the new government would prove more robust to the machinations of any such cabal. But these were not the last, nor the most lasting, of Madison's rhetorical moves in the *Federalist*.

Move #3: Social Plurality and the Single-Person Faction

By insisting both that even "the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions" suffice to ignite factional conflict and that, instead of naturally aligning, factional identities stem from "various and interfering interests", Madison made the most important theoretical contribution of *Federalist* 10.[279] If Madison had limited his rhetorical strategy to introducing religion as a source of political conflict, orthogonal to the "unequal distribution of property", the second dimension might have split the Antifederalists, but might not have contributed much to long-term political stability. If he had stopped at defending institutional checks on overambitious politicians, the possibility of a durable majority or a coalition between angry disempowered minority groups remained. Instead, *Federalist* 10 presents social plurality as a barrier to mass mobilization and points to a new reality of hegemonic politics in which political power depends largely on soliciting consent from the governed.

By relegating the source of faction to the ephemeral realm of opinion and treating interests as fundamentally changeable and contingent, Madison introduced a novel variety to factional politics. Instead of two factions contesting economic resources, or as many as four defined by their positions on economic distribution and religious freedom, the possible factions proliferated wildly: who could know, after all, if people would find more common cause over

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[279] Madison, *Federalist* 10, *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 10, 265.

slavery or westward expansion than conflict over the precise distribution of the settler republic's acquisitions? Interests are the product of opinion formation, which could take many different forms. As a result, Madison's treatment of plurality refigured the economic diversity that "middling Antifederalists" like Federal Farmer had seen as a source of stability: so many roles and opinions cut across the various economic orders that, instead of providing a source for politics-as-usual, these differing orders exploded the possibilities of factional contestation. Individuals who follow Madison's rhetorical lead recognize that any faction that might represent one identity they hold dear would compromise others. With this recognition comes a distrust, not only of factional politics, but of invitations to join in such projects.

Madison's repeated references to the rule of the majority, as well as the fundamental difference between his "safeguard against domestic faction and insurrection" and Hamilton's, point to the centrality of hegemonic politics. Hamilton's *Federalist* 9 centered on a highly creative reading of Montesquieu in which a "confederate republic" – strangely interpreted to describe the new national government – has a greater capacity for coercive force against insurrections of the sort that (Hamilton and Madison agreed) had taken place in western Massachusetts; Madison's *Federalist* 10 not only addressed the possibility of peacefully preventing such insurrections, but actively attempted to constitute subjects who would consent to the new order. A few years later, Hamilton would provoke, then urge Washington to crush, another populist "regulation" in rural Pennsylvania; here, Madison was trying to stop fights

before they got going.[280]

Madison's rhetorical strategy, and its implications for the relationship between public opinion, consent, and government, would become especially clear as his immediate political agenda suddenly reversed. In 1791, as Madison became the leader of the Jeffersonian faction in Congress, in open opposition to Alexander Hamilton and Hamilton's allies in the executive branch, his tune in the *National Gazette* changed from extending the sphere of government to theorizing that the circulation of opinion is "equivalent to a contraction of territorial limits, and is favorable to liberty, where these may be too extensive."[281] In other words, now that the wrong faction – finance capital and Northern speculators, instead of the planter aristocracy, now that these interests had diverged – was benefiting from federal power, Madison was more interested in coordinating opposition to the executive branch than in breaking up majoritarian movements. Madison's commitment to the tactic of rhetorically altering public opinion nonetheless remained firm. Indeed, his confidence in this tactic became grounds for opposing any new federal control over political expression:

"As there are cases where the public opinion must be obeyed by the government; so there are cases, where not being fixed, it may be influenced by the government. This distinction, if kept in view, would prevent or decide many debates on the respect due from the government to the sentiments of the people."[282]

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[280] On "regulation" as the preferred term for popular checks on elite power, and elites' rhetorical reframing of "regulation" as a "rebellion" centered on Daniel Shays, see Nelson, *Commons Democracy*, 26-28, 53-60; Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 26-34.
[281] "Public Opinion", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 14, 170.
[282] "Public Opinion", *Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 14, 170.

In other words, if Hamilton and others wanted to manufacture consent for their policies, they needed to put in the work, as Madison had done back when he and Hamilton were political allies. More generally, Madison claimed that the capacity of rulers both to fragment opposition to and to build support for their policies was sufficient that any durable opposition to those policies evidenced a serious and unjustifiable mistake of political judgment. Absent such a gross error, however, the web of various and interfering interests would attach to individuals even more thoroughly than to groups. Where a particular group can exist to mobilize around a specific interest, and limit itself to that purpose, people experience cross-cutting concerns whether they would like to or not. And the Madisonian logic has proliferated in ways that Madison almost certainly never considered. The interests and identities that are politically relevant in the United States have expanded with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and the Nineteenth, and the Twenty-Sixth, and the laws that gave those amendments political force, and with every social movement that brings to political presence an aspect of humanity that had been subordinated or excluded. With this expansion of the people who count as politically relevant, and of the issues that matter to those people, the range of possible divisions among any given movement has similarly expanded. To the extent that we are shaped by Madison's political logic, then, the possibility of uniting around a set of demands becomes ever more elusive. Instead, the state becomes the guarantor of the unique set of various and interfering interests in any one person's lived experience, while the logic of Madisonian pluralism erodes and neutralizes other forms of collective identity and effort.

4. The Democratic Problem of Madison's Pluralism

Madison's legacy, a rhetoric that obscures wealth and power as targets of political dissent and divides movements that seek to change how wealth and power are distributed, continues to

loom over democratic theory and practice. As such, "Madisonian pluralism" depends for much of its present force on its reception among scholars, from the 1950s onward, who read Madison's rhetorical moves as straightforward expressions of his political thought and treated that reading as a jumping-off point for a pluralist approach to democratic theory. These scholars – the most notable was Robert Dahl, with Martin Diamond also influential for some political theorists – reacted against portrayals of the United States' constitution as a reactionary or "Thermidorian" text, arguing that Madison instead genuinely sought to prevent tyranny and that the new system impartially protected minority groups.[283] Minority factions grow organically from people's interests and compete within relatively benign bounds to advance those interests; as a result, provided that institutions prevent the dominance of a majority faction, the competition between minority factions is compatible with a free and stable republic.[284] This scholarly uptake of Madison's rhetoric helped cement Madisonian pluralism in American political discourse both by naturalizing Madisonian factions – treating as a political fact the concepts that Madison attempted to rhetorically construct – and by introducing generations of political scientists and students to Madisonian faction as a central concept in political thought. In both cases, Madisonian pluralism undermines contemporary democratic politics by misleading those who draw on Madison as a democratic resource (whether or not they disclaim Madison's own

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[283] Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*; Diamond, "Democracy and the Federalist: A Reconsideration of the Framers' Intent", *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 53, No. 1 (March 1959), 52-68. The primary target of these readings of Madison was, of course, Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1921).

[284] Diamond thought that Madison had discovered the principles of political science that constituted "a beforehand answer to Marx", because an extended republic would prevent proletarianized workers from ever seeing themselves as a class instead of as members of narrow interests. Diamond, "Democracy and the Federalist", 65-66. Diamond's treatment of this logic as a discovery of objective political facts, rather than a highly intentional rhetoric, does not seem tenable in light of this chapter's argument.

normative commitments) and contributing to the intuition that plurality divides movements.

Democratic Theory and the "Democratic" Madison

The interest pluralism of Dahl, Charles Lindblom, and their various interlocutors has been particularly significant in transmitting Madisonian logics to contemporary democratic theory. Some time ago, Kirstie McClure worried that the status of pluralism as "a central element of the dominant political culture" of the United States would obscure "the potentially radical implications" of radical democratic pluralism.[285] For McClure, two waves of pluralist thought had already shaped this status – Anglo-Americans of the 1920s and American interest pluralists from the 1950s and 1960s onward – and with "a third generation of pluralist debate" already in progress, the familiarity of assuming that social groups are irreducibly plural threatened to overwhelm the novel aspects of the radical democratic project.[286] Richard M. Merelman has characterized what he calls "Yale pluralism" as a contribution to a hegemonic legitimating discourse which, even in its relatively reform-minded versions, tends to represent the state as a neutral party mediating between competing minority groups.[287] Mark Wenman, like Merelman, emphasizes an early mutual hostility between interest pluralists and political radicals, but has claimed that after "a remarkable renaissance", "pluralism has become the common sense in Anglo-American political thought, and there is, it seems, a palpable sense in which 'we are all

[285] McClure, "On the Subject of Rights: Pluralism, Plurality and Political Identity", in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (New York: Verso, 1992), 113.
[286] McClure, "Pluralism, Plurality, and Political Identity", 114.
[287] Merelman, *Pluralism at Yale: The Culture of Political Science in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 239-244.

pluralists now'."[288]

Of these, only Wenman has identified a Madisonian influence on recent pluralisms in the United States, tracing a lineage of pluralist political thought from the agonist pluralism of William Connolly, through Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom, to William James and James Madison.[289] For Wenman, Madison's concern with the tyranny of an overbearing and interested majority, largely solved in the institutions of the extended republic, informed Dahl's concern with preventing "the tyranny of a well-organised and motivated minority", which in turn has informed Connolly's "account of the danger of intense minorities".[290] We might struggle to find a more strongly motivated tyrannical minority than the owning class, and both Dahl and Lindblom wrote book-length treatments of the relationship between economic systems and democracy that balanced liberal anticommunism and moderate support for workplace democracy.[291] This may explain how some contemporary agonist pluralists might see that body of work more as a resource than as a legitimating discourse or text of American political ideology, but the Madisonian logic remains damaging.

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[288] Wenman, "William E. Connolly: Pluralism without Transcendence", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* Vol. 10 (2008), 158.
[289] Wenman, "William E. Connolly: Resuming the Pluralist Tradition in American Political Science", *Political Theory* Vol. 43, No. 1 (February 2015), 54-79.
[290] Wenman, "Resuming the Pluralist Tradition", 59-60. Kyong-Min Son has sharply criticized Wenman's account, arguing that it misses "productive tensions" between "different articulations of pluralism". Son's account of the differences and tensions between Dahl's and Madison's pluralisms, however, does not extend to the idea (not appearing in Wenman's article) that Dahl's minorities are self-interested, value-equivalent groups along the lines of Madison's rhetorical construction of faction in the *Federalist*. Son, "A Discordant Universe of Pluralisms: Response to Wenman", *Political Theory,* Vol. 43, No. 4 (August 2015), 533-540.
[291] Dahl and Lindblom, *Politics, Economics, and Welfare* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953); Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Cf. Laclau and Mouffe's use of these texts to defend the expansion of "democracy" to include relationships beyond that of citizen and state. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 169.

Recent uses of Madison as a resource for democratic deliberation have similarly adopted the logic of Madisonian pluralism, often without close attention to his more troubling normative commitments.[292] Jason Stanley has taken Madison's distrust of factions as an important resource for understanding the problem of group-based identities, "flawed ideologies", and propaganda.[293] Stanley, for whom the terms "propaganda" and "political rhetoric" are coextensive, presents Madisonian faction as a standard for the kinds of appeals that "public political speech" should avoid in favor of appeals offered from the standpoint of the impartial observer.[294] Given Stanley's commitments, expressed in that text and elsewhere, to anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and pro-worker politics, it appears that Stanley is committed to two claims about Madison's position: that Madison's treatment of faction reflects a standard of impartiality, and that Madison's own normative commitments were either irrelevant to his treatment of faction or consistent with contemporary left-liberal opposition to oppressive institutions and behaviors.[295] Stanley's turn to Habermas, Rawls, and the early Du Bois as similar resources for norms governing public reason reinforce this understanding of his reading of Madison.[296] Bryan Garsten has also drawn on Madison in engaging with political persuasion on the basis of

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[292] On the incompatibility of Madison's commitments with any egalitarian politics today, see the deep commitment to slavery and the rights of the planter aristocracy portrayed in Weiner, "James Madison and the Legitimacy of Majority Factions", 200, 209-213.
[293] Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 7-8.
[294] Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 4, 94.
[295] Eric Swanson has argued that Stanley's model of propaganda misses the role of hegemony: a "flawed ideological belief" does not grant the power to distort democratic processes in itself; instead, the political fact (at some point in time) that a certain "flawed ideology" is hegemonic means that appeals to that ideology have social power. Swanson, "Critical Notice of Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works*", *Mind* Vol. 126 (July 2017), 941-944. Following Laclau and Mouffe, as well as Gramsci, I will argue that hegemony not only produces the capacity of an ideology to distort, but also the common sense of what counts as an "undistorted" or "impartial" resource for appeal.
[296] Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 94-100.

Madison's commitment to majoritarian norms: "the people", as Madison says, "are, and must be, themselves the judges", and Garsten takes this to be a call to take the people's judgment seriously, and to embrace rhetoric as a mode of persuading audiences to move from demanding their own interests to deliberating over collective interests.[297] This would allow for "sustained dispute" that would move "toward less demagogic and more deliberative forms of controversy".[298] While Garsten's reading of Madison perhaps asks less of Madison than Stanley's does, it nonetheless implies a deference to the beliefs and desires of the people that is more than merely procedural, and a hope for the people's *good* judgment more optimistic than Madison's sustained treatment of "human nature". Appealing to the American founding as a resource for projects opposed to the actual purposes of someone like Madison probably offers rhetorical advantages for some audiences – ones simultaneously inclined to see the principles of the constitutional framers as authoritative and unfamiliar with the content of those principles – and disadvantages for others. Aside from the immediate tactical concerns for speakers trying to convince audiences to join in anti-oppressive efforts, however, Madisonian pluralism undermines projects that attempt to use it.

First, reading Madisonian pluralism as "value-neutral" is not sufficient to empower the oppressed minorities that Madison and his heirs have striven to keep oppressed. As I argued in Chapter 4, an appeal to value-neutral or impartial principles to justify ending specific instances of oppression requires a shared discursive framework of what counts as oppression. Achieving

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[297] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006)*, 174, 203.
[298] Garsten, *Saving Persuasion*, 176.

such a shared discursive framework would require successfully struggling for and winning hegemony, insofar as such an appeal can only mobilize collective social power to the extent that a broad range of audience members would recognize the hypothetical impartial principles as authoritative.[299] We can probably find, and certainly must build, audiences that take opposition to a broad range of oppressions as an authoritative principle of deliberation and action. I discuss how to do that in the following chapter. But we do not *have* such audiences, beyond local or otherwise limited contexts, and appealing to the obvious in front of audience members who do not share the speaker's conception of the obvious is more likely to drive them away than to bring them together. Indeed, assuming that liberal conceptions of racial equality and feminism are and have been hegemonic grants cover to right-wing groups' claims of grievance while simultaneously demobilizing those who are satisfied with those liberal values. Even a relatively tame version of liberation, then, in which everyone simply receives de facto equal rights as liberal citizens, therefore requires resources that the current hegemonic articulation does not grant. For those of us who take these liberal achievements as insufficient, the need for a new and stronger counter-hegemonic politics is even more pressing.

Second, someone might read Madison's conception of faction as value-neutral – or even recognize Madison's own commitments as actively hostile to the rights of human beings who

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[299] For those who haven't yet or haven't recently read Chapter , this is Laclau and Mouffe's argument that relations of subordination only take shape as relations of domination or oppression *within* a given discursive framework; it follows that a discursive framework makes relations of oppression broadly obvious to the extent that that framework is hegemonic. Cf. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 137-138; Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (New York: Routledge, 1998, 2003), 8; Lisa Disch, "Radical Democracy: The Silent Partner in Political Representation's Constructivist Turn", in Dario Castiglione and Johannes Pollak, eds., *Creating Political Presence: The New Politics of Democratic Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 170-171.

should be free equals in a society and aren't – and attempt to graft a different conception of rights or rule for deliberation onto Madisonian minorities. A version of this happens in Dahl's engagement of Madison, insofar as Dahl avoids assigning any content to the concept of "natural rights" in favor of avoiding seriously infringing on any group's preferences, While Stanley does not explicitly say this, his references to Habermas, Rawls, and Du Bois might draw on a different conception of human wellbeing to inform what counts as factious behavior. But Madison treats *either* side of any particular pair of factional identities, given sufficient power, as prone to abuse the other. Here, again, we have a resource for those who describe intentional attempts to redress genuine injustices as "reverse" racism or sexism. One also needs to determine what will be accomplished by identifying Madison as a resource that one would not accomplish otherwise. If the idea is, knowing Madison's actual commitments, to borrow his perceived cultural and historical authority, then the objections from above apply. On the other hand, if one hopes to treat value-neutral factions as a basis for adopting new ways of resolving conflicts between various minority groups, one will have to face not only the ghost of Madison's own commitments, but the tensions implicit in any attempt to fuse value-neutral conceptions of political relationships with specific and substantive conceptions of political or social values.

Third, theorizing oppression in terms of separate, discrete relations that affect disparate minorities contributes to the divisiveness of Madisonian pluralism. The interests of each minority, at a minimum, exist and must be protected separately from each other; on the most natural reading of Madisonian factions, various factional identities have more or less obvious opponents (creditors and debtors, agrarian and mercantile interests, coreligionists and nonbelievers, and so on). Since these identities will intersect in somewhat unpredictable ways, and since either side will oppress the other if given the opportunity, Madisonian pluralism

artificially obscures the possibility that any particular people would consistently end up on the winning or losing side of factional contestation. With the causes and solutions to factional oppression both varying across different minorities, the political action to address any particular instance of oppression has opportunity costs for other instances of oppression.

The Intuition of Divisiveness

The intuition of divisiveness may be Madison's most successful rhetorical move. Here, his move to the state as the only mediator of factional conflict and therefore the proper repository of individuals' trust and the push for individuals to consider the various and interfering factional identities that they themselves embody do most of the work. By setting up a dichotomy between "the permanent and aggregate interests of the community", which can only be maintained by the state's power and the people's consent, and the rigid, toxic self-interest of the factious minority, Madisonian pluralism explicitly opposes collective unity to particular factional demands, and implicitly sets a burden on individuals or groups demanding change – even to establish bare legal equality – to demonstrate how their project benefits all of society.

The explicit opposition between what is good for society and what is good (only) for a particular faction alters the rhetorical terrain in two ways. First, because material relations of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy shape a common sense of what counts, in Asad Haider's terms, as "neutral, general, and universal", demands to redress the harms of these material relations end up in the factional category by default.[300] In effect, this sneaks Madison's

[300] Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (New York: Verso, 2018), 22; cf. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 59-61.

normative commitments in through the back door. His lifelong commitment to constituting the political class in terms of white men, much like his attachment to property rights in general and to the rights of the planter aristocracy in particular, appear as the default point of unity for political discourse. Second, because that which benefits one group at the cost of another appears both inherently factious and potentially damaging to the entire society, rhetorical appeals that define a political project in terms of struggle appear threatening at best and outright subversive at worst. For a group to define itself in terms of opposition to another group within society, it has to signal to others that its intent and reason for existence are factious. The distinction between agonistic rhetorics – those that acknowledge the possibility of sharing a society with those that the speaker identifies as adversaries – and antagonistic ones, which suggest that the enemy cannot ultimately remain part of the speaker's society, shades towards irrelevance when simply identifying a social adversary suffices to identify a movement as factious and dangerous.

Consider the strange consensus between elements of the liberal center and the remnants of an essentialist left on the usually misinterpreted target of "identity politics".[301] Mark Lilla has summarized the liberal side of this consensus as follows: "identity-based social movements", by emphasizing demands that are specific to the experiences and concerns of people within isolated social groups, undermine or compromise "a broad political vision" that could more effectively support a coherent egalitarian project.[302] In Adolph Reed Jr.'s Marxist version, "race-reductionist" perspectives serve purely to obscure "the interests and concerns of working people"

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[301] On the misinterpretation of identity politics, see Haider, *Mistaken Identity*; Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective", *Monthly Review* Vol. 70, No.8 (2019).
[302] Lilla, *The Once And Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (New York: Harper, 2017), 77.

and therefore constitute "the left wing of neoliberalism and nothing more".[303] Their agreement centers on the claim that we can either transform politics in the name of a privileged form of social unity or watch someone else's politics transform us as isolated, powerless individuals. This apparently powerful claim accepts without comment or protest the Madisonian logic in which only single-person factions and the entire society count as privileged political actors. Based on this logic, and the very anti-Madisonian desire for broad political change, these writers and others like them conclude that contesting politics at the factional level pushes us towards disempowered individualism. They propose instead taking an allegedly more universal group – liberal democratic citizens or proletarians, respectively – as a basis for mobilizing a maximally broad part of society in favor of a progressive political agenda.

This universal progressive movement, however, has to come from somewhere. People have to organize it. Lilla's open disdain for political mobilization and action outside the narrow frame of electoral politics – "the only way to meaningfully defend [minorities] – and not just make empty gestures of recognition and 'celebration' – is to win elections and exercise power in the long run, at every level of government"; instead of turning Republican control of government "around at the local level", "identity liberals" are merely "organizing yet another march in Washington or preparing yet another federal court brief" – demonstrates not only the Madison-inspired tendency to center politics in the relationship between state and individuals, but a profound inattention to the process and techniques of actually organizing a political movement.[304] This inattention reappears in Lilla's idealized misrepresentation of the New Deal

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[303] Reed, "Antiracism: a neoliberal alternative to a left", *Dialectical Anthropology* 42 (2018), 114.
[304] Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal*, 12-14.

as a new political "catechism" that united "nearly everyone (though African-Americans were effectively disenfranchised in many programs due to Dixiecrat resistance)".[305] Reed is more attentive to "the daunting prospect of building a movement … to center the interests and concerns of working people – of all races, genders, sexual orientations, and whatever immigration status", and unlike the liberal wing of the anti-identitarian consensus, the class-essentialist wing has a history of radical bottom-up organizing on which to rhetorically draw.[306] Nonetheless, the prospect of building a mass liberatory movement is daunting partly because Reed reproduces once again the all-or-nothing Madisonian logic in which electoral politics – pages, for example, of discussion in the cited essay of how identity politics contaminated the 2016 Democratic Party presidential primary – and a purposeless mass of self-interested individuals appear as the dominant forms of political (or depoliticized) existence.

We can find a more promising starting point for a response, both to Madisonian pluralism and to the racial dogwhistling central to the right-wing neoliberal articulation in the United States, in the "race-class narrative" developed by Ian Haney-López, Anat Shenker-Osorio, and a group of researchers at think tanks and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).[307] The race-class narrative starts by recognizing two facts about the political reality that Madisonian pluralism helps define: first, "color-blind" class warfare appeals (Haney-López calls

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[305] Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal*, 32-33. For an account of the intense organizing efforts to articulate labor and racial equality during and after the New Deal see Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); for one of the many injustices referenced in the twelve words in Lilla's parentheses, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017).
[306] Reed, "Antiracism: a neoliberal alternative to a left", 114.
[307] Here, I engage primarily with Haney-López' presentation of the race-class narrative in *Merge Left: Fusing Race and Class, Winning Elections, and Saving America* (New York: The New Press, 2019).

them "economic populism") run into decades of a racialized narrative about who deserves basic economic goods; second, many voters of all colors express a feeling that "racial justice" narratives are divisive. The designers of the race-class narrative found, however, that fusing these appeals – explicitly advocating for collective provision for everybody's material needs, across all colors, and phrasing social opposition in terms of the need to fight back against the greedy few – proved persuasive across a broad range of conversations with focus groups. In the vocabulary of this dissertation, the race-class narrative adopts a populist appeal in which the material needs of people from all races are articulated against in relation to the oligarchs who deny these needs to enrich themselves. As presented, the race-class narrative has limitations. Unsurprisingly, for a project targeted at helping Democratic Party candidates get elected, it emphasizes responding to existing conditions, while relegating more radical demands and transformative projects to "think tanks, grassroots groups, and unions".[308] The role of rhetoric in building communities in which radical demands enter the common sense will have to wait for the following chapter. Nonetheless, constructing an articulation across identities offers more of a path forward than continuing to allow Madison's terms to define our common sense.

5. Conclusion

Madison's legacy continues to distort contemporary politics and to protect the United States' oldest hierarchies and oppressions. It's worth considering, however, how tenuous that legacy is. As we've seen, the brilliant and rhetorical moves of *Federalist* 10 were mostly *not* the ones that Madison had been brooding over for a year. Those, like his other comments on the

[308] Haney-López, *Merge Left*, Kindle location 3492.

American political and economic situation since 1785, would have contributed to angry Antifederalists' condemnations of an aristocratic conspiracy rather than deflating, distorting, and flattening those condemnations. Instead, a political thinker whose new ideas pervaded his correspondence and private notes never expressed doubts about his contemporaries' binary political sociology and may not have seriously considered the issue at all, prior to writing *Federalist* 10 on a week's notice. The later essays that built out Madison's rhetorical intervention still only had a development period under three months. The reception of this rhetorical intervention, in which several generations of political theorists and political scientists overcame Madison's class position, privately-expressed views, and frequent returns to the importance of economic hierarchy to instead read *Federalist* 10 in a flatly literal fashion that reinforced the politics of the Cold War, similarly demonstrates the contingency of Madison's rhetorical devices. Like all rhetoric, Madison's required an audience to see something in it that made sense. In this case, Madison's mid-20th-century audience saw the argument of one of the most sophisticated thinkers of the American founding generation and recognized a resource for simultaneously attacking the insufferably materialist Charles Beard and defending the enlightenment and foresight of the American constitutional system. And finally, like all interventions in the world of hegemonic politics that Madison saw approaching, the effects of Madison's rhetoric rode partly on existing material conditions and on favorable intellectual and rhetorical resources, such as the neoliberal articulation assembled at nearly the same time that Dahl, Diamond, and others found Madison's *Federalist* such a congenial jumping-off point. Each of these factors should underscore the contingency of Madisonian pluralism's success.

At the same time, the material conditions of late capitalism and the discursive conditions of the neoliberal articulation have given Madisonian pluralism tremendous staying power. The

apparent divisiveness of appeals to identity, not to mention the apparent untrustworthiness of mass political mobilization, show up in the experience not only of people engaged in the academic contestation of contemporary political and social theory, but also of members of mass political audiences who may not know much about Madison, or care. It follows that the people who must join in a liberatory movement in order for it to succeed recognize a common sense in which liberation falls somewhere between impractical and undesirable. Rhetoric that divides us against each other enjoys an advantage over rhetoric that builds movements not only because Madisonian pluralism explicitly portrays rhetoric as inherently divisive, but because the distrust of faction and political mobilization that is so important to Madisonian pluralism implicitly encourages the cynicism at the core of dogwhistling, ethnonationalism, and similar invocations of racism in order to protect the interests of the few. It follows that attempting to articulate a broad movement towards freedom will require not only top-down representative moves of the kind that politicians' advisers can summon, but long-term, bottom-up alterations of the common sense within specific local communities. In the following chapter, I turn to how rhetoric contributes to articulating a new sense of solidarity within such a community.

Chapter 7 "A Moderate and Reasonable Position": Articulating "Union Issues" in the Graduate Labor Movement

1. Introduction

By analyzing rhetoric as a practice of articulation and situating this analysis in a broader political logic of hegemony, I've shown in the two previous chapters how rhetoric draws on a set of material, social, and political resources to construct solidarities within an audience. I've also shown that these resources are distributed unevenly based on hegemonic political conditions, so that it is much easier to appeal to existing disparities and subordinations in order to maintain them than it is to construct new solidarities in a counterhegemonic project. For the purposes of articulation in the United States, the existing neoliberal hegemonic articulation finds important support in two other political conditions: the long history of racist institutions and discourses in the American settler empire, which provides a stable basis for reactionary rhetorical appeals, and the Madisonian intuition that difference is divisive, which undercuts centrist and center-left liberals' ability to effectively craft oppositional populist rhetorical appeals. Taken together, these conditions show that leftist and left-liberal political efforts require a new counter-hegemonic articulation, and that this articulation will likely need to start outside electoral contexts.

This chapter analyzes efforts to form a local version of such a counter-hegemonic articulation, centering on the organizing efforts of the Graduate Employees Organization at the University of Michigan (AFT/AFL-CIO, Local 3550). Like most labor unions, GEO's members have fought for a wide range of changes to their compensation, working conditions, and broader

living conditions; also like most labor unions, GEO has only made progress in these areas due to decades of struggles carried out through – and sometimes outside – the collective bargaining process. These struggles depend on substantial member participation, which demonstrates the union's credibility when it carries out various forms of collective action, and on the support of broader communities, including undergraduate students, faculty workers, and support staff at the University of Michigan, other labor unions in southeastern Michigan, and other community organizations in and around the Ann Arbor area. To build this support, the union has relied on a rhetorical strategy of articulating their demands as "union issues" – i.e. topics over which the union's right to bargain, demonstrate, and threaten and carry out job actions should be unquestioned – even, and especially, when these demands are near or beyond the limits (wages, benefits, and working conditions) traditionally established in labor law. This strategy was especially apparent during the struggles that culminated in each of GEO's two strikes, a 28-day strike in 1975 that secured the union's first contract and a 10-day strike in 2020 over working conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic. On both occasions, GEO members overwhelmingly supported, and went on strike for, platforms including demands at the radical edge of contemporary labor activism: in 1975, a robust union and management co-planned affirmative action system and contractual guarantees against discrimination on the basis of sexual

preference, and in 2020, union and management co-planning of the university's pandemic response and the disarmament and demilitarization of University of Michigan campus police.[309]

At stake in these struggles were the extension of workplace democracy to include workers' influence – as an equal seat at the table, or even with veto power – in areas of hiring non-discrimination, racial justice, and safe working conditions, and the union's capacity to represent not only its members, but broader communities with whom the union claimed to act in solidarity. The union's strategy of articulation, implicit in its rhetoric during the 1975 contract campaign, became explicit in its public statements during the 2020 strike. While the university claimed demands on policing had nothing to do with demands for a safe response to the pandemic, making the former an inappropriate subject for bargaining or for strike action, activists insisted that the demands were inseparable under union members' right to safe workplace conditions. In both the 1975 and the 2020 cases, union activists' articulation of broader social justice demands as union issues, worthy of union members' and broader communities' collective support, succeeded in building support within the union's membership for the strike platform. GEO largely failed, however, to secure enough community support during the 2020 campaign to impose its demands on the university administration, or indeed, to continue the strike against increasingly severe legal retaliation from the administration. Instead, where the 1975 strike ended with the administration largely capitulating – the affirmative action

[309] Today, the language of "sexual preference" is most often a right-wing dogwhistle that portrays sexual attraction as an individual choice that can be subjected to surveillance and control by employers and potentially the state. At the time, activists in the local gay liberation movement understood sexual preference to cover not only the existence of LGBT people, but their freedom to express themselves and refuse to be assimilated into liberal, individualist, and heteronormative logics. When referring to the GEO demand in the 1974-75 contract campaign, I use the term that the union and activists at the time used.

and nondiscrimination demands, in fact, were settled only a few days into the month-long strike – and the union winning its first contract, the 2020 strike ended with the administration making symbolic concessions and continuing to "discuss" the union's concerns.

What enabled GEO's success in its internal organizing? Why did this success translate to broader community mobilization during the 1975 strike, but much less so in the 2020 strike? How could GEO, or unions like it, more effectively build community support? The theory of rhetoric developed in the previous chapters can help answer each of these questions. In the chapter's first substantive section, I argue that GEO's record of internal solidarity and its consistent ability to articulate social justice-based demands as "union issues" deserving of GEO members' support owe much to participatory decision-making mechanisms and member-to-member organizing practices. The union understands itself to be a social movement union operating on an "organizing model", and union officers rely on decisions at mass meetings to determine the union's goals and strategy.[310] These institutions and practices create space for members to persuade each other to commit to common goals and, indeed, to persuade reluctant or overworked union officers to continue to fight for member-approved demands. GEO's past and present articulatory practices have created and maintained a common sense among the organization's members, in which racial justice, LGBT rights, and a safe and just workplace broadly construed are all integral to the union's vision of workplace democracy.

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[310] A "social movement union", in the lexicon of contemporary union organizers, is one that orients itself to broader social struggles rather than to narrowly-construed categories of member interests. An "organizing model" is distinguished from a "service model" in that unions adopting the latter model tend to emphasize providing specific and concrete services to members in exchange for their dues, while unions that choose the former commit themselves to turning new employees into active members, and turning active members into shop stewards or even elected leadership. Given the high turnover inherent in graduate labor unions, the organizing model has proved extremely popular among graduate labor unions and contingent academic labor more broadly.

Second, however, this articulatory rhetoric primarily reaches GEO members – those who experience the union's participatory democratic practices, member-to-member organizing, and so on – and is of limited efficacy when offered to audiences without the organizing and institutional support that make it effective within the union. GEO's attempts to call on support from broader communities and organizations, therefore, typically (with one important exception, the union's requests for solidarity from other labor unions) have the function of coalitional or populist rhetoric; that is, these appeals attempt to summon allies based on a contingent common interest, or by uniting audience members with reference to a common source – usually the university administration – for their various discontents. Understood in this way, the union's appeals for community support depend on conditions largely outside the union's control – for coalitional appeals, the existence of strong and effective organizations with which the union can ally; for populist appeals, the existence of a systemic crisis from which the union can construct a negative equivalence – which the union must respond to, rather than control, in decisive moments. In terms of coalitional politics, the union had far stronger potential allies in the 1975 strike than in 2020; in terms of populist strategies, the union had some opportunities to coordinate discontent with the university administration in 2020, but did not build enough power through these opportunities to impose its demands on the administration.

Third, then, I turn to examining how an organization like GEO could employ a politics of articulation more successfully. I argue that both articulatory strategies, centering on more developed engagement with relevant communities, and coalitional strategies based on improved cooperation with partner organizations are valuable; indeed, combining the two is most likely to produce favorable organizing conditions.

2. Internal Rhetoric and GEO's Common Sense

This section describes the internal institutions that characterize GEO as an organization, as well as a history of articulatory practices inside the organization before and during the union's two strikes. By consistently making space for member participation in the union's decision-making processes, GEO has generally been quite successful in articulating "union issues" so as to include a broad social justice vision within its member base. The bulk of this section documents the continuity in this articulation across the union's history, particularly in the cases of the union's affirmative action and sexual preference demands before and during the 1975 strike, and the case of the "safety articulation" during the 2020 strike.

Participatory Practices

GEO's most important structural support for its articulatory practices, its emphasis on mass participation across organizing contexts, is a legacy of the New Left and 1960s freedom struggles at and near the University of Michigan. Most active organizations in this area depended on mass meetings, featuring substantive discussion and voting on the organizations' policy and tactics, as their primary decision-making mechanism. Every major collective action on the University of Michigan campus during the 1970s, including the building occupations carried out by the first two iterations of the Black Action Movement, the GEO strike, and various demonstrations and confrontations leading up to these, involved collective deliberation in large, relatively open meetings to determine platforms, overall strategy, and the tactics for specific collective actions. Students and faculty in Michigan's Residential College collectively decided whether and how to support these actions, as did the members of other organizations in the area. For GEO specifically, the practice of direct democracy at general membership meetings (GMMs) became a central part of the union's organizing and deliberative practices, and the union holds

five or six such meetings per year in typical years. During bargaining and job actions (a generic term for strikes, walkouts, and similar direct action involving the members' labor), the union holds these meetings at a much higher rate, allowing members to determine the union's current bargaining terms, whether and how to continue job actions, and other urgent issues.[311] During these especially urgent meetings, hundreds of union members – ranging from perhaps one in four members to, during the union's second strike, eight or nine out of every ten members – attend and participate. Similar deliberative practices have appeared in other unions of academic workers, at the University of Michigan and elsewhere, with several consequences for unions' internal organization and deliberation.

First, direct democratic procedures in mass member meetings tend overall to strengthen members' resolve for risky or confrontational courses of action. This tendency matches the one that Francesca Polletta observed in participatory democracy in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the New Left, and post-New Left radical feminist organizing.[312] Aside from alleged idealistic reasons for adopting deliberative and participatory internal processes, Polletta identifies eminently practical reasons for basing collective action on such processes: when such organizations solicited wide participation in the decision to begin, continue, and end direct action campaigns, and relatively wide participation in tactical decisions during those campaigns, they provided a framework for participants to gain trust in the strategy that they eventually adopt. As a result, people became more willing to take risks on the basis of

[311] In 2017 and 2020, the union held bargaining GMMs twice a month; during the 2020 strike, the union held GMMs twice a week.
[312] Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

collective solidarity.

Further, building collective action on members' collective deliberation grants an alternative source of authority to the organization's rhetoric. The terms in which the organization justifies its actions tend to apply with greater force to future actions. Reminding wavering present members that they or past members had committed to some platform demand or principle of solidarity tends to calm worries of overly radical leadership and instead center frustrations on authorities and management, who have failed to respond to a consistent collective demand. This kind of appeal mobilizes members' trust in themselves against habits of deferring to management and other official sources of authority. It also tends to solidify rank-and-file radicalism. For one thing, people considering the myriad ways in which collective action could hypothetically improve their lived experience usually choose goals with more ambition and excitement than they feel after weeks or months of effort. Even when the member-approved demand reaches beyond what a newly-organized member might otherwise support, the fact that other members voted to approve the demand often suffices to gain support and maintain solidarity. This owes partly to trust built by collective participation and strengthened by struggles with management.

Most importantly for this chapter's argument, in democratic unions committed to member participation, the use of mass meetings and empowerment of rank-and-file members broadens and flattens the rhetorical field. While the elected officials at a mass meeting are privileged speakers, in the sense that they shape the meeting agenda and generally have the bulk of whatever speaking time has been planned in advance, other speakers have considerable opportunities to introduce their own perspectives and to persuade their fellow members. Moreover, members can organize – spontaneously or in advance – a substantial speaking and voting presence at mass meetings, which often shapes the union's final direction on any

particular issue. Whether organized spontaneously or otherwise, these kinds of self-organized member groups often become formalized as union caucuses responsible for designing future demands that affect them. For example, in late 2016, members voted to reexamine the bargaining committee's proposed contract language on work hours protections after a group of international graduate workers pointed out that this language would not protect them from being ordered to work more than 20 hours a week, a violation of their entry visas that was especially worrisome shortly after the election of Donald Trump. The bargaining committee members responsible for the original proposal, largely unaware of this aspect of U.S. immigration law, withdrew the proposal in favor of the decision of the new union caucus, and the reworked hours protections became one of the centerpieces of the 2017 contract campaign.

Members' appeals before and during mass meetings also shape the union's collective willingness to insist on certain demands, and plan collective action to enforce those demands, in the face of management intransigence. In most struggles, the union's elected officials, especially those responsible for bargaining with the university administration and for soliciting support from affiliated labor organizations, reach a point where they no longer expect progress from continued negotiations. Only widespread member support for collective action will generally make further progress. Because of the fatigue involved in long negotiations with obstinate administrators, and all too often in dealing with higher-up union officials who urge the local to settle for an easier but worse contract, elected representatives sometimes ask members to authorize concessions on sticking points rather than asking for more concerted and aggressive collective action. It has often, therefore, fallen on rank-and-file members to insist on escalation instead of surrender. As I will show in the following section, rank-and-file member activists crafted much of the rhetoric that successfully connected workplace rights for LGBT people and

affirmative action against racial hiring discrimination as "union issues" in GEO's first campaign to respond to exactly such a problem.

In each of these cases, then, the participatory model that GEO and other contemporary organizations inherited from racial justice and New Left movements has created an internal space for rhetoric that articulates a wide range of member and community concerns to create a common sense of the union's purpose and goals. Such rhetoric channels the concept of union solidarity in a concrete, specific direction, shaping the union's strategy and intent for a specific struggle. At the same time, articulating issues within the central organizing principle of union solidarity works most effectively within the labor movement. To build movements that extend beyond the union to other potentially-relevant organizations and communities, the union depends either on well-organized groups that are willing to respond to its internal rhetoric, or on separate rhetorical strategies that reach beyond the discourses associated with the labor movement.

Articulation in the Early Union: Racial Justice

GEO's commitment to an end to hiring discrimination dates to within a few weeks of the union's formation in September 1973. A "Demand for racial and sexual equality" was adopted at the October 18, 1973 meeting of the Organization of Teaching Fellows (OTF)d, which would become the Graduate Employees Organization a few months later.[313] The formal language for

[313] "Notes from T.F. Meeting Thurs. Oct 18, 1973" (Bentley Historical Archive, GEO Box 1, Organization of Teaching Fellows Meetings Sep 1973-Dec 1973). Efforts to form a graduate union at the University of Michigan date at least to 1969, and the university administration deflected two attempts at a union election between 1969 and 1973. In the 1973-74 academic year, a strike threat compelled the administration to voluntarily recognize the union

this demand was adopted at a mass meeting in February 1974:

"There will be an end to discrimination against graduate academic employees and applicants for graduate academic appointments due to sex, race, creed, national origin, union affiliation, political beliefs, or sexual preference of those employees and of those applicants; GEO will set quotas for affirmative action to end such discrimination."[314]

These standards might seem familiar today. Indeed, the University of Michigan adopted phrasing for its official non-discrimination policies wholesale from GEO contract language. At the time, however, administrators found this language highly objectionable, and deployed a strategy now familiar to labor organizers everywhere: simultaneous claims that the university did not presently discriminate on most of these grounds or intend to do so, and that asking the administration to make a contractual commitment not to discriminate infringed on management rights. Administrators rejected the sexual preference language entirely, resorting to reprehensible homophobic claims including lamentations that they might somehow lose their management right to punish sexual predators.[315] After forceful pushback on this point, administrators' official response emphasized the disingenuous but common claim that while they did not discriminate, they did not want to be contractually prohibited from doing so; while homophobic attacks on GEO's sexual preference demands continued, administrators generally allowed regents and

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and agree to bargain in the 1974-75 year, provided that the union accepted the administration's proposed bargaining unit (including graduate instructors, research assistants, and staff assistants) – with the new bargaining unit and the university's renaming of "teaching fellows" to "teaching assistants", the OTF changed its name to the Graduate Employees Organization. The reasons why this organizing effort succeeded, its implications for GEO's history and institutions, and the lessons for other organizing efforts in academic labor are of value to labor historians and organizers, but beyond the scope of this chapter.

[314] "CONTRACT DEMANDS PACKAGE AS APPROVED BY THE MASS MEETING FEB. 7, 1974" (Bentley Historical Archive, GEO Box 1).

[315] John Ellis, "Homophobia: Paranoia or prejudice?", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), February 11, 1975.

reactionary bargaining committee members to make those attacks for them.

On the question of ending racial discrimination in hiring, and establishing a contractual mandate for an affirmative action program, the union's rhetoric initially aimed at activating existing support in the membership for these demands. The union circulated an anonymous flyer, "An Injury to One is an Injury to All", fairly early in negotiations for the first contract.[316] The flyer referenced the university's past failures to honor racial justice commitments, such as those it had made in 1970 to the first iteration of the Black Action Movement after a lengthy student strike and building occupation, and argued that a union-negotiated contract would invoke a controlling legal framework and force the university to make good on its pledges.[317] By emphasizing the contract's unique potential to force real change at the university, the authors suggested that racial justice demands naturally fit within the category of union issues.

The chosen title of this flyer, "An Injury to One is an Injury to All", as well as other rhetorical choices throughout the text, also reinforce the framing of affirmative action and non-discrimination as "union issues". The title, of course, comes from a motto adopted at the beginning of the 20th century by the Industrial Workers of the World, and appearing ever since in

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[316] "An Injury to One is an Injury to All.", handwritten "Oct. 74" date on the page (Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 2, "Outreach"). While the flyer is anonymous, it is reasonable to assume that this, like practically all union publications, was written by a small committee.

[317] On these and many other broken promises, and university administrators' broader choice to emphasize "diversity" rather than racial justice in half-hearted efforts to recruit more Black students and faculty, see Matthew Johnson's groundbreaking study of the University of Michigan's resistance to racial justice in higher education. Johnson has practically nothing to say about the role of labor in anti-racist direct action, as he focuses on administrators' strategies for creating layered institutional defenses against long-term commitments to racial justice. Nonetheless, Johnson's archival research and discussion of UM administrators is a tremendous contribution, not only to studies of racial injustice in the academy, but to the history of the University of Michigan. Johnson, *Undermining Racial Justice: How One University Embraced Inclusion and Inequality* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 88-103.

the history of American industrial unionism.[318] The use of a union slogan demanding radical solidarity among members simultaneously advances the "union issue" framing and invokes the best elements of labor history in support of the specific affirmative action demands. The beginning of the flyer emphasizes the union's purpose "to unite all graduate employees" and assesses the university as unwilling to make concessions on any questions – economic or "non-economic" – unless "forced to do so".[319] Here we have an enemy – a powerful institution defined by "long-standing institutionalized racism and male supremacy" – and a strategy, and the sole path to victory requires unified solidaristic action. The same framing recurs in a double flyer, printed front and back and circulated in November 1974, explaining GEO's proposals on non-discrimination and affirmative action on the two sides of the page. "The union", the flyer's authors insist, "has to be sensitive to the interests of <u>all</u> of its members if the interests of any are to be safeguarded."[320] The front of the flyer concludes with a striking appeal to members for empathy and solidarity:

"GSA's [graduate student assistants, the term applied to graduate workers by the University from 1974] are often isolated from each other and remain unaware of the pain many other GSA's feel, and the problems of survival they confront, as a result of discrimination. The 'U' structure encourages us to feel competitively about each other, and our isolation too often prevents us from seeing one another's problems. If we don't actively participate in efforts to

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[318] While the IWW was active in the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area of Southeast Michigan from the late 1970s onward, I haven't found any evidence of direct contact with IWW organizers at this time, and the earliest dates of public IWW organizing seem to be in 1978.
[319] "An Injury to One is an Injury to All.", handwritten "Oct. 74" date on the page (Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 2, "Outreach").
[320] "GEO Proposals: Non-Discrimination/Affirmative Action", dated November 1974 per the GEO timeline (Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 2, "Outreach").

break down these barriers, we can't hope that our future reality will be any different than our present one. Supporting the GEO demand for non-discrimination with enough strength to ensure its acceptance is one essential move towards that difference."[321]

This appeal reinterprets the populist logic, in which university administrators deny the needs of separate and potentially allied communities and each of those communities therefore benefits from weakening the administration through any given struggle, into a framework in which the university's structure actively produces the perceived differences between these communities. This works particularly well because it takes seriously the experiences of readers who don't initially see the value of the non-discrimination language and offers a new way for those readers to understand their experiences. The appeal avoids moralizing language in favor of the hope that graduate workers can create a better world for themselves, and because of this, it also recontextualizes previous paragraphs that speak to the importance of standing unified behind each and every union demand. Where a reader might initially think of the previous paragraphs of warning of the dangers of disunity, on the basis that a union that fails to support the needs of all of its members will fail to advance the interests of any of them, the turn from warning to aspiration encourages creativity and transformation instead of self-criticism and conformity to the leadership's official line.

On the question of affirmative action to end hiring discrimination against Black and "Third World" graduate workers (a term that racial justice organizers on the Michigan campus favored at the time, and used to describe the collective actions that would later be called "BAM

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[321] "GEO Proposals: Non-Discrimination/Affirmative Action", dated November 1974 per the GEO timeline (Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 2, "Outreach").

II"), these flyers and the accompanying conversations with membership convincingly portrayed racial justice as a union issue. While the struggle to impose an affirmative action system on the university, and the administration's intransigence in bargaining, led to "affirmative action" or the "Fair Practices Committee" (the relevant union committee) receiving significant agenda time for nearly every meeting of GEO's Stewards Council in the 1974-1975 academic year, union activists apparently saw no need to prepare further organizing or messaging materials on this subject after the wave of flyers on practically every contract demand in the fall of 1974. This uneven pattern – extensive time in leadership meetings to strategize around winning demands, but practically no member-facing messaging on the importance of the demands – almost always indicates that the union's stewards and officers believe that rank-and-file members are united and no further organizing on the relevant demands is urgently needed.

Articulation in the Early Union: Sexual Preference

The demand to include sexual preference in the non-discrimination language faced more serious challenges. While the university's intransigence on this point and on the affirmative action program reached similar levels, and crumbled at exactly the same time during the 1975 strike, the union's capacity to maintain the sexual preference demand in bargaining and the strike platform was unclear. A call to action in the November 1974 GEO newsletter demonstrates the relative weakness of the mobilization and organizing behind the sexual preference demand. The authors made little effort to change anybody's mind; instead, with unclear levels of membership support behind the demand, they concluded by asking people *already* committed to the demand to show up: "…GEO cannot fight effectively for groups who do not make their presence felt, both within the union and to the university. If you feel that those demands which would improve the position of women and gays are important, come to the mass meeting on Nov. 13 and show

your support. And lobby within your departments for these issues…"[322] That is, if more than a handful of activists supported the contract demands, the authors – probably members of this handful – needed the heretofore-silent supporters to speak up. The framing of these demands is also a bit ethereal. A "demands package" that would "improve the position of women and gays" did exist, but only in the sense that the university administration opposed affirmative action to end discrimination against women and students of color, as well as a childcare program, and *also* refused to include sexual preference in the now-agreed-upon language prohibiting discrimination on the base of race or sex, while the union wanted contract language on each of these points. The piece provides no additional framework for understanding the interests of women and LGBT people as materially or ideologically articulated, and overall, the rhetoric of this appeal evidences little ambition, and not much more optimism, for persuading union members to newly support contract protections for their LGBT colleagues.

For other rank-and-file members (and possibly bargaining team members, although this is unclear) in late 1974 and early 1975, the apparent lack of support for the sexual preference demand led them to consider dropping it entirely. If the university was giving up nothing on the contract demand at the bargaining table, how was the union to know that it would win any progress on the demand after going on strike? Surely it would be worse to include a demand on the strike platform and then lose that demand than to drop the demand prior to the strike. Finally, if activists believed that community solidarity would win this demand, where was the gay and lesbian community agitating and pressuring the university? Were radical activists in the union

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[322] "women, gays, and GEO", *GEO Newsletter* No. 2 (November 1974), 7.

out in front of the community they claimed to represent?[323]

It's important to recognize that while some of the people voicing this position doubtless did so because they didn't support the demand to begin with, others understood themselves to be in solidarity with the principle behind the demand and worried over the proper strategy to advance that demand in the long term. Maintaining such a clear distinction between principle and strategy often provides intellectual and rhetorical cover for retreats on principle without meaningful strategic gains, and GEO activists Gayle Rubin and Anne Bobroff would write a brilliant retrospective, while the strike successfully concluded, on why avoiding these retreats was correct.[324] In the immediate moment, however, a moralizing response that condemned or criticized overly worried members would only have alienated them and, in a way, proved them right by further fracturing union solidarity around the sexual preference demand. Rubin, Daniel Tsang, and other GEO members who were active in local struggles for gay liberation identified the only way forward: by mobilizing sufficient external support for the sexual preference demand, activists would prove the advocates of strategic retreat wrong on their own terms. This began with arranging a letter from Ann Arbor's Gay Liberation Front to the GEO Stewards' Council, delivered on January 16, 1975, and signature gathering for a forceful condemnation of

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[323] Much later, after the University of Michigan's administrators' decades-long struggle to undermine racial justice and replace it with the language of diversity and inclusion, as well as broader state and national reaction against affirmative action and the resulting collapse of Black student enrollment, these kinds of moderate critiques would trouble racial justice demands in the 2016-2017 and 2019-2020 contract campaigns, as well as during the organizing for GEO's fall 2020 strike. In 1974, of course, the high-profile student activism for racial justice at the university made this kind of attack on racial justice demands completely inaccessible to centrist critics.

[324] Rubin and Bobroff, "On the Fetishism of Bargaining", *The File*, September 20, 2019 http://thefilemag.org/on-the-fetishism-of-bargaining-2/.

the university's homophobia in the *Michigan Daily*.[325] This op-ed, when published, carried over two hundred signatures of faculty and graduate workers, including the chair of the political science department, Samuel Eldersveld.[326] With community support now clearly in evidence, Rubin and Tsang circulated a flyer calling on their fellow GEO members to fight for the sexual preference demand up to and throughout the upcoming strike: "Don't settle for a contract which perpetuates discrimination against gays. Join with others who have already spoken out in defense of this simple and basic demand for civil rights for an oppressed minority."[327] Now that organizing and solidarity made the demand winnable, the appeal called on members simply to keep fighting, and it worked. The fact that outside groups treated the union contract as the specific locus of struggle for this moment of liberation solidified the treatment of the sexual preference demand as a union issue, allowing its advocates to persuade union members to include it on the strike platform and eventually to win it as a part of the contract.

Internal Articulation and the 2020 Strike

In recent contract campaigns and in its 2020 strike for "a safe and just campus for all", the union attempted to use its traditional "union issues" articulatory strategy to ground two very different approaches to these problems in its organizing and rhetoric. After an initial attempt to identify specific, highly targeted aspects of local injustices that contractual provisions could

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[325] "STEWARDS' AGENDA JANUARY 16, 1975" (Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 1, "GEO Admin – Stewards' Council Meetings, 1974").
[326] Gayle Rubin and Dan Tsang, "Letters to The Daily: homophobia", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), January 23, 1975. While the letter was submitted anonymously, see Guerin Wilkinson, "UM GEO demands set for strike", *Michigan Free Press*, January 27, 1975.
[327] Rubin and Tsang, "Non-discrimination: A Matter of Rights" (Bentley Historical Library, Dan Tsang Box 1, "GEO Topical Files: Gay Rights (1)").

solve particularly well, the union turned to a maximalist version of "union issues", provoked by a novel mode of administrative obstruction, in which practically anything that would improve the lives of graduate workers at the University of Michigan could be a contractual demand.

The first highly targeted approach attempted to define a recent university initiative to advance "diversity, equity, and inclusion" in terms of union issues. After the administration had announced this initiative in response to Black students' protests of racial injustice, systematic and personal exclusion, and a sustained decrease in Black enrollment, the union argued that any such initiative required material support for marginalized graduate students, who after all are early-career scholars who often provide uncompensated labor to advance the goals the university claimed to support. The union wanted this support in several forms: paid, unionized positions for graduate students doing diversity work, overall wage increases, unified hours protections for all graduate workers that would safeguard international graduate workers from visa violations while removing incentives to discriminate against them, expanded coverage for gender-affirming health care, and improved funding for childcare. The administration's response to these demands involved the standard stonewalling, gaslighting, and condescension that graduate labor unions had long since learned to expect, but also a newly emphatic insistence on an arcane legal distinction between mandatory subjects of bargaining, topics on which the parties to collective bargaining are legally obligated to discuss, and permissive subjects of bargaining, on which discussion is optional. Repeatedly demanding that a party to collective bargaining discuss a permissive subject carries potential legal penalties, and the administration threatened to file a legal action against the union if the bargaining team continued to discuss permissive subjects,

especially the DEI staff assistant positions.[328]

At this point, the bargaining team and some of the committee members working on the DEI proposal succumbed to the logic that had nearly undercut the sexual preference demand in 1975.[329] While members initially voted to authorize the bargaining team to abandon the demand for DEI staff positions, after a significant mobilizing effort and some tense meetings, the membership reversed that decision and ordered the bargaining team not to give ground on that demand at all, as well as overwhelmingly authorizing a two-day walkout. Several hundred graduate workers and community members occupied the university administration building while, a few blocks away, the bargaining team accepted a "strike prevention package" that involved substantial administration concessions on every remaining issue, including a promise to hire six DEI staff assistants.[330] The connection between GEO's rhetoric around the 2017 strike platform, which continued to demand that the university deliver on its alleged commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the union's actual demands could hold firm only because the union stood behind the demand for DEI staff positions. This demand was a central material link to the administration's alleged commitment, and therefore served to demonstrate the seriousness

[328] I was the notetaker for these negotiations. During the 2017 contract campaign, instead of having one or two lead negotiators across the entire contract, the GEO bargaining team appointed separate primary negotiators for each contract demand, based on the team members' experiences and subject matter expertise. While I took notes on all of the formal negotiations, I specialized in and was present in sidebars for negotiations on other, mostly mandatory, subjects.

[329] For another eyewitness perspective on these events that closely matches my recollections, see Nick Caverly, "Reflecting On The Fetishism of Bargaining", *The File*, September 21, 2019 https://thefilemag.org/reflecting-on-the-fetishism-of-bargaining/.

[330] Ultimately, the number was somewhat higher than the contractual minimum of six, after graduate workers and activists lobbied schools and departments to hire additional staff assistants.

of the union's position and the sincerity of its rhetoric.[331]

When the University of Michigan announced a premature in-person campus reopening for the fall of 2020, GEO and many community members accurately predicted that this plan would expose large numbers of students, university employees, and residents in Washtenaw County to serious risks from the ongoing pandemic.[332] The administration refused to meaningfully negotiate on its reopening plans, and announced a new "Michigan Ambassadors Program" under which students – in the initial announcement, to be escorted and reinforced by armed campus security officers – would police other students in order to mitigate infection risks. Both the intention to increase an armed police presence on campus and the broader idea that the university's only meaningful pandemic safety plan relied on policing and blaming misbehaving students outraged GEO members generally, as well as organizations representing students and communities of color on campus, and GEO included a demand to demilitarize campus police and redirect funding to community support in its platform for a "safe and just pandemic response".

Several factors led union activists to center "safety" when justifying the union's actions. In late 2017, at a point when Richard Spencer, then a prominent neo-Nazi, was negotiating with

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[331] I have omitted discussion of the union's 2020 contract campaign, which was prematurely ended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I briefly discuss GEO's description of its contract demands as "bargaining for the common good" later in the chapter; other aspects of the campaign are beyond the scope of the chapter.

[332] The administration's motives in reopening in-person are both uncertain and beyond the scope of this chapter. An anonymous University of Michigan employee attributed the reopening to pressure from billionaire donor and UM's lone Republican member of the Board of Regents Ron Weiser, whose status as one of the Ann Arbor area's largest landlords meant he stood directly to profit from bringing students back in-person. Anonymous, "Op-Ed: The University's summer of lies", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), August 27, 2020. In a personal conversation in July 2020, Regent Paul Brown, one of the more union-friendly regents, told me that the administration feared losing students to peer institutions if it went remote in the 2020-21 academic year. However, since Harvard had already announced a remote-only fall term and Michigan's public peer institutions overwhelmingly cancelled in-person reopening plans or never had them in the first place, this explanation does not seem entirely consistent with my understanding of the facts at the time or since.

the university president over a possible campus appearance, the union's officers and staff realized that contractual guarantees of safe working conditions offered a useful lever for demanding accommodations around any potential incursion of neo-Nazis and white supremacists.[333] Union members had also used this language to argue that the university's climate plan and militarized police counted as making working conditions unsafe for present and future GEO members. The most important factor in the union's rhetoric around safety, however, came from the national union with which GEO is affiliated, the American Federation of Teachers. AFT president Randi Weingarten, normally an avatar of respectable, centrist unionism, announced at the national federation's biannual conference in late July 2020 that local unions could authorize "safety strikes" against unsafe in-person reopening plans with the full backing of AFT.[334] While it was unlikely that AFT Michigan or the national federation would ever endorse broad anti-policing demands specifically, and the Huron Valley Area Labor Federation had long been divided on how to respond to ongoing police violence, GEO now had an opportunity to articulate a set of strike demands that the national federation would be obligated to support. Because of the union's previous advocacy for a broad reading of workplace safety, the administration's thoroughgoing disregard for student and community safety, the rising opposition to police violence in the summer of 2020, and AFT's new commitment to support "safety strikes", the safety articulation was both available and highly useful to GEO as the union's

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[333] In the end, antifascist activists' counterdemonstration at Michigan State University, which had been forced by a court decision to allow him to rent a meeting space at the fringes of campus, drove off so many of Spencer's supporters that he cancelled the remainder of his college tour because such appearances "aren't fun". Martin Slagter, "Richard Spencer rethinking plans to visit UM after violence at MSU", *MLive*, March 12, 2018.
[334] Brakkton Booker, "Teachers Union Oks Strikes If Schools Reopen Without Safety Measures in Place", *National Public Radio*, July 28, 2020.

members realized that only large-scale direct action had a chance of changing the university administration's direction.

As GEO carried out its eight-day strike, the second full strike in its history, a group of union members situated the strike within a broader vision of radical solidarity. Alejo Stark, Jasmine Ehrhardt, and Amir Fleischmann argued that GEO's articulation of safety from the pandemic and safety from policing offered a valuable new vision of labor solidarity:

"…by articulating two seemingly different set[s] of demands, GEO is insisting that 'safety' and 'security' aren't two separate subjects. Take, for example, the university's police force's name: the Division of Public Safety and Security. GEO is insisting that such security forces do not make us safe. And the COVID demands speak to a different vision of safety, where the health of the community is not subordinated to the university's bottom line.

This is a strike with an abolitionist strategy. Its demands are squarely contractual, inseparable from our working conditions, while also beyond a single contract. Such demands are exactly the kind the labor movement needs to make to address the wide range of miseries all of us, union and non-union workers, face."[335]

By connecting a set of radical and controversial demands, this articulation enabled the union ultimately to put another crack in the university administration's firewall between mandatory and permissive bargaining subjects. The university administration promised to talk to the Students of Color Liberation Front and to GEO about reviewing the ambassadors program, as well as inaugurating a broader campus-wide conversation about policing, as part of the strike

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[335] Stark, Ehrhardt, and Fleischmann, "University of Michigan Graduate Workers Are on Strike", *Jacobin*, September 11, 2020.

settlement.[336] Two days later, the administration unceremoniously announced the cancellation of the ambassadors program.[337] This was the first reduction in campus policing as a response to student or union activism in the history of the University of Michigan, and contradicted repeated administration statements before and during the strike that the university would never negotiate on policing with the union. This policy change, like the others in the strike settlement, fell far short of a truly safe and just pandemic response, and as predicted, the university became a center of the pandemic's resurgence in Washtenaw County.[338] Indeed, the union's acceptance of the strike settlement spoke to years of financial damage inflicted by state and federal "right to work" laws, leaving the union unable to absorb the financial costs of continuing to strike in the face of a legal injunction that would be waived if the strike settlement was accepted. The university's injunction not only "requested relief against GEO in excess of $25,000", but also named any union members and anybody else cooperating in a continued strike as targets, meaning that anybody continuing the strike would be personally vulnerable to arrest and to fines of $250 per day of continued action.[339] Nonetheless, the strike made historic progress in forcing the university to negotiate on issues it never would have negotiated otherwise, and the union concluded the strike only when it secured non-retaliation pledges covering graduate workers,

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[336] The Students of Color Liberation Front is a coalition of the Black Student Union, United Asian American Organizations Executive Board, La Casa, the Arab Student Association Executive Board, and Students Allied for Freedom and Education, formed during the GEO strike after the administration ignored the first four organizations in designing and implementing the Michigan Ambassadors program. See BSU, UAAO, La Casa, and ASA, "Op-Ed: A call to end the Michigan Ambassadors program", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), September 7, 2020.
[337] Emma Stein and Allex Harring, "University to end controversial Michigan Ambassador program", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), Friday, September 18, 2020.
[338] David Jesse and Kristen Jordan Shamus, "Washtenaw County issues two-week stay home order for U-M students", *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 2020.
[339] Emma Ruberg, "Facing legal pressure, graduate students accept University's proposal to end strike", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), September 16, 2020.

other union employees who acted in solidarity, and non-unionized undergraduate and staff allies.

Probably the strongest evidence that GEO's "safety strike" rhetoric successfully articulated safety from the Covid-19 pandemic and safety from police violence came two days into the strike, when the university offered a standard carrot-and-stick offer for an end to the strike. The carrot, minor movement on workplace safety measures with no mention whatever of policing – an issue, the administration reminded the union, entirely outside the collective bargaining system – left nobody in the union satisfied. The stick, however, frightened many members and a majority of the union's elected leadership: an "unfair labor practice" claim filed with the state government, along with other threats against the union and its members. In a long and contentious mass meeting, members eventually chose to reject the elected officers' majority recommendation (accepting the administration's offer) in favor of continuing the strike. This decision reversed a straw poll, taken early in the meeting, in support of accepting the administration's offer. While it is impossible to know exactly what was in the minds of hundreds of union members who changed their minds, those who spoke in opposition after that straw poll heavily emphasized the safety articulation: for the union to give up one aspect of safety in favor of progress on another would demonstrate its lack of solidarity, and the union either supported a safe campus for everybody or it didn't. The reversal of members' positions, from a substantial majority leaning toward accepting the administration's offer to an overwhelming majority rejecting it, suggests that the safety articulation, and the rhetoric appealing to solidarity over fear of management reprisals that set up and reinforced that articulation, did important work in members' deliberation.

3. Community Support and the Limits of Coalition

While GEO made significant efforts to mobilize community support behind both strikes, and many people donated time and energy to the picket lines, money to strike funds, and food to strikers during both strikes, organized allied groups were overall much stronger and more effective in their support in 1975 than in 2020. In 1975, many allied organizations had either developed from New Left and civil rights organizing in the previous decade, or traced their origins to efforts to build on and extend the previous decade's struggles. These organizations, recognizing opportunities in GEO's struggle, chose to echo, affirm, and endorse the union's rhetoric and therefore motivated their members to join in the shared struggle. In 2020, the overall organizing climate was not as impressive, but some organizations – especially the broader labor movement, and exploited undergraduate workers hoping to unionize – did offer important solidarity during and after the strike. GEO, however, had mixed success in rhetorically summoning community support; while the union's safety articulation was highly successful in mobilizing latent support for the union's goals, it was less effective in persuading those who did not already support the full strike platform.

Mirrored Rhetoric in the 1975 Strike

As the 1975 strike approached and then proceeded, allied organizations came to regularly adopt GEO's rhetoric when announcing their support for graduate workers. The Undergraduate Support Committee – undergraduates working to bring students to the picket lines – perhaps hewed most closely to the union line in a flyer simply titled "GEO on Strike – WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?":

"Undergraduates, graduate students, the faculty, and even department heads supported going into binding arbitration. Yet the administration refused. They refused because they wanted

to drive a wedge between these groups, making it appear like their interests are opposed. Realizing that our interests are the same, we must work together for the strike."[340]

The authors referenced compensation, anti-discrimination demands, and class size limits as particularly closely linked to student interests: graduate employee compensation affected their teachers' ability to focus on their academic work; anti-discrimination would advance the interests of minority undergraduates; class size limits would both immediately serve undergraduates and create more jobs for students hoping for an academic future. Various New Left successor organizations similarly endorsed GEO's claim to represent a broad front of campus movements. During the Third World Coalition's occupation of the administration building, which was protected from police interference by a large group of GEO-led students ringing the building, the Revolutionary Student Brigade argued that

"What the University would like to see is Third World Students and whites divided and GEO isolated from the rest of us students. But what we've got to see is that our struggles <u>are</u> linked and that a victory for one will make us better able to strike blows against the University. …Winning these struggles will strengthen the overall movement on this campus."[341]

The Spartacus Youth League, New American Movement, and Young Workers Liberation League similarly supported the strike, albeit often critically and while highlighting each other's real and perceived transgressions. In each of these cases, the support emphasized the ways in which GEO's strike platform advanced struggles across the campus community, closely

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[340] "GEO on Strike: WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?" (Bentley Historical Library, Sandy Silberstein Box 1, "1974-75 (including strike)").
[341] "UNITE TO WIN!" (Bentley Historical Library, Dan Tsang Box 1, "GEO Topical Files Printed and press release material"). Emphasis in the original.

matching a GEO spokesperson's statement that GEO's strike "is in the interest of every other union on the campus, in the interest of progressive education, and all the students as well."[342]

By representing a broad range of demands within the rubric of "union issues", GEO's most important achievement may have been organizing labor support behind demands that much of the labor movement might otherwise not have supported. While organized labor in southeast Michigan had begun to recognize the value of affirmative action programs by 1975, most labor unions were less thoroughly persuaded to oppose homophobia. Nonetheless, as the strike built momentum, the United Auto Workers, AFSCME, Michigan Education Association, and Michigan Federation of Teachers all sent speakers to a meeting of the university's board of regents. Regent Deane Baker adopted a particularly homophobic line when asking a UAW spokesman whether GEO, "by supporting non-discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, advocated homosexuality and lesbianism", and the UAW spokesman dismissed the question as an obvious distortion that "[did] not deserve a reply".[343] The Huron Valley Central Labor Council donated to the strike fund, and among a broad range of labor organizations that endorsed the strike, the Washtenaw County Coalition of Labor Union Women explicitly endorsed GEO's affirmative action demands. The next year, with GEO's active engagement, the Michigan Federation of Teachers also passed a resolution urging locals "to bargain for affirmative action clauses in upcoming contracts", and the federation generally supported such projects from that

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[342] Lisa Katz, "GEO readies strike vote", *Michigan Free Press,* February 3, 1975.
[343] The anecdote is recorded in GEO's strike news bulletin, *The Picket Line*, Vol. I No. 8 (February 21, 1975). See also Jim Tobin, "Fleming, GEO clash; exchange 'bad-faith' bargaining charges", *Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), February 21, 1975.

point forward.[344]

Finally, with the union having adopted and even radicalized positions previously taken by their allies, allied groups also found an opportunity for further mobilization. Statements issued early in the GEO strike by MECHA, the organization representing Chicano students at the time, and by the Black United Front document this opportunity. MECHA's statement described GEO's demands as "a moderate and reasonable position on affirmative action which deserves the support of all groups systematically excluded from the resources of this University"; the Black United Front's statement echoed this assessment, and called for "a serious consideration of the present proposal as a mere beginning of a strong and effective affirmative action program."[345] Activists on campus had long moderated their own demands for a genuine commitment to fair hiring practices, in favor of building larger coalitions in support of their high-profile student strike and similar direct actions. When the union made these earlier demands its own, organizations demanding racial justice believed that they had room to move to the left, and did so with some success. When MECHA, the Black United Front, and a few smaller organizations formed the Third World Coalition Council and announced revised, more radical demands, they were able to secure new recognition and programs for Chicano, Asian-American, and Native American students, and the university briefly increased Black student enrollment. The TWCC/BAM II actions very probably would have escalated further had the university not suddenly capitulated on GEO's affirmative action and sexual preference demands as the TWCC's

[344] Early drafts of this resolution can be found in the Bentley Historical Library, Dan Tsang Box 1, "GEO Topical Files: Michigan Federation of Teachers".
[345] MECHA, "Chicanos Unite with GEO", Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 9; Black United Front, "Blacks & GEO", Bentley Historical Library, GEO Box 2. Emphases in the originals.

occupation of the administration building approached. Unconscionable infringements on management rights, which the university had refused to negotiate on for eight months, had suddenly become a lesser evil that management was happy to accept.

Safety, Abolition, and Coalitional Limits

While the union's rhetoric in 1975 gained legitimacy and support from allied organizations, the union's safety articulation in 2020 was less successful. On the one hand, justifying the strike in terms of safety helped ensure that officials in the American Federation of Teachers' Michigan and national ranks publicly supported the strike. Efforts to persuade members of local unions not to cross picket lines, on the other hand, relied far more on appeals to maintain traditional solidarity across the labor movement – and to strategic targeting of different job sites on most days of the strike, so that no one job site had its workers too heavily burdened by missing work – than on the union's official political positions. Indeed, GEO's own record of solidarity was probably the most important factor in local building trades unions' honoring of the GEO strike. GEO members had not only honored picket lines in Washtenaw County, but repeatedly showed up in significant numbers to informational pickets and strike pickets of the United Auto Workers, the Bricklayers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and the Michigan Nurses' Association, among others.[346] Whether conservative, progressive, or revolutionary in their own politics, members of each of these unions recalled GEO's solidarity

[346] In early October 2020, a month after the strike, at least seventeen GEO members attended the line of Sprinkler Fitters Local 704 for two days, continuing this history of solidarity and forcing a quick resolution of the Sprinkler Fitters' concerns.

and honored the GEO line. Where the 2020 strike received support from the labor movement, then, this support depended on considerations other than the union's public-facing rhetoric.

Other communities, on whose support GEO also depended, seemed similarly unpersuaded by the safety articulation. To put it bluntly, for organizers, activists, and individuals who already felt that police make people less safe, GEO's articulation of safety from the pandemic and from police violence was highly persuasive; for those who did not already share that perspective, the strikers' rhetoric often succeeded in persuading them against the university administration's reopening plan, but much less against campus policing. Overall support for the strike was quite high; hundreds of faculty members signed a solidarity letter endorsing the strike, while many students joined picket lines, spoke out in support of the strike, or – in the case of residential staff, whose safety the university had jeopardized in its reopening plans – went out on strike themselves.

Much of this support, however, emphasized the medical aspect of safety, sometimes at the detriment of the union's policing demands. In some cases, faculty, union leaders, and community members who union activists knew sympathized with at least some of the policing demands nonetheless expressed concern that the union's contract was not the right place to secure such demands, as the conversation around the demands necessarily excluded entities other than the union and the university administration. In principle, many union activists would have preferred a broader and more public process for developing demands around safety from police violence and coercive administration policies, but felt that the union had compelling reasons to press a radical agenda forward and draw community support for that agenda. The problem with the safety articulation, then, was strictly practical: it was more effective at activating latent support than persuading new people to adopt the union's position.

Late in the first week of the strike, the union and some of its allies supplemented the safety articulation with the claim that GEO and its allies were engaged in an "abolitionist strike". While initially coined in radical media coverage, many strikers and allies on the picket lines adopted the term as capturing the urgency and significance of the common struggle. At times, this and similar phrases supplemented the safety articulation, as when Stark, Ehrhardt, and Fleischmann explained that a "strike with an abolitionist strategy" meant advancing demands that both advanced the union's contractual rights and continue struggles that reach far beyond any one contract. However, this rhetorical framing is best understood as a populist appeal that attempted to characterize the university administration as complicit in (and in some ways embodying) structures of institutional racism, classism, and extractive capitalism, thus justifying increasingly confrontational strike tactics. In this role, the phrase "abolitionist strike" functioned as an empty signifier, uniting the various opponents to the university administration with respect to the depth of their opposition, asserting that only deep and radical change would remedy the harm done by the university, and specifically referencing the university administration's complicity in ongoing racial injustice. The turn to this rhetorical frame therefore de-emphasized the specific content of different groups' grievances, concerns, and demands in favor of the negative equivalence of opposition to a highly unpopular university administration.

It's possible that the turn to abolition as a rhetorical frame will, along with GEO's 2020 policing and racial justice demands and the union's broader history at the university, contribute to cultivating broader movements in cooperation with anti-racist organizations on and near the University of Michigan campus. As argued in Chapter 5 and as observed in the 1975 strike, radical appeals and demands can alter public discourse and open space for further organizing; I will discuss this possibility further in the following section. Similarly, abolitionist slogans had

appeared on the picket lines before the "abolitionist strike" label appeared in media coverage or in union leaders' speeches, and seeing this label in media coverage and hearing it in the union's new rhetoric energized many strikers. At the same time, much like the previous articulatory strategies, this one worked much better within the union's membership and among already-dedicated strikers than it did among those who were on the fence, or who were generally sympathetic but not present in the many collective actions in and around the strike. The turn to an abolitionist framing was especially ineffective in reaching those whose frustrations with the university administration were most limited to the pandemic response. Those who had experienced conflict with the university president, conservative members of the board of regents, and high-level administrators for the previous several years – and activists in labor unions representing University of Michigan employees and racial justice organizations demanding change on the Michigan campus were at the top of this list – were often disposed to think the worst of these administrators and officials; those who simply wanted a safer reopening plan had not necessarily developed such an oppositional relationship.

At a more fundamental level, the "abolitionist strike" language pointed past the horizon of presently achievable demands in a way that demonstrated the inadequacy of those demands. This is not a new problem; it has always loomed over workers' attempts to use a contract with their employers to codify demands that call into question the relationship between labor and capital. However, the attempt to rally substantial community support, in the name of demands and concerns that unavoidably reached beyond and outside the experience of union members as union members, posed the problem in a new way. An organization that exists to democratize the workplace could, in principle, build history and institutions for a democratized workplace that would remain relevant beyond the need to bargain with private or hostile "public" management.

Demands that greatly expand the power and autonomy of a workers' organization, then, may compromise the authority and legitimacy of the employer (no wonder employers react so harshly when protecting "the rights of management"!) but do not similarly challenge the union. When fighting for demands that exist outside and beyond the wage labor relationship, however, GEO's rhetoric pointed to its own insufficiency as an agent for enacting those demands, as well as to the incapacity of management for granting them. It follows that while activists could use the organization's history and achievements to demonstrate their intentions and sincerity, the organization itself did not comprise an adequate representative body for the shared struggle.

4. The "Common Good" and Paths Forward

Each of these appeals depended on the perception that the union's struggle was an effective one for advancing shared demands. Union members and sufficiently pragmatic members of potentially-allied communities may share this perception, but for different reasons: union members, because the union stands as an *obviously* effective agency for advancing the interests they identify with; potential allies, to the extent that they see the union as a *presently* effective agency for advancing their interests. It follows that to mobilize broader communities in the union's support, the "union issues" articulation in all its forms depends on some connection to those broader communities. Perhaps the union can directly reach out to concerned communities, via a sustained dialogue in which the union's activists and community members co-create platform demands or via a compelling and persuasive representative claim, or the union can rely on other organizations to mirror its rhetoric and thereby symbolically reinforce its value to community members, as when the Third World Coalition/BAM II member organizations endorsed the 1975 GEO strike and portrayed it as a shared struggle for racial justice on campus. In considering possible improvements in the union's recent strategies, I examine a sustained

practice of outreach and organizing under the concept of "bargaining for the common good", and also consider the possibility of a broader abolitionist or anti-racist movement with campus and community organizations. In either case, the union's outward-facing rhetoric would require consideration and refinement based on extensive community contacts, so as to develop a convincing articulation of the union's platform as reflecting a collectively-developed "common good" or a sustained and developed engagement with anti-racist partner organizations.

"Common Good" Organizing

What could the union have done to persuade more people during the 2020 safety strike? To some extent, this question asks how rhetoric crafted to persuade people within a particular community – a local union in which solidarity based on the safety articulation would reach a wide variety of members and help them find strength to begin and continue a strike – could have become rhetoric that more effectually reached people with less or no experience in such a community. Some activists during the strike turned to an attack on the university's overall austerity policy – laying off instructors and nurses, for example, in the middle of a pandemic, and providing ill-prepared housing with poor or sometimes no food to students who reported Covid-19 symptoms – as an example of the administration's lack of care for the broader community, and of better uses for the university's substantial real-dollar increase in police funding during the pandemic. When the union donated food to hungry quarantined students, this appeal and the union's commitment to students' wellbeing probably did gain some good will. Others in the union suggested that people didn't need to feel particular affinity with *all* of the union's demands to join in achieving those demands that they did identify with. This appeal, however, would have proved more persuasive if there were a broader variety of demands that the union could articulate through its ongoing struggle with the administration. As it was, the safety articulation – effective

as it was in uniting union members around the strike – made it a little more difficult to include demands that otherwise fit with a formula such as "a safe and just pandemic response": for example, ending and reversing layoffs among lecturers and employees of the UM hospital system. Ultimately, in the context of a "common good"-oriented contract campaign (during which the union would typically approach job actions and mass mobilization with five to seven key demands), these problems would be less serious because the union's rhetoric could more easily reach a wider variety of subject positions.

A project of "bargaining for the common good", to effectively construct a common good, would need to do two things that the union did not effectively accomplish in its 2020 campaigns. First, the success of teachers' unions in similar campaigns in Chicago and Los Angeles drew substantially on mobilizing existing community organizations in support of those unions, and this involved a longer and more sustained conversation between union members and community organizations than the union has yet accomplished. It is too soon to tell if the union is taking that path forward, but two developments suggest that it may do so: post-strike attempts to build relationships with community organizations in Washtenaw County, and the increasing growth and strength of racial justice organizations on campus in the wake of the strike. A larger number of partner organizations, co-creating the demands advanced in a collective bargaining campaign and offering marginalized voices in support of demands that the union claims to create a more just knowledge community, would offer important validation to the union's rhetorical claims that its agenda, not that of university administrators, best reflects an achievable common good.

Second, the union would need to identify worries among the thus-far less active or union-friendly sectors of students and graduate workers (historically, concentrated in the College of Engineering and in STEM programs more broadly) and offer persuasive solutions for those

worries. These efforts are not new – notably, efforts to organize students in the sciences and in engineering played a significant role in GEO's attempt to unionize research assistants in 2012, and similar efforts from 2018-2020 contributed to GEO's recent interest in affordable housing – but these efforts require more effort and concentration. By more consistently identifying concrete problems that underorganized graduate workers experience and moving to address those problems, the union can draw these individuals into a practice of improving working conditions through collective effort and thereby ground appeals to a *common* good that effectually includes and advances a range of otherwise disparate and incommensurable individual goods. Put simply, the experience of collective effort that helps achieve one's own goals translates readily to the belief that collective effort to achieve another member's goals is worthwhile, and rhetoric that reminds people of past and present successes will empower them to achieve future successes.

Anti-Racism, Abolition, and Developing Partner Organizations

One might defend the union's strategy on the basis that by activating latent community support – representing a set of otherwise-quieter voices in such a way that those voices grew louder – the union's demands contributed to a broader conversation about ending police violence. Many of the faculty in Michigan's Department of Afroamerican & African Studies signed an open letter in which they "applaud[ed] GEO for linking their employment demands to calls for justice, the protection of the health and safety of our community and the absolutely relevant de-militarization of local and campus police."[347] Similarly, the racial justice student organizations

[347] DAAS faculty, "Op-Ed: Statement in support of GEO strike & associated student activism", *The Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), September 15, 2020.

who had condemned the Ambassadors Program (and, during the strike, merged into the "Students of Color Liberation Front") all strongly supported both aspects of safety that the strikers tried to advance; the following winter (February 2021), the SOC LF released a comprehensive list of demands to advance racial justice on campus, again setting up GEO's strike platform as a relatively moderate position on which to expand.[348] Strike endorsements and material support from the campus and Huron Valley chapters of the Democratic Socialists of America, as well as from racial justice organizations and activists throughout Southeast Michigan and nationwide, demonstrated the union's success in activating radical anti-capitalist and anti-racist organizations and activists.

Understood this way, the union's efforts to present and justify radical demands were not a failure; nonetheless, these efforts also have not proven successful. A strategy of activating and supporting partner organizations requires those organizations to grow, develop, and exert political influence. Where BAM, Third World groups, the Gay Liberation Front, and other organizations had independently developed and functioned as successful partners in the 1970s, the campus and community organizations that might form a new emancipatory force have yet to build and wield independent power in a sustainable way. While this broader organizing effort continues, then, GEO members will need to engage in further community outreach, either through a "common good" campaign or some other process of engagement, organizing, and persuasion.

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[348] Paige Hodder, "Students of Color Liberation Front releases anti-racist demands for UM administration", *The Michigan Daily* (Ann Arbor, MI), February 8, 2021.

5. Conclusion

The Graduate Employees Organization at the University of Michigan owes both its historical and present successes and, in the final analysis, its existence to an ability to persuade individuals to fight for each other as well as for themselves. This persuasive capacity offers two sources of collective power. It means that the union, through organizing and rhetorical practices, produces members who are willing to show up for collective action – mass gatherings, sit-ins, job actions, strikes – in order to achieve the goals that they set for themselves; at the same time, by uniting members with a variety of concerns in struggle to advance each of those concerns, the union makes it more difficult for management to buy the membership off with minor concessions in any one area and therefore makes it more likely that management will eventually make sufficient concessions on each of the major demands.

When a political contest expands beyond the solitary organization, however, a new set of rhetorical problems arise. This expansion, and these problems, are inevitable in any organization that seeks to advance more than the simplest of singular interests. Even strictly oppositional, negative projects, such as "NIMBY" movements that exist purely to prevent some development or infrastructure project from happening, often find themselves in a situation where they must rhetorically justify their existence with reference to separate vocabularies, interests, and experiences that their members and potential members work within. In the case of an organization like GEO, success in many struggles can only be achieved if the organization persuades broader communities and organizations to join in those struggles.

This persuasion, however, typically cannot depend upon the accountability and experimentation that the process of deliberation within mass meetings provides for the organization itself. Instead, the organization has to somehow demonstrate its commitment to the

needs and goals of its potential partners. It can do this through sustained dialogue and collaboration with another established organization, in which case activists are relying on that other organization's credibility in order to gain the additional support they require. On the other hand, an organization can attempt to directly gain supporters through accurately evaluating individuals' latent concerns and designing an agenda that successfully represents those concerns. In each of these possibilities, however, the use of rhetoric to create solidarity is fundamentally asymmetrical. That is, where the practices of a democratic, organizing-based organization can build solidarity through processes of mutual accountability, when that organization attempts to build broader support, it must attempt to represent others' interests either indirectly, based on dialogue with other organizations who hope to direct their members toward a mutually useful goal, or directly, by appealing to individuals on the basis of an imperfectly informed assessment of their goals and needs. In either case, the formation of deeper affective and discursive ties depends on getting new people "in the door", so that the rhetoric and behaviors that build more durable solidarities have time to work. And in either case, the organization's ability to invite new members or new partners depends heavily on other people's efforts and success, whether drawing on existing powerful efforts, as the GEO of 1975 did in its struggles for affirmative action and non-discrimination, or when drawing on existing but disorganized frustrations and suffering, as the GEO of 2020 tried to do in building support for a campus safe from both pestilence and policing.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

I began my reading of Aristotle by claiming that the self-contained political production of the Aristotelian regime offered reassurance against the alleged dangers of rhetoric, but within constraints – a narrow, tightly defined conception of who counted as citizens, with the large majority of a political community unquestioningly excluded from political life – that we rightly reject today. The final chapter in the dissertation suggests an important addendum to this claim: deliberation within well-organized, solidaristic participatory spaces can also be robust, with no need for the kind of categorical exclusion characteristic of the Aristotelian polis. These spaces may not comprise an entire society – it would be strange to find the shared principles and common purpose necessary for such deliberation across an entire society – but they are enough to enable collective reflection, persuasion, and action.

The collective aspect of persuasion was evident, in a minimal form, in the earliest parts of the dissertation. For ancient theorists of rhetoric, to be sure, the individual nature of the speaker – a person using the techniques of eloquence to craft appeals to an audience – was obvious and inescapable. Nonetheless, in the archetypal case of rhetoric for Aristotle and Plato, the assembly, the audience was both a large collective and the product of the regime's production. Even in less typical cases, such as the far smaller cast of characters in Plato's *Gorgias*, the choice even to engage in conversation required a kind of collective consent. It was not until Hobbes that the collective production of the audience was replaced with a sweeping array of individuals: a single

sovereign educator in the figure of Pericles, used by Hobbes to warn against individual rhetoricians and their controversy-stirring appeals, and portrayed as encouraging audience members to calculate their self-interest and listen to their fears as individuals. Madison's single-person factions, equally fearful and self-interested as Hobbes' hoped-for readers if not inclined to the same solutions, similarly learned to distrust individual bad actors and appeals to form collective attachments outside of the national order.

Even in Hobbes' and Madison's times, individual speakers, as represented by figures as different as Pericles, a hypothetical sovereign, parliamentary or factious demagogues, or even Madison himself, were rhetorical constructs, abstracted from community and context in order to exaggerate their political significant. For their influence, such speakers depended on broader material and political supports, from printing presses, to friendly churchmen, to the social resources required for training in eloquence. Today, speakers' greater reach comes almost entirely from the far greater material and social resources that they enjoy, and from the audiences whose interests have been produced on an unprecedented scale. As a result, the apparent influence that today's most prominent politicians possess is less their own than, perhaps, at any previous historical moment. The possibility, and indeed the responsibility, of producing audiences that will reject appeals we consider harmful or contemptible therefore cannot be avoided. In every way that matters, it is up to us to build the spaces in which we attempt to persuade each other.

With that in mind, it is worth considering the connection between principle, in the general sense of seeking liberation and wellbeing, and strategy, in mobilizing political movements via counterhegemonic articulation. In theorizing rhetorical appeals that reinforce reactionary politics, I have repeatedly returned to the claim that material conditions of racial capitalism and

longstanding racialized conceptions of individual and national self-interest tend to produce audience members who understand reactionary politics as advancing their own interests, and therefore that such audience members serve as willing accomplices to such projects rather than the manipulated dupes of far-right politicians. In rejecting worries about rhetoric as a practice of manipulation, then, I have cultivated far more serious worries about the nature and origins of the political and social institutions of the United States. Nonetheless, I maintain that the theory of rhetoric that I have advanced in this dissertation is, on balance, good news for those of us who seek emancipatory and egalitarian political change. A pessimistic assessment of rhetoric as a political practice undermines the very possibility of political intervention, while a similarly critical assessment of present political conditions motivates such intervention. Moreover, just as rhetoric that produces fear, hatred, and a commitment to hierarchy and inequality will tend to produce subjectivities that resist emancipatory appeals, rhetoric that produces a concern for liberation, dignity, and wellbeing and an opposition to relations of subordination will tend to open possibilities for more egalitarian and creative collective deliberation. A counter-hegemonic struggle therefore offers the possibility, not only of ending specific harmful institutions and practices, but of creating spaces where persuasion is more creative, kind, and affirming.

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