

The QUARTERLY JOURNAL of SPEECH

VOLUME 61

OCTOBER 1975

NUMBER 3

IN SEARCH OF 'THE PEOPLE': A RHETORICAL ALTERNATIVE

Michael C. McGee

THOUGH concerned almost exclusively with public, social life, students of rhetoric have not been much involved with the topics of social theory. I do not mean, of course, that we are ignorant and sloppy in our scholarship; there has been, especially in so-called "movement theory," a good deal of borrowing from the rubrics of empirical sociology and social psychology.¹

But as a rule, we tend not to recognize the significance of our own concepts in describing man's social condition. We bind ourselves to Greek and Roman understandings of rhetoric and thus tend to underplay our intellectual associations with such social philosophers as Voltaire, Hegel, Guizot, Burckhardt, Lamprecht, Marx, Dilthey, and Huizinga.

Mr. McGee is Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Communication Arts at Memphis State University.

¹Empirical sociologists, social psychologists, and most contemporary rhetoricians seem to be studying "movement" only by a stretch of the imagination. As Black has indicated, Griffin's pioneer work with social and historical "movements" was little more than an attempt to extend the range of traditional Aristotelian rhetorical criticism. Griffin began with *philosophical* descriptions of determinism, with the attempt to understand the connection between rhetoric and the movement of ideas in history. But he conceived rhetoric to operate within historical matrices (rather than seeing history executed within a range of rhetorical possibilities), and thus he was led to think of "movement" as a *physical* motion toward the repeal of a law or condition. Griffin thus confused an event—"agitation"—with a situation—"movement." Though Aristotelian categories have largely been abandoned, contemporary writers still give little evidence of conceiving "movement" in its traditional sense (the *historical* movement of ideas), concentrating in-

stead on the restrictive definitions of empirical sociology (a *social* movement of "forces"). Bowers and Ochs, for example, concentrate only on *messages* generated in the context of what someone else defines as the "movement," in effect giving up the right of definition and interpretation to empirical sociology, politics, and history. The result is the same as Griffin's—we study, not "movement," but rhetorical documents existing in "movement" contexts. Such persistence seems strange, especially when it should be possible for rhetoricians *directly* to study "movement" as *linguistic* process contained in and defined by the rhetorical *situation*, not the rhetorical *event*. See Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 19-21; Leland Griffin, "The Anti-Masonic Persuasion: A Study of Public Address in the American Anti-Masonic Movement," Diss. Cornell 1949, pp. i-iv; John W. Bowers and Donovan J. Ochs, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1971), pp. 1, 15; and Michael C. McGee, "Edmund Burke's Beautiful Lie: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Rhetoric and Social Theory," Diss. Iowa 1974, pp. 11-66.

ga.² So, for example, rhetorical scholars were for a time intent on categorizing Kenneth Burke as an "Aristotelian" when in fact his writing is part of a much newer intellectual tradition, that of Hegel, Marx, and Freud.³

One manifestation of our continued orientation to conventional rhetorical topics is our general failure fully to exploit the organic conception of human existence presupposed in nearly all rhetorical documents. Whether one's reference is to Marxist "communism" or to Hegelian *Volksgeist*, most all of social theory has been warranted by understanding "humanity" to be a collective entity, "the people."⁴ And central to all of rhetorical theory has been a similar organic concept, the advocate's "audience." The consistent appearance in rhetorical literature of appeals to "the people," however, has been considered

² At least in part, this was the point of the Wingspread Committee on the Nature of Rhetorical Invention in asserting that, because of significantly changed realities, the "conventional view" of the process of invention, having to do "with the making of arguments by a speaker for an audience for the purpose of gaining assent to a predetermined proposition," should be altered. As the Committee points out, the study of "rhetorical invention" in effect is a study of "the core social process." In its broader contemporary sense, then, rhetoricians have a stake in, and can make significant contributions to the sort of conceptual, cultural dialogues envisioned in the Hegelian social/philosophical tradition. The relevance of social theory to the study of rhetoric is apparent even from a cursory look at the writings of the "philosophers of culture." See Lloyd F. Bitzer and Edwin Black, eds., *The Prospect of Rhetoric* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 228-33; and Karl J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966).

³ See, e.g., L. Virginia Holland, *Counterpoint: Kenneth Burke and Aristotle's Theories of Rhetoric* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), esp. pp. 39-85, and compare with the easier, more obvious Hegelian/ Marxist associations noted by Don Abbott, "Marxist Influences on the Rhetorical Theory of Kenneth Burke," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 7 (1974), 217-33.

⁴ See Irving L. Horowitz, *Radicalism and the Revolt Against Reason* (New York: Humanities Press, 1961) and Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

usual argumentative gymnastics. Especially in analyzing *messages*, critics have taken "people" and "audience" to be no more than plural abstractions of "person" or "individual." In consequence, any appeal to a "people" is almost by definition an argumentative fallacy and hence an "irrational" form of persuasion. It even has a Latin name, *argumentum ad populum*. The attitude one adopts toward such "fallacies" seems to have determined that one of two general lines of research will be pursued.

First, there are those who rarely encounter a problem of ethics in rhetoric. Such writers, typically critics in an Aristotelian tradition or technicians engaging in attitude research, note the *fact* of appeals to the "people" and attempt to isolate as well as they can a list of "effects" which those appeals are supposed to have. Critics study election results, votes in deliberative assemblies, and reports of witnesses to guess at the impact of great speeches. Experimenters attempt scientifically to describe the changes in attitude and belief which are attributable to persuasion in controlled circumstances. In both cases, "people" or "audience" are terms used in a different, more specific sense than when, for example, our founding fathers wrote about the "will" of "We the People." In the current sense, "people" is no more than the plural of "person," a grammatic convention which encourages the notion that the people of a nation are objective, literal extensions of the individual.⁵ To

⁵ Aristotle placed more trust in the judgments of the many than of the few, noting in one place that the many are more incorruptible than the few (*Politics*, III. 11-12, 1281^a39-1283^a20), and in another that judgments were less likely to be perverted by emotional argument among the many than with one judge (*Rhetoric*, I. 1, 1354^b22-1355^a3). His attitude toward the many, however, is contradictory. By urging advocates to adapt to individual characteristics displayed by members of an audience, he seems to be adhering to the grammatical conception of "the people" (*Rhet-*

determine the "effects" of an argument, or to describe "the will of the people," a poll or survey is taken, and terms like *majority* or *plurality* are used to define the collective life. So in any age studied, individuals are distinguished, divided, and weighed by age, sex, occupation, religion, education, income, *ad nauseum*. It is supposed that an arithmetic of sorts can capture the spirit of a "people."⁶

Another group of writers (typically rhetoricians trying to improve the academic reputation of their art or philosophers seeking to "rehabilitate" a renegade discipline convicted by Plato⁷) apparently believes that pointing up a fallacy in argument is enough in itself to warrant either dismissing an advocate entirely, apologizing for him, or composing a polemic against him. The significance of "the people" in argument, in other words, seems to be that appeals to them instead of to reasoning and evidence short circuit the reasoning processes. A position of this sort presup-

toric, II. 12-17). But by treating the audience as an irrational "mob" responding almost unpredictably to emotional appeals and assurances of what they knew already, he seems to join Plato in conceiving the "people" to be, at best, childlike (*Rhetoric*, II. 21, 1395^b1-10; 22, 1395^b27-1396^a4). In any case, the only examples of nongrammatical organic conceptions of "the people" in either the Platonic or the Aristotelian traditions with which I am familiar follow the theme that "Demos" is a monster. See Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: The Spell of Plato*, 4th ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962).

⁶This attitude is endemic in the social sciences. It is also at the center of a dispute between proponents of a romantic style in history (so-called "Whig" history) and proponents of the "Namerite" style ("revisionism" in this country). See McGee, pp. 106-88, 264-346. A critique of the cause-effect syndrome in rhetorical criticism is provided by Black's *Rhetorical Criticism*.

⁷See Franklyn S. Haiman, "Democratic Ethics and the Hidden Persuaders," *QJS* 44 (1958), 385-92. Even in criticizing "antirhetoric" and exploring the possibilities of a "new rhetoric," for example, Florescu seems to be saying that the function of rhetoric is to fill "gaps" in classical logical theory. See Vasile Florescu, "Rhetoric and Its Rehabilitation in Contemporary Philosophy," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 3 (1970), 207.

poses that the human condition ought to be a rational one; as Marcuse argued, the impulse is to make reality over into a thing with only one, fashionably reasonable, dimension—to create a "one-dimensional man." Marcuse further argues that this impulse is in a straight-line tradition of Western logic, from Socrates and Plato to date.⁸ And as E. L. Hunt observed, the oldest traditions of rhetoric are grossly misrepresented and falsely served by imposing on them the rationalistic ideals of Platonism.⁹

The impulse to continue humanity's reduction to one dimension, partly by deploring such "sophistries" as arguments *ad populum*, is exhibited even by the group of philosophers whose recent rediscovery of rhetoric has led them to resist Plato's blanket moral condemnation of rhetoric. Perelman, for example, will not take rhetoric as he finds it in nature, replete with sophistries, propaganda, myths, and visions. Such things seem specifically "irrational," and his mission is to create a "new rhetoric" which is conceived as a species of reason, the contrary both of experiment and logical deduction on the one hand, and of "irrational forces, instincts, suggestion, and violence" on the other.¹⁰ "People" are more important to Perelman than they were to Plato, for he understands that "audience" is a central, defining concept in any idea of rhetoric. But he will not take audiences as he finds *them* in nature, dominated by individuals moved, as Aristotle observed,

⁸ See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), pp. 123-69, esp. pp. 123-27.

⁹ See Everett Lee Hunt, "Plato and Aristotle on Rhetoric and Rhetoricians," in *Historical Studies of Rhetoric and Rhetoricians*, ed. R. F. Howes (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 29-54.

¹⁰ Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 1-3.

more by maxims and self-interest than by reason and evidence.¹¹ Such audiences are anathema for a rhetoric conceived as a stop-gap for formal logic. A redefinition is thus attempted, and Perelman creates (or borrows from literary theory) a "universal audience" which is not universal at all, but rather a series of intellectual elites which do no more than "stand at the vanguard of humanity."¹² So as Plato ignored the *real* "people" in attempting to remake rhetoric for *Phaedrus*, Perelman ignores *real* "people" in writing a *New Rhetoric* which is not more than *A Treatise on Argumentation* for the elite.

One might conclude that, with few exceptions, most rhetorical scholarship presupposes a "people" or an "audience" which is either (a) an objective, literal extension of "person," or (b) a "mob" of individuals whose significance is their gullibility and failure to respond to "logical" argument.¹³ The purpose of this essay is to describe an alternative means of defining "the people" based on organic conceptions of human society, depending neither on the observed behavior of individuals nor on Platonic prejudices about the role of reason in

human affairs. The essay incidentally explores one part of the reciprocal relationship between rhetoric and social theory—implicitly, it is suggested that a central concept in rhetoric ("audience/people") is better understood within the meanings and intentions of social philosophy than those of logic or the philosophy of science; further, it is argued that attention to the use of the concept "people" in rhetorical documents can illuminate serious problems which have plagued the development of social theories.

I

Describing an alternative conception of "the people" in rhetoric demands first an understanding of A. F. Pollard's observation that "the 'people' is so indeterminate an expression that its use, let alone its abuse, obscures almost all political discussions."¹⁴ Typically, "the people" justify political philosophies; their only concrete significance is their existence, for not even their *identity* is agreed upon by those who appeal to them. About the only point of agreement is that, in politics, "the people" are omnipotent; they are an idea of collective force which transcends both individuality and reason. John Locke's "people," for example, are perceptive in ways no philosopher could be, powerful in a way no army could match, patient in a way any behavioral scientist would envy.¹⁵ Hitler writes of "historical ava-

¹¹ See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, 21, 1395b1-10.

¹² See Richard Burke, "Rhetoric, Dialectic, and Force," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 7 (1974), 154-5 and Perelman, *New Rhetoric*, pp. 30-45. In an Aristotelian sense, Perelman has come closer to a "new dialectic" than to a "new rhetoric." Though he draws extensively from treatises in the rhetorical tradition, his development of "universal audience," his stated motives for undertaking the treatise, and the character of his conclusions are more reminiscent of Aristotle's *Topics* than of the *Rhetoric*, I, 1, 1354a-1355b25, especially where Aristotle appears to hold that, in function, rhetoric is a species of force, a kind of violence which Perelman specifically wishes to avoid in his new rhetoric.

¹³ Though in the last few years (since 1960) there have been rumblings of a change in attitude, the most conspicuous exception remains Kenneth Burke, who has always seen a symbolic rather than objective reality, and who has consistently modified his rationalism with the idea of "orientation." See Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (1939; rpt. Boston: Beacon Paperback, 1961).

¹⁴ A. F. Pollard, *The Evolution of Parliament* (London: Longmans, Green, 1934), p. 343.

¹⁵ In Locke's vision of civil government, "the people" are God's earthly embodiment. It is they who punish "tyrannical" governments by appealing to Heaven in a trial by combat called revolution. The notion is carried so far that a willingness to engage the collective life in a holy struggle for Liberty is a *condition of humanity* in Locke's philosophy. See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning the True and Original Extent of Civil Government in Great Books of the Western World*, ed. J. Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Wm. Benton for Encyclopedia

lanches" which are "movements of the people," "volcanic eruptions of human passions and spiritual sensations" which do not involve individuals.¹⁶ In China, Chairman Mao plots strategy which matches nuclear bombs against nothing more than masses of "the people."¹⁷ Thus, in each of the three major ideological systems of the twentieth century (Whig, Fascist, and Communist), "the people" warrant a whole political system; but their identity varies from system to system, no political philosopher surely describes them, no political leader for long can be assured that he has captured the spirit even of his own people.¹⁸

Stated simply, the problem is this: How can one conceive the idea "people" in a way which accounts for the rhetorical function of "the people" in arguments designed to warrant social action, even society itself? A possibility most

recently was suggested by Bormann's reassertion of arguments advanced some time ago by Sorel, Lippman, Burke, Mannheim, Ortega, and Weaver.¹⁹ Bormann believes that such concepts as "The People" may be strictly *linguistic* phenomena introduced into public argument as a means of "legitimizing" a collective fantasy. The advocate, he suggests, dangles a dramatic vision of the people before his audience. The audience, essentially a group of individuals,

Britannica, 1952), 35: 63. Classic works at hand in this collection hereafter cited to *GBWW*.

¹⁶ Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Alvin Johnson (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), pp. 491-92, 496.

¹⁷ Mao Tse-Tung, *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 89: "The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people. It is mainly because of the unorganized state of the Chinese masses that Japan dares to bully us. When this defect is remedied, then the Japanese aggressor, like a mad bull crashing into a ring of flames, will be surrounded by hundreds of millions of our people standing upright, the mere sound of their voices will strike terror into him, and he will be burned to death."

¹⁸ Boas uncovers this ambiguity as it has emerged through history by examining the old proverb "vox populi, vox Deus." Whether in reference to popular taste as an aesthetic standard or to "the people" as a warrant for a certain type of government, appeals to "the people" in modern times have assumed the same proportion and character as appeals to "the will of God" in former times. The difference is that, among Christians, there is a tolerably consistent guideline for "the will of God" in the Holy Bible; "the people" are not contained in a scripture, nor are there many priests to aid us in interpreting their "will." See George Boas, *Vox Populi: Essays in the History of an Idea* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), esp. pp. 39-71, 248-77.

¹⁹ See Ernest G. Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality*, *QJS* 58 (1972), 396-407. Bormann's piece links commonplace arguments in twentieth century rhetorical and social theory with recent findings in communicology. Though such writings are, as I have suggested previously, rarely referred to in contemporary rhetorical theory, there is a long tradition behind ideas of social realities which are essentially fictional (or "dramatistic"). As part of the antirationalist movement in nineteenth century philosophy, Sorel used the idea of "group fantasy" to argue for his invention of the concept "political myth." Lippmann picked up on Le Bon's notion of a "popular mind" made up of dreamlike commitments to policies and values in his description of "the reality of the mind," the "public mind" which rules in a democracy. Kenneth Burke's "dramatism" was originally grounded in the observation that masses of people make decisions in the context of rituals executed within poetic categories. Though he believed it possible to reduce such fantasies to the system of an empirical science, Karl Mannheim began his invention of the "sociology of knowledge" by comparing objective reality with "ideological" reality (false consciousness). In Ortega's last major work, he began directly to speak of "the people" and of "public opinion" as linguistic phenomena. Richard Weaver's polemic assertion that *Ideas Have Consequences* was predicated upon a defense of linguistic "realities" against the universally fashionable exclusion of all dimensions of humanity except an empirically defined "objective" reality. See, resp., Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme (1916; rpt. New York: Peter Smith, 1941); Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (1895; pt. New York: Viking Press, 1960); Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1922); P. H. Odegard, *The American Public Mind* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1930); Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*; Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (1929; pt. New York: Harvest Books, 1952), esp. pp. 55-108; José Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: W. W. Norton 1957), esp. pp. 192-272; and Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948), esp. pp. 92-112.

reacts with a desire to participate in that dramatic vision, to *become* "the people" described by the advocate. "The people," therefore, are not objectively real in the sense that they exist as a collective entity in nature; rather, they are a fiction dreamed by an advocate and infused with an artificial, rhetorical reality by the agreement of an audience to participate in a collective fantasy. As Bormann observes:

When there is a discrepancy between the word and the thing the most important cultural artifact for understanding the events may not be the things of 'reality' but the words or the symbols. Indeed, in many vital instances the words, that is, the rhetoric, are the social reality and to try to distinguish one symbolic reality from another is a fallacy widespread in historical and sociological scholarship which the rhetorical critic can do much to dispel.²⁰

An alternative to collecting the votes of "persons," therefore, may be to conceive "people" as an essential rhetorical fiction with both a "social" and an "objective" reality.

This notion of dual realities is specifically "nonrational" in traditional terms. Contrary to the law of identity, the assertion is explicit that "the people" are both real and a fiction simultaneously. I would like to consider this possibility in some detail by using as a context Hitler's description of the rhetorical process in which a leader transforms individuals into a "people":

By 'people' I mean all those hundreds of thousands who fundamentally long for the same thing without finding the words in detail to describe the outward appearance of what is before the inner eye. For with all great reforms the remarkable thing is that at first they have as their champion only a single individual, but as their supporters many millions. For centuries their goal is often the inner ardent wish of hundreds of thousands, till one man stands up as the proclaimer of such a general will and as the flag-bearer of

an old longing he helps it to victory in the form of a new idea.²¹

Hitler's suggestion is that individuals have a predisposition toward a particular expression of the popular will, but that they are unaware of it. Their identity as a "people" is contained in general propositions — maxims, commonplaces, national ideological commitments — which remain attitudes, "inner ardent wishes." While they are in a condition of quiescence, therefore, *there is no such thing as a people*. In terms of objective reality, there are only individuals who perhaps "long for the same thing," but who have no collective identity because they cannot describe "what is before the inner eye," the urge to achieve collective unity and collective goals.

The vision of Hitler's "champion" (advocate) extends not just to a particular audience at a particular time, but to an entire nation over a period of centuries. The duty of a champion is to find "an old longing" and "help it to victory." This duty necessarily involves a search of the nation's history with a constant sensitivity toward the character of the "people" who executed it. When "one man stands up as the proclaimer of a general will," what he says, *at the time he originally says it*, is a fiction, for it is his personal interpretation of his "people's" history.²² Though

²¹ Hitler, pp. 456-57. With a friendly stretch of the imagination, a reader might see in this section of *Mein Kampf* a sketchy philosophy of history. I am reluctant, however, to accuse Hitler of committing philosophy; what he argues is more properly a macrorhetoric, an explanation of the *uses* of *Volksgeist* by "reformers" who seek to define and preserve national identity and purpose.

²² As Muller indicates, even the historian who sets his goal at recreating the past through simple description faces problems of his own subjectivity. The writer who aims even higher, at the discovery of a "popular will" running as a theme within history, is more properly an "ideologue" than an "historian," for he must argue constantly, not in concrete episodes, but in metaphors. See Herbert J. Muller, *The Uses of the Past* (New York: Oxford Univ.

he warrants his argument with abundant examples, he creates, not a description of *reality*, but rather a political *myth*. Often such myths are confused with descriptions of reality by historians writing in a later day; the result is entertaining and meaningless polemic. So, for example, Namier draws himself up to the height of self-righteousness in recognizing one of Edmund Burke's political myths to be nothing but a product of the writer's "fertile, disordered and malignant imagination."²³ In two short pages, Brooke calls the same myth every name he can think of to discredit it, a "legend," a "bogy," a "myth," a "fantasy," a "hotch-potch," and a "fiction."²⁴ Burke's *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents* is all of this and more—it is a vision of the "people" of England in 1770, drawn from their history, and offered to a general audience as an expression of what Burke believed to be "the inner ardent wish of hundreds of thousands."²⁵

Hitler asserts that the curious chemistry mixing the single advocate, his vision of "the people," and the social commitments of a million or more persons is characteristic of "all great reforms," and is the *process* which he finds "remarkable." The advocate is a "flag-bearer" for old longings, and by transforming such longings into a new idea, he actualizes his audience's predisposition to act, thus creating a united "people" whose collective power will warrant any "reform" against any other

power on earth. Once the process is complete, "the people" have an objective existence defined by their collective behavior.²⁶ But that reality is still "mythical" in two important respects.

First, in the purely rhetorical encounter Hitler describes (as distinguished from leaderless group encounters), "the people" focus on the Leader to establish a group identity.²⁷ The advocate is recognized as Leader only when he transcends his own individuality in the estimation of his audience. That is, an advocate brings to the confrontation with his audience a battery of entirely personal convictions and opinions; he then adapts them to his vision of what a "people," when created, will want to hear.²⁸

²⁶ As LaPiere indicated some time ago, most "mass movements" are conceived as fantasies by those caught up in them. In the first textbook on the subject, he suggested that it was all but impossible to analyze the mythical content of a movement; so he abandoned the intentions of Sorel and claimed that the only "real" part of a social movement was observable, collective behavior. See Richard T. LaPiere, *Collective Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1934), esp. the definition of "mass movement" in highly poetic terms, p. 504.

²⁷ I am referring to "leader" in an historical sense. I am not willing to argue that one conception is better than another, but it is necessary to distinguish between that "leadership" which makes a shavetail fit to be an officer and a gentleman, and that other kind of "leadership" which defines for a moment in history the identity of a whole people. In the former view, leadership is a quality defined by the behavior of a person highly esteemed by his peers; the notion is abstracted to theory with a lengthy checklist of behaviors which, if followed like a recipe, will produce an extraordinary man. In the latter view, leadership is defined by the topics of epideictic rhetoric, the process of comparing the words and deeds of one man who led a whole people with the words and deeds of other recognized leaders. In the former view, any man is "leader" if he exhibits certain preconceived behavior; in the latter view, a man is not "Leader" until his people are inclined to compare him with Pericles, Cicero, Savonarola, Cromwell, Danton, Chatham, Jefferson, Lincoln, Hitler, and Churchill.

²⁸ Though an advocate is seeking to get his audience to exhibit belief or action they might not otherwise have contemplated, still he is but a mirror of the commonplace judgments of his society; he must argue from socially defined "good reasons." See Karl R. Wallace, "The Substance of Rhetoric: Good Reasons,"

Press, 1952), pp. 31-2; Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), esp. pp. 104-25, 240-304; and Thomas Molnar, *Sartre: Ideologue of Our Time* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968).

²³ Sir Lewis Namier, "Monarchy and the Party System," *Personalities and Powers: Selected Essays by Sir Lewis Namier* (1955; rpt. New York: Harper Torchbook, 1965), p. 21.

²⁴ John Brooke, *The Chatham Administration, 1766-1768* (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 231-32.

²⁵ See McGee, pp. 67-105.

If he is successful in dragging "the people" into objective reality, he (the focal point for collective identity) is transformed by their faith in him and his ideas into a *Leader*, an image or mirror of collective forces. And as Frazer argued, the new Leader is himself a kind of fiction, for he wears the magic mask of Kingship, an anonymous face which conceals the powers of a demigod.²⁹

Second, "the people," even though made "real" by their own belief and behavior, are still *essentially* a mass illusion. In purely objective terms, the only human reality is that of the individual; groups, whether as small as a Sunday school class or as big as a whole society, are infused with an artificial identity. So from a rhetorical perspective, the entire socialization process is nothing but intensive and continual exercises in persuasion: Individuals must be seduced into abandoning their individuality, convinced of their sociality, not only when their mothers attempt to housebreak them, but also later in life when governors ask them to obey a law or to die in war for God and country. When in Hitler's vision a champion offers individuals group identity as a "people," therefore, the invitation is to assume an anonymous mask, the kind of face that a timid storekeeper might don to lynch an alleged criminal, to kill an enemy in war, or simply to confront a dominant personality in group discussion.³⁰

QJS 49 (1963), 239-49. It was because rhetoric functioned more as a mirror of mass opinion than as an arbiter of truth that Plato called it a knack and not an art. In this vein he argued that "rhetoricians and tyrants have the least possible power in states . . . for they do literally nothing which they will, but only what they think best." Plato, *Gorgias*, 466.

²⁹ See Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough, a Study in Magic and Religion*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1900); and *Lectures on the Early History of Kingship* (London: Macmillan, 1905).

³⁰ This seems to have been what Isocrates had in mind when he scoffed at conceptions of rhetoric which were tied to particular occasions (deliberative, forensic, ceremonial). The

II

Hitler's rhetoric has not been used here as an object of criticism, but rather as an example of the sense in which "people" exist in objective reality and as social fantasies at the same time. The more important point, however, is that "the people" are more *process* than *phenomenon*. That is, they are conjured into objective reality, remain so long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end wilt away, becoming once again merely a collection of individuals. As Namier observes of eighteenth century England, "Even the principles of the Glorious Revolution, after victory had been irrevocably won and they had changed into an accepted profession of faith, came to sound somewhat hollow."³¹ An active "people," tired of "tyranny" and jealous of "liberty," existed in 1688. But when Whiggism came to dominate the politics of the 1750s, individuals were no longer inclined to do battle for it. As a result, Namier argues, politics in England were "personal," Whiggish references to "the people" were formulary, and the whole population was generally content to pursue selfish interests.³² If Namier's observations (and Hitler's) are correct, one cannot speak of "the people" of Anglo-America without reference to stages of development.

sort of rhetoric he professed was a kind of social surgery, the study and practice of manufacturing a Greek "people" from the "old longings" recorded in the history of individual city-states. For him, the transubstantiation of persons into a *people* was the highest function of rhetoric, as unlike argument in a courtroom or at a marriage ceremony as Pheidias' statue of Athena was unlike the mannikin fashioned by a doll-maker. See *Isocrates*, trans. George Norlin, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), II, 185, 187.

³¹ Sir Lewis Namier, "Human Nature in Politics," in *Personalities and Powers*, pp. 4-5.

³² Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, (London: Macmillan, 1929).

I would argue that a kind of rhetoric defines "the people" at each stage in a "collectivization process" of coming-to-be, being, and ceasing-to-be an objectively real entity. "The people" may be defined rhetorically, therefore, from four distinct perspectives. The seeds of collectivization stay dormant in the popular reasonings (aphorisms, maxims, and commonplaces) which Mannheim identifies as the "total ideology" of a particular culture.³³ Such dormant arguments do not define "the people" at a specific moment, but they do represent the parameters of what "the people" of that culture could possibly become.³⁴ From time to time, advocates organize dissociated ideological commitments into incipient political myths, visions of the collective life dangled before individuals in hope of creating a real "people." Regardless of its actual effects, such a myth contains "the people" of a particular time more surely than general ideological commitments, for it focuses on specific problems in specific situations. A third kind of rhetoric emerges when masses of persons begin to *respond* to a myth, not only by exhibiting collective behavior, but also by publicly ratifying the transaction wherein they give up control over their individual destinies for sake of a dream. At this state, a "people" actually exists in a specific, objective way. As rhetoric defines each of the first three stages of collectivization, so there is a rhetoric of decay as society becomes quiescent and ideological commitments are once again dissociated. Such rhetoric is marked by its hostility toward collectivism ("the people are a

monster"³⁵); the collective life exists only in legend, and, as Edmund Burke writes of his own time, the tendency is to treat collective existence as an abstraction:

I have constantly observed, that the generality of people are fifty years, at least, behind-hand in their politicks. . . . Men are wise with but little reflection, and good with little self-denial, in the business of all times except their own. . . . To be a Whig on the business of a hundred years ago is very consistent with every advantage of present servility. This retrospective wisdom, and historical patriotism, are things of wonderful convenience.³⁶

The heart of the collectivization process is a political myth, a vision of mass man dangled before persons in the second stage of their metamorphosis into a "people." In a sense, the myth contains all other stages of the process: it gives specific meaning to a society's ideological commitments; it is the invention-al source for arguments of ratification among those seduced by it; and it is the central target for those who will not participate in the collective life either because they are hostile to the myth itself or because they have tired of the myth and are not inclined to defend it. Edmund Burke's *Present Discontents*, for example, is almost a textbook summation of the Whig ideology made to justify the use of seventeenth century value judgments in 1770. The pamphlet was a prime influence on politicians attempting to develop a system of parliamentary democracy and among histor-

³⁵ An excellent example of the kind of rhetoric which might be analyzed from this perspective is Eric Hoffer's polemic reaction to Hitler's National Socialism. A more systematic development of arguments designed to justify a retreat from the collective life is Popper's lengthy polemic, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950). See Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

³⁶ Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents in The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, 4th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1871), I, 442.

³³ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, pp. 59-94.

³⁴ An inquiry of the sort I am attempting to describe was recently completed at the University of Florida. See Woodrow Wilson Leake, Jr., "Ideological Rhetoric: Systemic Arguments on War and Peace in High School American History Textbooks," Diss. Florida, 1973.

ians who attempted to rationalize the emergence of parliamentary democracy.³⁷ It was also a prime target for opponents of the eighteenth century version of Whig-liberalism, and in the twentieth century, it became a symbol of "political dogma" which "clouds thought" by recommending collective fervor and passion (rather than reason and evidence) in the defense of "liberty."³⁸ This one document, in other words, can be said to contain the entire collectivization process from coming-to-be to ceasing-to-be a "people."

Though many have attempted to define such myths as the *Present Discontents* in terms of collective behavior or historical criticism, they are purely rhetorical phenomena, mass fantasies in which grown men justify their intention to act by "playing like" the world is a more comfortable place than it appears to be. Sorel writes: "Myths are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act. . . . A myth . . . is, at bottom, identical with the convic-

tions of a group, being the expression of those convictions in the language of movement; and it is, in consequence, unanalysable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical description."³⁹

So-called "objective reality" is made more comfortable by making an alternate "reality," what Marx called "false consciousness."⁴⁰ The fantastic worlds of political myths make possible an almost absolute control over the environment—as anyone who has ever attended a traditional Christian funeral can testify, even the most final reality can be controlled by faith in an "afterlife."⁴¹ Though myths defy empirical or historical treatment, therefore, it is easy to recognize them rhetorically as ontological arguments relying not so much on evidence as on artistic proofs intended to answer the question, What is "real"? So political myths were made, for example, when Winston Churchill redefined the reality of Dunkirk, when Franklin Roosevelt redefined the reality of the Great Depression, and when John Kennedy made apparently insoluble so-

³⁷ In commenting on Burke's influence in the transition from "balanced government" to parliamentary democracy, Lecky observes that "No other politician or writer has . . . impressed his principles so deeply on both of the great parties in the State, and has left behind him a richer treasure of political wisdom applicable to all countries and to all times." W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 4th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1890,) III, 181-82. The *Present Discontents* was received as a satisfactory, though exaggerated, account of the early years of George III's reign by such writers as Robert Huish, Lord John Russell, William Nathaniel Massey, Erskine May, Lecky, and William Hunt. See Herbert Butterfield, *George III and the Historians* (London: Collins, 1957), pp. 75, 104, 146-47, 152-53, 163, and 179 resp.

³⁸ For an account of the none-too-friendly reception of the pamphlet by those who distrusted "incendiary" justifications of "mob" behavior, see Donald C. Bryant, "Burke's *Present Discontents*: The Rhetorical Genesis of a Party Testament," *QJS* 42 (1956), 115-26. I have already referred to the passionate attacks on the pamphlet created by those whose mission is to discredit what Namier called "beautiful and very rational legends." See Sir Lewis Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 128-31.

³⁹ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp. 32, 33.

⁴⁰ See Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, trans. with intro. by Frederick Engels (1847; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1963), pp. 103-25; and Mannheim, pp. 70-75.

⁴¹ See Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, pp. 317-19. The physical world exists, but it has no meaning until it has been defined by individuals coping with it. Such individuals bring "perspective" or "orientation" to the physical world, mythically and ritualistically redefining it, causing themselves to be "reborn" in a new world of their own making. So if it happens in my life that I become economically insecure, I do not need to respond to my situation with a direct action such as getting a job, standing in a welfare line, or robbing a bank. I can avoid my problem, and perhaps solve it, by redefining my environment. I may argue that the rich are robbing me and ought to be made to shoulder my economic burden; or I may argue that poverty is only apparent, that I should count my blessings and stop worrying about economic security. With each argument I create a new world, and I feel more comfortable because I am "reborn" in a world where my problem does not exist.

cial and political problems seem like a "New Frontier."

Political myths technically may represent nothing but a "false consciousness," but they are nonetheless *functionally* "real" and important, as Peter Schrag noted in describing "the failure of political language" in the Presidential campaign of 1972:

In the past, there was always some assurance about certain fundamentals. Political language began with . . . a set of unquestioned givens. . . . Such assurance . . . survived for nearly two centuries as the true-blue, one-for-all, now-and-forever, American creed. With some exceptions, we shared a common set of political axioms . . . and so we . . . could feel relatively certain about what bothered people . . . and about what they expected. What is new and striking about the 1972 campaign is that even that fundamental assurance is missing. . . . It is as if a dozen candidates . . . are running for the Presidency of an undiscovered country, looking for connections, for a nerve to touch, seeking a language.⁴²

Each political myth presupposes a "people" who can legislate reality with their collective belief. So long as "the people" believe basic myths, there is unity and collective identity. When there is no fundamental belief, one senses a crisis which can only be met with a new rhetoric, a new mythology.

From the moment of its first utterance, the political myth is in a dual competition with at least two other ontological constructs. Because it is an attempt to redefine material conditions, the myth most obviously conflicts with "objective reality." Because it is a response, not only to discomfort in the environment, but also to the failure of previous myths to cope with such discomfort, a new political myth also conflicts with all previous myths. Each new vision of the collective life, in other words, represents a

movement of ideas (and of "the people") from one "world" of attitudes and conditions to another. The result is the sort of silent revolution Walter Bagehot observed in describing "the people's" accommodation to a new set of governing maxims, a new "constitution": "A new constitution does not produce its full effect as long as all its subjects were reared under an old Constitution. . . . Generally one generation in politics succeeds another almost silently; at every moment men of all ages between thirty and seventy have considerable influence; each year removes many old men, makes all others older, brings in many new. The transition is so gradual that we hardly perceive it."⁴³

As Bagehot translates it, the objective conflict involves disagreements in attitude among overlapping "generations" whose perceptions both of reality and of valuative myths differ noticeably.

Recognition of an argumentative competition in history (usually characterized as "dialectical") is commonplace in social theory. If one is an idealist, he sees rational "laws" of history, perhaps an eternal struggle between "good" and "evil." If one is a materialist, he sees a competition between "bourgeois" and "proletariat," or in the West, between the "haves" and the "have-nots." And a pragmatist might see competition between "establishment" and "antiestablishment," or "ins" and "outs" with reference to power. Bagehot's contribution was his association of such competition with attitudes developed by "generations" who shared a roughly comparable socialization process. The political "generation" is a biological phenomenon, but it is defined by its "Constitution." A rhetorical analyst might suggest further that, regardless of their biological

⁴² Peter Schrag, "The Failure of Political Language," *Saturday Review*, 25 Mar. 1972, pp. 30-31.

⁴³ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (New York: Appleton, 1877), pp. 3-4.

age, all who accept the same system of myths constitute a "generation" of "the people." As myths change, "generations" change, and with the new "generation" comes a new "people," defined not by circumstances or behavior, but by their collective faith in a rhetorical vision.

Analyzing the collective beliefs presupposed in one myth, however, does not give the rhetorician a satisfactory description of "the people," for as Bagehot observed, there are several myths and several political generations at any one time, each with a modicum of influence in the society. How many myths, and how many peoples, for example, were envisioned by other advocates at the time Hitler dangled National Socialism before the German public? Can one automatically assume that all Germans were Nazi, or at least enough of them to constitute a "people"? If that judgment can be made, can one decide at which point the myth of super-race came to dominate the German public mind? Such questions indicate that "the people" exist, not in a single myth, but in the *competitive relationships* which develop between a myth and objective reality, and between a myth and antithetical visions of the collective life.

If we believe Ortega, the competitive relationship between myths is not a haphazard political or economic tension; it is rather a tension within each individual between contrary impulses, one to credit the lessons of the past forced upon us in the socialization process, the other to credit our own "root feeling in the presence of life" regardless of social dicta.⁴⁴ Because life conditions are always changing, there is a constant choice

between a "stable" impulse to see objective reality as tending to confirm traditional judgments of life (old myths) and a contrary "vital" impulse to perceive objective reality as tending to refute traditional judgments (a condition calling for new myths). Because such impulses are a product of the learning condition itself, Ortega argues, the tension between stable and vital impulses is a drama which must be replayed with each biological generation.⁴⁵ Over a period of time, several generations making different judgments about the life condition establish a cultural "rhythm" within which all myths are born, grow useless, and are superseded by new myths better fit to new life conditions. So, for example, Roosevelt's "people" judged their condition by predominately vital criteria and therefore abandoned an economic tradition in favor of a "New Deal," a new myth. In time, the "New Deal" stabilized, became a part of the stable tradition of subsequent generations, an "old deal." In the 1960s, children of affluence reacted with vitality against the security conscious morality

⁴⁵ Ortega is careful to qualify his argument with the obvious notation that no generation is *purely* vital or stable. Rather, the general tension between vital and stable judgments makes each generation more-vital-than-stable or more-stable-than-vital. I am uncertain as to whether the tension might be characterized as *balance*, *equation*, or *stasis*. There is something of Festinger's dissonance theory in the observation that vital judgments inconsistent with stable teachings make individuals receptive to new political myths. This makes the term "balance" or "congruity" attractive. There is something akin to a Marxist dialectic of social class in Ortega's assertion of the inevitability of conflict between stable and vital impulses. This makes the term "equation" or "conflict" seem attractive. And there is also something like the relationship between affirmative and negative arguments in a courtroom in Ortega's description of the practical relationship between vital and stable. This makes me want to refer the whole concept to the stasis doctrine of classical rhetoric. I will settle here for the more neutral term "tension" to avoid tangents and to leave open possible associations with communicology, Marxist philosophy, and the classical rhetorical tradition.

⁴⁴ See José Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*, trans. James Cleugh (1933; rpt. New York: Harper Torchbook, 1961), pp. 1-13; *History as a System*, trans. H. Weyl (1941; rpt. New York: Norton Library, 1962); and, *Man and Crisis*, trans. Mildred Adams (1958; rpt. New York: Norton Library, 1962).

of the 1930s, creating what Means calls a "crisis in American values."⁴⁶

Because myths can be classified within a culture's vital and stable rhythm, "the people" of that culture can be described rhetorically. One begins with the understanding that political myths are purely rhetorical phenomena, ontological appeals constructed from artistic proofs and intended to redefine an uncomfortable and oppressive reality. Such myths are endemic in the human condition and, though technically they represent nothing but a "false consciousness," they nonetheless function as a means of providing social unity and collective identity. Indeed, "the people" are the social and political myths they accept. But because a new myth competes for public faith both against objective reality and against other myths, it is difficult to get a clear view of a "people" by analyzing a single myth. Myths dominant during the socialization process are generally accepted, and thus come to represent "generations" of "the people." But these myths, and the generations they represent, conflict with new and old myths, new and old generations, all existing in some degree of influence at a single moment in history. The tension existing between competing myths is a product of the contradiction between an individual's impulse to accept "stable" representations of reality derived from the collective experience of the past, and a contrary impulse to yield to "vital" impressions of reality derived from personal experience with the life condition. Political myths and generations may therefore be classed as predominately "stable" or "vital." So the rhetorical

analyst might argue that a description of the argumentative tensions between stable and vital political myths would constitute a portrait of "the people" at a particular time. One might investigate the possibility, for example, that "the people" of Germany in 1934 were somewhere in a competitive tension between National Socialist myths of *Übermensch* (a predominately stable, nationalistic reaffirmation and extension of the rhetoric used to unify the "Fatherland") and a contrary Marxist myth of the classless society (a predominately vital, immediate rebellion against such economic conditions as those described in the didactic drama of Brecht).⁴⁷

III

The analysis of political myths can reveal but one face of "the people," for though the myth is central to the collectivization process, it is evidence of but one stage in the metamorphosis of "persons" into "people." It is nonetheless a productive and important line of inquiry because it illustrates the significance of pursuing the rhetorical alternative in search of "the people." The arguments developed here could be used to explain in theory a new approach to rhetorical criticism; but it has not been my purpose to contribute still another monistic set of categories to aid in the appreciation of oratory. Rather, it has been my intention to follow Kenneth Burke's lead by arguing that studies of rhetoric should contribute positively to

⁴⁶ See Richard L. Means, *The Ethical Imperative* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969). Toffler has made much of the difficulty of communicating lessons learned in the Great Depression to a generation incapable of experiencing extreme economic deprivation. See Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 7-48, 124-82.

⁴⁷ See Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933-1945* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 95-98; George W. F. Hallgarten, "Adolf Hitler and German Heavy Industry, 1931-1933," *Journal of Economic History* 12 (1952), 225-46; Gerard Brauntal, "The German Free Trade Unions during the Rise of Nazism," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 15 (1956), 339-53; and Gerhard Ritter, "The Fault of Mass Democracy," in *The Third Reich*, ed. Maurice Baumont (New York: Praeger, 1955). pp. 389-412.

understanding the social process and the human condition.⁴⁸ So the analysis of rhetorical documents should not turn inward, to an appreciation of persuasive, manipulative techniques, but outward to *functions* of rhetoric.⁴⁹ Studies of the collectivization process through rhetorical analysis of political myths orients the researcher to problems of social/rhetorical theory rather than to myopic questions of causation so common in contemporary historical methods.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Even in his first book, before his language-oriented arguments led him to consider *The Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke used literary and rhetorical documents, not as objects of esthetic or formal criticism, but as evidence of social and human processes. See *Attitudes Toward History*, pp. 3-33.

⁴⁹ Though ultimately he retreated to a method which, as Black suggests, did little more than "illuminate the history of rhetorical practice," this was Griffin's argument in observing that "we have now sat long enough upon the ground and told sunny stories of the kings and counsellors of the platform." It is also a position Black seems inclined to in his discussions of "the functions of argumentation" and "clusters of opinion," though the end of Black's "Alternative Frame of Reference" for rhetorical criticism seems to lie more in the rhetorical event itself than in the social and human significance of the event. See Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *QJS* 38 (1952), 185, and Black, pp. 21, 132-37, 161-64, 168-76.

⁵⁰ My fear is that the use of faddish historical methods might obscure more productive rhetorical methods resulting in the kind of myopia now endemic among writers of histories. See Isaiah Berlin, "History and Theory: The Concept of Scientific History," in *Generalizations in Historical Writing*, ed. Alexander V. Riasanovsky and Barnes Riznik (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), pp. 60-113. "Revisionism" and "Namerism" in history have produced too many comments like this from Barzun and Graff: "An historian would say, for example, that under the conditions prevailing in this country today it is not probable that a public official, e.g., the governor of a state, could be entirely misrepresented to posterity as regards his appearance, actions, and character. Too many devices of publicity are continually playing on public figures." It is evident even to the neophyte in rhetorical method that "devices of publicity" distort rather than clarify public character. Historians are mistaken greatly if they believe that even a cinematographic footnote will be taken seriously. No twentieth century reporting, for example, will render Neville Chamberlain in his complete character. He will be, for purposes of argument and action, a weak and despicable villain so long as the possibility of "appease-

ment" exists in conflict situations. The "devices of publicity" which have "played" on him have rendered, not a portrait, but a caricature. Jaques Barzun and Henry Graff, *The Modern Researcher* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1957), p. 138.

Consider the rhetorician's advantage in dealing with the collectivization process: When a writer such as Ortega or Marx must describe "the people," he is hampered by lack of evidence. It is admitted in social theory that "the diagnosis of . . . a people or an age must begin by establishing the repertory of its convictions," since social man is a creature of beliefs and not of truths.⁵¹ To discover those convictions, however, social theorists typically ignore rhetorical documents, arguing that a people's repertory of convictions is apparent in the material life conditions of the age.⁵² While it may be true that life conditions dictate structures of belief, it does not follow that a history of *events* is equal to a history of *convictions*. As Lichtheim observes, "history is always the history of *this* particular event and *those* particular actors, whose appearance at *this* particular moment must be understood in all its concreteness."⁵³ The suggestion is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, historical "facts" do not speak for themselves in defining the "people" of a nation. In the Marxist litany, for example, I would suggest that it was not working conditions which made a class struggle in England inevitable, but rather *human responses to working conditions*.⁵⁴ These human responses (rhetoric) constitute a filter for "facts" which translates them into *beliefs*. If such filters are ignored (as they have been by

ment" exists in conflict situations. The "devices of publicity" which have "played" on him have rendered, not a portrait, but a caricature. Jaques Barzun and Henry Graff, *The Modern Researcher* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1957), p. 138.

⁵¹ Ortega, *History as System*, p. 166.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵³ George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays* (New York: Random House Vintage, 1967), p. 296.

⁵⁴ This is one point I believe Sorel successfully illuminates in another historical context than that chosen by Marx. See Georges Sorel, *The Illusions of Progress*, trans. John and Charlotte Stanley (1980; rpt. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1969).

all orthodox Marxist writers), the result is what Butterfield called the "Whig fallacy," imposing on the past one's own conviction and perception of what human responses to conditions ought to have been.⁵⁵

My argument here has been that through the analysis of rhetorical documents (particularly political myths), it should be possible to speak meaningfully, not of one's own, but of *the people's* repertory of convictions, not as they ought to be, but as they *are* (or have been). When a writer works with rhetorical documents, he sees material forces, events, and themes in history *only as they have already been mediated or filtered by the Leader whose words he studies*. What he sees, in other words, is not a dialectical materialism, but rather a "rhetorical idealism." It may be that Peter Rodino, for example, was wrong when he suggested that the impeachment of Richard Nixon was linked to Magna Carta, to Locke's *Civil Government*, to the wishes of our "founding fathers," and to Burke's impeachment of Warren Hastings.⁵⁶ It is true that no thought of democracy or rule of law as we understand it was involved in the extraction of the Magna Carta. It is true that Rodino argued a lie, therefore, that

he imposed a meaning on the past in precisely the same way Marx did. The difference rests in the fact that Rodino was a politician arguing a *real* case, before *real* people, and before the *actualization* of the "repertory of convictions" held in his society. If "the people" of Anglo-America *believe* that there is a Whig theme or motion in history, then for that moment there *is* such a "movement" *in fact*. The rhetorical theorist working with the sort of speech Rodino gave should be able to *document* the existence of themes, movements, or rhythms in a way that historicists such as Marx and Ortega could not.⁵⁷

Such possibilities, I would conclude, develop when we begin to realize the significance of our own concepts. Pursuing a rhetorical alternative in defining "the people" leads one to the importance of recognizing the collective life as a condition of being the "audience" of those who pretend to lead the society. Rather than turn the concept "audience" upon itself by inquiring into the effects of rhetoric or by exhorting fledgling advocates to avoid *argumentum ad populum*, I suggest that we use it to explore the reciprocal relationship between rhetoric and social theory and to participate in the serious Hegelian and Marxist dialogues of the previous two centuries which have so greatly affected life in our own time.

⁵⁵ For a detailed discussion of the Whig fallacy as it exists in the writing of history, see Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1965). For a discussion of the fallacy as it appears in philosophies of history, see Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969). And for a discussion of the fallacy as it has existed in the study of rhetoric, see Michael C. McGee, "The Rhetorical Process in Eighteenth-Century England" in *Rhetoric: A Tradition in Transition*, ed. Walter R. Fisher (Lansing, Mich.: Mich. St. Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 99-121.

⁵⁶ Peter Rodino, "Opening Remarks at the Public Inquiry of the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. House of Representatives Relative to the Impeachment of Richard M. Nixon," July 24, 1974, videotape in possession of this author, reel 1:252.

⁵⁷ Speculative philosophical themes have an objective reality only when, by accident, social theorists arguing for Utopian systems happen also to be practicing advocates engaged in the persuasion of a mass society. Marx, for example, had no contact with the reality of any people's repertory of beliefs; rather, Lenin, a rhetorician, is responsible for making Marxist beliefs real, not as a result of the *truth* of his argument, but because of the *persuasiveness* of his appeal. This is an old point central to the rhetorical method, made by Aristotle: "Whatever men wish to be, rather than seem, is the greater good, *since it is nearer reality*." My italics. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 7. 1365^b10-14.

