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The University of Oklahoma

Graduate College

EXCLUDING THE MASSES:

APTITUDE IN CLASSICAL AND MODERN RHETORICAL THEORY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Phillip P. Marzluf

Norman, Oklahoma

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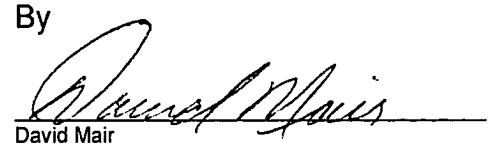
EXCLUDING THE MASSES:

APTITUDE IN CLASSICAL AND MODERN RHETORICAL THEORY

A dissertation APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

By



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Abstract

This dissertation interrogates how classical rhetoric and three broad formations of rhetoric in the United States have defined and deployed aptitude, a keyterm signifying the innate traits that impact the speaking and writing performances of students. Analyzing aptitude as an ideological construct, I argue that it plays important roles in determining the boundaries of rhetorical theory, forming judgments about the natures of individuals and human beings, and providing a "natural" means to justify the exclusion of certain groups (e.g., non-citizens, women, and other marginalized groups) from rhetorical training.

In my examination of classical rhetoric, I argue that statements about innate talents can be categorized according to their strength, that is, to how rigidly natural ability is conceived of as determining final linguistic performances. The strongest position maintains that innate differences in human nature determine linguistic performances and account for social stratification. A less restrictive version of aptitude, one advocated by Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian, maintains that though natural ability is important, gifted students still require training, practice, and experience if they are to become ideal orators. Finally, a sophistic position denies either the importance or existence of natural traits.

In my discussions of how aptitude operates in the composition theory of the United States, I explore current-traditional, expressivist, and social rhetorics. Although classical commonplaces persist, I argue that American rhetoricians, relying upon universal, Enlightenment conceptions of human nature, hope to make language training accessible to a wide range of human beings. These egalitarian attempts, however, reveal uncomfortable consequences. For example, the meritocratic possibilities of current-

traditional rhetoric are challenged by static conceptions of language and mind – and, importantly, the rise of standardized language testing in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Also, expressivist rhetoric, exemplified by Peter Elbow's enthusiasm for the discovery of authentic voice, may lead to the construction of a false expression/rationality binary and the exoticizing of the texts and experiences of marginalized students. Finally, I describe how James Berlin and other social rhetoricians situate themselves in the current nativist debate led by cognitive psychologists, psychometricians, and conservative educators.

KEYWORDS: Aptitude, Rhetorical Theory, Educational History, Ideological Critique, Keyword Analysis, Written Language Assessment, Standardized Testing

Chapter I

Nature or Nurture? An Introduction to Rhetorical Aptitude

> For our natural disposition is, as it were, the soil; the tenets of our teacher are, as it were, the seed; instruction in youth is like the planting of the seed in the ground at the proper season; the place where the instruction is communicated is like the food imparted to vegetables by the atmosphere; diligent study is like the cultivation of the fields; and it is time which imparts strength to all things and brings them to maturity. (Hippocrates, "The Law" 323-324)

> Reduce employee training time, mistakes and turnover by assessing the cognitive ability of your job candidates. Most job candidates begin a new job with enough knowledge and skills necessary to get started, but must learn the rest on the job or in a formal training program. That's precisely why it's so important to determine just how quickly and comprehensively your candidates learn... prior to making a hiring, training or placement decision. (Wonderlic 1)

> I have no patience with the hypothesis occasionally expressed, and often implied, especially in tales written to teach children to be good, that babies are born pretty much alike, and that the sole agencies in creating differences between boy and boy, and man and man, are steady application and moral effort. (Galton 14)

> Everyone, however inexperienced or unskilled, has real voice available; everyone can write with power. (Elbow, *Writing with Power* 304)

The four quotations above offer a constellation of claims, definitions, and attitudes of human nature, about how innate abilities differentiate human beings and the effectiveness of their performances in a wide range of activities. Writing around 450 BCE, Hippocrates argues in "The Law" that natural talent – the "soil" – represents an important component of the medical student and can serve as a selection criteria for physicians in order to enhance the professionalization of medicine.[1] Roughly 2450 years later, the Wonderlic testing corporation promises a technique, an aptitude test of basic cognitive skills, that can select appropriate job candidates for select responsibilities; aptitude testing, Wonderlic avows, can save a company time and money – as well as provide a more rational basis for making hiring decisions. The version of aptitude expressed by Hippocrates and Wonderlic is a commonsensical one. Its status as a "real" construct, supported, according to the Wonderlic version, by the neutral, authoritative scientific methodology of cognitive psychology, goes largely unquestioned. Proponents of this view of aptitude contend that it is in the best interest of institutions like the medical establishment, universities, and even NFL football clubs, a main consumer of the Wonderlic tests (Dillon 1), to make their selections of candidates more rational, especially when there are only a limited number of openings and few resources available.

The last two quotations reveal an alternative ideology of aptitude. Francis Galton, the coiner of "eugenics," deplores egalitarian, moralistically tinged statements

---

[1] Hippocrates also provides a convenient way of talking about human nature, the agricultural analogy; classical Greek and Roman rhetoricians will deploy this trope, along with analogies of physical training and sculpture.

that all human beings are created equal. He sounds similar to contemporary "race-realist" scientists like J. Philippe Rushton and Arthur Jensen who supposedly feel compelled to tell the truth, regardless of "political correctness" or the sensibilities of minorities, about how members of different races and sexes possess innate capabilities that differentiate their behaviors and performances. Galton extends this deterministic version of aptitude to justify the unequal distribution of income and power in modern, industrialized societies. The hierarchies of society, which merely reflect the various inherent capacities and propensities of its members, are natural – and justified. Obviously, Peter Elbow's enthusiastic avowal that all human beings have the capability of writing effectively differs significantly from Galton's account. Replacing aptitude with "voice," Elbow isolates a linguistic trait that all students have access to. This egalitarian position maintains that social hierarchies and unequal access to educational experiences are systemic problems. People need to be empowered in order to critique and change unequal and unjust conditions.

In this dissertation project, I intend to connect statements like those above about human nature to the discipline of composition and rhetoric. I focus upon aptitude, a term from educational and psychometric theory that describes a diverse set of innate traits affecting to what degree students are capable of developing their abilities to make judgments, persuade others, critically read and evaluate texts, and deploy effective speaking and writing strategies (for definitions of rhetoric, see Bingham 17-19; Wilson 9). Importantly, I do not intend to validate the existence of aptitude as a real construct. My dissertation, therefore, will not attempt to operationalize an empirical definition of aptitude (see, for example, Reschly and Robinson-Zañarta's distinction of aptitude and

achievement [183-184]), nor will it analyze and compare studies that deploy aptitude as an independent variable in order to account for differences on dependent variables such as verbal intelligence scores or direct writing samples.[2]

Instead of considering aptitude as a neutral psychological variable, I will deploy it as a rhetorical commonplace that rhetoricians return to in order to theorize the impact of natural ability upon linguistic performances, the role of training, judgments of what constitutes expertise in writing, and the correspondence of innate gifts and talents with social status and privilege. I argue that our examinations of rhetorical history and theory must take into account how rhetoricians have situated aptitude – as well as related terms like originality, creativity, and intelligence – in terms of their educational projects. Aptitude, I contend, has important ideological implications, especially regarding the characterizations of who can become elite speakers or writers, who can be their teachers – and in what capacity – and, finally, how judgments regarding expertise can be formed. As the title of this dissertation suggests, I believe that aptitude, conceived as a rhetorical construct, has performed a nefarious role of excluding certain types of students eligible for rhetorical training and success based upon claims of natural ability. However, the narrative of aptitude I relate is not solely a tragic one. More general, less determining versions of aptitude -- those that mark the language learning model of Noam Chomsky or the search for natural language of Elbow -- can provide an egalitarian basis for rhetorical theory and literacy instruction.

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[2] See Larsen-Freeman and Long for studies that deploy aptitude as a causal factor for why students learn second languages with varying degrees of success (167-171).

The issues this project confronts are especially important now because of the absence of aptitude in the terminology of social-epistemic rhetoric, currently the predominant theory of rhetoric and composition in United States academia. Two texts, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve* and Steven Pinker's recent *The Blank Slate*, critique the inability or refusal of academic disciplines like rhetoric and composition (the thrust of Pinker's argument is against all disciplines that align themselves with deconstruction or social-construction) to account for the effects of human nature, the differences that exist between individuals and groups, and the educational implications of erasing aptitude as a formative term. The now infamous Herrnstein and Murray do not hesitate, as I do, to portray innate ability – in their case, "intelligence" – as a real, measurable quality that not only determines people's wealth, vocation, and social status, but originates from their parents' genetics. Enthusiastically, Herrnstein and Murray reconstruct American society as a meritocratic ideal, one that rationally allots wealth, power, and privilege to those who, because of their cognitive gifts, deserve it most. Herrnstein and Murray also sound gloomy at times, especially when they talk about education and English studies: because of such social factors as lowering birth rates for highly educated women (341) and the arrival to the United States of immigrants with low IQs (360-361), the United States, overall, may become a less intelligent nation; additionally, because English departments feel the need to champion multicultural curricula, erase the differences between groups of students in how they perform, and cultivate students' self-esteem (432), they fail to teach gifted students how to analyze, judge, and solve problems (443).

Pinker's *The Blank Slate* is a more direct attack against the humanities and social sciences' dependence on social-construction. Pinker provides a mainly sympathetic history of the emergence of egalitarian philosophical positions, those that, like Locke's "blank slate" or Rousseau's "noble savage," provide a justification, among other things, for "natural rights," racial equality, first- and second-wave feminism, and the ability of modern art to challenge mundane and traditional aesthetics. However, Pinker objects to the "Marxist" and "paranoid" extensions of these egalitarian positions by post-modern and post-structuralist intellectuals who insist that all differences between groups (as well as styles, standards, and tastes) reveal, not nature, but the presence of ideology (411). Pinker, joining other critics of post-modern academia, such as Lynn Cheney and Allan Bloom, laments its relativistic excesses, its version of a world completely shaped by language and other sign systems. According to Pinker, post-modern academia rejects scientific inquiry in favor of fear and silence (see, for example, Pinker's discussion of evolutionary biologists whose research was condemned as racist [106-119]); and, post-modern theory deems "truth" as a symptom of white, male-dominated ideological power. In English departments, Pinker continues, the effects of post-modern theory have been to valorize the role of language in altering how people perceive marginalized groups (i.e., "political correctness") and to disrupt universal conventions of writing, thus allowing for the proliferation of jargon and texts that celebrate opaqueness and incoherence (415).

Yet, why do Pinker and such incendiary texts like *The Bell Curve* matter? Why do I feel compelled to respond to critiques of the egalitarian projects of social-construction theory? What do biology, natural instincts, and evolution have to do with writing and speaking, with rhetoric? One answer may lie in the recent resurgence of

composition and rhetoric in the 1960s and 1970s, a period of tremendous social change in the university. As universities included a broader range of students, because of, among other reasons, open-admissions policies (Hairston 82), the composition classroom, often the first step for students into the university community, had to confront issues of race, gender, and class. The universal characteristics that marked current-traditional rhetoric – the detached, objective voice of third-person, static forms and genres, and generic audiences – could not represent the singular voices, interests, positions, experiences, and dialects of the contemporary classroom. Social rhetoric, on the other hand, has been successful in locating difference in situated contexts, discourse communities, and local knowledges. It has remained skeptical of attempts to characterize the differences of students in terms of innate talents and propensities. However, the recent trends in cognitive psychology that I have described are attempting to redefine the reasons for difference, refuting the claims that designations of rhetorical expertise are community specific and do not involve universal traits of learners.

We ask ourselves questions about differences, and we investigate them, but we certainly do not erase them, nor do we feel comfortable with making generalizations from them. Yet, once we recognize differences – how class, race, ethnicity, and gender are represented in our classrooms – we approach controversial territory. Foremost, teacher lore abounds with stories of students who were born writers – and, conversely, students who were impervious to instruction and who will never become writers. Though differences do exist among students, reflected, for example, in grades, we hesitate before rationalizing why certain students fail to develop their writing abilities. Most likely we blame conflicting cultural attitudes toward education (Ogbu), inexperience

(Shaughnessy), or systemic problems in the student's prior education; in other words, except for obvious learning disabilities, we blame social factors for poor achievement of our students, not inherent, biological ones.

Proponents such as Pinker of the nativist critique ask us to consider an even more controversial position. We should look for explanations, they contend, of individual difference in the inherent differences that exist between races, ethnic groups, socioeconomic classes, and sexes. We should, therefore, be ready to explore possibilities that Asian-American students perform better on mathematical and technical problems, and are inherently less "verbal" (Herrnstein and Murray support this claim by comparing the verbal and quantitative scores on Scholastic Achievement Tests); women, on the other hand, are biologically better equipped to process linguistic cues and excel at interpersonal communication (see Pinker's discussion of innate sexual differences in *The Blank Slate* [345-359]); and, even more controversially, the nativist position asks us to entertain the possibility that African-American males simply do not have the linguistic gifts to produce effective texts, given the rigid conditions of standard academic English; yet, fortunately, they do have the capacity to use language effectively, outside of academic contexts, in genres that are more naturally suited to them. To be fair, Pinker wouldn't go as far to advocate the last example (though, Jensen and Rushton would); Pinker does not ignore the effects of environment and politics; and, he would contend that evolution is not so powerful as to select for such a specifically cultural activity as writing.[3]

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[3] The persistence of the cultural perception that African-Americans – as well as Latinos and women – are more "oral," that is, more comfortable in social contexts of speaking with immediate peers, is troublesome. This dichotomy of groups who are comfortable in social, intimate settings, as opposed to

The Analysis of Aptitude

I place "aptitude" at the head of a cluster of terms that have functioned to differentiate students, orators, or writers for the last 2,700 years of rhetoric. Terms like *areté*, *physis*, *natura*, talent, creativity, and verbal intelligence are used to justify selections for a limited number of academic or occupational positions, or for limited socioeconomic and cultural power and privileges: there are, after all, only so many slots available at Harvard, the officer corps in the United States military, or in the philosopher king class of Plato's utopia; moreover, only a restricted number of orators and writers can constitute the western canon; in Athenian and Roman contexts, few individuals are able to become incomparable, ideal speakers and political leaders. The terms of aptitude presuppose that certain activities or practices – for our purposes, writing and speaking – either obviate teaching or learning or, at least, complicate their effectiveness. Innate, natural qualities of students, instead, largely determine later accomplishments and capabilities. Howard Gardner, for example, describes the latent poetic aptitude in a young T. S. Eliot – among other aspects, a particular sensitivity to shades of meaning or phonology – which foreshadowed his dominant linguistic intelligence (74, 77). Aptitude, thus, traces a path, from mysterious origins already established at the birth of the child, through faint manifestations in childhood, and finally to fully realized accomplishments.

In classical rhetoric, the problem of aptitude bases itself on *physis* and its oppositional term *nomos*, a binary that predates the many versions of the nature/nurture

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groups who are more capable of dealing with language in more abstract, decontextualized contexts, appears in polarized versions of the great-divide theory in literacy studies, Jim Cummins's Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills versus Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and Basil Bernstein's elaborated and unelaborated linguistic codes. Though all three are grounded in social causes, they are, I fear, susceptible to essentializing the language practices of marginalized groups.

debate: for instance, the philosophical arguments in the eighteenth century of rationalists against empiricists, or the political and "scientific" attacks of twenty-first century fringe "race realists" against social-construction theorists. *Physis* describes a universal truth anterior to human experience and empiricism; *nomos*, on the other hand, signifies social laws and customs constructed and interpreted by human beings (Guthrie, *The Sophists* 55-56). As the Greek word for aptitude in classical Athens[4], *physis* is passive[5], a term erasing the effects of human activity, experience, and social interaction. *Nomos* depends upon everything that *physis* excludes: writing, language, education, experience, convention, habits, and customs. According to W. K. C. Guthrie, "it presupposes an acting subject – believer, practitioner or apportioner – a mind from which the *nomos* emanates" (*The Sophists* 55). *Nomos* cannot exist before or outside of human beings and their social interactions; importantly, it privileges practice, experience, and education – and provides a space for rhetoric to flourish.

Classical rhetoric provides a rich vocabulary for the analysis of aptitude. For example, *areté*, a word that articulates aristocratic anxiety in the pre-classical literary texts of Theognis, Pindar, and Solon, operates like *physis* to identify aristocrats and military heroes who are naturally born to lead. Additionally, *empeiria* appears as Plato's definition for rhetoric in *Gorgias*, a "kind of knack [*empeiria*] [...] of producing a

---

[4] Butler's translation of the *Odyssey* substitutes "aptitude" once for *areté* (8.244). Early uses of *physis* for natural ability appear in an alternate form, *phuô*, in Pindar's fifth-century *Nemean Odes*, as in "Each of us differs in nature [*phuô*], for men were allotted a different life" (7.5.50).

[5] *Physis*, according to Welch in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric*, defies a simplistic, one-to-one translation; it is a word that continues to shift in meaning from the presocratics to its appearance in Plato's dialogues. For the Ionian presocratics, the term itself possesses a passive quality, if it is meant as an originating, elementary substance, or an active one, if its meaning implies a more human-centered "process" or "becoming" (78).

certain kind of gratification and pleasure" (462c). The three common translations of this term, "habitude" (Lamb), "routine" (Woodhead), and "knack" (Hembold), indicate the problems of word-for-word translations (Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 12-13, 78), as only the final one suggests Plato's derision for rhetoric. The subtle distinctions of these translations are crucial, especially considering the importance Schiappa places upon *Gorgias* as the text in which *rhetorike* first appears. Translated as "habitude" or "routine," *empeiria* can be classified as a derogatory form of *nomos*, a mindless persuasive habit or *atechnic* practice that the speaker has little control over. Though equally pejoratively, the translation of *empeiria* as "knack" places the practice of rhetoric in the realm of *physis*; indeed, few individuals possess the innate and natural ability to persuade. They are condemned by Plato as being flatterers (463a), another quality of *physis*, yet certainly one that Plato despises: anthropomorphized as a deceitful, enticing woman, flattery – Plato would easily substitute it for rhetoric – corrupts "true" disciplines and ideals and ensnares ignorant human beings with promises of momentary pleasures (464d).

As the above discussion suggests, the keyword analysis of aptitude, because of its participation in the nature/nurture debate, introduces the methodological problem of breadth. Williams, aware of this problem, warns his readers at the outset of the definition of "nature" that it is "perhaps the most complex word in the language" (219). As David Hothersall indicates in his history of psychology, the nature/nurture debate furthermore grapples with such questions as the structure of the mind, the mind/body split, the existence of God, and *a priori* constructs of time and space – that is, the foundational questions of philosophy. I am compelled, therefore, to constrain the generative power of

placing the nature/nurture debate alongside rhetoric. First of all, I restrict my investigation of aptitude mainly to adult students and formal educational institutions (several of the formations of Athenian and Roman rhetoric I analyze, however, consider the development of the orator from childhood); I will not discuss the research of aptitude testing in children (see Reschly and Robinson-Zañartu 183) or the conflicting theories of child development and learning that arise in the writings of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey. Though I find these issues compelling, I am more interested in how rhetoricians account for the abilities of individuals at the final stages of their formal academic careers and how they maintain theories of innateness in spite of the evidence of dissimilar qualities of experience and social conditions. Furthermore, at this level, there is a great deal at stake in how ranks of excellence and terms like "talent" or "genius" are allotted: individuals, for example, may gain access to cultural, economic, and political resources; less successful individuals, of course, may be assigned to different fates.

Second, I focus only on how western rhetoricians have deployed aptitude as a way to account for the speaking and writing practices of students; in my discussions of classical rhetoric, I will also examine leadership and ethical student characteristics, as they are involved in the main *physis/nomos* dispute, whether or not *areté* can be taught. I will be unable, however, to address the appearance and function of aptitude in other disciplines; in the twentieth century, especially, with the advent of group intelligence testing, there has been an explosion in differentiating aptitudes for mechanical skills and professional occupations (Anastasi 13-16; Bingham; Goldenson 98-106) as well as such fields as music, nursing, and engineering.

Finally, I situate the implications of aptitude – or, of course, of disputing aptitude – firmly in the disciplinary history and politics of composition and rhetoric. I am interested, therefore, in how the nature/nurture debate helps locate and define rhetoric itself. I am especially interested in how rhetoricians use a concept of innate ability to restrict who their students will be, to predict how successful they will be, or to rationalize their failures. It is not the intention of this project, however, to reify a concept of rhetorical aptitude, to analyze how stable it is across time or to indicate, for example, how well it corresponds to specific features of writing and speaking. Though perhaps a disappointment to scientifically inclined readers, I do not entertain the possibility of whether rhetorical aptitude exists, nor do I analyze what aptitude tests purport to measure. In this project, aptitude remains a rhetorical construct, a commonplace that rhetoricians accept or deny under certain political, social, and institutional pressures.

In order to demonstrate the overall scope of this project, I present in Figure 1 on the following page the main aptitude keywords listed along a historical timeline. Below that, I provide a sample of the terms both associated and opposed to aptitude. These are the keywords and concepts that are often deployed to support or disrupt aptitude as a mechanism of rhetorical theory. Unfortunately, it will be impossible to interrogate all of these terms.

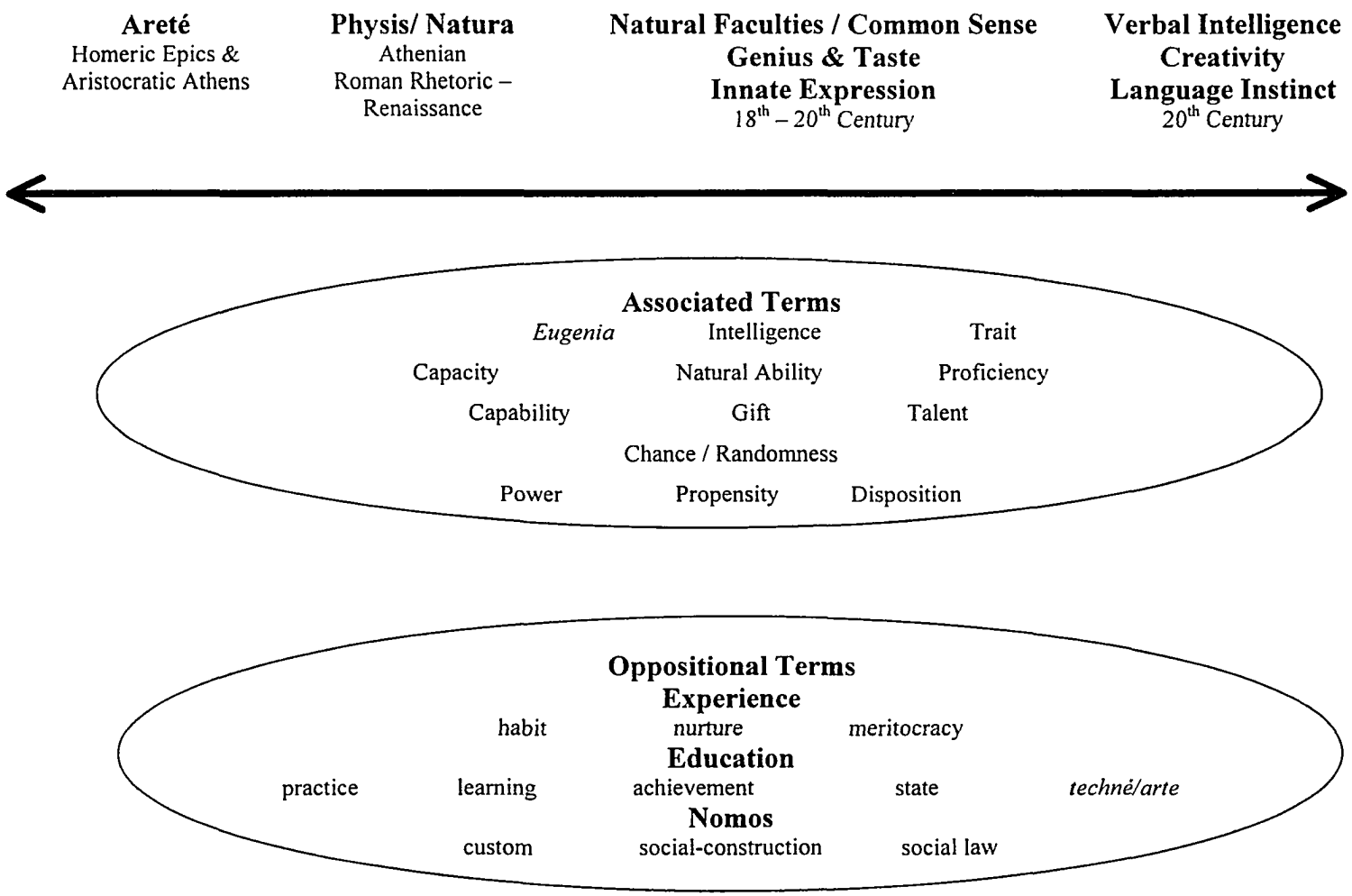


Figure 1:. The Terminology of Western Aptitude

Methodological Considerations

Earlier, I elaborated upon the importance for pursuing an analysis of rhetorical analysis and identified several of the key terms and issues that I will need to confront. In this section, I describe the four major formations of rhetorical theory that I explore: classical, current-traditional, expressivist, and social. Next, I demonstrate two methodological procedures that I deploy in this project, keyword analysis, which is especially important in Chapters 2 and 3, and ideological critique, which governs the often political nature of my investigation. Finally, I illustrate the main historiographical problems that complicate the interrogation of rhetorical and educational theory and history.

Classical Rhetoric

It is impossible and unproductive to provide an encompassing definition for "classical rhetoric" and, I believe such an attempt would undoubtedly erase important, competing formations of theory (see Knoblauch and Brannon's endeavor to limit "classical rhetoric" to a conservative interpretation of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian [23-24]; see also Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 28). For the purposes of my analysis of aptitude, I examine pre-classical, aristocratic educational history, Isocrates' *paideia*, the sophistic rhetoric of Protagoras, as well as the more familiar accounts of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Unlike Knoblauch and Brannon, I feel that I cannot abandon classical rhetoric, limiting it to a group of theories and practices that have been superceded by Enlightenment thinking. As I hope to demonstrate in Chapters 2 and 3, the large, diverse body of work signified by "classical rhetoric" is an excellent source for the vocabulary, concepts, and main issues and problems that continue to inform

conversations of language, human nature, and natural ability. For my immediate purposes, attempts to historicize and retheorize classical rhetoric represent excellent opportunities to recognize how statements connecting literacy and the essential natures of individuals and groups are imbedded with the politics of the (privileged) rhetoricians and historians who articulate them. Importantly, these ideological stances, even though often concealed in the commonsense of "nature" (see Vitanza, "'Notes'" 65), participate in excluding and silencing Greek and Roman women, slaves, marginalized men, foreign workers, and the *barbars*, the ethnic groups representing the eternal enemies of Athens and Rome.

Formations of American Rhetorical Theory

The taxonomy outlined in James Berlin's *Rhetoric and Reality* motivates my selection of the three American rhetorical theories, all of which continue to play significant roles in how college students are trained to write. Current-traditional, expressivist, and social rhetorics correspond, respectively, to Berlin's objective, subjective, and transactional rhetorical categories. Berlin differentiates these rhetorics by their opposing epistemological orientations. Proponents of objective rhetoric conceive of knowledge as facts that appear in the material world and that are accessible to the senses of human beings; truth, importantly, exists prior to language. Advocates of subjective rhetorics, on the other hand, claim that truth transcends the material world and can only be discovered within individuals themselves. Finally, transactional rhetoricians, with whom Berlin aligns himself, consider that knowledge is a construction arising out of the interaction of the rhetorical situation, that is, rhetors, their interlocutors, their subject matter, and language itself (see 7-17 for an excellent overview of these categories).

As Berlin's taxonomy has become the dominant organizational scheme of rhetoric and composition, recent scholarship has begun to indicate its limitations. Donald Jones questions Berlin's faith in the stability of the categorical boundaries he constructed and the "either/or thinking" that his taxonomy promotes (274): indeed, as a graduate student I have found myself safely labeling rhetoricians based upon the criteria that Berlin proposes. Additionally, though perhaps a methodological problem that plagues all taxonomies, Robin Varnum, Hephzibah Roskelly, and Kate Ronald contend that Berlin's triadic scheme creates monoliths of often diverse rhetorical theories (Roskelly and Ronald 34-35) and illuminates little of the economic and institutional restraints with which real writing programs have to contend (Varnum 7). It is also important to note that Berlin's taxonomy is far from neutral; any rhetorical position or teaching practice that does not promote collective action or a critical engagement of society and culture is regarded as limited (see especially Berlin's unfair, agonistic treatment of Linda Flower's cognitive model in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" [480-484]).

Despite these limitations, I agree with Roskelly and Ronald that Berlin's taxonomy remains useful, especially for a discipline attempting to establish itself (34). Berlin's objective-subjective-transactional well describes, for example, the various theoretical intuitions of writing teachers in George Hillocks's empirical study, *Ways of Thinking, Ways of Teaching*. Although more than likely a product of Hillocks' own triadic system, the instructors he observes alternately focus on standards of usage, or the ability of their students to express themselves, or their students' collaborative inquiry (Hillocks, like Berlin, obviously privileges the last practice). In the three subsections below, I define the three formations of American rhetoric I deploy in this project.

Unfortunately, I will be unable to examine the multitude of rhetorics, those that serve as excellent historical sources for the transformation of key concepts of human nature, such as Medieval and Renaissance rhetorics, or those that continue to impact current contemporary theory of practice, most notably the rhetorics of cognitive psychology (which I briefly consider in Chapter 6) and liberal culture (in which writing is taught by the appreciation of the Great Books). In many cases, these rhetorics can be subsumed in the general categories below.

Current-Traditional Rhetoric. The category of "current traditional" is at first historical, signifying the dominant rhetoric of the meritocratic American university in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. According to Kitzhaber, it is a dreary epoch for rhetoric: instructors, and the textbooks they relied upon, dictated the obedience to static genres, stylistic and usage rules, and themes and drills. However, historians of rhetoric now question Kitzhaber's monolithic construction, one that considers any rhetorical activity before the 1960s not too interesting and thus not worthy of attention (Varnum 15). Historians have attempted to disrupt this monolith by revealing the contributions of, for example, Gertrude Buck or Theodore Baird, or the often silenced voices of African-American women in the nineteenth century, who emerge in Shirley Wilson Logan's *With Pen and Voice.* Secondly, "current traditional" capitalizes upon the "objective" rhetorical theories of the Scottish Enlightenment in the latter part of the eighteenth century (Berlin, *Rhetoric & Reality* 7-8). Rhetoric is conceived of as an activity and discipline that reflects the psychological operations and the natural faculties of the mind. Language, which exists outside of the formation of

truth, enables the transmission of knowledge to proceed as an empirical transaction between rhetors and their interlocutors.

Expressivist Rhetoric. Although Berlin identifies three different historical manifestations of expressivist rhetoric in the United States (*Rhetoric & Reality* 43-46, 73-78, 145-151), I focus only upon the last one, the highly personal and empowering rhetorics of Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, and Ann Berthoff in the 1960s and 1970s. In their engaging and accessible texts, Elbow and Macrorie, in particular, urge students to discard their conformity to standard academic English and rediscover their own powerful linguistic capabilities, their authentic voice. Rhetoric does not describe, thus, an empirical transaction, but a more mysterious, personal revelation

Social Rhetoric. Berlin's "transactional" category includes classical and the Marxist social-epistemic rhetorics (originally, it also consisted of cognitive rhetoric, which Berlin later discarded). Historically, I narrow my focus to approximately the last two decades, in which social rhetoric has become the dominant theory (see Bruffee; Hairston), informing teaching practices (see Berlin's description of a social-epistemic classroom in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* [115-131]), historiography, and the ways we conceive of difference in the classroom. Importantly, for proponents of social-epistemic rhetoric like Berlin, Freire, or Giroux, language becomes the focus of how meaning is constructed – and how students can negotiate possible, contingent "truths."

I am aware of how much territory these rhetorics span. Throughout this dissertation, I will be self-conscious of my methodology for selecting theorists and rhetoricians and for narrowing the scope of the project. Henceforth, I restrict my analysis of these broad categories to the five questions below:

1. How have rhetoricians attempted to define aptitude? What devices (such as Hippocrates' use of analogy in the epigraph) have they deployed?
2. What types of traits – physical, cognitive, emotive, spiritual, or ethical – have been classified as innate?
3. How powerful is aptitude conceived to be? In other words, how specifically are innate abilities supposed to determine the speaking and writing performances of students? How stable is aptitude in terms of the effects of environment, education, and culture?
4. How does the presence – or absence – of a concept of aptitude inform rhetorical theory? For example, if a component of the rhetorical process is determined as being innate – such as invention – what are the implications for defining and teaching rhetoric?
5. What are the political implications of the deployment of aptitude? How have rhetoricians used aptitude as a "natural" device select students and judge their performances?

In many cases, I am interested in what rhetorical authorities do *not* say. A key strategy, for instance, has been to identify the linguistic or cognitive behaviors, such as Plato's *areté* or John Genung's inventive aptitude, that are declared to be unteachable and unlearnable. Rhetoricians' statements about what can or cannot be taught, I believe, provide excellent opportunities to explore how they define rhetoric and what behaviors and qualities they attribute to human nature.

Keyword Analysis

Raymond Williams, in the following quotation, describes the purpose of *Keywords*, his compilation of extended definitions of important terms in social and cultural discourse:

> This is not a neutral review of meanings. It is an exploration of the vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical – subject to change as well as to continuity – if the millions of people in whom it is active are to see it as active: not a tradition to be learned, nor a consensus to be accepted, nor a set of meanings which, because it is 'our language', has a natural authority; but as a shaping and reshaping, in real circumstances and from profoundly different and important points of view; a vocabulary to use, to find our own ways in, to change as we find it necessary to change it, as we go on making our own language and history. (24-25)

Williams does not intend *Keywords* to serve a utopian purpose, insuring, for example, that all discourse communities are working from a common language; nor does he aim to stabilize slippery meanings. He hopes to inculcate an awareness, an "extra edge of consciousness" (24), of the origins and variations of these terms, how they become transformed in different contexts, and how they are deployed by culturally dominant groups. The critical awareness that Williams is describing goes beyond individual keywords; students and scholars must question the mechanisms for determining

meanings; they must, moreover, investigate the mechanisms for assigning words powerful, transparent, and univocal meanings – those terms that resist investigation.

Recent rhetorical scholarship has not ignored keyword methodology. For example, in *The Beginnings of Rhetoric* and "Sophistic Rhetoric: Oasis or Mirage?," Edward Schiappa interrogates the terms logos, *rhetorike*, and sophist in order to dispute the foundational (i.e., Aristotelian) definition of rhetoric itself and, especially, attempts to define its origins in the fifth century (BCE), before the appearance of *rhetorike* in Plato's early fourth-century *Gorgias*. Invoking Thomas Kuhn and Michel Foucault, Schiappa emphasizes that definitions contain ideological perspectives and reveal the attitudes and biases of the definer. Yet, in especially authoritative, canonical texts, the relationship of the term to its necessarily biased author becomes erased; thus, Aristotle's interior, psychological definition of rhetoric, defined as "an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion" (*On Rhetoric* 36), becomes an uncontestable term (Schiappa, *The Beginnings* 25; see Swearingen 98, 118). No longer an author, Aristotle becomes a neutral transcriber of an objective body of rhetorical facts and principles.

Schiappa's examination of *rhetorike* becomes more than an academic debate over etymological origins. He confronts the questions of how ideology and power help determine origins and "fix" meanings, the very same questions that Foucault raises in "The Discourse on Language": Who is forming the definition? How does the definition align the term in respects to other keywords or within other disciplines? Who or what does the definition exclude? What ideological work does it perform? Applying these questions to the inauguration of *rhetorike* in *Gorgias*, Schiappa argues that Plato limits the scope of the word and positions it as a weaker counterpart to philosophy (*The*

Beginnings 26-27). In other words, even though rhetoric thrives under the label Plato creates, it is stained with Plato's distrust of persuasion and the materiality of language (see Neel, *Plato* 4-6, 12; Swearingen 58-63).

Deploying a similar keyword methodology as exemplified by Williams and Schiappa, I believe that "aptitude," and all of the other similar and competing terms that cluster around this keyword (see page 14), must become more of a conscious, visible part of the vocabulary of rhetoric and composition. Partly, this re-emergence of aptitude corresponds to the increasing number of attacks against English studies for its failure to recognize the innate talents of students and its refusal to champion, for instance, universal criteria for good writing and, consequently, a natural canon of established authors. More importantly, I believe that aptitude needs to be reconsidered because of its impact upon the formation of rhetoric as a discipline: whereas I do not support the redeployment of aptitude, for example, as the basis for research studies uncovering a biological rationale for students' academic problems, I do hope to show how concepts of natural ability have been used in the construction of rhetorical theories.

Ideological Critique

In its broadest sense, ideological critique resembles a political analysis, the examination of the political implications of statements and actions – especially those that present themselves as free of agendas and biases. According to Berlin, the main objective of the critic or historian who deploys ideological critique is to locate how a theory of rhetoric privileges certain versions of "economic, social, and political arrangements" over alternative versions ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 477). However, what immediately complicates Berlin's examination is his contention that critics can assume a

position outside of ideology and provide alternative interpretations, versions, or solutions to rhetorical problems. At stake, I believe, are definitions of ideology itself, which Terry Eagleton reduces ultimately to two competing perspectives: first, a monolithic interpretation of ideology, in which power is distributed throughout societies, and identities are constructed by ideology; alternatively, a more traditional Marxist perspective, in which power is held by a dominant class or group, and ideology represents a distorted image of the world, one that serves the interests of ruling elites. In this second model of ideology, human beings can critique social injustices, challenge the limitations of the worldview held by subordinate groups, and struggle to transform their societies, but only insofar as they can escape the dominant ideology (5-8).[6]

Berlin accepts both perspectives. In "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," he argues that critics and historians are capable of revealing the political self-interests and implications of rhetorical theories and offering alternative theories or solutions. Yet, Berlin also maintains that these alternative theories are still saturated with ideology. For example, social-epistemic rhetoric, the alternative theory he privileges, is "self-consciously aware of its ideological stand" (478). Berlin's provisional solution, however, does not satisfy all rhetoricians. Victor Vitanza claims that Berlin's ideological posturing is disingenuous; it resorts to a "myth of emancipation," and thus provides another foundational truth, in which collective social action empowers groups to escape repressive ideologies ("Three Countertheses" 142-143).

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[6] Eagleton and LaCapra provide thorough definitions of the various models of ideology; see Sinfield for a critique of the ethical problems of Althusser's "entrapment model" (24); also, see Vitanza for a critique of "traditional" historiography ("'Notes'" 64-74).

For my purposes, ideological critique is an excellent procedure to interrogate how rhetoricians classify certain beliefs, explanations, or practices as natural, commonsensical, or universal – and thus attempt to preclude efforts to characterize them as specific political interpretations. It has dominated, in particular, the examination and historicizing of educational systems. For example, Foucault addresses the role of educational systems as a "political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriateness of discourse" (*Archaeology* 227). Theories of education as a system tainted with the agendas of political perspectives populate the work of Althusser, in which it appears as a formative ideological-state apparatus; Bourdieu, in terms of an institution that transmits an economy of cultural capital; and Giroux and Freire, who describe how power inscribes curricula, pedagogy, teacher-student relationships, and attitudes towards teaching and language.

One important demonstration of how ideological critique impacts the keywords of rhetorical scholarship is the body of work devoted to the analysis of "taste." As a key feature of late eighteenth-century belletristic rhetoric, taste (for example, see Hobbs's analysis of Condillac's use of taste [118-119]) shares many of the same qualities of aptitude. Blair, who popularized the term in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, categorizes taste as both a product of nature and of culture, a human universal and a skill of discrimination that can be perfected by training:

> [I]n the powers and pleasure of taste, there is more remarkable inequality among men than is usually found in point of common sense, reason, and judgement. [...] This inequality of taste among men is owing, without doubt, in part, to the different frame of their natures; to nicer organs, and

> finer internal powers, with which some are endowed beyond others. But if it be owing in part to nature, it is owing to education and culture still more. (17)

According to Thomas Miller, Blair's rhetoric is marked with a vacillation between the adoration of the unteachable, primitive originality of geniuses and the reverence for the propriety gained by exposure to rules of taste. Students who develop their ability to discriminate excellence can then better appreciate and evaluate the works of geniuses (239).

Rhetorical historians have provided several broad ideological implications for Blair's deployment of taste. First, by situating taste as both natural and cultural, Blair can account for why the appreciation of aesthetic beauty is a universal human trait and yet why real differences do exist between the tastes of a Longinus or Addison as compared with those of the "Hottentots." Importantly, Blair needs to refute the claims of cultural relativism, separating British culture from African signifiers of primitiveness (see Gates's summary of how the "Hottentots" were the commonplace exemplars of the lowest rung of the eighteenth-century "Great Chain of Being" [55]). Second, Miller's *The Formation of College English* maps out how Blair's theory of a disinterested, passive taste exploited the linguistic anxiety of Scottish students hoping to conform to the English center (228-232); this interpretation of taste, one that naturalizes a specific mode of criticism, reveals many important implications for the transformation of rhetoric from a discipline devoted to public discourse to one of detached literary criticism (14; see also Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 5). Third, Bourdieu, by defining taste itself as an ideologically active type of consumption (*Distinction* 2), indicates its insidious political implications. Bourdieu's

theory helps explain how taste constructs the aristocracy; for example, by classifying their judgments as "natural," aristocrats discredit the role of education, which can only provide individuals with a "second nature" (Cottom 16); moreover, the definition of a disinterested, natural taste restricts those who can possibly access it to aristocrats, the only individuals, after all, who are not troubled by economic and social concerns (Cottom 11).

Historiographical Problems

As I will be situating my keyword analysis and ideological critique of aptitude in the history of rhetoric, I will need to confront the major problems of "traditional" and patriarchal history writing that Michel Foucault and other post-structuralist historiographers have identified. In the three subsections below, I address the problems of revealing a history of rhetoric consisting solely of "great men," privileging written documents, and, finally, treating keywords as transparent signifiers.

Writing Women into the Rhetorical Canon. In male-dominated histories like M. L. Clarke's *Higher Education in the Ancient World*, individual male heroes of discourse (e.g., Socrates) emerge to formulate original ideas and change the course of rhetorical history. Only one woman, Sappho, whom Clarke mentions in a list of lyrical poets, appears in this history. Countering this erasure of women, feminist scholars like Andrea Lundsford, Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, Kathleen Welch, and Susan Jarratt have begun to create spaces for women in the rhetorical canon.[7] Feminist scholarship has also examined and countered past constructions of marginalized women like Sappho and

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[7] The erasure of women, of course, does not only occur in classical rhetorical history. Among others, Nan Johnson, Shirley Wilson Logan, and Susan Kates have made important contributions to reflect the important activity of women educators and rhetoricians in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Aspasia who have descended through competing discourses as dangerous whores or important philosophers and educators (Henry 33-34, 66). Their projects, as well as attempts to reconfigure the importance of the sophists (Jarratt; Poulakos), share many of the same ideological intentions and methodological concerns with this interrogation of how classical aptitude functions to exclude women and non-Athenians from rhetorical training.

Barbara Biesecker, however, questions the strength of these attempts to regender the canon, especially with individual women like Sappho, Aspasia, and Diotima. She attacks the logic of tracing the history of rhetoric back to individual, almost celebrity-like authorities; as a patriarchal logic that "celebrates the individual," it links these individuals, as proper names, to their "originating function" of particular texts (143). Without disrupting this logic itself, of placing individuals anterior to discourse, Biesecker concludes, the rhetorical historian will necessarily exclude women, a group whose rhetorical practices, excepting the elite appearances of women like Aspasia, have been largely collective.[8]

Unfortunately, the present study, because of its reliance upon authoritative and dominant accounts of rhetoric and education, does not disrupt the logic of centering itself upon the statements of celebrated individuals. I deploy these authorities as proper names attached to a body of claims, regarding the possibility of natural ability, its extent (i.e., the traits or practices that are determined by aptitude), its effect upon teaching, and its impact on attempts to classify rhetoric. I examine theses "originating" rhetoricians as

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[8] David Fredal's "Herm Choppers, the Adonia, and Rhetorical Action in Ancient Greece" is an excellent example of the attempt to rewrite the silent, collective rhetorical action of women.

ideological actors writing for specific audiences. Aristotle, therefore, when defending his classifications of "natural slavery," does not have to worry about the strength of his argument: his elite, slave-owning readers already accept – and expect – such claims (Neel, *Aristotle's Voice* 20-22). The writers of *The Bell Curve*, envisioning their audience as representing the top five percentile of intelligence, meanwhile, are not overly concerned with how well lower-scoring and darker-hued readers will take their arguments (121).

Selecting Sources. The problem above, the reliance upon single (often male) rhetoricians, connects to the problem of selecting sources. For historicizing classical rhetoric in particular, this problem impacts how we accept and cite the fragments or quotations of women or sophists within the more authoritative, hegemonic texts of, for example, Plato and Aristotle (Welch, "Writing Instruction" 4). Glenn asks whether the status of Sappho is different from Aspasia in the rhetorical canon because, for the former, primary documents remain (23); more provocatively, when she questions why we accept the individual presence of Socrates more than that of Aspasia, even though both appear only secondhand by way of Plato (8), she reveals the patriarchal assumptions that underlie what texts or voices we validate and take for granted.

Classical rhetoric presents additional methodological difficulties. Martin Bernal, for example, criticizes traditional accounts of classical history for only privileging written archives and archaeological objects and for not explaining how the exclusions of alternative sources like legends and place names affect their conclusions or reveal the expectations of their academic audiences (9). Welch discusses how classical scholars find it difficult to supplement their reliance on dominant, authored texts because of the lack of

marginal or alternative materials. Many resources that this study might benefit from, such as student files or teacher records, were neither archived nor preserved; and, even if they had been, the delicate material of these texts – oftentimes papyrus – would not have survived ("Writing Instruction" 3-4). In the historicizing of American rhetorical theory in the past two centuries, Varnum claims that many of these same problems still exist. The historicizing of writing programs, she insists, continues to rely on the pronouncements of textbooks and not upon the proliferation of specific documents that these programs produce.

The Transparency of Translation. "Transparency" presents another historiographical problem, one with important implications for ideological critique. Foucault criticizes scholars who attempt to erase the ideology of their efforts by neutralizing the effects of language. Extracting rhetorical treatises from, for example, first-century Rome or eighteenth-century Aberdeen and placing them, as decontextualized objects, into supposedly neutral research stances, presupposes that language acts as a convenient instrument objectively linking the consciousness of writers with that of readers (e.g., Berlin, *Rhetoric & Reality* 8-9).

An example of the transparency fallacy, one especially important for classical rhetoric and with consequences for keyword analysis, is the problem of translation. Welch criticizes the non-critical approach of traditional rhetorical historians to translating the keywords of primary classical texts, such as *areté* or *techné*, without any regard to their contexts, to their implicit assumptions, and without examining the connotations of the English substitutions (*Contemporary Reception* 15-21). "Virtue" and "art," the customary translations for *areté* or *techné*, are words loaded, especially for modern

readers, with gendered and disciplinary implications (17). Treating keywords as stable, denotative entities, the rhetorical historians Welch derides assume that languages present only the difficulty of finding simple one-for-one substitutions.

Chapter Summary

In Chapters 2 and 3, I examine the role of aptitude in classical Greek and Roman rhetorical theory. I argue that statements concerning natural ability can be placed into one of three categories, according to how strongly they claim to determine rhetorical success. The strongest position, advocated by Aristotle in his defense of natural slavery, proposes that differences in human nature reflect themselves in the stratification of society; natural gifts and innate capacities are responsible, therefore, for eminent speakers and leaders. A more general position, the necessary-but-not-sufficient theory of aptitude, stresses the importance of natural ability yet additionally provides a space for education: according to Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian, gifted students require training, practice, and experience if they are to become ideal orators. Finally, the third, sophistic position denies either the importance or existence of natural traits. Though few of the canonical authorities uphold this view, Plato, especially in his support of women's equality in *The Republic* and his recognition that social hierarchies must be corroborated with lies about human nature (i.e., the Myth of the Metals), foreshadows the possibility of egalitarian conceptions of aptitude and rhetorical theory.

Whereas the Greek and Roman writers I discuss emphasize ideal projects of educating incomparable orators and leaders, the rhetoricians of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as George Campbell, and those of American current-traditional rhetoric in the nineteenth century, including Adams Sherman Hill and John Genung,

describe the innate mechanisms that make language and rhetoric possible for all human beings. In Chapter 4, I indicate how these rhetoricians support a theory of human nature, yet not one that allows them to explain the differences of students in terms of innate ability. Of the current-traditional writers that I survey, only Genung defines various inventive aptitudes, which can manifest themselves as different styles or even genres of writing. I argue that in the twentieth century, as current-traditional rhetoric does not consider human differences, this need is fulfilled by nascent developments in experimental psychology, psychometrics, and scientific-management theory. Verbal intelligence arises out of standardized tests like the Scholastic Aptitude Test, a set of innate linguistic traits that depend on the same assumptions of communication and language learning held by current-traditional rhetoric.

The expressivist rhetoricians whom I discuss in Chapter 5 would abhor the effects of current-traditional rhetoric and verbal intelligence testing on the language of students. For Ann Berthoff, Ken Macrorie, and, Peter Elbow, language ceases being language once it is extracted from conversations (both spoken and written), yanked away from real language users, and parsed into distinct sets of linguistic skills. Language needs to be returned to students, a process only accomplished once teachers discover the innate linguistic origins from where their students are coming (e.g., Berthoff 48) or when students find their own authentic voices (Elbow, *Writing with Power* 304-309). Their view of an innate, natural language ability, one available to all human beings, hopes to reconnect students with their propensities for creating meaning and expressing themselves. Elbow articulates a nostalgia for a lost, original language – the magical

language of children and primitive people – which students need to embrace in order to discover their own authentic voice speaking through their revelatory, empowered prose.

Though I support Elbow's attempt to build an inclusive, democratic pedagogy and rhetorical theory upon a conception of a natural language aptitude, I am suspicious. Elbow's theory of authentic voice, I argue, produces troublesome binaries of, for instance, poetry/prose, presence/distance, magic/logic, and speaking/writing. These binaries rehearse the Platonic distaste of writing as an unnatural, possibly corrupting instrument. More problematically, instructors who advocate authentic voice, may exoticize the texts of marginalized students, rehearsing the discursive codes attached to "blackness" yet ignoring the dominant, though invisible codes of "whiteness" that mark standard academic prose, the language that Elbow disavows.

In the concluding chapter, I explore the conflict between rhetoricians who align themselves with social construction theory and proponents of general standards or human universals, who either take advantage of models of "genius" or human nature (e.g., Harold Bloom and Lynn Cheney), language-specific cognitive structures (e.g., Chomsky and Pinker), or, most nefariously, theories of racial innateness (e.g., Herrnstein, Murray, and Philippe Rushton). Importantly, both sides of this debate claim their own version of "truth telling." For cultural humanists like Lynn Cheney or Allan Bloom, the social construction that (supposedly) dominates English departments fragments the activities of producing and critiquing texts and hinders the practices of teachers; in this view, teachers and students are told to forget the "truths" found in canonical texts and, instead, are forced constantly to subject authors and their texts to political critiques – oftentimes those shaped by the ideological self-interests of specific groups. Social rhetoricians like

Berlin, Ohmann, or Brandt, on the other hand, conclude that such politically motivated "lies" are impossible to prevent. Resisting the "truths" of an essential human nature or universal criteria for evaluating texts, social rhetoricians acknowledge that the positions they privilege are provisional ideological interpretations.

Chapter II

Formations of Classical Aptitude

This chapter explores the definitions, putative origins, and possible political implications of classical conceptions of aptitude and their complex relationships with rhetorical theory. Paradoxically, I will begin my investigation where most classical historiographers and theorists end, with the powerful voices of Cicero and Quintilian, the two major Roman rhetoricians whose monumental projects, *De Oratore* and *Institutio Oratoria*, respectively, play important roles in the formation of rhetorical studies in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (Atwill 38-40; Kennedy, *Art of Rhetoric* 111; *Classical Rhetoric* 118; Murphy 71). My description of how aptitude operates in the rhetorical and educational theories of Cicero and Quintilian is analytic in intent, as I hope to deduce the assumptions, commonplace arguments, and tropes that undergird their conception of aptitude (see Appendix 1 for a summary of the aptitude commonplaces).

It is not my intent, though, to claim that Cicero and Quintilian are convenient compendiums of previous, and by then frozen and foundational Greek fourth-century debates of how to define rhetoric, how nature and education interact to develop orators, or what natural traits ideal speakers require. Cicero and Quintilian do not merely close a historical period of privileged texts and canonical rhetoricians and philosophers, often characterized as a monolithic "classical rhetoric" that ignores or homogenizes a tremendous variety of theoretical stances, definitions of rhetoric and its purposes, and the silenced, marginalized voices of active rhetorical educators like Sappho and Aspasia (Glenn 1-3; Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 28-30). These Roman rhetoricians problematize the intersection of aptitude and rhetoric, emphasizing the

importance of education and carefully listing the methods, techniques, and issues that compose it. Aptitude becomes especially important in their attempt to develop ideal, and, in Quintilian's case, ethical rhetors.

In this chapter, after discussing how Cicero and Quintilian formulate the most pervasive definition of aptitude, I present a taxonomy in which to group the competing definitions of how natural ability relates to rhetorical theory. This taxonomy, despite its limitations, helps to situate the Greek and Roman rhetoricians and educational theorists who constitute classical rhetoric. Finally, I explore the most conservative – and possibly nefarious – definition of natural ability, which manifests itself in the aristocratic pedagogy of pre-classical Athens. I argue that a keyword associated with this conservative pedagogy, *areté*, operates similar to aptitude to stabilize and perpetuate social hierarchies and to distinguish warriors and other male elites.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the analysis of aptitude, as an ideological construct deployed to exclude subordinate groups from rhetorical training, has important implications for women. This project profits from a great deal of feminist scholarship that has recovered and retheorized important rhetoricians and educators like Sappho, Aspasia, and Diotima (Glenn; Henry; Pomeroy, *Goddesses*); has revealed the political and material reasons why women have been excluded from the rhetorical canon (Welch, *Electric Rhetoric* 83-84); and, sometimes challenging the two activities above, has attempted to reconfigure rhetorical historiography, distancing it from the patriarchal fixation upon individual (male) rhetoricians, universalizing categories, and distinct origins (Biesecker; Gale 366). This analysis of aptitude reveals how rhetorical theory can be deployed to prevent women and a multitude of marginalized groups from gaining

access to literacy training. It can also be used, after the fact, to silence, trivialize, or mock figures like Aspasia – a woman and a foreigner – who achieved rhetorical power despite the "natural" limitations that had been inscribed upon her.

Cicero & Quintilian: The Roman Codification of Natural Ability

In *De Inventione*, an incomplete *techné* often presumed to be a compilation of lecture notes, Cicero, early on in his career, accounts for the progress of human beings in a myth depicting their natural state, a time "when men wandered at large in the fields like animals and lived on wild fare; they did nothing by the guidance of reason, but relied chiefly on physical strength" (5). In this period, there was no respect for the law and no regard for the legitimization of marriages and children; people neglected both their religious and social duties. Then, Cicero reports, taking the role of the arch-traditional mythographer, an originating, creative, and rational man appears: "At this juncture a man – great and wise I am sure – became aware of the power latent in man [i.e., eloquence] and the wide field offered by his mind for great achievements if one could develop this power and improve it by instruction" (5). There is no explanation of from where this ideal man arises or what enabled him to fulfill this leadership function. Cicero, deploying a commonplace of aptitude and education, substitutes cognitive ability for the physical strength of people. The "wild savages" become "kind and gentle folk" (7).

Cicero's myth does not always remain a narrative of progress. He describes a corruption, a "depraved imitation of virtue" (9), which brought people a step backwards to their original state and embroiled them in petty disputes. This "corruption" of progress was the result of individuals deploying a superficial, false eloquence to win legal victories over "great men" who were concentrating upon more important issues of

leadership. The reasons why Cicero presents this rhetoric-centered myth, especially at the beginning of what was meant to be a complete discussion of the rhetorical canon, become clear: to account for the low status of rhetoric and the reasons why it had been abandoned by scholars, who preferred less agonistic disciplines (11). I cite this myth to indicate the assumptions that influenced conceptualizations of aptitude and that had survived into the Roman Republic: 1) The original state of nature was dangerous, savage, and dependent upon physical strength, and thus the natural state of the individual may be equally as "dangerous"; 2) All people (i.e., all male, upper-class Romans) have a latent capacity for improvement; 3) Education serves a vital role for the development of individuals; 4) Rhetoric can unite people and form the basis of a state's laws, but an amoral, eristic rhetoric can infect elites and corrupt societies; and 5) Rhetoric should focus upon selecting and developing ideal orators and political leaders. The last assumption suggests that the rhetorics of Cicero and Quintilian intend to recover the ideal leader and speaker who arose in this myth of progress (see Atwill's discussion of how Cicero and Quintilian do not possess the same conception of the ideal orator [37-38]).

The twelve books of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* represent a similar codification and systematization of prevalent attitudes, beliefs, and practices of rhetoric, aptitude, and education, this time in the Roman Empire, written approximately 200 years after Cicero's *De Oratore* and *De Inventione* (like the early work of Cicero, the first two books and a fragment of the tenth of *Institutio Oratoria* were widely available in the middle ages [Murphy 71]). At the outset of his project, Quintilian targets his audience specifically: elite Roman fathers concerned about the education and future of their sons. These anxious fathers, Quintilian implies, perhaps believed that their sons were unable to

profit from instruction and, hence, incapable of acquiring rhetorical mastery, a power which would lead them to political careers. As James Murphy reminds us, the Roman society depicted in the *Institutio Oratoria* was one dependent upon "becom[ing] rhetorical," as the ability to reason, speak, and write would mark the individual's life and status (68).

Quintilian mollifies the fears of his audience by appealing to a description of aptitude as general and widely available to almost all individuals (like Cicero, however, Quintilian restricts the universality of his educational project to a relatively small group of male, elite Romans). Quintilian announces to the concerned fathers that

> there is absolutely no foundation for the complaint that but few men have the power to take in the knowledge that is imparted to them, and that the majority are so slow of understanding that education is a waste of time and labour. On the contrary you will find that most are quick to reason and ready to learn. Reasoning comes as naturally to man as flying to birds, speed to horses and ferocity to beasts of prey: our minds are endowed by nature with such activity and sagacity that the soul is believed to proceed from heaven. Those who are dull and unteachable are as abnormal as prodigious births and monstrosities, and are but few in number. (20-21)

I have quoted this passage at length because it includes, like Cicero's myth of progress, many of the assumptions regarding aptitude that have become – by his time (and ours) – commonsensical. Quintilian emphasizes a "democratic" conception of aptitude. Though "there will be a corresponding variation in actual accomplishment" (21), all individuals benefit from some form of training. Aptitude, defined here as a capability for reasoning

and a capacity for learning, is an almost divine quality that "naturally" characterizes humans and fulfills their essential characters.[9] Education complements and completes natural ability, a belief that is tantamount to a theory of aptitude: aptitude is a necessary, yet not sufficient element in the development of rhetorical power. This necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine, however, by no means diminishes the importance of nature. Quintilian claims that "if we make an absolute divorce between the two [nature and education], nature will still be able to accomplish much without the aid of education, while the latter is valueless without the aid of nature" (349). Yet, for the development of an ideal, perfect orator – the aim of Quintilian and the Cicero of *De Oratore* – the blend of aptitude and education is necessary. This construction of the relationship of natural ability with rhetorical training, with its political consequences, becomes the foremost trope of aptitude, one that, in Roman rhetoric, defines what rhetoric is, tacitly underwrites rules of exclusion of who can become an ideal orator, and circumscribes how discussions of language learning are to be formulated.

Quintilian and Cicero revisit rhetorical and educational issues that were contested in fifth- and fourth-century Athens. These arguments, which include, for example, the relative importance of natural ability versus *techné*, the classification of rhetoric, the importance of models, and the role of morality and learning, assist in the formation of the following questions that characterize the story of aptitude:

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[9] Quintilian and Cicero rely upon the general passive/active dichotomy. For example, Quintilian writes, "Nature is the raw material for education; the one forms, the other is formed" (349). Aptitude is passive, it must be acted upon; education, meanwhile, is the active, forming force. Interestingly, even though aptitude is the privileged term, it relates to the devalued "passive." According to Aristotle's gendered logic, aptitude would be conceived as a static, feminine object, acted upon by the moving, masculine force of education (see Cheryl Glenn's critique of *Generation of Animals* [49-50]).

- Who can speak? (In other words, who – or what group of individuals – is guaranteed rhetorical power? Who benefits from specific definitions of aptitude?)[10]
- What is the source of aptitude and what kind of traits – whether physical, mental, or spiritual – does natural ability consist of?
- Given a specific definition of aptitude, how can rhetoric be defined?
- What is the relationship of nature and rhetoric?

Though I will be unable to exhaust these four questions in my discussion of Quintilian and Cicero, I do want to provide a sketch of how they interrelate rhetoric and aptitude.

Who Can Become the Ideal Orator?

By privileging the status of rhetoric and envisioning the development of "perfect orators," Quintilian and Cicero emphasize the importance of natural ability to fulfill their idealistic projects. They do differ, though, in terms of this idealism.[11] Cicero's perfect orator may never be realized. In Book I of *De Oratore*, Cicero proclaims the difficulty of developing rhetorical power in the guise of a paradox: oratory, an activity that deploys "universal reason" and focuses upon an "ordinary kind of language," should be accessible to a multitude of people (9); yet, there has been an absence of great orators, in Rome as well as previously in Athens. According to Cicero, though Roman students embrace the discipline with enthusiasm, they all fail once they confront the responsibilities and types

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[10] Deploying Foucault's historiographical method from "Discourse on Language," Glenn asks similar questions for her interrogation of how rhetorical history has silenced women (1-2).

[11] Atwill contends that Quintilian's version of the ethical speaker (*vir bonus*) is not simply a repetition of Cicero's "consummate orator"; most importantly, Cicero's ideal may not be a general model, an end in itself (37-38).

of knowledge necessary to become an ideal orator. Rhetoric, for Cicero, is the most difficult of disciplines; it encompasses and requires the talents of all the other areas of study:

> To the acquirement of other arts it is sufficient for a person to resemble a man, and to be able to comprehend in his mind, and retain in his memory, what is instilled, or, if he is very dull, inculcated into him; no volubility of tongue is requisite, no quickness of utterance; none of those things which we can not form for ourselves, aspect, countenance, look, voice. But in an orator, the acuteness of the logicians, the wisdom of the philosophers, the language almost of poetry, the memory of lawyers, the voice of tragedians, the gesture almost of the best actors, is required. (37)

In addition, orators must possess a knowledge of many topics, be able to deploy emotions, remember models, recite laws, and display all the attributes of a "well-bred man"; they must show grace and appropriate the expressions and gestures of their class.

Cicero's delineation of the traits of the ideal orator includes "gifts of nature," the individual's predetermined ability to invent, remember, explain, and adorn as well as the physical qualities "born with the man himself": tongue, tone, strength, and countenance (34). This conception of aptitude, however, does not merely focus on these cognitive, physical, and class-based features. Cicero's orator must undoubtedly be a man, one endowed with a power that separates him from the rest of the Roman public: "For what is so admirable as that, out of an infinite multitude of men, there should arise a single individual who can alone, or with only a few others, exert effectually that power which nature has granted to all" (13). However, Cicero reiterates his skepticism, contending

that speakers cannot rely on natural ability alone. Crassus, the main character in *De Oratore*, represents the closest manifestation of this ideal orator. Unfortunately, as he modestly admits, though he does possess the natural "capacity" for persuasion, he lacks the learning, leisure, and diligence to fulfill his potential (26).

Quintilian is more confident. Addressing his audience of anxious fathers, he reassures them that the ideal speaker is a possibility: "The perfect orator is not contrary to the laws of nature, and it is cowardly to despair of anything that is within the bounds of possibility" (161). The *Institutio Oratoria*, therefore, is a testament of his optimism and consists of a detailed description of successful students and the necessary traits for rhetorical success. Aptitude remains paramount. Nature forms active and penetrating minds, endowing students with the ability to reason and receive knowledge, usually in the form of models of discourse and rules of style and arrangement. Also, the "natural aids" of a good voice, strong lungs, a healthy constitution, and physical endurance are prerequisites for the would-be orator. "Grace," another of the natural aids, is an attribute with class-based connotations, signifying the posture and bodily gestures that compose the body (19).[12]

As children enter school, they bring with them natural abilities that teachers must be ready to identify and maximize. Quintilian expands upon his description of the "active mind," specifying that it must consist of a good memory, which allows students to apprehend and retain impressions, as well as powerful mimetic properties, which enable

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[12] Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is important here, as grace represents one of the codes for the presentation of the elite body. Bourdieu, of course, would reject Quintilian's claims that there is a natural, unlearnable quality to these codes. Habitus, the internalization of class-specific dispositions, attitudes, and interests, simply erases its ideological formation (*Distinction* 170).

them to imitate and repeat (55). Though a personality trait like ambition is important in developing the student's ability, Quintilian cautions teachers to be wary of students whose natural propensities are overly precocious. Children must be passive and accept their subordinate relationship to the teacher: "Precocious intellects rarely produce sound fruit." (55). Quintilian's qualification is typical of conservative pedagogues: he desires "active minds," yet not ones that may contest the issues of power within the classroom.

The moral development of children, whose natural inclinations may be towards good or bad (41), must be cautiously guarded. Quintilian first urges his audience to choose for their sons the best nurse[13] possible, one who speaks "correctly" and who possesses a good character. As the nurse will spend the most time with the child, Quintilian bases the importance of her role on two assumptions, that initial perceptions are the most permanent and that bad habits are more durable than good ones. Concerning the latter, Quintilian writes, "While what is good deteriorates, you will never turn vice into virtue" (21-23). Similarly, Quintilian's exhortations regarding the educational level of the parents (23), the selection of the proper slave tutor (*paedagogus)* and teacher (41-43), the designation of the instructional materials (37), the issue of public versus private schooling (39), and the need for more parent-initiated discipline (43) focus his moral concerns and possibly intimate his distrust of the natural state of these future orators. Habit, especially the bad habits cultivated by the child's perceptions of immoral speech and behavior of caregivers – Quintilian identifies, for instance, vain tutors who do not

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[13] Quintilian's concerns about the early development of the child are one of the few areas where he emphasizes the importance of women and shows that they did have roles to play in education and oratory. For example, he provides notable examples of women who were able to enhance the education of their sons because of their own mastery of rhetoric (23).

understand their social place (23-25) and the bawdy dinner parties of the parents (43) – overpower any natural inclination towards morality and can permanently corrupt the child, often in the form of what Quintilian calls "second nature" (43). The education of the orator, who must by Quintilian's definition of rhetoric be a moral person, becomes a constant vigilance over the child's experiences, speech, and actions. Teachers and tutors must diligently watch over what natural capacity is unable to protect.

Relating Rhetoric to Nature

Attempts to define rhetoric confront the commonplace questions, "Is rhetoric an "art" (*arte/techné*)?" or, similarly, "Can eloquence be taught?" (In Chapter 3, I will examine Plato's contention that *areté* cannot be taught.) According to Book I of Cicero's *De Oratore* and a lengthy section in Book II of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, the answers to these questions place rhetoric either into a circumscribed discipline of textbooks, canons, rules, and principles (the *arte* of the Roman rhetoricians or the *techné* of the Greek writers) or into a more fluid category of gifted individuals who have a "knack"[14] for oratory that they develop through experience (Quintilian 327). Rhetoric, in other words, can be constructed as a disciplinary object or a natural practice.[15] Cicero and Quintilian, who both herald the natural qualities of ideal orators and establish rhetorical and instructional theories, attempt to synthesize these two possibilities.

A great deal is at stake in how Cicero and Quintilian define rhetoric, and, moreover, how they draw the boundaries between rhetoric and nature. Atwill reminds us

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[14] I use "knack" (in Greek, *empeiria*) consciously. It appears as the classifying term for rhetoric in W. C. Helmbold's translation of *Gorgias* (462C).

[15] In Chapter 3, I revisit these attempts to define rhetoric by examining Protagoras', Plato's, and Isocrates' deployment of the *nomos* (human-scripted conventions) and *physis* (universal laws) duality.

that "[v]arious senses of 'nature' and 'the natural' have been used to authorize specific models of virtue, power, and distribution; and *techné* has frequently served as the dividing line, separating these models of 'nature' from human culture" (83). This analysis of aptitude, indeed, bases itself on the examination of what rhetorical features or qualities have been categorized as "natural" or as "conventional," generating, in the process, questions about the interrelationships of disciplinary status, language, human nature, and power. For example, if rhetoric is defined as a "knack," how does its status change, especially in terms of its relationship with philosophy? How do these competing classifications impact who can gain access to rhetorical power? Or, how do these different views of rhetoric differ in the types of traits rhetoricians deem necessary for the development of ideal orators?

Thus, in spite of the long lists of pedagogical methods, techniques for developing memory and delivery, and descriptions of the rhetorical canon (see Murphy for a description of Quintilian's pedagogy [46-52]), the extensive rhetorics championed by Cicero and Quintilian necessitate the ethos generated by appeals to nature. In *De Oratore*, Crassus, the mouthpiece for the rhetorical system that Cicero champions, articulates an Isocratic *paideia* that spans all disciplines. Emphasizing the requisite knowledge of orators, Crassus disrupts the content/form binary – and thus diminishes the disciplinary power of philosophy. Ideal speakers require knowledge of rhetorical method and precepts, ethical philosophy, and subject-specific issues (21-23); moreover, Crassus contends that this knowledge is "nothing" without the performance of orators (20), disputing rhetoric's customary role as an ornamental vehicle for philosophical truth.

Cicero presents an alternative to Crassus' *paideia*, an Aristotelian rhetoric restricted to the forums of the court, assembly, and ceremony, yet Crassus' interlocutors, intimating their reverence for the "incomparable orator," acknowledge the weakness of their position. Perhaps this truncated, formulaic rhetoric serves only the purpose of fulfilling the aims of mediocre students, those like the unfortunate "Q. Varius," who, despite his meager natural gifts, "has obtained his great popularity by the cultivation of such faculties as he has" (35).

The rhetorical projects of Cicero and Quintilian envision only orators who possess an ethos represented by natural ability – and, by extension, their adherence to sex- and class-specific codes of language and conduct. According to Atwill, the pervasive, Isocratic systems of *paideia* that Cicero and Quintilian adopt saturate students in a "very complex kind of mimesis" (59); students learn not only rhetorical rules, but also rhetorical *kairos*, that is, a thorough understanding of when to speak, a way of knowing determined only by the complete understanding of contexts and audiences (57-58). Importantly, this powerful form of instruction produces its own type of nature, what Atwill presents as a paradox: orators are only effective insofar as they make their performances appear effortless, or *arte*-less; the *arte* is only successful insofar as it conceals itself. Students in the context of Cicero and Quintilian's instruction, Atwill claims, do not simply memorize rules, they perform and become them. Indeed, audiences only become aware that the instruction has failed at the moment the *arte* reveals the artificiality of its rules (59).

Cicero and Quintilian's necessary-but-not-sufficient theory of aptitude and their strong avowals of rhetoric as a discipline mark the arbitrary end, in terms of this project, of classical rhetoric, a fervent period for the development of rhetorical theory and practice, yet nonetheless a construction with its own politics, especially in the criteria for selecting texts and rhetors for the classical canon. Possibly more important than fixing endings is the determination of origins. There is more at stake. When does the period of classical rhetoric commence? From where does it arise? How do the origins affect the development of rhetoric as a discipline? More specifically, if historians reconfigure rhetoric as commencing with Sappho's school or reconceive Aspasia as the teacher of Socrates, how will these novel origins transform the gendering of rhetorical history? These questions and issues inform my provisional attempt to determine the origins of aptitude's location within rhetoric.

The Methodology of Origins

More so than the origins themselves, which remain arbitrary and undecided, the methodology of finding the origins of a discipline, construct, or keyword continues as a contentious and often silenced process. Origins are meant to be salient and indisputable markers: for rhetoric, the emergence of Cicero's "Great Man," an inaugurating text (e.g., the *Iliad*, or the lost *techné* of Corax and Tisias), the emergence of a historical period (e.g., the rise of Solon and democratic Athens), a technological revolution (e.g., the Greek alphabet), or the term itself (e.g., *rhetorike* in Plato's *Gorgias*). Clarke, in *Higher Education in the Ancient World*, hopes for these obvious origins, declaring the starting point of his investigation of higher education as the fourth century; he ignores his

methodology and fails to acknowledge the assumptions and exclusions that went into his selection. The projects of classical historians like Werner Jaeger, F. A. G. Beck, and H. I. Marrou, similarly, all center themselves unquestioningly around classical Greece as a master term for western culture, a signifier of rhetoric, learning, and democracy. Again, their origins are obvious and unexamined – purged of the "methodology" of how they chose Greece as the locus of their investigations and cleansed of the political ramifications of the way they write histories.

Even though my interrogation of rhetorical aptitude remains firmly within the chronological boundaries of the received history of western rhetoric, [16] I nonetheless hope my project profits from the interruptions to the "traditional" paradigm offered, for example, by Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* or the work of historians of rhetoric like Jan Swearingen. They have challenged the portrayal of ancient Greece and Rome as a collection of indisputable, objective facts linked to our current period by a linear, unfettered line of 2500 years of history. They dispute Greece's place as the center – one basically wealthy, white, male, and European – of the culture, academic disciplines, law,

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[16] Attempts to relocate the origins of theories of aptitude and nature could begin by examining the myths and writings of civilizations, like Egypt, ancient Israel, Mesopotamia, Assyria, and China, all except the latter possessing scripts that predate the Greek alphabet. The abundant myths of the miraculous births of political and religious leaders are one source of investigation. Enkidu, for example, a hero in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which preceded the Homeric poems by at least 1,500 years, represents an example of a natural man, an "innocent of mankind," (63). Created from clay by a female god, he lived with wild animals until he was "civilized" by an urban prostitute – and henceforth was thrust out of his natural and innocent state. Chinese philosophical writings in the fifth century (BCE), many of which included principles concerning language, cultural, and moral teaching, may also be a fruitful source. The doctrine of the ascetic and pacifist Mo Tzu (circa 479-438 BCE), for instance, demanded a strict obedience to the natural law mandated by the "Will of Heaven" (Chan 217-218). Another example from this period is from the canonical *Analects*, the sayings of Confucius. In one passage, Confucius lists different types of students: "Those who are born with knowledge are the highest type of people. Those who learn through study are the next. Those who learn through hard work are still the next. Those who work hard and still do not learn are really the lowest type" (Chan 45). This privileging of natural knowledge appears as well in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, where knowledge cultivates leadership "virtues"; in this case, Confucius is cited as declaring that the method towards knowledge was unimportant, as the final results would be the same

and politics of the West, if not the world. The received, traditional account of "ancient Greece" or "classical rhetoric" erases its own historical and political traces, the facts regarding its own constructed-ness, that there may exist possibly competing paradigms of what represents classical Greece. Bernal attempts to counteract this erasure by indicating how relatively recent (i.e., the nineteenth century) this traditional paradigm was constructed; also, he provides a motive: by purifying the image of Greece from the possible dangerous taints of Egypt and other non-European influences, nineteenth-century classicists and philologists could provide a convenient and comfortable foundation – the origin – for the western academy.

These sophistic counter-histories[17] impact my project by injecting a self-consciousness regarding its methodology, that is, how I select texts, how I read them, and how I draw conclusions. Oftentimes, this self-consciousness leads to apologies, especially concerning the limitations of the study (e.g., the problems of its scope or the lack of viable research materials), the inconclusiveness of my claims, and problematic decisions based upon methodological convenience. Yet, there is also another form of self-conscious apology: the acknowledgement that my project of aptitude will, in many respects, end as a "failure." Though I will categorize theoretical formations of aptitude and hint at their political motives and consequences, I will be unable to provide a general conclusion, the final, capturing enthymeme; indeed, as I hinted in Chapter 1, by the end

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(Chan 105).

[17] As I have already explored in Chapter I, these "histories" represent a large body of work that crosses several different disciplines, from the philosophical critiques of Lyotard, Foucault, and Rorty, to the rhetorical historiographies of Berlin, Vitanza, and North, and to the feminist projects of Ede, Lunsford, Glenn, Jarratt, Welch, and Biesecker.

of this project I will still be unable to assert whether aptitude does or does not exist. I can only apologize, answering that the question itself lies within an ideology.

Why Bother with Classical Rhetoric?

As I addressed in Chapter 1, Knoblauch and Brannon's *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing* calls for an abandonment of classical rhetoric, at least in how we apply its theories to contemporary writing pedagogy. According to Knoblauch and Brannon, classical rhetoric represents an object of decay consisting of an outdated canon and epistemology, overly rigid taxonomies and genres (26, 29), and stale precedents for mainly conservative theories of writing, such as current-traditional rhetoric. As others have already challenged Knoblauch and Brannon's claims (Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 44-45), I will not respond to specific arguments of classical rhetoric's supposed decay or superfluousness, but I will defend my decision to commence my analysis of aptitude in the Graeco-Roman center, especially a more traditional, constructed center that is undoubtedly white, European, masculine, male, and elitist.

One of the main reasons for focusing upon fifth- and fourth-century Athens is that it is populated with many authoritative voices, canonical proper names, and privileged texts that leave many, often contradictory, traces of the terms that fall within the scope of "aptitude." These classical writers emphasize the importance of aptitude (i.e., *physis* and its cognates) and examine how it fits into their rhetorical, educational, and, oftentimes, political theories. According to Atwill, for example, one of the main debates of Cicero's *De Oratore* is to decide to which degree natural talent, *techné*, imitation, and practice should be emphasized (36). Many scholars, those who agree with Knoblauch and Brannon that we should separate ourselves from classical rhetoric, perhaps would

contend that canonical authorities like Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle talked *too* much, especially about how certain groups – the laboring class, *barbars*, and slaves, respectively – lacked the natural ability to rationalize, learn, and speak. My project cannot ignore these authorities. It relies upon these conversations to demonstrate how aptitude includes and excludes human beings from rhetorical training and power.

Another reason *not* to ignore classical rhetoric is that, as a construction, it provides an excellent, if not complicated, example of the problems scholars face when attempting to deal with a historical construct as a de-politicized object. Yun Lee Too, for instance, claims that Marrou's canonical history of classical education needs to be rewritten, for it holds the assumption that education systems are anterior to, not influenced by, political issues of power. According to Too, Marrou treats education as an innocent "activity confined to a particular time of life – childhood and youth – and to a particular circumstance, the home (at Rome) and/or the classroom. It is an activity distinct from the concerns of adulthood, of politics, and power" (10).[18] Profiting from the work of theorists like Althusser, Foucault, and Giroux, I hope that my project represents a step towards rewriting Marrou, as it recognizes education as an institution occurring, not before, but because of political power. Again, this claim would not have come to a surprise to the canonical authorities like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, who unabashedly link rhetoric to political power and educational systems to the ideals of a good society.

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[18] Though, perhaps the claim that Marrou treats education as apolitical is an overstatement. In his discussion of the type of educational "revolution" that the sophists effected, Marrou claims that it was "technical rather than a political origin" (47-48). Marrou's main point here is that the sophists still had a largely aristocratic audience of students and were not interested in questioning the status of the elite. Still, the fact that he was able to consider – and then reject – the political role of the sophists indicates that the

Definitions of Aptitude

As an attempt to provide structure to this investigation, I will describe three categories of aptitude, a heuristic which will hopefully help in 1) defining different formations of natural ability, 2) situating the rhetorical authorities that I will later explore, and 3) indicating the links between power and definitions of aptitude. I have constructed these categories on the basis of the determining strength of nature, upon, for example, the ability of a conception of natural ability to stabilize social structures, validate the superior qualities of elites, and exclude undesirable groups. This "strength" of aptitude, I argue, correlates with the political, economic, and cultural power of the groups or authorities involved in the formation of rhetorical and educational theory; in general, whereas elite groups prefer strong, determining versions of aptitude that help perpetuate conservative social structures, groups possessing less power and control propose weaker, more general versions of aptitude and consequently promote formal education institutions that assume more of an equal distribution of physical, intellectual, and moral capacities. Obviously, this generalization suffers from a mechanistic, over-reductive ascription of agency to these ancient political elites, as if they acted outside of, and not within, the formulation of natural ability and how it interrelated with education. Moreover, I must emphasize that the taxonomy below is only a provisional construction; though it may assist to situate specific authorities, it certainly does not "capture" them. The slippery Plato, for example, and his shadowy protagonist, Socrates, disrupt the well-delineated boundaries of the taxonomy and contradict my assertion that definitions of natural ability reflect the motives of social classes.

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political was not too far away from Marrou's focus.

Hereditary and Divine Aptitude. This strongest version of aptitude requires a theological or *physis*-driven apparatus to support its main contentions: group-specific qualities are passed from one generation to the next with little variability, and these differentiating qualities, those sanctioned, for example, by a divine presence, determine the rigid hierarchies of who can gain access to rhetorical power. Homeric conceptions of divine, natural ability, as exemplified in the character of Achilles, the son of a king and goddess, exemplify this strong definition. It is a particularly aristocratic conception, one that emphasizes the importance of the land, originating, chthonic ancestor heroes, and qualities of nobility (e.g., *areté*) that demarcate the martial and leadership qualities of elites. Interestingly, the hyper-empiricist Francis Galton revisits this definition in what became the hereditary-intelligence paradigm of psychological testing in the late nineteenth century: inspired by Galton, early empirical psychologists substituted conceptions of divine aptitude for a panoply of physiological and mental variables that attempted to show how intellectual and moral traits are hereditary, and hence, class-based.

This position, at least in its formulations in pre-classical Greece, privileges a conservative system of education, what Jaeger and Marrou classify as traditional, aristocratic *paideia*. Children, this position asserts, do not learn within formal institutions or because of well-prescribed rules and principles; they learn "naturally" – that is, their natural capacities are revealed usually by an older, elite mentor who acts as a model and habituates the child in terms of the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual expectations of the aristocracy.

General Aptitude. This large category includes the pervasive, commonsensical necessary-but-not-sufficient theory of aptitude. Proponents of general aptitude, such as Cicero and Quintilian, acknowledge the importance of natural ability in developing the rhetorical abilities of students, yet dispute the direct hereditary transmission of qualities and abilities from one generation to the next. Thus, though they still retain an exclusionary role for aptitude (e.g., Isocrates excludes *barbars* and Aristotle bars slaves and women), their emphasis on formal education and rhetoric as a valid discipline makes natural ability a less rigidly hierarchical, more egalitarian theoretical apparatus. Weaker accounts of general aptitude will even maintain that students are randomly endowed with talent and special capacities (though, oftentimes, the pool of possible students has already been restricted to wealthy males); or, they will suspiciously question nature itself and maintain that education must control and correct it.

Weak Aptitude. Supporters of this perspective counter the class-based, exclusionary assumptions of the stronger versions of aptitude, claiming that natural ability represents a social construction with an obvious ideological agenda or insisting that if some forms of natural ability do exist, their effects are largely unimportant. Education, environment, class, and other constructs like motivation emerge as important keywords that focus upon how social, cultural, and technological factors differentiate the performances of students. Though the meritocratic and egalitarian assumptions of this position are more common in the rhetorics of the nineteenth and twentieth century, I will argue that precedents do exist, especially in the stances of Protagoras and Plato, for weak aptitude in classical rhetoric. Obviously, this current project bases itself exclusively in

the weak aptitude position, especially as I attempt to reveal the motives and effects of what makes up the narrative of natural ability.

The Aristocratic Formation of Aptitude

Despite the claims of Clarke, who dated the origins of classical education in the fourth century, and Cole and Schiappa, who draw similar conclusions, yet for more methodologically compelling reasons, histories of classical education commonly begin with the Homeric hero, citing myths of Achilles' upbringing, his relationship with Phoenix in the *Iliad*, as well as the training of Telemachus in the *Odyssey* (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 5-11; Marrou 3-13; Jaeger 13-20, 44-48). Kennedy, Marrou, and Jaeger possess their own agendas for marking the origins of education at the time of the codification of the Homeric epics. Kennedy hopes to show how the epics held precedents for the technical rhetoric of the fifth and fourth centuries. The latter two are more interested in providing a theory of progress: Marrou's narrative of education traces the shift from an aristocratic to a more democratic institution; Jaeger, on the other hand, lapses into an enthusiastic philhellenism in order to tell the story of ancient Greece, as this description of the contribution of Solon indicates: "Although the whole Athenian spirit was predestined, by the strange harmony of its spiritual powers, to some great accomplishment, the early appearance of a creative personality [Solon] to direct these powers helped to mould its future history" (135). Utilizing theological terminology, such as "spirit" and "predestined," Jaeger attributes a heroic, mythical status to an Athenian collectivity of people and their culture. His description of Solon, moreover, resembles the young Cicero's rhetorical hero who unites and tames an uncivilized people.

Aptitude in the aristocratic period, which I will roughly date from the advent of the Greek alphabet in the eighth century[19] to the decay of political power of the aristocracy in the sixth century, is a construction of stories of divine births, a vocabulary of social distinctions, an emphasis upon a "natural" education, and *areté*, a complex keyword that functions like natural ability to rationalize differences in social status. The definition of aptitude that emerges in this period, and that persists throughout the classical period (Marrou 95), represents the strongest version of aptitude, especially in its ability to limit natural capacity and talent to an elite group of the sons of aristocratic landowners.[20] Aristocratic aptitude is partly theological, for it is supported by an adherence to *thesmoi*, external laws created by the gods[21] (Jarratt 41), as well as myths of divine births. The religious institution, therefore, compels everyone to participate in the operation of *areté*, irregardless of how the social benefits of natural ability were distributed.

Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad*, represents an important didactic symbol of aptitude and aristocratic education. His divine and noble birth helped to establish his authority, his fighting ability, and, importantly, his ability to speak, persuade, and make

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[19] Bernal disputes the dating of the inception of the Greek alphabet at 720 BCE. This "fact," he contends, actually is the product of a racist ideology that aims to erase the traces of Semitic influences in ancient Greece (35).

[20] Sappho's late-seventh-century school on the island of Ionian Lesbos is an important exception to this exclusionary function of aptitude and education. Similar to the aristocratic "schools," Sappho's included a natural curriculum of athleticism, music, poetry, etiquette, and epideictic rhetoric and provided a holistic, intimate education for women up until the time of their marriage (Marrou 34-35; Glen 18-26; Blundell 83-86). Sappho also represents an antidote to the theories of progress forwarded by Marrou and Jaeger, as the education of women and their participation in official religious ceremonies – for which Sappho's school would have helped prepare them – became more restricted in the sixth century (Blundell 85; see also Pomeroy's discussion on whether Solon's laws led to the decline of the status of women [*Goddesses* 57-60]).

[21] Guthrie argues that in the fifth century, once the *thesmoi* were no longer tenable, the duality of *physis/nomos* emerges (*The Sophists* 55-56).

practical decisions. Though Achilles' natural capacity was warranted by his noble birth, the natural form of education he experienced indicates that, even for a Homeric hero, some type of training is necessary to develop innate strengths. The education of Achilles was based upon a personal association (*synousia*) with elderly, noble tutors, such as the archetypal Chiron, the mythical educator of many heroes (Marrou 7), and Phoenix, an elderly, honorable knight, who takes the place of the more mythical Chiron in the *Iliad.* In Book 9, Phoenix, attempting to persuade Achilleus to remain in the battle against Troy, utilizes an emotional appeal[22] that establishes their close relationship together, as tutor/student and as father/son:

> Peleus the aged horseman sent me forth with you
> on that day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon
> a mere child, who knew nothing yet of the joining of battle
> nor of debate where men are made pre-eminent. Therefore
> he sent me along with you to teach you all of these matters,
> to make you a speaker of words and one who accomplished in action.
> (210)

This passage is important because it indicates the emphasis placed upon both military and oratorical training and the manner of the instruction, a one-to-one relationship that began early on in the life of the student. Phoenix further describes the intimacy of this relationship: "Achilleus, I made you all that you are now, / and loved you out of my

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[22] See Kennedy's rhetorical analysis of this scene (*Classical Rhetoric* 8-11).

heart, for you would not go with another / out to any feast, nor taste any food in your own halls / until I had set you on my knees" (211).[23]

The training represented by the relationship of Phoenix and Achilles, an ideal aristocratic education,[24] does not negate the belief that certain individuals possess a natural superiority based upon noble lineage. An education of aristocratic association emphasizes the importance of aptitude by means of a natural curriculum – in its earliest stages, an emphasis upon gymnastics (which took the place of military training) and music (conceived as aiding the development of the soul) – and the doctrine that the characters and lives of young nobles develop naturally and organically. The latter mandates that the type of instruction will not be technical, but will be aimed at holistically nurturing the body, character, and discourse of the child. Additionally, it bases itself upon a taxonomy of the student's life, which divides stages of development into seven-year spans:

> The youthful boy loses the first row of teeth
>
> He grew while a baby in seven years;
>
> When god had completed the next seven years for him
>
> He shows the signs that his youthful prime is on its way;
>
> In the third seven, while his limbs are still growing
>
> His chin grows downy with the bloom of changing skin.

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[23] In the classical period, an alternative to this intimate, father-son relationship is the sexual relationship of the older male teacher, the lover, and his pupil, the beloved (Marrou 26-33).

[24] A term preferable to education would be *paideia*, which, unlike the English word, has a more holistic connotation, embracing informal and formal modes of training as well as constituting technical aspects of education along with developing the cultural, social, and moral selves of the child.

In the fourth seven every man is at his best...[25] (Dillon & Garland 440)

The development of the individual noble is "natural," governed by a "natural" conception of time that reflects the "natural" signs of physical change in the human body.

Already supported by the mythologies of divine birth and heroes and by an espousal of an associative form of education, aptitude is also underwritten by *areté*, which operates in a field of other terms that judge and rank the statuses of individuals and groups. Jaeger's *Paideia* is an important investigation of *areté* and a good source for its multiple, changing meanings, especially as aristocratic power decays. *Areté* is the aptitude of the aristocracy. It is a term in which the definitional class is difficult to define – whether it be a "quality," "spirit," or, as Jaeger's translators opt for, a "power"; traditional attempts to translate it in English as "virtue" have failed, for, according to Marrou, the English substitution does not encompass the semantic field of the term (11) and, for Welch, it triggers gendered connotations for contemporary readers (*Contemporary Reception* 17, 74).

Defined, according to Marrou and Jaeger, by a constellation of chivalric[26] qualities like "valor," "glory," "honor," "courage," and "nobility," *areté* governs the young noble's physical actions, his conduct, and speech. Like aptitude, it has both active and passive aspects. Warriors must prove their *areté*, either through their power in

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[25] Aristotle in the *Politics* claims that this seven-year scheme is not an exacting enough description of the development of young students: "The poets who divide ages by sevens are in the main right: but we should observe the division actually made by nature; for the deficiencies of nature are what art and education seek to fill up" (194).

[26] I question Marrou's attempts to associate the *areté* of pre-classical Athens with the chivalric code of pre-Renaissance Europe; though this may be an indication of Marrou's sympathy towards the Annales movement in historiography (Too 7), it may also erase the very real differences that exist between the two historical periods.

counseling others or by their prowess on the battlefield; in this active formation, *areté* can be defined (as can Glenn's deployment of *entelechy* [13-14]) as "the characteristic of something fully realized" (Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 17), that which has fulfilled its capacity.[27] A nobleman fulfills his capability by his ability to fight, to speak, and to conduct himself in terms of aristocratic expectations (Jaeger 5). Additionally, *areté* serves a more passive function by dictating obligations, often in the form of tributes and respect, to the warrior. In this way, it clearly demarcates social boundaries; aristocratic women, for example, fulfill an *areté* that prescribes the qualities of "beauty," "sober morality," and "domestic prudence" (Jaeger 21); non-elites, who cannot possess *areté*, must submit to the social hierarchy the term helps construct.

Stasis

The strong definition of aptitude operates in archaic and classical Athens as an important way to distinguish social groups and classes[28] and account for the relatively different amounts of cultural, social, political, and economic power allotted to them. Social hierarchies were described in four different ways, based upon levels of goodness (*agathoi*, the "good," versus *kakoi*, the "bad"), land ownership, type of employment (one scheme, for example, divided common people into working farmers, artisans, traders, and wage-laborers [Ste. Croix 77]), and income levels (Martin 85). Strong definitions of

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[27] The definition that appears in the glossary of Welch's *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric* is "the movement toward the best expression of a person's or a thing's unique capacity" (167). "Capacity" falls within the field of aptitude.

[28] Ascribing Marxist theories of class to a pre-capitalist society like sixth-century Athens is fraught with theoretical problems. However, unlike Ste. Croix, who defends his use of "class" by invoking the authority of Aristotle (77-78), I will use "class," along with other political terms of identity, like "gender" or "race," as a general term of convenience; though not the socioeconomic "classes" of Marx, they still represent social groups struggling against other groups for political, economic, and cultural power.

aptitude could be deployed to make any of these hierarchical systems natural, though they most powerfully impact the first, the distinctions of individuals based upon a quality of goodness and beauty. This particularly aristocratic form of classifying individuals – based upon a hereditary transmission of *areté* – became less viable as aristocratic power gradually waned in the seventh and sixth centuries, even though *areté* itself would remain a fundamental keyword in educational and rhetorical theory throughout the classical period.

The emergence of nascent democracy in Athens at the end of the sixth century, its codification in the laws of Draco, Solon, and Cleisthenes, and the decline of hereditary, aristocratic oligarchies are complicated events and, unfortunately, can only be covered here in the most summative of fashions. Historians have championed urbanization, the deleterious impact of the Persian Wars, the upward social mobility of small-scale farmers, and the rapid population growth of rural farmers (Jaeger 185-185; Martin 82-88; Ste. Croix 280) as contributing factors in the rise of the political power of the *demos* (i.e., adult male citizens) and the weakening of a political system based upon blood descent.[29] For the purposes of this project, the most important consequence of these historical factors is the expansion of civic and legal participation, which generated the need for logographers, language teachers, and *techné* writers (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 20-21). As more Athenians had to speak for political causes or defend themselves in this

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[29] This political shift was by no means a progressive, uninterrupted path towards the culmination of male-based Athenian democracy. In the middle of the sixth century, after Solon's reforms, Pisistratus established a short-lived hereditary line of tyrants, who, by courting the support of the lower classes, also contributed to the weakening of the elite families (Martin 86-87). This ability of tyrants and demagogues to gain the support of the *demos* was regarded contemptuously by Isocrates (Ste. Croix 290). Similarly, Plato's low opinion of rhetoric in *Gorgias* possibly stems from its use by demagogues to persuade mass audiences; throughout his career, Plato would regard the masses – the public – with distrust and contempt.

excessively litigious and agonistic society, aristocratic conceptions of aptitude had to be expanded in order to include more of the (male) population.

What arises is a period of social conflict and turbulence (*stasis*), as distinctions warranted by aristocratic concepts like *areté* clash with those built upon new wealth. In pre-classical Athens, the conservative poets Pindar and Theognis speak in a genre of "class anxiety," arguing for the purity of aristocratic ideals and values and bemoaning the rise of the poor. Theognis, in *Sayings to Cyrnus*, guides the conduct of a young nobleman, Cyrnus, through a society that no longer respects the privileges and status of wellborn elites. In the following quotation, as an expression of class anxiety, Theognis deploys urban/rural, civilized/savage, and *agathoi/kakoi* dichotomies:

> Cyrnus, the town's a town still, but it has new folk
> who knew no justice previously, no laws.
> They used to wear old goatskins on their flanks, and lived
> outside the town like deer. And now they are
> the gentry, Polypaïdes, while yesterday's
> gentry are dregs. Who can support the sight –
> the men of worth reviled, the lower class esteemed?
> Good stock now seeks to marry into bad... (West 65)

The lower classes, like the inhabitants of the natural state of the young Cicero's myth of progress, have entered upon Theognis's world and tainted it. The traditional elites, who once predicated their worth on the nobility of their descent, no longer enjoy the same status, and, worse yet, seek to enter marriages with members of the lower classes, simply in order to gain access to wealth. Theognis laments, "Property's what they value. Good

stock breeds from bad / and bad from good; wealth has confounded blood" (West 68). Money corrupts *areté*, precisely because it confuses the "natural" logic of blood descent and interrupts the vocabulary of worthiness.

This period of social conflict, according to the traditional histories of Jaeger, Marrou, and Kennedy, transforms the Athenian educational system. An aristocratic pedagogy concentrating upon close relationships of elite tutors and noble students, a curriculum of gymnastics and music, and the cultivation of *areté* becomes more specialized and formal: 1) Teachers and schools outside of the students' homes become prevalent, though, throughout the classical period, nurturing relationships of teachers (e.g., the celebrity sophists Protagoras and Gorgias) with wealthy students still persist; 2) The language-rich disciplines of grammar, rhetoric, and logic (i.e., dialectic) – dominate the curriculum; 3) More attention is paid to adult education; and 4) Though *areté* still serves as an ideal, the term loses its aristocratic connotations, and becomes only one of several qualities that comprise aptitude.

As I will explore in the following chapter, the general formation of natural ability (*physis*) emerges to answer the contentious questions of who can be endowed with special abilities and how these innate talents reflect themselves in a hierarchy of social privileges. For this tentative narrative of aptitude, the classical disputes of the disciplinary viability of rhetoric, of what represents the aims and knowledge of rhetoric, will become crucial. In fourth-century Athens, the criteria of what makes up *physis*, and its interrelationship with technical rhetoric, will be challenged by the neo-aristocratic counterattack waged by the powerful Plato.

Chapter III

Aptitude in Classical Athenian Rhetoric

Fourth-century (BCE) Athens is an important site in which to continue the narrative of aptitude. As part of a wealthy, maritime, and imperialist empire, Athens was the center of commerce, political debate, the courts, and education. It possessed a democracy restricted to male citizens,[30] one that, despite its limitations, corruption, and constant reforms and interruptions, did allow for more mass participation in the operation of the state, especially in decisions of budget allocation and in legal proceedings (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 20; Martin 109-113). Importantly, this expansion of civic participation boosted interest in rhetoric and necessitated an increase in the number of language teachers. During the second half of the fifth century, peripatetic orators and educators – the sophists like Aspasia, Empedocles, Gorgias, Protagoras, Prodicus, and Antiphon – arrived from Athens's distant colonies to ghostwrite legal defenses and instruct young, upper-class males how to conduct themselves and persuade others to act (Guthrie, *The Sophists* 27-54; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 29-47). Their skepticism, relativism, and *logos*-centered *paideia* challenged the dominant aristocratic educational system, one that relied upon a strategy of *physis*, which appealed to how communities defined categories of the natural and commonsensical and accordingly determined the essential qualities of elite orators and leaders.

Physis remained a vital means for the construction of Athenian identity. According to Jonathan Hall, Athenians after the fifth-century Persian Wars began to

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[30] Thomas Martin estimates in the fifth century that Athens consisted of 40,000 adult male citizens and several hundred thousand (often forgotten) women, slaves, and foreigners (55).

identify themselves according to whom they were not: they certainly were not the Persians they had defeated, nor were they Ionians or any other Greek descendent. Basing the origins of Athens on an autochthonous myth[31] with its own originator, Erekhtheus, and its divine protector, Athena, Athenians believed they had always occupied the same land and thus possessed a distinct, pure, and divinely sanctioned ancestry (Hall 47-54). In a city with its classifications of citizen and slave, man and woman, and Athenian and foreigner, strict definitions of how these groups essentially differed were crucial (Hall 54-55). Oftentimes, as in Aristotle's conceptualization of a slave nature, *physis* was invoked to demonstrate the natural superiority of certain groups and to justify the restrictions of educational opportunities for women, foreigners, laborers, and slaves.

In this chapter, I expand my investigation of *physis* and rhetoric by examining Aristotle, Plato, Isocrates, and the sophists. I locate these writers in the three categories of aptitude I constructed in the previous chapter, that is, strong, often hereditary conceptions of *physis* that determine who possesses natural talents; general formulations of aptitude, which, like the pervasive necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine, emphasize not only *physis*, but training and experience; and, weaker definitions of aptitude, which either discount the importance of *physis* or attempt to reveal its ideological origins.

My analysis of Athenian rhetoric, unlike, for example, Clarke's history of classical education, does not follow the usual narrative of progress. This "traditional" account first encounters the sophists, a group of orators, writers, and educators who questioned the validity of *physis* itself, but who are then silenced by the powerful voice of

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[31] Glenn comments that autochthony also erases the bodies of women: no longer are they responsible for creating the ancestors of Athens; the land itself, according to this originating myth, produced the heroes for the *polis* (49-50).

Plato, an idealist philosopher attempting to limit the scope of rhetoric. It concludes with the empirical Aristotle, who found a middle ground between *physis* and *nomos* (Schiappa 4-8; a competing "traditional" history commences with Aristotle and ignores everything that occurred before him [Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 114-115]). As the writer of the *Metaphysics* and *On Rhetoric*, he was embraced by both disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric – as long as philosophers and rhetoricians ignored each other's texts (Neel, *Aristotle's Voice* 14-15). In my analysis, I reverse this narrative, commencing with Aristotle and Plato and their strong appeals to *physis* to construct their versions of aptitude. I then conclude with the more general, less determining conceptions of aptitude advocated by Isocrates and Protagoras (and as well by the elusive Plato).

Aristotle: A Retreat Towards Physis

Although contemporary historians have interrogated Aristotle's problematic position in the center of classical rhetoric (Knoblauch and Brannon; Welch, *Contemporary Reception* 21, 26), I deploy him as an example of a contradiction in the relationship of aptitude and Greek education theory. On one hand, Aristotle supports a balanced relationship of nature, experience, and knowledge (*Politics* 1332a39-42) and proclaims an important role for public education. On the other hand, Aristotle diminishes the egalitarian possibilities of these claims by resorting to a conception of *physis* that universalizes specific cultural practices or values. He then excludes groups of individuals -- such as women who are aberrations of the universal male body -- who deviate from these universals (Atwill 83).[32] This contradiction will not come as a surprise to readers –

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[32] Atwill complicates Aristotle's deployment of *physis* as a "subject of persistent debate" (84). According to Atwill, Aristotle and the pre-Socratics were constantly redrawing the boundaries of what separated *physis* from culture.

indeed it marks the rhetorical and philosophical positions of Isocrates and Plato as well, complicating attempts to place these canonical authorities into my taxonomy of aptitude.

In the *Politics* (e.g., Books VII and VIII), the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle states a moderate definition of aptitude, one that must operate in harmony with experience (i.e. "habit") and reason in order for the student to emerge successful and well balanced. He emphasizes the importance of education, as the institution that will shape people and support well-governed states. In order to accomplish this, he proposes a mass, public system of education and even goes so far as to criticize parents who encourage private training for their children: "It is manifest that education should be one and the same for all, and that it should be public, and not private – not as at present, when everyone looks after his own children separately, and gives them separate instruction of the sort which he thinks best" (*Politics* 1337a21-26). Moreover, according to Aristotle, education and experience are what mold the characters and value-systems of students. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle, utilizing the typical examples of good "harpists" and bad "builders," states that appropriate learning experiences promote successful performances:

> Playing the harp makes good and bad harpists, and it is analogous in the case of builders and all the rest; for building well makes good builders, building badly, bad ones. If it were not so, no teacher would be needed, but everyone would be born a good or a bad craftsman. (1103b8-13)

Experiences also shape values and personality traits. Whether students become just or unjust, brave or cowardly, or gentle or angry depends upon how they conduct themselves

in social interactions and situations of terror and need (1103b14-21). In short, their actions in the past mark their futures.

Despite the fact that Aristotle articulates the general, necessary-but-not-sufficient theory of aptitude and appreciates the importance of social experience and education, his stance certainly represents no egalitarian agenda. As I will demonstrate below, Aristotle's enthusiasm for education only extends to elite Athenian males. Again, this undemocratic disposition is not surprising. Glenn and Neel, in particular, have well documented Aristotle's misogyny and elitism. What I find interesting is that Aristotle's inability to extend his definition of natural ability past the self-interests of his community discloses a failure of his analytical methodology. Proceeding with his classifying and hierarchizing fervor, once Aristotle reaches the natures of human beings he immediately relies upon stereotypes and terminates his examination. Furthermore, as his methodology for defining rhetoric resembles that of his essentializing the inferiority of women and slaves, this discussion holds important implications for how conceptions of human nature' impact rhetorical theory.

At the beginning of the *Politics*, Aristotle announces his methodology, which, in this instance, allows him to delineate the composition of states:

> As in other departments of science, so in politics, the compound should always be resolved into the simple elements or the least parts of the whole. We must therefore look at the elements of which the state is composed, in order that we may see in what the different kinds of rule differ from one another, and whether any scientific result can be attained about each one of them. (1252a19-23)

This quotation reveals a desire to analyze, to tear apart a model in order to ascertain its constituent, essential elements. What Aristotle hopes to discover is the "first growth and origin" (1252a24) of the model, the *telos* which constitutes the foundation from which categories and structures can be built. In the model of the ideal state, a man and woman represent this foundation, "a union of those who cannot exist without each other" (1252a26-27). A man and woman are fundamentally necessary, for they cannot exist if split apart, and they constitute the basis of the family, and consequently, the village, and finally, the state.

Aristotle pursues the same methodology when he analyzes a single individual. Like the ideal state, this person consists of two parts, a soul and a body, a basic duality that soon implicates other important binaries: mind/emotion, honorable action/practical action, leisure/business, and even peace/war (1333a16-36). Aristotle contends that these binaries base themselves on relationships of independence/dependence and superiority/inferiority, stating "in the world both of nature and of art the inferior always exists for the sake of the superior, and the superior is that which has a rational principle" (1333a21-24). This "rational principle" inhabits the dominant terms of mind, honorable action, leisure, and peace – all terms that are unquestioningly superior, Aristotle contends, because they simply are, by "nature"; they are terms far removed from the body, the situated, practical lives of human beings, and, for that matter, from the concerns of rhetoric, or, at least before Aristotle codified its universal rules and categories. Aristotle offers empirical proof to support the superiority of the terms possessing the rational principle: reminding us to "look for the intentions of nature in things which retain their nature, and not in things which are corrupted" (1254a34-36), Aristotle asks us

to observe cases of individuals in which the inferior term, such as the body, rules over the superior term, the soul; these individuals, Aristotle asserts, will possess a "bad or corrupted nature" (1254a39-1254b1), the stereotypical traits of slaves, brutes, or criminals.

The implications of Aristotle's methodology – and his retreat towards an empirically supported *physis* – are sinister. Once his readers accept the fundamental dominance of the soul over the body, or the powers of reason over physical desires, they are also asked to obey the logic of these following dualities:

Man	Woman
Husband	Wife[33]
Human	Tame Animal
Greek	Non-Greek
Male Citizen	Slave

In these five binaries, the first term is "naturally" superior to the second. The first actively rules, while the latter must passively submit, a relationship, Aristotle happily reminds us, that actually benefits the second term; tame animals, for example, "have a better nature than wild and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved" (1254b10-13). Both groups require each other in order to maintain their own health and that of the ideal state. Aristotle hopes, however, that we

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[33] Aristotle categorizes the husband-wife relationship as based upon "constitutional" rule and thus perhaps implies more of an equal relationship than the "despotic" rule that characterizes the citizen-slave relationship (1259b1-2). Unlike slaves, Aristotle contends that women possess a rational capability (i.e., "deliberative faculty"), yet lack "authority," a rhetorical ethos that would appear to be based upon social conventions (*nomos*), not nature (1260a12-14).

overlook how he deploys an unexamined *physis* to establish the hierarchies of the superior and inferior, the active and the passive.

Book I of the *Politics*, which includes Aristotle's defense of natural slavery, demonstrates how he conceals *physis*.[34] First, Aristotle provides a "neutral" definition of a slave as "he who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man who, being a slave, is also a possession" (1254a14-18). Aristotle does not bother to defend this definition, why, for example, certain human beings become passive possessions of natural rulers. Another source of evidence to support the category of slavery is empirical. Visible signs mark the master/slave positions. One example is the distribution of intelligence to masters and "bodily strength" to slaves (1252a33-37). Another sign is "where the relation of master and slave between them is natural they are friends and have a common interest, but where it rests merely on convention and force the reverse is true" (1255b12-15). In other words, Aristotle implies that if human beings passively submit to a landowner's control and do not rebel against his terms of enforced labor, these behaviors determine their slave classification. However, Aristotle complains that nature is often unreliable. He writes,

> Nature would like to distinguish between the bodies of freemen and slaves, making the one strong for servile labour, the other upright, and although useless for such services, useful for political life in the arts both

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[34] Aristotle accepts the possibility of a category of human beings who, because of military defeats, were enslaved by a legal convention, not by their natural capacity to be a slave (1255a3-1255b15). See Neel's discussion on how Aristotle sorts out the difference between slaves by *nomos* and those by *physis* (*Aristotle's Voice* 22-23).

> of war and peace. But the opposite often happens – that some have the souls and others have the bodies of freemen. (1254b26-32)

In this passage, Aristotle admits that nature often makes mistakes with the signification of masters and slaves, placing the former at times into the bodies of slaves and allocating the latter with the souls of masters. Instead of resolving this contradiction, Aristotle simply declares that "it is clear [...] that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right" (1255a1-3). Obviously, the institution of Athenian slavery is only "clear" to Aristotle and his audience, wealthy slave-owning male Athenians, who require little coaxing to accept their superiority.[35]

For the training of young rhetoricians, Aristotle's methodology of *physis* replaces descriptions of the traits of rhetorical aptitude. The *Politics* effectively circumscribes who can profit from *On Rhetoric*, a *techné* meant for politicians and warriors, citizen landowners, and, most of all, aristocratic intellectuals. Who is his *techné* not meant for? In Books VII and VIII of the *Politics*, the most thorough account of his educational theory, Aristotle dictates his exclusions by dismissing foreign residents[36] (e.g., 1326b21-23), artisans and tradespeople, whose "life is inimical to excellence" (1328b40-41), farmers, who should "of necessity be slaves or barbarian country people" (1329a25-26), and, of course, women, slaves, and non-Greeks.[37]

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[35] Neel insists that contemporary readers cannot forgive Aristotle for his racist views. Not only was Aristotle aware of the sophistic arguments against slavery (he lists them in Book I of the *Politics*), his anti-abolitionist stance affects the reception of his rhetoric; we cannot, Neel implores, separate *On Rhetoric* from the *Politics* (*Aristotle's Voice* 20-22).

[36] Born in Macedonia, Aristotle himself was a "foreign resident" (*metic*) in Athens.

[37] Europeans, for example, would be unhappy to learn that Aristotle considered them to be spirited and yet dumb, a combination that led to their freedom and yet lack of political organization (1327b24-27).

Aristotle's analytical theory remains consistent with these class-conscious exclusions. Utilizing the theory/praxis and liberal/illiberal binaries, Aristotle was capable of constructing – yet again on "natural" principles – an educational system that excluded certain subjects, constrained the order in which subjects were taught (e.g., the body must be trained before the mind), and focused upon the final goal of developing the minds and reasoning capabilities of students (1334b15-28).[38] Most importantly, according to Andrea Nightingale's analysis of the education system in the *Politics*, Aristotle rids the curriculum of "baunasic" (*banausos*), vocational-based subjects, of any activities that are tied to the body, to its desires, and to its practical, daily experiences (134, 156-166):

> Any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or the soul or the mind of the freeman less fit for the practice or exercise of excellence, is mechanical [baunasic]; wherefore we call those arts mechanical which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind. (1337b8-12)

Aristotle's privileging of the theoretical over the practical makes rhetoric, particularly sophistic rhetoric, inferior as a practice. For example, logographers, like the young Isocrates, and the writers of rhetorical *techné* specifically for the legal courts, such as Corax and Tisias, would only be slightly above the artisans and craftspeople whom Aristotle despises: they use their minds, yet for specific, practical, and useful purposes;

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[38] Aristotle's educational theory also establishes the most propitious circumstances for the ideal, healthy child, prescribing who should procreate, the age of procreation for both mother and father, their physical constitution, and the particular season when procreation should occur. Aristotle contends that "women should marry when they are about eighteen years of age, and men at thirty-seven; then they are in the prime of life, and the decline in the powers of both will coincide" (1335a27-31). As for expectant mothers, Aristotle reverses his usual emphasis upon the rational powers of the mind. Aristotle writes that the minds of pregnant women, "unlike their bodies [...] ought to keep quiet, for the offspring drive their natures [i.e., characters] from their mothers as plants do from earth" (1335b17-19).

they insist upon fees for their services; they scoff at universals and dirty themselves with specific techniques, memory devices, and scripted models; finally, they still rely upon their bodies, their mouths and their physical gestures.

Plato: Constructing Models of Aptitude, Education, and Social Status

In the educational theory of the *Republic*, Plato articulates the same exclusions as Aristotle, restricting rhetorical, political, and philosophical training to elite students who possess natural ability. Plato shares with Aristotle a bias towards an ideal educational system, one that rejects the body and its desires, daily life and its necessities, and money, the marketplaces, and the rhetorical babble of the law courts and political assemblies. Unlike Aristotle, Plato presents a more interrogated description of aptitude, its traits, its ability to create social classes, and, importantly, its source – that is, what constitutes the essential nature of human beings. In this section, I analyze the role of aptitude in the *Republic* and describe how it determines the levels of education and social status of human beings. Though I argue that Plato relies upon a strong definition of aptitude, Plato's elusiveness complicates such absolute categorizations. Later in this chapter, by utilizing *Protagoras* and the feminism of the *Republic*, I suggest that Plato advocates a weaker, more egalitarian conception of aptitude.

Of the many tasks that Plato sets out to accomplish in the *Republic*, one is to revise and elaborate upon the myth of rebirth that appears in *Phaedrus* (see 248d-e). This myth recounts the soul's descent from "Reality" (i.e., pure knowledge) to the material world, where the status of the soul's rebirth depends upon how much knowledge it perceived. An obvious model of his aristocratic class-consciousness, Plato places the disinterested philosopher and law-abiding monarch at the top of the birth hierarchy. Not

surprisingly, at the bottom of the list, he assigns occupations that imitate reality (e.g., poets), feature the body (e.g., the craftsmen and farmers), deploy lies (e.g., the sophists), and resort to self-interested violence (i.e., the tyrants).[39]

Complicating this idealistic birth hierarchy, in Books II-III and VI-VII of the *Republic*, Plato reveals a complex of aptitudes, traits, placement tests, education levels, disciplines, occupations, and distinct social strata. Plato creates a pyramidal model of an ideal educational system, one warranted by these three claims: 1) people are born with different aptitudes; 2) the mind (or soul) is separate from the body, and thus mental work is separate from physical labor; and 3) a state is "naturally" led by an elite few, who rule the soldiers and often untrustworthy masses of workers. Philosopher kings and queens, men and women who have mastered the dialectic, reign at the top of the three-part pyramid. Below them are the guardians, who protect the state from enemies outside and within, and, finally, the commoners, who provide for the basic physical necessities of the body. In the following three subsections, I will summarize, for each of these groups, the types of aptitude they possess, the education they undergo, and the occupations they fulfill. Throughout this discussion, I will attempt to demonstrate how Plato's aristocratic class-consciousness[40] and distaste for sophistic rhetoric shape his educational system.

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[39] In *Timaeus*, Plato provides another fate for men who have not lived righteously: in their second lives, they will occupy the bodies of women (Glenn 52).

[40] Socrates' search for wisdom in the *Apology* complicates claims about Plato's class-consciousness. After an oracle at Delphi proclaims Socrates to be the most wise, he interviews, in descending order, politicians (and presumably orators), poets, and skilled craftsmen (21a-22a). As he descends toward these less privileged occupations, he discovers more "technical proficiency" and "practical intelligence." He finds no true wisdom, however, a trait reserved for aristocratic intellectuals.

Commoners

Plato first populates his ideal state with commoners, a group consisting of farmers, builders, and weavers who satisfy the physical needs of the body; as the utopia expands, Plato includes craftsmen, sailors, and merchants – occupations that serve the needs of a complex economy. For the purposes of selecting appropriate individuals for these positions, Plato provides a simplistic selection device, what C. D. C. Reeve calls the "unique aptitude doctrine" (172). Each commoner possesses exactly one natural aptitude for each specific occupation: "one man is naturally fitted for one task, and another for another" (370b). If individuals possess a "farming aptitude," for example, they will "naturally" become farmers.

Attempts to counter the aptitude or engage in different occupations are counterproductive to the individual as well as to the state. Plato deploys the logic of the division of labor to support this conception of unitary aptitude, commenting, "The result [...] is that more things are produced, and better and more easily when one man performs one task according to his nature, at the right moment, and at leisure from other occupations" (370c). As Plato does not assign any ranking of quality to these occupations, except perhaps for those like farming and carpentry that are fundamental to the existence of the state, commoners exist as equals, living in a pastoral, idyllic utopia that serves their physical needs (372a-d). Their aptitudes make them different only by kind. It won't be until later, when Plato describes the aptitude necessary to become a guardian or a philosopher king, that human beings will represent a different worth.

According to Reeve, Plato's indifference to the types and sources of aptitude indicates that he did not seriously accept the unitary conception of aptitude (174-175).

For example, Plato does not care if a "carpenter undertak[es] to do the work of a cobbler or a cobbler of a carpenter interchange of one another's tools or honors or even the attempt of the same man to do both" (*Republic* 434a). As long as commoners remained in their specific class, Plato declares there is no danger to the state. The threat occurs when commoners attempt to become guardians or, even worse, commoners and guardians masquerade as philosophers. Plato scornfully describes commoners attracted to philosophy, despite the fact that they are "pretenders unfit by nature, whose souls are bowed and mutilated by their vulgar occupations even as their bodies are marred by their arts and crafts" (495d-e). Their original aptitudes, and the harmful effects of labor on their minds, make them unsuitable for philosophy. Sounding like the sixth-century Theognis, Plato describes the commoner's embrace of philosophy in terms of aristocratic class anxiety:

> Is not the picture they present [...] precisely that of a little bald-headed tinker who has made money and just been freed from bonds and had a bath and is wearing a new garment and has got himself up like a bridegroom and is about to marry his master's daughter who has fallen into poverty and abandonment? (495e)

This is typical of Plato's class-conscious philosophy. The lower classes are naturally unsuitable for philosophy, because of their inability to understand the dialectic ("Seventh Letter" 341c-342a), their attention only to the multiple and temporary (*Republic* 494a), their deleterious effect on the natures of true philosophers (*Republic* 492b-e), and the fact that, because of their ignorance, they can be easily swayed by sophists and demagogues (*Gorgias* 459a).

Plato relates little about the education of the commoners. Lacking the aptitude to become a guardian, commoners pursue no form of formal training (see Figure 2 on page 81). Possibly, Plato discards his conception of unitary aptitude and assumes that the sons and daughters of commoners take over the traditional crafts of their families (Reeve 173-174). Their education consists of helping their parents at work, and in certain cases, such as the apprenticeship of merchants, instruction in practical mathematical applications (*Republic* 525c).

Guardians & Helpers

In order to defend the commoners and protect the state, the guardians, who occupy the second level of Plato's triadic class system, possess a range of physical, mental, and spiritual natural traits. Plato compares these aptitudes to those necessary in a well-bred watchdog. Guardians must hold the physical characteristics of strength, quickness, and "keen perception," and furthermore, a "high-spirited" and brave personality (375a-c). However, Plato stretches the watchdog analogy when he maintains that guardians need to be "gentle to their friends and harsh to their enemies" (375e), an ability that Plato connects, though not convincingly, to a "love of wisdom." Guardians supposedly base their judgements of who is a friend or an enemy on a criteria of knowledge and, for the latter, ignorance (376b-c). Finally, guardians must possess a conviction to serve the state and demonstrate an ability to withstand pain, fear, and personal gain.

Despite their natural abilities, the guardians are not necessarily more intelligent than commoners. Plato claims that guardians are differentiated by their psychological motivation, not by superior cognitive powers. Unlike commoners, who are motivated

basically by their physical needs or their desire for money, guardians act for honor and their love for the state (Reeve 49).[41] Nurturing these values, Plato's education consists of the traditional, aristocratic subjects of music and gymnastics and emphasizes the development of discipline, morality, and *areté*. Nightingale, in her analysis of Plato's primary education, emphasizes its ideological purpose of saturating students with the values of the state, not in developing their ability to speak, rationalize, or make judgments (139). Instead, guardian students absorb the models of censored fables, narratives, and songs, imbibe standards of goodness and grace through harmony and rhythm,[42] and learn what amounts to a masculine code of warrior ethics, of simplicity and asceticism (*Republic* 522a).

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[41] Reeve hypothesizes that Plato concludes with three models of the ideal state, one for commoners, who are ruled by their desire for "necessary appetites," another for the guardians, who are led by their desire for honor, and a final one for the philosopher kings, who are freed because of their love of wisdom (176-203).

[42] See Plato's *Laws* (esp. 653e-654b, 659a, & 665a) for a discussion of the role of music in education.

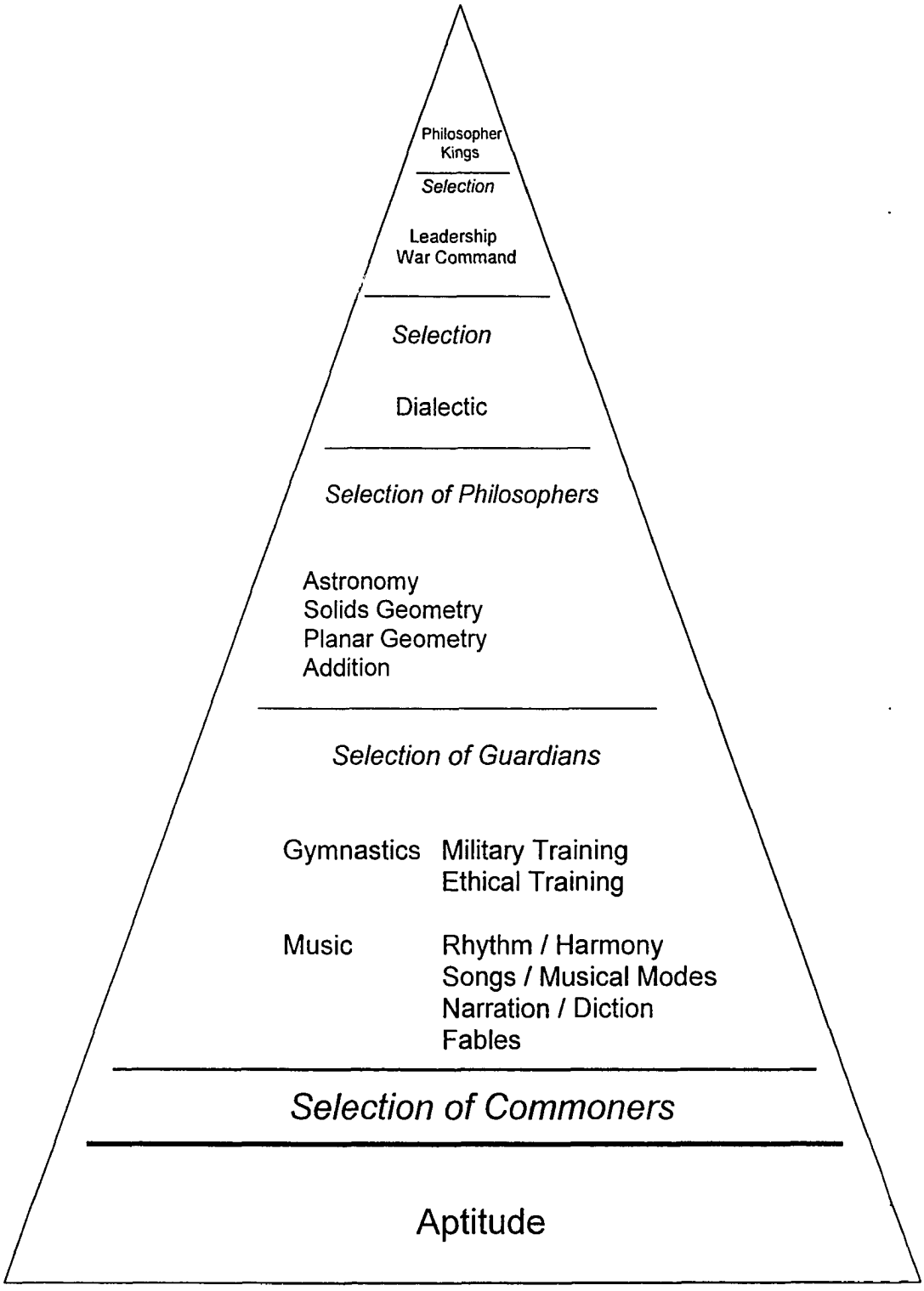


Figure 2: Education and Aptitude of Commoners, Guardians, and Philosopher Kings

Philosopher Kings[43]

For this privileged class, Plato presents a detailed, elaborate system of aptitude and education. It consists of four distinct selection periods, when the natural traits of the students are examined in order to determine who will proceed onto the next education level: first, having completed the same primary education as the guardians, a group of men and women are selected to begin a ten-year training course in higher studies; second, from these students, a smaller group is then chosen for five years of dialectical training; after that, selected individuals command the military forces for fifteen years; finally, at the age of 50, the most able of them become full-fledged philosopher kings (see Figure 2). A compilation of the traits, characteristics, and natural abilities of what constitutes a "philosophical nature" is as follows:

- Attraction to knowledge that is essential and universal
- Integrity and truthfulness
- Distaste for money and physical pleasures
- Liberal and brave spirit
- Mind endowed with "measure and grace"
- Stable, brave, and enterprising personality
- "Virile and vigorous in temper"
- Ability to grasp new information quickly
- Desire for studying
- Good memory

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[43] I will discuss the implications of Plato's inclusion of women as Philosopher Queens later in the chapter.

- Discipline and diligence
- "Trueborn" soul, especially in trustworthiness and courageousness (485a-487a, 535a-536d)

Plato has eliminated all of the physical characteristics that were important for the selection of the guardians and distanced his philosopher kings from the bodies and practical desires of the commoners: his ideal students were not to fear death, nor care for money, privilege, and public opinion. The ideal philosophy student was a Socrates, not a Gorgias.

If interpreted as a mission statement of Plato's own ideal school, this model of higher education positions itself against the sophists (or, at least Plato's portrayal of them), distancing itself especially from Isocrates and Protagoras and their emphasis upon strengthening their students' language and decision-making skills. Plato formulates an educational system that eliminates the effects of the senses, the body, and a non-ideal, temporal, rhetorical sense of time. Consisting of basic mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and, most importantly, dialectic, Plato's educational program privileges only the pure, theoretical applications of these disciplines.[44]

Plato concludes the description of his educational system with the image of philosopher kings and queens outside of the city and its affairs. They spend their leisure examining the fundamental and eternal truths of ethics and politics and only occasionally

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[44] One important exception to Plato's curricular idealism is the practical military applications of addition and geometry; traditionally an aristocratic responsibility, military commanders need mathematics for tracking the numbers of soldiers and ships (*Republic* 525b) and geometry for planning troop formations (526d).

have to return to their leadership roles. Eventually, they will be celebrated as divine beings – and depart the city forever.

Isocrates: An Enthusiasm for Education

I have attempted to capture Plato. By focusing upon his activity as a builder of ideal educational systems, I have confined him to a single strong definition of aptitude. Plato emerges as a proponent of a rigidly aristocratic and class-conscious conception of natural ability, which determines the educational experiences of human beings, selects their role for the state, and forecasts their social status. It has unfortunate consequences for rhetoricians and sophists, who appear low in the rebirth hierarchy in *Phaedrus*, and for slaves and non-elites, who possess only an aptitude for their specific occupations and not one that necessitates formal education.

This attempt to subdue Plato suffers from two problems. First, it attempts to categorize Plato too narrowly. It forgets Plato's elusiveness, the difficulty in forming a monolith of the voices he represents, his irony, the duration of his career, and his changing stances towards rhetoric and philosophy (Neel, *Plato*). Second, the version of aptitude that Plato defends remains too theoretical. In my analysis, Plato is a builder of models, ideal systems, and abstract human beings, seemingly aloof from forming statements of the types of aptitude his own students would require. Therefore, in this section I hope to complicate Plato. By including another authoritative voice – that of the Athenian Isocrates – I explore more egalitarian definitions of aptitude, what will resurface in the rhetorics of Cicero and Quintilian as the commonsensical necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine of aptitude.

There is a precedent for comparing Isocrates, the archetypal rhetorician, and Plato, the hegemonic philosopher. These two canonical authorities have often been received as representatives of a polarized dichotomy. Both led competing schools in the first half of the fourth century (BCE). Both promulgated different epistemologies; Plato promoted an aristocratic, decidedly anti-sophist agenda, while the wealthy Isocrates felt sympathy, if not at times ambivalence, towards the sophists. Finally, Plato wrote, but feared and tried to erase the effects of writing. Isocrates wrote and made writing an important part of his *paideia* (Benoit). However, it is not my intention to argue that Plato, as an aristocrat, completely de-emphasized teaching in order to valorize the natural abilities of elite students, or that Isocrates, as a sophist who accepted money for his teaching, democratized language training by championing education and a specific rhetorical *techné.* These broad comparisons oversimplify the complicated role aptitude plays in their educational projects and especially in their divergent views of how to instruct students to become more effective speakers and leaders.

Plato, uncharacteristic of an aristocrat, acknowledges the importance of pedagogy. In *Phaedrus*, for example, he voices the commonplace triad of natural ability, practice, and knowledge, stating "[t]he ability [...] to become a finished performer is probably, or perhaps certainly, like everything else: if it is in your nature to be a speaker, an eloquent speaker you will be if you acquire knowledge and practice. If you are deficient in any of these, to this extent you will be imperfect" (269d). In order to achieve rhetorical excellence, students need aptitude, but there is also an important role for teachers and instruction. Plato addresses the qualities of the teacher – indeed, Socrates represents the ideal – though he specifies few pedagogical practices. Instead, he claims teachers should

represent a model of moral standards and leadership values; their teaching methodology, furthermore, remains the dialectic, the exploratory question-answer activity that aimed to elicit the knowledge of students.

In *Phaedrus*, Plato exemplifies these basic educational principles in the figure of Pericles, a trope of rhetorical superiority, who possessed excellent natural aptitude and acquired his ability to reason by way of dialectical discussions with the philosopher Anaxagoras. Pericles was then able to transfer his thinking skills to rhetoric, to his ability to persuade and govern others (270a). The order of Pericles' training is important: reasoning (i.e., dialectic) precedes rhetoric. One consequence of this sequencing of reason before persuasion is that another set of natural traits for language use becomes unnecessary. Even though Plato provides rhetoric a role in *Phaedrus*, it remains a secondary application of his philosophy. Rhetoric becomes a logical process of division and analysis, one that classifies the souls/minds of interlocutors, selects the appropriate discourse to effect persuasion, and deploys it for a specified action (270b-272a).

Isocrates surpasses Plato's treatment of aptitude and pedagogy by specifying the natural traits that benefit speaking and writing and by emphasizing the importance of the teacher. First, Isocrates focuses on the natural cognitive abilities of students, claiming they need strong memories, mental diligence, as well as the ability to explore and apprehend the "truth." The student needs a "voice and a clarity of utterance which are able to captivate the audience, not only by what he says, but by the music of his words" (*Antidosis* 189). Additionally, Isocrates insists that self-confidence, a sense of ease and self-control in front of an audience, is a vital feature of rhetorical aptitude – and one that Isocrates himself claims to have lacked. With these cognitive, linguistic, and personal

qualities, Isocrates declares, even individuals with only limited training can become excellent orators. They already possess, because of these traits, four parts of the rhetorical canon: invention, the ability to explore and discover truths; style, the focus upon language itself; memory; and delivery, the self-confidence in front of audiences. Only the discourse-specific canon of arrangement remains outside the possible reach of aptitude.

Additionally, Isocrates expands the triad of ability, knowledge, and practice, including two elements that enhance the role of the teacher:

> The student must not only have the requisite aptitude but he must learn the different kinds of discourse and practice himself in their use; and the teacher, for his part, must so expound the principles of the art with the utmost possible exactness as to leave out nothing that can be taught, and, for the rest, he must in himself set such an example of oratory that the students who have taken form under his instruction and are able to pattern after him will, from the outset, show in their speaking a degree of grace and charm which is not found in others. (*Against the Sophists* 17-18).

I have quoted this passage at length to emphasize the importance Isocrates places upon the teacher, who must lay out the principles of rhetoric as well as perform models of them. An alternative way to demonstrate Isocrates' interest in pedagogy is to investigate his criticisms of the teaching practices of the instructors whom he pejoratively names "sophists."[45] In the polemical *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates condemns these instructors

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[45]Isocrates' use of this term is confusing, for he, like Protagoras, would later label himself as a sophist. In this context, the sophists Isocrates attacks represent a class of teachers who accept meager fees in exchange for training in superficial and overly rigid rhetorical rules.

for applying static, formulaic rules to complex skills and creative processes that depend upon specific contexts (12-13). Isocrates reminds us that though the sophists boast they can form incomparable orators or ethical leaders out of their students, regardless of their natural ability, they still fear that their students will cheat them out of their tuition (5-6). Isocrates' connection of aptitude with language training is controversial. In the *Antidosis*, Isocrates ironically places himself in the same category as the embattled sophists, defending his *paideia* against that attacks of neo-aristocratic educators, possibly figures like Plato. They question the ability of his *paideia* to influence "a man's ability to speak or his capacity for handling affairs" and conjecture that excellent students simply "owe their superiority to natural gifts" (197-198). These critics (Isocrates never names them) maintain that education corrupts innocent students (198) and deride students whose rhetorical skills develop as a result of studying a rhetorical *techné*. They value only oratorical performances arising from natural excellence. Isocrates also complains that these same critics demand to see immediate improvement in his students from the commencement of their studies (*Antidosis* 199-200) and hold false expectations of what his students can accomplish in only a short period of time. Isocrates' expectations are considerably lower: "From all our schools only two or three students turn out to be real champions, the rest retiring from their studies into private life" (201). Because his students possess varying aptitudes, interests, and levels of diligence, Isocrates acknowledges that their oratorical performances will vary.

In order to defend his *paideia* from the harmful image of the sophists (as Isocrates narrowly defines them in *Against the Sophists*) and the criticisms of aristocratic educators like Plato and Aristotle, Isocrates formulates what amounts to a meritocratic position.

Effort and achievement, Isocrates suggests, may outweigh the benefits of natural gifts: "We praise, at least in other fields, those who by their own devoted toil are able to acquire some good thing more than we praise those who inherit from their ancestors [....] it is well that in all activities, and most of all in the art of speaking, credit is won, not by gifts of fortune, but by efforts of study" (291-292). In this passage, Isocrates begins to shift away from the more orthodox necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine to a weaker role for aptitude. Though he does not completely discard natural ability, his enthusiasm for education and language training, especially in the development of the practical wisdom of students, minimizes the impact of specific aptitudes that privilege particular individuals. Isocrates declares that all human beings can benefit from language training – that all of them possess a capacity for development and growth.

Isocrates announces the power of education in the analogy of the dancing bears. Why base human outcome on aptitude, why doubt the effectiveness of training, Isocrates asks, when you have dancing bears? Isocrates writes of those that deny the impact of education, that

> they behold in the shows which are held year after year lions which are more gentle toward their trainers than some people are toward their benefactors, and bears which dance about and wrestle and imitate our skill, and yet they [detractors of education] are not able to judge even from these instances the power which education and training have, nor can they see that human nature will respond more promptly than the animals to the benefits of education. (*Antidosis* 213-214)

Isocrates' argument is simple: if lions and bears, animals with savage and evil natures, can become tamed, then human beings, who possess much more intellectual capacity, can certainly be transformed by education (Welch, *Electric Rhetoric* 76-79).

One consequence of the analogy of the dancing bears is that more individuals can possess oratorical power and *areté* – in this context, the values of leadership – than accepted by more conservative formulations of aptitude. Isocrates criticizes individuals, oftentimes the sons of aristocrats, who rely solely upon talent, "[f]or men who have been gifted with eloquence by nature and by fortune, are governed in what they say by chance, and not by any standard of what is best" (*Antidosis* 292). In other words, these individuals are unaware of public expectations, of the laws of *nomos* constructed by specific communities. They rely instead upon their unpredictable individual talents. Conversely, Isocrates lauds the efforts of "those who have gained the power by the study of philosophy [*philosophia*] and by the exercise of reason [as they] never speak without weighing their words, and so are less often in error as to course of action" (*Antidosis* 292). In order to become excellent speakers and leaders, *physis* itself means little. Individuals require training in Isocrates' language-rich *philosophia* and in models of discourse to recognize standards of successful action.

There is a danger, however, of overstating the effects of Isocrates' optimism towards education and his subsequent, tentative statements towards a less rigid, more meritocratic conception of aptitude. An overly sympathetic portrayal of Isocrates' *paideia* may ignore the restrictions it makes. Relying upon *physis* to create a natural category of Greek identity, Isocrates repeats a similar logic to the one Aristotle deploys in constituting the inherent qualities of women, slaves, and the laboring classes. Similar to

his teacher, Gorgias, this strategy possibly allows Isocrates to restrict his enthusiasm for education to a small group of wealthy, male Athenian and foreign Greeks.

According to Isocrates, Greeks possess innate gifts that separate them from non-Greeks, the *barbars* (in the context of the *Panegyricus* or *On the Peace*, this term represents the Persians), the natural, eternal enemy. Isocrates depicts Athens – and, by extension, all of Greece – as the center of the world, an original, autochthonic city (*On the Peace* 49). Boasting that Athens consists of men who were "endowed with the greatest capacity for the arts, and [...] the most devoted in the worship of the gods" (*Panegyricus* 33), Isocrates claims that the city remains the basis for constitutional democracy, trade, athletic and cultural competitions, philosophy, oratory, and liberal education (*Panegyricus* 38-50); though, the reactionary Isocrates does admit that present-day Athenians are incapable of matching the expectations of their noble birthright.[46]

After establishing the excellent natures of Athenians, Isocrates then needs to demonstrate the inferiority of the *barbars*, deploying, like Gorgias, a strategy to scapegoat all of Athens' problems upon them – which has the additional benefit of illustrating his allegiance to a united Greece. Isocrates' strategy is successful. As Aristotle had no problems in convincing slaveowners about how certain human beings were by *physis* meant to be slaves, Isocrates relies upon the assumptions of his chauvinist Athenian readers, who held beliefs that the "barbarians [were] fit only to be used as

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[46] In all of his celebratory praises of Athens, Isocrates balances his commendation for the city with his derision for its present state of decay; sounding much like contemporary AM talk-show radio hosts, he rails against, among other issues, the youth, immigration laws, the slackness in ethical values, and high taxes (in the form of provisioning triremes for the navy). See Isocrates' *Areopagiticus* for the most developed of these reactionary responses.

household slaves" (*Panegyricus* 181) or, as Plato divulges in the *Republic*, that the *barbars* were evil, universal enemies (470c). Isocrates pronounces the *barbars* corrupt and degenerate, not "by accident" but "due to natural causes" (*Panegyricus* 150); their way of life precludes them from being victorious over the united Greeks or, for that matter, from leading a successful state. Yet, in characteristic fashion, Isocrates then undercuts these remarks by making his claims of *physis* ambiguous:

> It is not possible for people who are reared and governed as are Persians, either to have a part in any other form of virtue or to set up on the field of battle trophies of victory over their foes. For how could either an able general or a good soldier be produced amid such ways of life as theirs? Most of their population is a mob without discipline or experience of dangers, which has lost all stamina for war and has been trained more effectively for servitude than are the slaves in our country. (*Panegyricus* 150-151)

What Isocrates describes is a group of people who are devoid of his conception of *areté*, which, in this particular case, alludes to an archaic, military, and masculine code. What is interesting is how Isocrates attributes the "weakness" of the Persians to their impoverished experiences and training (Aristotle, importantly, doesn't consider the nurturing of individuals as leading to their status as slaves).

The fact that Isocrates' ascribes this lack of *areté*, this specific area of inferiority, to how the *barbars* are brought up and governed leads to an important question: despite his hatred of the Persians, does he really believe that they are inferior, by *physis*, and can never be improved by education? Though Isocrates never directly answers this question,

in the *Antidosis*, he suggests that Athenian education is responsible for the success of the city: "[T]hose qualities by which the nature of man rises above the other animals, and the race of the Hellenes above the barbarians, namely, in the fact that you [the Athenian reader] have been educated as have no other people in wisdom and in speech" (294). For Isocrates, there are few other passages that commend the role of education so highly – and that challenge his own role as the vociferous hater of the eternally inferior *barbar*.[47]

Weakening Aptitude: Myths, Noble Lies, and Women

Isocrates challenges stronger formulations of aptitude by valorizing education and the work of teachers. As I demonstrated above, Isocrates even implicates education to explain the differences that exist between Greeks and non-Greeks. He remains silent, however, about whether *nomos*-driven conceptions of aptitude, which acknowledge their social construction (Welch, *Electric Rhetoric* 52), can account for the differences between men and women or the wealthy and the laboring classes. In this section, I will return yet again to the elusive Plato, whose prior formulations of aptitude have already been characterized as strong (e.g., he invokes models of utopias led by almost divine philosophers) and as general (e.g., in *Phaedrus*, he voices the trope that rhetorical excellence is a result of natural ability, knowledge, and practice). I will argue that Plato, even more so than Isocrates, provides an opportunity to destabilize the supremacy of aptitude, especially as regards to the development of *areté* and rhetorical ability.

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[47] Though Isocrates distinguishes between Greeks and Persians by fundamental and essential differences, he suggests that a Greek identity could spread to the rest of the world. Not relying upon the *physis* of race (*genos*), he describes a Greek identity based upon culture and intellectualism: "[Athens] has brought it about that the name 'Hellenes' suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title 'Hellenes' is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood" (*Panegyricus* 50). See also Ste. Croix's examination of this statement (300).

Plato discredits a conception of aptitude based upon an appeal of *physis* in three separate passages. First, in *Protagoras*, Plato presents "The Myth of Prometheus," a narrative attributed to the celebrity sophist Protagoras, who pronounces that all human beings have the capacity for *areté*. Second, in the *Republic*, Plato again deploys a myth, "The Myth of the Metals," in which Socrates discloses that the differences among the social classes are not natural but ideological. Finally, in Book V of the *Republic*, Plato, by disputing the natural differences that exist between men and women, possibly defends the right of women to education and positions of leadership. Below, I summarize these three appearances of a more egalitarian aptitude and analyze their implications for rhetoric. I am mindful of the fact that Plato, by occupying all three of the categories of aptitude simultaneously, contradicts – and weakens – this defining apparatus. At the close of this chapter, therefore, I explore the consequences of Plato's elusiveness by suggesting what a sophistic definition of aptitude might look like.

The Myth of Prometheus

In *Meno* and *Protagoras*, Plato forces his hero, Socrates, to hold the unpopular position that *areté* does not arise by sophistic training, aristocratic *paideia*, or by chance. Instead of these commonplace explanations, at the end of *Meno*, Socrates reveals to his convinced interlocutor – and to unconvinced contemporary readers – that "divine dispensation" is responsible for the existence of *areté* in certain human beings. Plato presents several reasons for this belief. First, he defends his stance that *areté* cannot be taught by deriding the practical, commercialized educational projects of the sophists. In *Protagoras*, Socrates, while conversing with a young student eager to meet Protagoras,

associates shame with sophism[48] (312a) and scorns the sophists themselves as baunasic "merchants" or "peddlers" trying to sell values that cultivate the soul (313c). Second, by invoking his observations of how government assemblies operate, Socrates argues that there are specific, teachable subjects (for which governments retain trained experts) and general, non-teachable issues (for which all individuals, regardless of occupation and social class, can provide advice). *Areté*, according to Plato, is an example of the latter, for it represents a universal, philosophical quality, the successful and complete fulfillment of such values as justice and righteousness (Guthrie, *The Sophists* 253). For a sophist like Protagoras, *areté* is a rhetorical term, not a philosophical one: it has practical implications for the private and public lives of students. Ignoring the specialized disciplines such as arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy (which appear in Plato's educational program), Protagoras emphasizes instruction in language and *areté*, the latter which will teach "the proper care of his [the student's] personal affairs, so that he may best manage his own household, and also of the state's affairs, so as to become a real power in the city, both as a speaker and man of action" (318e-319a). *Areté*, comprised of a set of ethical, leadership, and personal values, becomes a vital part of Protagoras' rhetorical curriculum, one that amounts, according to Guthrie, to a *techné* of citizenship (*The Sophists* 38).

Plato must also defend his anti-aristocratic claim that *areté* does not arise from a hereditary *physis*. The sons of prominent and elite leaders, he contends, rarely live up to the standards of *areté* set by their fathers, regardless of the excellence of their education.

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[48] Importantly, Protagoras begins his dialogue with Socrates by proclaiming with pride his identity as a sophist (316d-317c).

Plato even critiques the sons of Pericles, the paragon of Athenian *areté*. Even though they received an excellent education in specialized subjects, they received no training in these public and private values: "In his [Pericles'] own kind of wisdom he neither trains them himself nor hands them over to any other instructor; they simply browse around on their own like sacred cattle, on the chance of picking up virtue [*areté*] automatically" (320a). These "sacred cattle," according to Plato, became worthless leaders. In *Meno*, Plato has Socrates provide even more examples of sons who failed the expectations of their powerful fathers. The implications of Socrates' claim, that *areté* cannot be passed from father to son, evokes an admonition from Anytus,[49] himself an elite politician: "You seem to me, Socrates, to be too ready to run people down. My advice to you, if you will listen to it, is to be careful. I dare say that in all cities it is easier to do a man harm than good, and it is certainly so here, as I expect you know yourself" (94e). Anytus's warning indicates the danger of Socrates' position: he could attack the training of the sophists, but he should not challenge an ideological system that "naturally" transfers political power from fathers to sons.

In *Protagoras*, after Socrates states his claims about the futility of teaching *areté* or acquiring it by *physis*, Protagoras, the monological celebrity orator, takes the stage and presents his case for why all human beings possess the capacity for *areté* and why almost all can develop these values through training. But, before I summarize Protagoras' defense, I must hesitate: wouldn't a historian of classical education like F. A. G. Beck question why I have not presented Protagoras alone, as a representative of a rhetorical

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[49] Guthrie suggests that Anytus was the one responsible for recommending Socrates' death penalty (*Meno* 353).

school completely independent of Plato and his codification of Protagoras in his dialogues? Beck, in *Greek Education*, feels comfortable in talking about a historical Protagoras, separate from Plato's "Protagoras," simply because he trusts Plato; in fact, Beck contends that the Platonic dialogues can be accepted as "historically true, or at least historically possible" and that they were based upon "fact, or what Plato perceived to be fact" (150). In other words, we should accept the Platonic "Protagoras" as a substitute for the historical Protagoras, perhaps, as Guthrie suggests, because Plato's account parallels the fragments of Protagoras (*The Sophists* 256). Unfortunately, even though I do not doubt Plato's faithfulness of describing Protagoras' teaching methodology and rhetorical theory, I distrust Plato, especially in this case in which Plato's motives for deploying Protagoras are suspicious. Most importantly, Plato forces Socrates to argue an untenable position, one that Protagoras easily demolishes; in other words, I cannot trust Plato[50] when he depicts his philosophical hero as a loser and a despised (though respected) sophist as a victor. Consequently, as I proceed, I will present a sophistic version of a weakened formulation of aptitude, yet I will be unable to extricate it from Plato's texts and purposes.

In his defense of the tenet that all human beings possess at least the capacity for *areté*, Protagoras presents "The Myth of Prometheus,"[51] which describes human beings in their natural state, who, because of divine irresponsibility, were left unable to defend themselves against animals and the elements. Prometheus, feeling pity on them, bestows

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[50] In *Plato, Derrida, and Writing*, Jasper Neel announces his distrust of Plato, especially his project to appropriate writing and the powerful voice of Socrates in order to destroy the system of writing itself in philosophical inquiry (6-9).

them with fire and specialized skills in hunting, farming, carpentry, and other crafts so that they can protect and sustain themselves. However, because these original people only possessed specialized capabilities and lacked *areté*, specifically the "qualities of respect for others and a sense of justice" (322c), they were unable to unite together and form larger communities. Like the inhabitants of Cicero's myth of progress before the advent of persuasion, once these people came together, "they injured one another for want of political skill, and so scattered again and continued to be devoured" (322b-c). Zeus observes this destruction of the human race and becomes involved, sending Hermes to endow all human beings (it is unclear whether Protagoras would restrict this claim to male citizens) with the values of respect and justice. All people, Zeus pronounces, must possess the capacity for these values of *areté*. For human beings who are unable to develop their innate, ethical capabilities, Zeus warns, "You must lay it down as my law that if anyone is incapable of acquiring his share of these two virtues he shall be put to death as a plague to the city" (322d). For the narrative of aptitude, this myth is important: it justifies the differences between specific skills and general values; more importantly, it allows an equal opportunity for people to develop themselves as leaders, citizens, and ethical orators.[52]

In order to counter Socrates' claims that *areté* cannot be taught, Protagoras provides two additional arguments. The first suggests that Socrates' ideal conception of education ignores the role of punishment in the forming of children's characters. For

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[51] See Guthrie's *The Sophists* for an extended discussion of how Protagoras defended the possibility of teaching *areté* (63-68).

[52] Atwill reminds us, however, that Protagoras' stance may have different, far less democratic implications. By assuring that the poor, marginalized *demos* have political and legal equity (*isonomia*),

Protagoras, education is a generalized form of punishment. All individuals, both formally and informally, in private and in public, undergo an education of observation, control, correction, and punishment; their young lives are marked by parents, nurses, and tutors telling them the standards of right and wrong conduct and speech. Once the children go to school, grammar, music, and gymnastic instructors continue to shape the children, through the use of moralistic texts or instruction in rhythm and harmony (326a-b). The state continues the instruction – in the form of written laws – once the children become adults.

Yet, despite punishment, control, and all the advantages of a formal education, Protagoras still must explain why some sons fail to emulate their fathers. Protagoras finally resorts to aptitude, in the form of an analogy: he explains that if instead of *areté*, it was excellence in flute playing that represented the most privileged social characteristic, the sons of excellent flute players would not necessarily become good flute players themselves. Protagoras argues that

> whoever had a son with the greatest natural talent for the flute, his son would rise to fame, and a son without this talent would remain in obscurity. The son of a good performer would often be a poor one, and vice versa, but at any rate all would be good enough in comparison with someone who knew nothing of flute playing at all. (327b-c)

In this important quotation, Protagoras claims that (a) aptitude is not hereditary, but an accidental, random trait and (b) the differences among individuals in aptitude, especially in regards to developing ethical values, are slight. If even the most reprehensible

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Protagoras does not extend economic equality (*isomoiria*) to them (64-65).

individual in Athens were to be compared with a lawless savage (327d), Protagoras reminds his listeners, then the former would appear to possess a great deal of *areté*. In this formation, aptitude no longer remains an ideological apparatus to rationalize the social status of elites; moreover, though perhaps to a degree still necessary, it is no longer of importance.

The Noble Lie[53]

Plato again acts suspiciously when, in the *Republic*, he allows the honest Socrates to deploy a myth, which he refers to, hesitantly, as a "Phoenician tale" and the work of poets (414c), and more pragmatically, as a "noble lie." Socrates' motivation for creating this myth is that it will help preserve and perpetuate the three-tiered class system of his model of the ideal state (in this case, as Socrates has yet to introduce the philosopher kings, the state is comprised of commoners, helpers, and guardians). All of the inhabitants of the state would be told this lie, a story that describes how gold was intermingled within the creation of rulers, silver within their helpers, and brass or iron within the souls of craftspeople, farmers, and other commoners.

Despite the rigid essentialism this myth perpetuates, Socrates partially recognizes a non-hereditary position of aptitude: "Though for the most part you will breed after your kinds, it may sometimes happen that a golden father would beget a silver son and that a golden offspring would come from a silver sire and that the rest would in like manner be born of one another" (415b). Socrates indicates the possibility of upward social mobility. Children possessing gold natures, regardless of the status of their parents, will take

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[53] I find it significant that Stephen Jay Gould uses a description of this myth in the introduction to *The Mismeasure of Man*, a text which reveals the racist and colonialist ideology of intelligence testing.

leadership positions; the opposite is also true, for "if sons are born to them [gold parents] with an infusion of brass or iron they shall by no means give way to pity in their treatment of them, but shall assign to each the status due to his nature and thrust them out among the artisans or the farmers" (415b-c). Though, this class instability has limits. A component of this story is an oracle that prophesizes the downfall of the state if a "man of iron or brass" – a commoner – ever takes a position of leadership.

Why does Plato need to resort to a noble lie that explains why men are different, especially when in the same text he provides an intricate system of natural abilities, stages of selection, and educational systems (of course, the utopia itself is in this sense a "lie")? Perhaps the myth of gods forging the souls of men with different types of precious metal acts as an analogy of the system of aptitude itself – or, possibly for Plato, it reveals the ideology of a state that will endorse lies in order to preserve itself, its unity, and its class structure. At this moment, Socrates suddenly becomes pragmatic, creating a story in order that elites would not question their social status and, obviously, so that commoners would not challenge theirs.

Plato, Aptitude, & Women

In fifth- and fourth-century Athens, conceptions of a *physis*-dominated aptitude operate to silence women and control their bodies. Cheryl Glenn, interrogating Aristotle's fundamental sexism in *Generation of Animals*, contends that his preconceived bias against women and his flawed empirical methodology led him to the claim that men were naturally superior to women. Whereas the male body represented self-control, form, and movement, the female body was unable to control itself and its excesses (49). Women, then, along with slaves, were meant for silence; in the private sphere of the

husband's or father's home, they were to remain hidden. The public sphere, the stage of rhetoric was meant exclusively for men (Pomeroy, *Goddesses* 79-82).

Plato, in Book V of the *Republic*, disputes this – presenting, perhaps, the first western voice to question whether essential differences exist between men and women. Plato's statement is a controversial one, and has a rich and contentious history in the classics, feminist studies, and philosophy.[54] Plato depicts Socrates as poised to describe how different types of souls align themselves to specific governments when his listeners heatedly interrupt him and demand him to first discuss the institutions of sexual relationships and family in his ideal state. Socrates – to a suspiciously agreeable audience – denies in principle any basic differences between men and women, besides an inconsequential difference of physical sexuality (454d-e). Jokingly, Socrates considers these differences equivalent to those of a bald man and a man with long hair. Sexual differences, he implies, do not assign human beings to separate, fundamental categories that naturally restrict the type of education and experiences they can participate in.

Plato's assertion of the egalitarianism of men and women can be distilled in this one quotation:

> There is no pursuit of the administrators of the state that belongs to a woman because she is a woman or to a man because he is a man. But the natural capacities are distributed alike among both creatures, and women naturally share in all pursuits and men in all – yet for all the woman is weaker than the man. (455d-e)

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[54] Natalie Bluestone's *Women and the Ideal Society* summarizes the critical reception of Plato's pronouncements in Book V. Especially interesting is her engagement of critics who dispute Plato's alleged feminism (90-102).

What Plato accomplishes is a reversal in how *physis* determines the outcomes of men and women. Unlike Aristotle, for Plato male and female physical differences become inconsequential and, such as the differences of short and long hair, a part of *nomos*. He reinstates, however, the primacy of his unitary conception of aptitude: individuals, regardless of their sex, are meant to become commoners, guardians, or philosopher kings or queens. There is not a single occupation meant only for men (e.g., rhetoric) or for women (e.g., child rearing). Both men and women must fulfill their particular aptitudes in order to contribute to the ideal state.

There are problems, obviously, with Plato's egalitarian statement. According to feminist classicists like Sarah Pomeroy, it represents only a halfhearted attempt to challenge how conceptions of *physis* have separated men and women and delegated the latter to a silent, private existence. Pomeroy contends that Plato conceives of women as the property of male guardians and of never possibly being the equals of men ("Feminism in Book V" 33-34; *Goddesses* 115-118). His conclusion that "the woman is weaker than the man" in the quotation above sounds similar to Aristotle and still bases itself in *physis*. Perhaps, for an audience of males, Plato feels constrained to qualify his statement of the equality of aptitudes, yet this definition of differences by degree does have its consequences: in general, according to Plato, women are unable to match the rhetorical and leadership abilities of men; in turn, this deficiency impacts their education and ultimate responsibilities, as Plato specifies in his provisions for "lighter tasks" for women "because of their weakness as a class" (*Republic* 457a).

Even though the impact of Plato's "feminism" is blunted by his inability to recognize the possibility of women's equal capacity (Glenn 52-53), his admission that

women could occupy positions – that of philosopher queens – superior to many men (Glenn reminds us that Plato did possibly allow two women to study under him [53]) does weaken strong definitions of aptitude, such as those offered by Aristotle to show the natural and logical inferiority of women, slaves, the poor, and non-Greeks. Plato provides a glimpse of a revolutionary restructuring of sex, education, rhetoric, and the public/private sphere. Unfortunately, he ultimately withdraws back towards an Aristotelian conception of natural difference – one based, not on kind, but by degree.

Conclusion: A Sophistic Definition of Aptitude?

> Our natural endowment is the same for us all, on all points, whether we are Greeks or barbarians. We may observe the characteristics of any of the powers which by nature are necessary to all men. [...] None of us is set apart either as Greek or as barbarian. We all breathe the air through our mouths and nostrils. (Barker 85)

The quotation above, from a fragment attributed to Antiphon, a fifth-century sophist, represents the weaker formulation of aptitude, a sophistic perspective that Plato articulates in Socrates' uncharacteristic defeat to Protagoras, Socrates' (sophistic) lie, and Socrates' relatively egalitarian inclusion of women. An exact definition of sophistic aptitude – by which I mean the theoretical framework of either a weakened or obviated aptitude – is difficult to capture, especially because a monolithic construction of the sophists, which would need to include Isocrates and possibly even Plato, is problematic. Antiphon, for example, deploys *physis*, as a set of natural rights that all human beings possess, in order to question the differences of Greeks and "barbarians," and, by implication, the differences between slaves and citizens, and men and women (Barker 67-

68). The more *nomos*-centered theories of aptitude of Protagoras and Isocrates question the universality of Antiphon's claims (though, Protagoras' contention that all people share at least the capacity for *areté* parallels Antiphon). These problems of defining what constitutes an egalitarian version of aptitude forecast twentieth-century discussions that contrast Enlightenment theories of human nature with social construction (see Chapter 6).

Nevertheless, I wish to close this chapter with rough criteria for what could comprise a sophistic stance towards aptitude. The sophistic perspective

- reveals the ideological motivation of strong and general formations of aptitude, especially in how they deploy *physis* to justify social hierarchies (see Welch, *Electric Rhetoric* 52).
- disputes the concept of *physis* in which divine or "natural" laws are established outside the discourses of human beings.
- challenges the belief in a singular, unitary aptitude that differentiates individuals or groups.

The main consequence of these three criteria is that they open up access to education for more human beings. Instead of restricting language training to upper-class Athenian males, positions like those of Antiphon and Plato at least allowed for the possibility of including women and non-Greeks (though, in practice, the sophists often restricted access by demanding fees for their teaching). Additionally, sophistic aptitude provides a space for writers and teachers like Aspasia and Diotima, who, as women and non-Athenians, would be automatically silenced by stronger definitions that could only accept the "natural" superiority of males (Glenn 13-14, 49).

Chapter IV

Capturing Individual Minds and Faithful Texts: Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Standardized Testing

In the middle of the nineteenth century, David Page published *Theory and Practice of Teaching*, a textbook for American primary-school teachers that based teaching excellence in terms of the classical commonplace triad of natural ability, training, and experience. Lacking aptitude, Page writes, teachers will labor tediously in an unnatural profession (21-22); without training and experience, teachers will be unable to cultivate taste, culture, and mental discipline, and will rely instead on stale, mechanical principles of methodology and the "barren technicalities" of English grammar (79). Additionally, echoing Quintilian, Isocrates, and Plato, Page insists that teachers must possess good and moral characters; after all, they must represent the prime model and center of morality for students: "[The teacher's] example in every thing before his school should be pure, flowing out from the purity of his soul" (47). So clean should their minds and souls be, that, according to Page, this purity will be manifested in the cleanliness of their bodies, nails, teeth, clothes, and, most importantly, language (64). Finally, Page decries the lack of professionalism in education, deriding every failed "clerk" or "farmer" who still regards himself as competent to teach. Failures, amateurs, and reprobates should not involve themselves in the important work of training children; for those who enter the profession despite their lack of aptitude, training, and moral character, Page provides this violent warning: "The school is no place for a man without principle. [...] Let starvation seize the body, and send the soul back to its Maker as it is, rather than he should incur the fearful guilt of poisoning youthful minds and dragging them down to his

own pitiable level" (49-50). Page pronounces the death sentence on those who would corrupt the youth – the same crime for which Socrates was condemned.

Although he focused on teachers and not on students, Page's adherence to the classical commonplaces of aptitude in *Theory and Practice of Teaching* suggests the persistent power and authority of rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian in nineteenth-century educational theory. Page's reliance upon the necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine, emphasis of moral conduct and general education, and aristocratic scorn against undesirables entering the profession corresponds well to a classical conception of aptitude that operates to identify orators and cultural and political leaders and that makes these selections appear natural and unbiased, not determined, that is, by the often highly visible social markers of status, sex and gender, occupation, race, and ethnicity.

Despite the persistence of classical rhetoric in nineteenth-century educational theory, in this chapter I examine aptitude in the context of an objective and meritocratic rhetorical theory that dominated college composition from its inception in the 1870s to the insurgence of process pedagogy that marked the revival of composition studies in the 1960s. This powerful, pervasive, and highly successful theory of language, learning, and knowledge has become known as current-traditional rhetoric (Crowley 175), a pejorative term that encapsulates everything that contemporary composition scholars deplore about how writing was – and, in certain classrooms, still is – taught in the academy: an emphasis on final textual products, editing, style, usage, and expository prose; assumptions of a reality that is independent of writers; and, the exclusion of rhetoric from invention (Hairston 78). Though in this chapter I use the term "current-traditional" in my general discussions of the effects of this particular writing pedagogy, I deploy

Berlin's less anachronistic "objective rhetoric" in my historical excursions. Berlin's term has the additional advantage of concentrating upon the epistemological differences of competing American rhetorical theories; unlike expressivist and social rhetorics, objective rhetoric assumes a material reality detached from human perceivers and their language (8-9), a *physis*-dominated source of truth that will have important implications for conceptions of natural ability.

Because of the expanse of time that current-traditional rhetoric spans, I will need to narrow the focus of my analysis. First, I examine how aptitude operates in the commonsense philosophy of Thomas Reid and in the empirical rhetoric of George Campbell, whose *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, along with Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, were fundamental influences for nineteenth-century rhetoricians in the United States (Berlin, *Rhetoric & Reality* 2; Crowley 56-57; Johnson 45). I am especially interested in how little attention Campbell paid to aptitude, despite the fact that he centered his rhetorical project on minds consisting of innate processes and faculties. Second, I will compare the role of aptitude in Adam Sherman Hill's *The Principles of Rhetoric*, Alexander Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric*, and John Genung's *The Practical Elements of Rhetoric*, all three influential textbooks in college composition in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These texts, I argue, represent divergent positions within objective rhetoric. Hill's and Bain's texts, emphasizing correctness, prescriptive style rules, and static genres, focus rarely upon the innate abilities students bring to their writing. Genung, on the other hand, stressing that invention is unteachable, contends that students produce different types of texts based upon their psychological makeup. Finally, I will extend my discussion of current-

traditional rhetoric to standardized testing of verbal intelligence in the first half of the twentieth century. Aptitude forcefully reemerges as a measurable variable that can predict students' future performances and provide educators with a seemingly objective framework from which to classify, select, and rank individuals. Though the testing of verbal intelligence largely remains outside of the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric and composition, it has had a damaging impact on how students and educators perceive language and writing – reinforcing, at the same time, current-traditional rhetoric's cult of correctness and convergent thinking.

This analysis of the role of aptitude in current-traditional rhetoric and its reification as a measurable variable of verbal intelligence benefits from the well-established histories of Scottish and American rhetoric. For example, Thomas Miller, Sharon Crowley, and Nan Johnson provide the political, philosophical, and psychological connections between the Scottish Enlightenment rhetorics of George Campbell and Hugh Blair and those of the American composition textbook tradition. They place current-traditional rhetoric in the context of a break from classical epistemology and language theory, especially in how rhetorical invention became centered in the minds of private, individual rhetors. Albert Kitzhaber and James Berlin locate college composition as a discipline, in the second half of the nineteenth century, which was marginalized within institutions transforming themselves from sectarian colleges of general education to secular universities based upon the German research model, which consisted of departments, electives, specializations, and scientific experts. Richard Ohmann, similarly, critiques current-traditional rhetoric's role in this new, meritocratic university

as it provided the language for a burgeoning professional middle-class – a language not meant for social action, but for the objective, agency-less transmission of information.

Aptitude in the Scottish Enlightenment: Reid and Campbell

> The mind may in this respect be compared to an apothecary or a chemist, whose materials indeed are furnished by nature; but for the purposes of his art, he mixes, compounds, dissolves, evaporates, and sublimes them, till they put on a quite different appearance; so that it is very difficult to know what they were at first, and much more to bring them back to their original and natural form. (Reid 14)

In the quotation above, Thomas Reid talks of the difficulty of psychological introspection: though anatomists have obvious visual evidence in order to support their classifications, philosophers of the mind find it almost impossible to trace complex ideas back to their origins (13), sites which emanate from innate cognitive faculties and universal cognitive processes. The assumptions of Reid's quotation are important. Human beings at their birth, he contends, are not pure "blank slates" upon which empirical facts of experience are inscribed; nor, however, are they equipped with innate ideas with which individuals learn to interact with the world. Thomas Miller stresses the common ground established by commonsense philosophers like Reid and Campbell, who take "from the former [i.e., empiricists like Locke] the method of induction, and [rely] on the latter [i.e., rationalists] for the view that certain propensities of human nature are prior to experience and cannot be reduced to sensory phenomena" (214). Reid refers to these innate propensities as "seeds"; they can represent instincts of self preservation common to all animals or the distinctly human faculties of reasoning, taste, morality, and common

sense (13). Reid does not restrict these faculties to a select range of human beings. All individuals have these innate "seeds"; even the "savage" possesses the same innate capacities as "the logician, the man of taste and breeding, the orator, the statesman, the man of virtue, and the saint" (13). These capabilities remain latent, however, until the individual receives the requisite experience, culture, training, and practice.

In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, George Campbell locates the basis of all rhetorical activity in these innate faculties and upon natural operations of the mind. His rhetoric arises, therefore, from an intersection of two psychological theories, medieval faculty psychology and Lockean associationism (Crowley 16-17). Faculty psychology provides Campbell with the structure from which to build the communicative goals of language. Rhetoric enlightens, pleases, moves, and influences because these aims reflect inner, natural categories: the understanding, imagination, passions, and will, respectively. Campbell builds an efficient rhetorical system from these correspondences of mind to linguistic goals. Each aim of the writer is matched with a distinct genre and then transmitted – as clearly, accurately, unambiguously, and forcefully as possible – to a reader whose appropriate faculty will be able to decode the message.

If faculty psychology allows for an audience-driven rhetoric (even though this audience is universalized), associationism enables Campbell to refocus on individual rhetors and explain how they have something to write about. Campbell claims that it is natural for the human mind to rely on empirical evidence as the primary source of simple ideas; furthermore, the mind executes universal associative actions based on principles – such as resemblance, contiguity, and causality – in order to develop complex ideas and concepts (Johnson 22). Rhetors, in Campbell's linear system, acquire empirical facts

(i.e., "simple ideas") via their senses from an objective reality that exists independent of themselves. They then utilize the logical procedures of associationism in order to elaborate upon thoughts which can next be encoded in language, according to a finite group of stylistic rules, and conducted faithfully to a universal audience. Campbell's chain of rational events, linking human nature to written discourse, serves as an adequate gloss for what will later become current-traditional rhetoric. It is, according to Crowley, another (failed) attempt to philosophize rhetoric, with the usual consequences: rhetorical situations are made universal, the ideological motivations of writers and speakers are erased, and language becomes a pliable tool for the representation of thought; in felicitous communication exchanges, language erases its own existence, becoming a transparent conduit of thought (165-167).

Yet, what does Campbell's rational system of human nature, knowledge, and language say about aptitude? Importantly, very little. Johnson, critiquing the influence of Campbell's rhetoric upon American current-traditional rhetoric, claims that objective rhetoric substitutes the highly social and active role of the classical orator with that of the modern conception of the manager, a rhetorical subject whose responsibilities are to make individual and private decisions regarding purpose, genre, style, and audience, to "replicate the laws of association in the structure of discourse and to infuse language with those qualities most likely to bring tangible referents and experiences to mind" (22). As rhetors become managers connecting aims and types of evidence to discursive forms, language becomes a transcription device, a conduit objectively linking writers to readers. It is uncertain, however, for Campbell, if these rhetorical managers require aptitude, a

trait or potentiality that would make certain writers more adept or efficient than others at adapting language to produce an effect in a reader.

Campbell and Reid make assumptions about the innateness of the mind and of how it acquires knowledge and uses language; but by designating these innate principles as universals, as *areté* was provided for all human beings in Protagoras' myth, Campbell and Reid resist conceptualizing a site of natural ability that differentiates the effectiveness of speakers and writers. Campbell hints, in several passages, that the capabilities and capacities of members of the lower classes are lower than others (263-264), but he ascribes these differences to their lack of experiences and training. In another section, Campbell states that the oratorical "talent" for becoming an effective preacher is rare, but he does not define how the rhetorical skills of a preacher are qualitatively different than those of politicians and lawyers, nor does he describe what the source of this "talent" would be. Reid pursues research in original language theory to account for the different performances of rhetors; in this case, individuals closer to an authentic, oral language – Reid uses mutes and the ubiquitous "savage" as examples – may quite possibly outperform rhetors who rely upon an artificial writing system and unnatural jargon (52-53). In Chapter 5, by analyzing the expressivist rhetorics of contemporary American composition scholars, I will examine the assumptions and consequences of those, like Reid, who champion a conception of natural language.

Up to this point, I have ignored Reid and Campbell's emphasis on common sense, a fundamental component of their projects.[55] Like classical *areté*, common sense is a

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[55] See Conley for an explanation of Claude Buffier's early deployment of "*un sentiment commun*" (194-197).

complex term that has implications for aptitude, insofar as it reflects the morality of rhetors and vacillates in the contentious binary of *physis* and *nomos*, innateness and social convention. Miller confronts the ambiguous way Reid deploys common sense. Reid, Miller argues, defines it at times as a faculty and thus a part of an individual's cognitive equipment that exists prior to language and experience; in other areas, Reid focuses upon a more general connotation of common sense, as the social wisdom accessible to all members of a discourse community (T. Miller 215). Every time Reid derides the skeptical philosophy of David Hume and announces that he hopes to begin his examination from the common sense of the "vulgar" (Reid 28), he reiterates his belief that common sense is a way of thinking and not an apparatus for thought. Miller, reminding us that Campbell relied upon a more straightforward conception of common sense as an unproblematic and natural component of the mind, teases out the political implications of the competing versions of this term: a version of common sense as a social convention could have had democratizing consequences for the history of rhetoric; instead, as Campbell's definition of common sense as a faculty became the accepted one, many moral and psychological issues became natural, commonsensical, and thus unassailable.

James Oswald, another philosophical precursor to Campbell, provides a comprehensive list of exactly what principles this Enlightenment common sense dictates. We must accept without question, Oswald insists, that we exist, that our identities our stable across time, that a world of objective facts exists before us, that we possess morality, and that we are all aware of the standards of truth (Ardley 6). Reid and Campbell, additionally, supplement their doctrines of common sense by asserting that the

memory of human beings is a faithful recording of past experiences (Campbell 40) and that the evidence of the senses, the memory, and the associative logic of ideas holds empirical validity (Reid 32). Common sense allows for individuals to not question themselves, nor to doubt their relationship to the world of objective facts. It is instrumental for Campbell's rhetoric: rhetors, as managers making decisions regarding aims, types of evidence, genres, and style, need to have faith in their experiences, memories, and ideas in order to remain as active subjects of discourse.

It is significant that, whereas Campbell does not directly declare that some individuals are better speakers or writers because of some innate rhetorical equipment, he does claim that individuals possess different strengths of common sense: "I own [...] that in different persons it prevails in different degrees of strength; but no human creature hath been found originally and totally destitute of it, who is not accounted a monster in his kind; for such, doubtless, are all idiots and changelings" (39-40). Campbell's "idiots" and "changelings" – unlike Reid's "savages" – cannot communicate; the evidence that they would acquire by way of their senses and the complex ideas that they would construct could not be considered as rational and objective material for discourse. Yet, since almost all human beings possess it, common sense promises egalitarian possibilities. We can all, to varying degrees of effectiveness, manage evidence and discourse and adapt it to specific audiences; we can, that is, all participate in rhetoric.

There are consequences, however, to Campbell's focus on individual rhetors who possess varying strengths of common sense and different qualities of experiences. He allows for the possibility of certain individuals possessing better memories and attention levels as well as being more conscious of their experiences and reflective of the logical

connections they make between ideas. As these "natural" qualities make them better rational subjects, they may make them better managers of rhetoric: their final texts will accurately represent the order of their minds. Unfortunately, there will exist texts that fail to meet the expectations of Campbell's stylistics. Discourses will remain that repulse the criteria of clarity, correctness, vivacity, and national appropriateness. Campbell, in an attempt to establish the source of these failed texts, implicates the poverty of experiences and education of the vast majority of people. These people possess few ideas and even fewer language resources (142).

Finally, recent conversations in rhetorical, feminist, and post-structuralist theory also must be taken into consideration when considering the egalitarianism of Campbell and its impact as an ethical stance. In short, Enlightenment universalities, especially those that homogenize human nature, are no longer to be trusted. They have been condemned as ideological stances that erase differences and nullify the agency of the marginalized constituents, silencing the positions and voices that differ because of race, gender, ethnicity, and class. In rhetorical theory, for example, the "universal audience" has been dismantled in favor of a multiplicity of readers and interpretive communities. Third-wave feminist theory, meanwhile, has adopted the language of "feminisms," attempting to bridge the gap between the empowering agency of a singular feminist stance with that of radical scholars like bell hooks and Adrienne Rich who contest a monolithic construction of "woman" (Ede et al. 406-407; Jarratt, "Introduction" 5-8). Of course, Campbell nor the nineteenth-century rhetoricians he influenced had to confront the social exigencies that would transform the makeup of college classrooms and force composition studies to turn to theories predicated upon difference and discourse

communities (Hairston 82). For his predominantly male, middle-class, and white students and readers, Campbell's theory of universal human nature was successful, as it provided a detached, socially neutral space that mirrored exactly their own interests.

Originating Minds in the Meritocratic University

In the often bleak *Rhetoric in American Colleges*, Albert Kitzhaber describes the institutional reasons in the middle of the nineteenth century for why the highly empirical rhetoric of the Scottish Enlightenment became entrenched in the college composition courses of American universities. Texts like Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* centered themselves on individual minds and their attempts to report, with as much precision as possible, the contents of their memories. Language and rhetoric were able to become scientific apparatuses extending from the mind, itself an inductive mechanism. Such theories of language, communication, and knowledge were well suited for the transformation of the sectarian, elite liberal arts college into the modern university. Harvard, according to Kitzhaber, was the prime example. Reforming a core curriculum based upon the trivium and classical languages, Harvard imported the Germanic university model, which consisted of an elective system, graduate studies, and independent departments. More importantly, Harvard reformed its purpose. Responding to the influx of students from middle-class backgrounds, Harvard no longer solely remained as an institution for cultivating the religious, legal, and political elite; it refashioned itself as a meritocratic university, one that would assess the achievements of individuals, defined as the quality of their experiences and their ability to communicate

them. It is no surprise, therefore, that Harvard was the first university in the United States to use entrance tests in English to select and rank students.[56]

Institutions indebted to meritocratic principles require language and language-learning theories grounded in the minds of relatively equal individuals. Current-traditional rhetoric, influenced by Campbell, Blair, and Whately, and adapted, after the 1870s, to the requirements of the American university (e.g., the attention paid to paragraph-length themes), met the criteria of a meritocratic rhetoric: 1) The material of language resided in private, individual minds; 2.) Evidence for arguments was widely accessible to most students; 3.) The effectiveness of a discourse was easily discernible and based upon relatively stable stylistic categories of perspicuity, order, force, unity, and efficiency; 4) It was predicated upon a "natural" curriculum that began with the word (i.e., diction) and then the sentence, before moving on to the paragraph and, finally, the complete theme (Kitzhaber 156-157); and, 5) The final written products of students provided an accurate trace of their minds (Crowley 53-54); that is, well-arranged texts reflect healthy minds. In short, current-traditional theory enabled teachers easily to judge a large number of students, rank them, and make decisions – based upon final texts – regarding achievement.

Objective theories of the mind and language require notions, like those articulated by Campbell, of universality. Texts can faithfully reproduce objective reality, but only insofar as the minds of both writers and readers are "right" – that they function according

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[56] Not all institutions joined Harvard's reforms. According to James Berlin, Princeton and Yale, both which rejected college composition, were still in the business of discovering and cultivating geniuses (*Rhetoric & Reality* 35). Grasping to the classical education model, these schools rejected the departmentalization and specialization of the German research model (Kitzhaber 18-19). John Brereton

to Campbell's natural progression of experience, concept generation, discourse formation, and decoding. Rhetoric and language are transparent instruments; they only leave a trace during events of miscommunication, when either the mind of the writer or reader is not functioning properly. Yet, despite this stance of universality, does current-traditional rhetoric completely obviate the natural ability of students? As a stable, often mechanistic theory of communication – with its rigid genres and often generic audiences – does it ever rely upon psychological traits that are, purportedly, un-teachable and un-learnable? Does it make impossible natural differences of students?

Two highly influential texts that I examined, Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric* and Hill's *The Principles of Rhetoric*, indeed, place little emphasis on language aptitude. In Bain's Preface, he matter-of-factly tells English teachers that they will have little effect upon their students' "fund of expression," not because their linguistic abilities are determined by innate faculties, but because they are molded by everyday experience, the "practice of life"; teachers, quite simply, will not provide enough exposure to alter their students' linguistic habits (3). The most teachers can hope to do is train students to judge what constitutes good and bad expression. Bain's textbook, consequently, primarily consists of lists of prescriptive rules (e.g. "The opening sentence, unless so constructed as to be obviously preparatory, is expected to indicate with prominence the subject of the paragraph" [150]), explanations of the elements that make up effective discourse (e.g., "In the Epigram the mind is roused by a conflict or contradiction between the form of the language and the meaning really conveyed" [51]), examples of rhetorical

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notes how elite schools like Princeton, in order to avoid mandatory composition courses, simply maintained high entrance requirements (14); by 1895, however, Yale relented and began to offer composition (160).

principles, and practice exercises. Like Campbell, Bain maintains that the innate structures of the mind provide the basis for the principles of rhetoric, and at the same time, that these principles reveal how these structures actually work. For instance, familiar tropes like antithesis, metaphor, and metonymy are effective because they can resemble a physical phenomenon, such as sudden change, that the mind responds to (21-22); moreover, a trope like a simile can reflect the mind's natural interest in apprehending similarities, due to the fact that it operates by way of an innate associative logic. However, Bain remains silent as to whether the innate structures and processes of the mind equate to different linguistic performances.

Hill's text is similar. He again champions the image of rhetors as efficient managers of language, who should possess as large a vocabulary as possible so that they can match their thoughts directly and unambiguously with suitable words. Borrowing Herbert Spencer's application of industrial metaphors to language, Hill provides a more concise analogy of the rhetor to the (capitalist) manager: a good rhetor/manager deploys the "machinery of language" as efficiently and economically as possible in order not to use up the cognitive resources of readers (163-164) – and thus allow them to preserve their energy for dealing with the meaning of the discourse, not the language; according to Hill, the "greatest genius of all" is a writer – like Dante – who cannot only conserve readers' attentive powers but actually increase this energy by means of figurative language (164).

Hill, by emphasizing the original and authentic self of this rhetorical manager, however, does attempt to account for the differences of writing expertise. Asserting that writers may need to shape their texts with their own individual voices, in order to

preserve the stylistic unity of the discourse, Hill invokes a theory of natural language that resembles the romantic philosophers and expressivist rhetoricians I will discuss in Chapter 5. Whereas Hill's objective model of language conveniently serves the ends of scientific, expository prose, his conception of natural language accommodates the production of literary texts. An effective text, according to Hill, "must come, partly from the natural qualities of the writer, and partly from his acquired resources, whether of matter or of language – resources which it is not the province of Rhetoric to supply" (166); without these "natural qualities" that unify the discourse, the text will consist of a disharmonious mix of outside, static styles. Hill's limitation of the role of rhetoric reveals a mystical, pre-rhetorical ability dependent upon students' innate powers; evidently, students who lack this pre-rhetorical ability will be unable to produce certain literary texts.

In *The Practical Elements of Rhetoric*, Genung is more straightforward about the role of aptitude in the rhetorical process. He admits that invention, the "finding of material by thought or observation," is a "work so individual, so dependent on the peculiar aptitude and direction of the writer's mind, that each one must be left to his own way of thinking" (217). Invention cannot be taught; no textbooks exist that can help students find the material for discourse. All that teachers can do is strengthen their students' "self-culture" and "mental habits," qualities that can make students more sensitive, attentive, and open-minded to their senses. Richard Young claims that Genung adopts a "vitalist" attitude towards the teaching of writing, one often attributed to romantic rhetoric (341, 343). It involves the familiar construction of the boundaries of

rhetoric, of what it can and cannot do (see Lauer 132-133): in this case, Genung insists that the teacher of rhetoric can have no effect on the creative process. [57]

Once an educator classifies a feature of the rhetorical process as outside the realm of teaching and learning, it becomes mystical and unexplainable – a feature that is valid only insofar as students do perform differently. Rhetoricians search for analogies to explain these differences. In Genung's case, he compares a writer's natural talent for invention with the "ear" of the musician or the "eye" of the artist, two other qualities of perception that are often characterized as unteachable. For example, if artists have the natural ability to observe the world and then make decisions on what to recreate for their audience, then writers must as well possess an aptitude for observing and then arranging and adapting these ideas effectively for specific readers. Genung writes, "The mark of the inventive mind is an aptitude to discern literary capabilities in a subject, a native endowment of imagination and skill which intuitively chooses such facts as are effective and groups them in interesting combinations" (223). Making the fundamental decision of what to write about becomes one of the key, yet intuitive moments of the production of discourse.

The two consequences of Genung's acknowledgement of aptitude are 1) only those individuals possessing strong inventive capabilities can develop into eminent writers and 2) the genres of writing reflect not only innate mechanisms but can be qualitatively ranked based upon the type of natural invention from which they were

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[57] Other rhetoricians attempted to make invention a more teachable and mechanical process. Hill's and Barret Wendell's textbooks, for example, depict invention as an activity of choosing a subject and a title and then producing an outline (Crowley 80-86). Invention of this sort, according to Crowley, de-emphasizes writing as a mere process of elaborating upon the outline's logic (93).

created. Since all students cannot possess the same strength of natural inventive ability, some will undoubtedly outperform others. Of course, Genung, a textbook writer for the meritocratic university, qualifies his statement of inventive aptitude. As long as students master the more mechanical rules of adapting discourse, he claims, they will eventually be capable of communicating clearly. Genung even promises that some students who lack talent may still be able to succeed at producing certain genres. Obviously, they will not be able to occupy the first, most privileged category of "originative" invention; Genung reserves this category for the founders of literary types (e.g., Shakespeare and Scott), sciences (e.g., Newton), and schools of philosophy (e.g., Bacon). They may, however, possess a "reproductive" talent and become the "middle-men between the deeply originative thinkers and the common mind," that is, writers who can synthesize common ideas; or, more likely, many of them may possess a "methodizing" talent, necessary for editors, translators, or bibliographers (224).

Genung agonizes over the consequences of inventive aptitude. Even though he accepts the current-traditional trope that final texts reflect the quality of the minds of writers, he hopes to assure students that they can all occupy a role as writers, as long as they reflect upon their own abilities and identify the most conducive writing style and genre: "Every man has his place, or rather makes his according to his individual endowment, in the world of literary achievement; and that is not the kind of invention that determines his rank, but merely excellence in the kind most natural to his powers" (224). Though this is a strong statement of Genung's meritocratic principles, the types of talents that Genung offers – an affinity for concrete facts, abstract ideas, or aesthetic forms – reflect different statuses of texts. Given the examples of authors that Genung

provides, Ulysses S. Grant, Francis Bacon, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, I wonder how strongly he would equate Grant, an exemplar of the type of mind that deals best with concrete facts, with the other two writers.

Adopting the classical necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine of aptitude, Genung departs slightly from the other current-traditional rhetoricians I have discussed in this chapter. He does forward, though with apologetic qualifications, a rhetoric of difference – one that could decide, for example, the student who will become an excellent writer of narratives. The nineteenth-century rhetoric dominated by Campbell's theory of human nature is more of a rhetoric of conformity. Its proponents did not hope to discover geniuses, philosopher kings, or incomparable orators. Instead, according to Ohmann, they searched for linguistic managers, individuals trained to embrace a particular theory and attitude of language, as an often troublesome instrument that needed to be controlled with obvious goals (i.e., strong thesis statements), static forms (e.g., five-paragraph themes), stable genres, and predictable stylistic principles. Though they were successful in training middle-class managers, they also taught generations of students to hate writing.

Another negative consequence of current-traditional rhetoric is the effect upon students whose texts are judged as inadequate. Students whose papers suffer from, for example, vulgarisms, solecisms, and improprieties, reveal marks of inadequate experiences, or, even worse, possibly uncorrectable problems in the way they think. According to Herbert Spencer, these cognitive deficiencies indicated a lack of "verbal memory," inadequate "sense of logical dependence," and little "perception of order" (9). These were problems that instruction could not remedy and that would render the student

incapable of producing clear discourse. Crowley discusses the consequences of regarding "bad" texts as symptoms of "bad" minds:

> If students' efforts do not meet certain discursive standards, such failures can be laid directly at the door of some mental inadequacy – some lack of experience, failure of memory, or inability to make the required connections between ideas. Quite simply, an author-centered theory of invention holds the quantity of an author's mind solely to account for the quality of his discursive inventions. (54)

If judgments regarding students are made solely on their final texts, and if these final texts are perceived as standing in for the minds of students, then current-traditional rhetoric enables college composition to function as a gatekeeper course, one that ranks and sorts students, designating some of them – often "basic writers" – as academically unprepared for the university. Instructors, moreover, possessed the empirical evidence, their students' severely flawed essays, to make these "objective" decisions.

Reifying Aptitude in Verbal Intelligence Testing

> A man's germinal inheritance is, so to speak, his capital, his stock in trade. He may foster or spoil it by good ante-birth acquisitions; his nurture may increase or waste it. But without it he couldn't do business at all... (Thorndike, *Human Nature* 183)

As exemplified in Thorndike's quotation above, human beings become marketplaces of aptitude. Applying a capitalist analogy to the necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine, Thorndike maintains that individuals first possess the "capital" of innate capabilities, contributed by their parents, which needs to be well managed and

invested. Successful people (i.e., in this analogy, wealthy people) are those who acquire a great deal of aptitude from their parents and who, by way of good nutrition and nurture, enhance their original possession. Like good money-managers, they simply don't fritter away their inheritance on bad investments. Thorndike, though an investigator of early child language acquisition, was not a rhetorician, but one of many hereditary psychologists, psychometricians, and scientific-management theorists at the turn of the twentieth century who advocated empirical, objective procedures and measures to calculate the inherent capability of human beings and then use these measurements for selection purposes or social policy decisions. Nascent empirical and hereditary psychology revised strong, determining definitions of aptitude. Supplementing meritocratic rhetoric, it became the discipline responsible for revealing how individuals' innate capabilities reflect their future performances, or vice versa, how class hierarchies reflect the natural cognitive differences of people.

Unfortunately, though I believe the interrogation of early empirical psychology with English studies may provide important contributions in how racial and colonialist categories are constructed and scientifically neutralized, I do not have the space here to examine fully the complex relationships between often racist versions of hereditary psychology, intelligence testing, parametric statistics, the twentieth-century cult of science, capitalism, and theories of language, language assessment, and rhetorical training. In this section, I only hope to sketch the connections between current-traditional rhetoric and group testing of verbal intelligence, which become significant especially after World War I. I argue that movements in standardized testing do not represent a break from how current-traditional rhetoric deployed concepts of innate capabilities.

Standardized testing, quite simply, provided a more efficient, reliable, and hegemonic mechanism for sorting, ranking, and differentiating students. No longer were final texts necessary to make judgments concerning students' inherent qualities; moreover, empirical psychologists could replace these final texts, which acted after all as achievement tests reflecting training and environmental influences, with multiple-choice tests that attempted to nullify the effects of language and the classroom to provide a statistic that could stand in for students.[58]

The history of writing assessment as a method of uncovering aptitude begins in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Cronbach cites the existence of aptitude tests as early as 1851, in this case to offset the nepotistic hiring practices of British Cabinet Ministers (7); more typically in the United States, university educators were interested in making the procedures for scoring entrance examination essays as objective as possible. For example, Thorndike lists an attempt at empirically scoring the writing of primary and secondary students. Of the two texts below, both of which described Ichabod Crane, the first received an 18 and the second received a 67:

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[58] Standardized testing has undergone interesting political transformations. In the 1920s and 1930s, the objective measurement of verbal and mathematical intelligence was conceived as a progressive way to select students not on the basis of their wealth or social status, but on their own individual merits. Recently, however, standardized tests like the SAT have been regarded as instruments of the status quo to evaluate standards and restrict the access of minority and marginalized students to the academy. Recently, for example, the Modern Language Association has proposed this resolution:

> Whereas high-stakes tests provide an ideological rationale for the perpetuation of inequality of opportunity, disguising this social injustice as a desirable result of "meritocracy," [b]e it resolved that the MLA opposes using the scores on a single test to make important decisions about students' futures, including promotion in or graduation from high school and admission to college.

Student 1:

The book I refer to read is Ichabod Crane, it is an grate book and I like to rede it. Ichabod Crame was a man and a man wrote a book and it is called Ichabod Crane i like it because the man called it ichabod crane when I read it for it is such a great book. (*Mental and Social Measurements* 19)

Student 2:

Ichabod Crane was a schoolmaster in a place called Sleepy Hollow. He was tall and slim with broad shoulders, long arms that dangled far below his coat sleeves. His feet looked as if they might easily have been used for shovels. His nose was long and his entire frame was most loosely hung to-gether. (*Mental and Social Measurements* 20)

Unlike percentile grades, the scores of these essays represent a statistic that supposedly gauges the students' writing level. Though Thorndike does not provide the scoring criteria or mechanism, these scores are meant to operationalize writing, that is, to allow for statistical comparisons between the quality of these two students; in this case, the second student wrote at a level 3.72 times greater than the first.

After written exams replaced oral recitations in the second half of the nineteenth century (e.g., Williamson 151), especially as a mechanism to select students for secondary education (in 1872, Harvard instituted the first entrance examination that required a sample of written English [see Brereton 34-36; Kitzhaber 33-35]), they remained achievement tests, measuring, in many cases, how well a secondary school prepared candidates to respond to questions regarding a canon of literary works. In 1879,

for instance, the Harvard entrance examination asked candidates to write a one-hour essay on "The Character of Sir Richard Steele," "The Style of 'Henry Esmond,'" or "Duelling in the Age of Queen Anne," keeping in mind the current-traditional stylistic principles of accuracy, clarity, organization, and force (Hill, "Answer" 49).

Approximately 45 years later, the entrance examination prompts became more general, less dependent on students' scholastic preparation and more predicated upon personal experience. For example, the 1923 College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) asked students to write on one of fourteen possible subjects, such as "Minor characters in fiction," "The neighborhood store," "Camp cooking," or "A question of national importance" (CEEB, *Examination Questions* 45). Though three years before the first Scholastic Aptitude Test (the more reliable multiple-choice SAT wouldn't appear until the mid-1930s), these questions were more of an attempt to measure general writing ability. The principles of meritocracy were obviously at work. Rather than reward students simply because of their attendance in elite secondary schools or participation in costly "cram programs" (Fuess 85), these more progressive entrance examinations hoped to reveal something deeper about the cognitive, and perhaps, ethical and personal traits of candidates.

One less obvious writing characteristic that the entrance examinations of institutions like Harvard or the CEEB failed to capture was what Genung identified as inventive aptitude. If innate linguistic ability was conceived as occurring before language itself – indeed, as Spencer lamented, it was the unfortunate necessity of language that often got in the way of the expression of thought (11) – then writing perhaps couldn't reveal much about the innate qualities of the mind. Moreover, the

written examination couldn't provide information on non-cognitive aptitudes, such as "Ethical behavior," "Powers of observation," "Mental alertness," "Ability to participate successfully in cooperative efforts or team work," and "Skill in laboratory work" (Fuess 103-104), which the CEEB claimed were important for colleges in their selection process. I find this list, which also includes concerns about physical health and ability to converse in foreign languages, revealing: the CEEB was attempting to certify students in many of the same qualities that had preoccupied classical and current-traditional rhetoricians.

Empirical psychology along with movements in psychometrics and scientific-management theory provided educators with the scientific apparatus for capturing the innate abilities of their students. As Stephen Jay Gould documents in *The Mismeasure of Man*, the history of these assessment procedures, in such disciplines as phrenology, craniometry, and parametric statistics, consists of assumptions about the infallibility of the scientific method and the superiority of men, the wealthy, and northern Europeans. For example, Francis Galton, the first researcher to apply statistical methods to the question of hereditary intelligence, voices a highly determinant version of aptitude. Human beings, he contends, acquire intelligence from their parents; their upward movement in society, in terms of wealth, status, and power, is constrained and predicted by this inheritance of innate ability, with little or no effect from environmental factors (Galton 38, 41-43; as I will discuss in Chapter 6, Herrnstein and Murray provide only a slightly less determinant version of hereditary intelligence, claiming that 60% of natural ability comes from parents). Galton perceives society as a rational system organized in terms of individuals' differentiating cognitive inheritance; in other words, the class-based hierarchies of capitalist societies and racial- or ethnic-based stereotypes have a genetic

rationale: consequently, the wealthy deserve their position because of their strong aptitude; and, northern European countries, because of a natural superiority authenticated by a technology of mental measurements, have the right to colonize African countries.[59]

As the coiner of "eugenics," Galton is an important figure who represents obvious racist and colonialist positions. The impact of his unflinching faith in the objectivity and neutrality of the scientific method (Galton xiii, 4; Gould 75-77) can be perceived, for example, in Carl Brigham's cognitive testing on newly arrived immigrants in the United States, research that would lead to immigration laws restricting southern Europeans (Gould 224-232); importantly, Brigham was the psychometrician most responsible for the creation of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (Fuess 106-108; Gould 199). In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the interrelationship of education and psychological testing was marked by this zeal for scientific neutrality, the perfectibility of individuals and societies, and, in addition, an emphasis on capitalist efficiency. A. Lawrence Lowell, the president of Harvard in the 1920s, exemplifies the faith in the neutrality of mass entrance tests, which presumably did not consider the backgrounds or statuses of candidates. Though relating most likely an apocryphal story, Lowell divulges the outcomes of intelligence testing upon the faculty of an unidentified college: the college president performed the worst, "scarcely above the level of a moron" (58), confirming the dangerous objectivity of intelligence testing. During this same period, prominent

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[59] A similar ethnocentrism may pervade strongly causal theories of literacy. For example, researchers have claimed that writing allows for abstraction (Street 22), economic development (Hirsch 73), the development of logic (Goody and Watt 17), and the emergence of democracy (e.g., Goody and Watt 10-11). Research has been conducted, by Street, Deborah Brandt, Suzanne de Castell, Allan Luke, and Harvey Graff, in countering these strong, causal consequences of literacy; as Street reminds us, though, the consequences of literacy are often in the best interests of meritocratic-minded educators: why, otherwise, should so much money be spent on education, if literacy does not have significant effects? (19).

psychologists like Goddard, Cattell, and Terman adopted the metaphors of engineers. They believed, as in this following quotation by Goddard, that they could construct a more rational society if they could only ascertain the intelligence levels of all of its members:

> The mechanical engineer could never build bridges or houses if he did not know the strength of his materials, how much of a load each will support. Of how infinitely greater importance it is then when we seek to build up a social structure that we should know the strengths of our materials. (qtd. in Brown 197).

World War I provided an opportunity for Terman and Goddard, as well as psychologists like Bingham, Thorndike, and Thurstone inspired by Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*, to test 1.7 million recruits and refine techniques in isolating vocational aptitudes and standardizing test items, environments, and scoring procedures for mass groups of candidates. According to Gould, however, instead of revealing the patterns of intelligence to help rationalize the "society" of the military, the methodology of mass intelligence testing suffered irreparably from validity and reliability errors (199-222).

The enthusiasm for objectivity, perfectibility, and efficiency reaches its apex, perhaps, with the appearance of the SAT in 1926. By collapsing verbal intelligence into a single statistic, the CEEB provided university administrators with an apparatus to standardize, rank, and compare verbal aptitudes – to efficiently capture the essence of a student, with, perhaps most importantly, the seemingly neutrality of scientific methodology. Taken by 8,040 candidates attempting for the most part to enter elite

Eastern universities, the original SAT featured seven language test items: definitions, classification, artificial language, antonyms, analogies, logical inference, and paragraph reading (Fuess 108-109). Though the test would not be broken into mathematical and verbal sections until 1929 and deploy multiple-choice items until the mid-1930s (Lawrence et al. 2), the SAT finally provided for the CEEB the mechanism to meet its goal of standardizing the experiences and responses of students (Fuess 39). The SAT responded well to educators' demands for efficiency.[60] From a centralized location, the CEEB was able to make decisions about a large number of people, without the expense and time of relying upon a large body of readers; for example, a year before the SAT's inception, 19,775 students took the exam; 626 readers, 141 alone from English and 115 from Latin, scored the responses (Fuess 95). The SAT, as an indirect measure of writing, achieved something even more – the ability to ignore writing altogether, thus controlling for the effects of subjective, often unreliable readers.[61]

The desire for standardization in measuring the verbal intelligence of prospective students is not far removed from the standardization of writing, in the form of abstract, universal audiences, prescriptive stylistic criteria, static genres, and mechanical invention procedures, promulgated by late nineteenth-century rhetoricians. Standardized testing is an inevitable extension of current-traditional rhetoric. Both movements share similar

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[60] Raymond Callahan, in *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, describes the effects of scientific management on secondary schools. Concerns for efficiency led to, among other things, initiatives to set up standards for student achievement, quantify student progress, and to select teachers (79-94).

[61] Psychometricians and compositionists have an uneasy relationship. The validity of indirect measures of writing has been closely scrutinized (e.g., Fowler and Ross; Huntley et al. 1); and, even though correlational studies have indicated that indirect and direct measures of writing share a similar predictive validity (e.g., Bridgeman), the SAT, in 2005, will once again include a written essay section (Barnes 52).

theories of language and emphasize that it is an unfortunate impediment to the communication of thought; current-traditional rhetoric, consequently, emphasizes clarity whereas aptitude testing relies upon the efficiency of multiple-choice testing. Developed in the early 1920s by Arthur Otis, a student of Terman, the supposed neutral technology of the multiple-choice item (Williamson 157-159) could counteract the troublesome effects of language. Another assumption shared by the two movements is that language consists of distinct grammatical units – words, sentences, paragraphs, and full discourses – that possess similar rules of coherence, unity, and force. Thus, as current-traditional textbooks frequently began with discussions of how to choose words (i.e., diction), early versions of the SAT included "six-choice antonym" questions. Candidates were prompted with four words, as in the following example, and had to compare the meanings of each possible pair of words (for a total of six comparison) in order to determine the pair that represented an antonym:

gregarious$_1$ solitary$_2$ elderly$_3$ blowy$_4$ (Lawrence et al. 2).[62]

Additionally, while textbooks announced the importance of paragraph unity, the SAT, from 1926 to 1945, asked students to single out the inappropriate word in a paragraph. An infamous example is the following paragraph, in which students had to detect the problematic word:

> At least William bade his knights draw off$_1$ for a space$_2$, and bade the archers only continue the combat. He feared$_3$ that the English, who had no$_4$ bowmen on their side, would find the rain of arrows so unsupportable$_5$

[62] The answer is 1-2 (gregarious – solitary).

that they would at least break their line and charge$_6$, to drive off their tormentors$_7$.[63] (Lawrence et al. 3)

Writers of the examples like those above endeavor to erase the effects of environment, teaching, and the cultural bias of language. They resemble current-traditional teachers who separate students from social and personal contexts, insisting they write paragraph-long themes or five-paragraph essays based on general topics to universal audiences, which become mechanical products of what Jasper Neel has dubbed "anti-writing."

As the SAT paragraph example above indicates, separating language and specific contexts from the raw cognitive capabilities of human beings is difficult; in this case, candidates with a knowledge of English history and military tactics are at an advantage (Lawrence et al. 3). Other attempts to erase the effects of language and culture are the Beta Intelligence tests administered to illiterate recruits during World War I, which, though they only consisted of images, asked participants to fill in such culturally biased items as the strings of a violin or the net of a tennis court (Gould 210-211). The 1937 revision of the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, finally, included test items that ask candidates to state the essential difference between two terms, such as "work and play" (Terman and Merril 184) or to explain a proverb like "A bad workman quarrels with his tools" (186). In both cases, individuals' responses to these items are deeply imbedded in social contexts; whereas test developers hope to reduce the social effects of language in order to capture enduring, universal traits, they constantly confront specific contexts and language uses. Proponents of social rhetoric, who I will elaborate upon in Chapter 6, would argue that any attempt to differentiate levels of writing or verbal ability – to make

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[63] The answer is 3.

judgments, for instance, about what constitutes expertise in writing – will fail if they are not connected to the criteria of specific genres and local discourse communities (Carter 276-277). Aptitude tests for verbal intelligence, therefore, would have to proliferate infinitely in order to match the conditions of local, and constantly changing, situations.

Ohmann and Richard Miller, who describe their experiences scoring Advanced Placement Program (AP) tests, an example of an achievement-based, direct-writing instrument, reiterate the problems of measuring writing ability, even for tests that eschew indirect, multiple-choice methodology. The convergent answers necessary for a multiple-choice test are simply substituted by the mechanical responses necessary for current-traditional essays. Miller, for example, compares the procedures of both taking and scoring the AP test with the "monitorial method" deployed in Great Britain early in the nineteenth century in order to instruct and evaluate large groups of students efficiently and cheaply; students and scorers alike are forced to conform to the "regime of grading," the former for the sake of a higher test score, the latter for the sake of reliability (49-50). Ohmann provides a more thorough critique of what the exam expects from students: students are to read like New Critics and to write like current-traditionalists; they are not to focus upon controversial issues, concrete social problems, ideas, and feelings, but upon structure and style, universal values, themes, and attitude (58-62).

In standardized testing formats, verbal intelligence equates to convergent thinking, accuracy, and speed. The last trait was perhaps the most important for success. Candidates of the 1934 SAT, for example, were asked to complete 100 antonym type questions in 25 minutes, meaning that candidates had 15 seconds in which to evaluate the meaning differences of six pairs of words (Lawrence et al. 2). These qualities, along with

a conception of language as an impediment to communicating thought efficiently, provide little of an explanation of the relationship between verbal intelligence and authentic writing and reading practices. Like the "manager" model of current-traditional rhetoric, these qualities represent Richard Miller's "pedagogy of obedience" (40-41), the traits that will allow the candidate to be most successful in the capitalist workplace: convergent thinking, accuracy, and speed are simply replaced with conformity, dependability, and obedience. The distinctions between aptitude and achievement tests as well as indirect and direct measures of writing become unimportant. For a Marxist critic like Ohmann, multiple-choice aptitude tests are perhaps simply more honest in fulfilling what he proposes as the one true and valuable function of these tests: to reward those skills which help to perpetuate the status quo (63).

Chapter V

Authentic Voices and Original Languages in Expressivist Rhetoric

Determining what beliefs, features, and pedagogical practices constitute expressivist rhetoric is a contested exercise. Recently, Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald, Robin Varnum, and Donald C. Jones have argued that the dominant taxonomies of rhetorical theory, most notably the three-part schemes that appear in Berlin's *Rhetoric and Reality* and Faigley's "Competing Theories of Process," have narrowly circumscribed the scope of the expressivist rhetorics of influential compositionists like Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, William E. Coles, and Ann Berthoff. Asserting that Berlin and Faigley have ignored the impact of John Dewey's social pragmatism upon expressivist rhetoric, Roskelly, Ronald, and Jones work to dispel the now commonly accepted notions that expressivist rhetoric solely privileges a conception of the writer as a solitary (and often male) originating genius, a philosophical idealism accessible only to elite thinkers, and a pedagogical stance that declares writing an unteachable mystery (Jones 273-275; Roskelly and Ronald 34-35; see also Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 74, 77, 145; *Rhetorics, Poetics* 31-33).

As I discussed in Chapter 1, categorizations of rhetorical theory – and their subsequent critiques and revisions – are important for this project, for they represent more visible emergences of the motives of particular rhetoricians. Berlin's commitment to a rhetoric that leads to group action and social transformation is clear; his suspicion of expressivist rhetoric stems from what he regards as its affirmation of the individual, the originating point for both language and political action: [Expressivist rhetoric] "always

describes groups as sources of distortions of the individual's true vision, and the behavior it recommends in the political and social realms is atomistic, the solitary individual acting alone" (*Rhetoric & Reality* 146). In other sections, Berlin is more careful to qualify his generalizations of expressivist rhetoric, acknowledging its multiple formations, some of which that approach the political aims of social-epistemic rhetoric (146), and asserting that it cannot be discounted simply as a revival of elitist nineteenth-century romanticism (73). Berlin certainly does not confront expressivist rhetoric as agonistically as James Porter, who collapses it with current-traditional theory under the label of "traditional rhetoric" (31) and claims that it makes the teaching of invention impossible (38).

Although I find the contributions of Jones, Roskelly, Ronald, and Varnum significant, especially their critique of how taxonomies of rhetorical theory have a tendency to produce monolithic descriptions and erase the important political contingencies of specific English departments (Varnum 7-8), I focus my gaze, like Berlin, upon the democratic possibilities of expressivist rhetoric, which has exchanged eighteenth-century notions of genius for a belief that all human beings share the potential for expressing themselves (73). For my purposes, the most compelling feature of expressivist rhetoric is its faith in the solitary individual, someone with an inherent talent for generating language, who has important experiences and ideas to relate. In order to develop the generative capabilities of this individual, societies need to allocate resources for the purposes of language training and opportunities for self expression. Obviously, expressivist rhetoric departs sharply from elitist conceptions of rhetoric, those that, like the liberal culture of Yale and Princeton, endeavor to cultivate the taste and genius of a cultural and political upper class (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 31-33): emerging in the

1960s and 1970s, expressivist rhetoric avows the importance that all human beings cultivate their capacity for self-expression.

In this chapter, I concentrate primarily upon Elbow, Macrorie, and Berthoff.[64] I narrow my investigation to their deployment of "authentic voice," a term rich with implications for the interrelationship of natural ability and rhetoric: it is associated with magic (Elbow, *Writing With Power*) and mystery (Varnum 158), a term, according to Coles, often vaguely defined as a "feel of words," a metaphor for writing that approximates the impact of "tonal variations of the spoken word" on the page (20-21). Despite these vague definitions, Elbow, whose attempts to describe voice I will contend with below, celebrates the ascendancy of authentic voice:

> Nothing stops anyone from writing words that will make readers listen and be affected. Nothing stops you from writing right now, today, words that people will want to read and even want to publish. Nothing stops you, that is, but your fear or unwillingness or lack of familiarity with what I am calling your real voice. (*Writing With Power* 304)

Authentic voice is a vital component of expressivist rhetoric, because it enables the individual self to express itself, with originality and integrity (see Faigley, "Competing Theories" 529-530). At stake is the health of the self, or soul, of the student. Varnum provides a specific example of how seriously instructors – in this case, those who taught under Theodore Baird's direction at Amherst – took voice, by quoting a student's attempt to rationalize why his instructors grew antagonistic if he or his classmates could not find

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[64] Jones reminds us that the classifications of individual compositionists is debatable (273). For example, whereas James Berlin categorizes Berthoff as a social-epistemic rhetorician, I classify her here as an expressivist.

a way to express themselves: "'[O]n some level, the best of them believed that you were doing violence to yourself if you didn't write well'" (193). In *Rhetoric and Reality*, Berlin cites liberal cultural and other expressivist antecedents in the first quarter of the twentieth century to demonstrate how voice was deployed as a way to save the soul: if writing could reveal the self, then good writing was what truly represented the writer (78); on the other hand, bad writing – when the writer falsified her voice – became the sign of an inner corruption and spiritual malady (43-44).

Expressivist rhetoricians' endeavor to empower and transform individuals has exposed it to several ideological critiques. Berlin and Giroux, most notably, claim expressivist pedagogy, as it does not enable students to engage material problems, may subject them to a false consciousness: the writer's search for self-transformation will preclude attempts to transform society. Furthermore, the emphasis on the individual can be easily co-opted by the dominant socioeconomic class, who relish, for example, the image of the nonconforming maverick CEO (Berlin, "Rhetoric and Ideology" 487; Faigley, "Competing Theories" 531). My critique is less broad. Tentatively, I examine the parallels between the expressivist endeavor to uncover authentic voices with eighteenth-century attempts to describe the original, natural language of human beings. I argue that Elbow shares with Rousseau, Blair, and Emerson the assumptions of natural language theory, a concurrence that uncovers three problematic consequences: 1) the construction of binaries of what represents personal versus public expression; 2) the idealistic suspicion of writing as an instrumental means of communication; and, probably the most damaging, 3) the exoticizing of the texts and experiences of marginalized students. In this chapter, I provide a sketch of natural language theory,

indicate how Elbow revisits it by stressing authentic voice, and then argue, more tentatively, how Elbow's position reveals a binary of expression/rationality, one coded by racial and ethnic stereotypes. First, however, I hope to elaborate upon the purposes for the expressivists' deployment of authentic voice before addressing how Elbow attempts to define it and locate it in his democratic, inclusive rhetoric.

The three primary texts that I will contend with in this chapter, Macrorie's *Uptaught*, Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*, and Berthoff's *The Making of Meaning*, all deploy authentic voice as a strategy of de-alienation. These expressivist accounts depict students who must free themselves of mass, institutional ways of thinking, writing, and learning. The expressivist definition of alienation is not strictly Marxist, one depicting human beings alien to their own productions because of historical and economic circumstances (see Petrovic). Yet, expressivists are concerned with connecting the selves of students to their texts – making them, in other words, committed to their own writing. In the autobiographical *Uptaught*, Macrorie describes students who are alienated from their own capacity to produce language and from their learning experiences. The texts his students produced were meant for grading – not reading – and represented a mechanical, general, and phoney discourse, the "same old academic stuff – no conviction, no redblooded sentences" (12-14). Macrorie dubs this type of writing "Engfish," a term that joins Neel's "anti-writing," the type of decontextualized, overly formal writing that infects the language of academia. In a revealing anecdote, Macrorie describes his only success story, a student who finally wrote with some originality and conviction:

unfortunately, at the end of the semester, Macrorie discovers that the student wrote all his papers while he was drunk (11).[65]

Though Elbow's use of authentic voice is similarly "Marxist," in that it frees students from the alienating effects of standard academic discourse, product-centered pedagogy, and overzealous current-traditional instructors, he also relies upon an Emersonian definition of alienation, one that aims to recover the true nature of students and reunite them with their inherent ability to create and express themselves (see Emerson 29). According to Elbow, almost all human beings possess the capability of revealing their true voice, the expressivist equivalent of a general language aptitude; the qualities of a voice, however, differ from one writer to the next; some writers, Elbow suggests, may not even like their own voices (304). Elbow exemplifies his confidence of the general linguistic capabilities of human beings by invoking the broad constituency of his readership – not just "beginning or advanced writers in particular, or to students, novelists, professional people, pleasure writers, or poets" (6) – and directly defining the abilities that people have. Elbow writes, for example, that one of the main themes of *Writing With Power* is

> an assumption that virtually everyone has available great skill with words. That is, everyone can, under certain conditions, speak with clarity and power. These conditions usually involve a topic of personal importance

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[65] Another important reaction to the practices of current-traditional rhetoric can be found in Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary* and Victor Villanueva's *Bootstraps*. Both of these autobiographical texts recount struggles with educational systems that mark students, often because of reasons of class, race, or ethnicity, and pre-determine their educational futures. Literacy becomes an opportunity to invoke identity (or, as Villanueva discusses in the case of Richard Rodriguez, to deny a native identity [39]). Yet, Rose and Villanueva also struggle to counter a more nefarious deployment of literacy, the attempts by scientists like Arthur Jensen to make determinations about the inherent intelligence of groups based upon theories of how "bad language" reveals "insufficient cognitive development" (Villanueva 11-12).

> and an urgent occasion. But the fact that everyone can sometimes rise to an urgent occasion shows that the capacity for spoken eloquence is there. (7)

I find this connection of classical *kairos* with native linguistic ability intriguing. Elbow grounds his belief in the equal distribution of true voice in ideal images, of both Athenian and American democracies, of lone citizens eloquently defending themselves or their urgent causes (of course, omitting the less-than-ideal effects of logographers and lawyers). Elbow's position recalls Wordsworth's and Emerson's reverence for the raw linguistic performances of untutored and uncorrupted individuals, such as the "strong-natured farmer or back-woodsman" (Emerson 36). As they remain closer to their natural languages, their words regain a power that elites cannot possibly find. Later in this chapter, I examine a more contemporary manifestation of this reverence for the natural and untutored, the exoticizing of the texts of marginalized students.

Elbow's attempts to define "true voice," unfortunately, are unsatisfying. He admits the difficulty, and perhaps futility, of rationalizing this term, settling at one point on this definition: "Voice, in writing, implies words that capture the sound of an individual on the page" (287). But, Elbow is not satisfied. True voice is a slippery, mystical concept, a quality that cannot be detached from the writer and evaluated and measured. Elbow contends that voice "has nothing to do with the words on the page, only with the relationship of the words to the writer – and therefore that the same words could have real voice when written by one person and lack it when written by someone else" (299). Yet, if voice does not exist independently, as a quality of final texts – if, moreover, voice cannot be judged without the presence of the writer – then how can

teachers make judgments of writing expertise? How can teachers and readers come to know the individual, authentic selves of writers in order to evaluate the authenticity of the voices their texts represent? Later, Elbow defines voice as "the sound of a meaning resonating because the individual consciousness of the writer is somehow fully behind... that meaning" (341). Remaining mystical, Elbow relies on phrases like "the sound of a meaning," "individual consciousness," and "somehow fully behind" to buttress perhaps the key term of his theory of writing. However, I need to make one qualification: Elbow connects his attempts to define "real voice" with his discussion of the "magical view of writing" provisionally; it is a ludic heuristic, a belief system to help students become better writers (367-369); nonetheless, I feel that the assumptions of this convenient framework are valuable and hold implications for voice as an inherent trait of all writers.

The Search for Natural Language[66]

In order to provide a background for my discussion of Elbow's authentic voice, I present in this section a description of late eighteenth-century forays into natural language theory. These nostalgic endeavors to return to the innocence of original voices and natural languages, which involve such keywords as taste, genius, primitivism, and sublimity, have been instrumental in the formation of college English (see Thomas Miller), especially in the construction of the binaries of consumption/production, expression/exposition, and poetic/rhetorical. Additionally, according to Karen LeFevre, these pursuits to recover the universal language, the *lingua Adamica*, are motivated by

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[66] I am indebted to Paul Auster's novella, *The City of Glass*, for my initial excursions into natural language theory.

the hope to repair the corruption of language, thus making the possibility of miscommunication impossible (98).

An inquiry, in western philosophy, that commences with Plato's *Cratylus*, the search for the origins of language follows a narrative of rational progress: language emerges first from a source of divine inspiration, natural objects, and human instinct and then matures into a linguistic code of abstract, arbitrary signifiers detached from the natural world; it slowly becomes a mathematical language, an instrument of logic and reason.[67] Thomas Reid, whose account of natural faculties we encountered in Chapter 4, and Hugh Blair, the most influential member of the Scottish Enlightenment (T. Miller 227), return to Cicero's commonplace of how language unites and civilizes a scattered, savage people. Blair, drawing from another commonplace, places divine intervention as the actual cause of language.[68] Reid, on the other hand, argues that language is a product of human instinct; without this inherent capability for language, the more elaborate, abstract linguistic code could not have been developed (53).

Natural language is a performance, connecting the body to the natural world. Blair and Reid, using evidence from the Old Testament, American Indian languages, and observations of children, the speaking/hearing-impaired, and "savages," describe the first, universal language as one consisting of interjections and exclamations, gestures, and facial expressions (Blair 55; see also Rousseau 28). Reid reminds us of the presence of the body: "Where speech is natural, it will be an exercise, not of the voice and lungs

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[67] Also, see Condillac's search for the origins of natural language (Hobbs 106-107). According to Hobbs, Condillac's theory of linguistic and aesthetic development follows the romantic commonplace of the inevitable shift from the poetic and imaginative to the analytic (107, 119).

only, but of all the muscles of the body" (52). Motivated by their desire of objects in their immediate surroundings, early language users first form nouns as onomatopoetic figures, verbal pictures. As early humans perform language in an immediate, situated space, there is an intimate connection of the words to the things they represent. The signifier breathes the signified. There is no chance for miscommunication. Original language, dominated by concrete nouns, consists of a string of one-to-one correspondences, verbal signifiers operating like pictures to conjure up images of objects.

Once early humans begin to form cities and come into contact with new objects or concepts, a threat to the original, one-to-one correspondence of original language develops. Blair explains the origins of figurative language as a necessity for speakers to supplement their meager, primitive vocabularies in order to denote these novel experiences. They apply an established vocabulary item to a new fact or idea, forming an original metaphor, and, in the process, disrupting the direct relationship of the signifier and signified and allowing for the possibility of miscommunication. Blair's passionate and emotional "savages," additionally, rely upon metaphor and hyperbole in order to express their states of mind (60). Supporting this theory of how figurative language introduces a proliferation of meaning in the original vocabulary, Emerson later demonstrates the physical, natural foundation that all abstract words embody: "Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance" (35). Indeed, Raymond Williams describes

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[68] The sixteenth-century Petrus Ramus articulates the divine origins of *natura*, the aptitude and reason that human beings possess at their birth (Ong, *Ramus* 176-177).

certain general words, such as "improve" and "interest," which have developed from more specific and material – that is, economic – contexts (160, 171).

As the progress of language tells a story of the evolution of reason, it also holds a parallel narrative, that of a fall from innocence, of a natural language being stripped of its human presence. Wordsworth and Emerson provide standard romanticist accounts of this corruption and cheapening of language. In the "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, Wordsworth detects the separation of language from its natural origins in his critique of poets who apply a "mechanical adoption" of figurative language to their writing; according to Wordsworth, these writers deceive their readers by allowing poetic language to masquerade as "feelings and ideas with which they [i.e., the poets] had no natural connection whatsoever" (364). Emerson underscores the deceptive quality of language, especially as human beings step away from nature. As language expands, absorbing new ideas and concepts, it becomes cheapened, like an inflationary, counterfeit currency (36-37). Emerson warns would-be philosophers about the limitations of unnatural language: "[Words] cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it" (42). In other words, those who attempt to locate truth by the way of language will be deceived.

Similarly, Blair and Reid, though they do not diminish the instrumentality of language as a means towards reason, feel a nostalgia for what is lost as languages progress. Deploying the "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" commonplace, Blair indicates that the life of every person replays the history of language; as children, human beings possess the same passions that mark "primitives" and "savages"; hence, their language shares the same poetic, playful, and oral qualities of the first, natural language.

But, once they grow older, their language becomes more precise and less expressive, more of the detached language required for philosophy and logic (65). Reid articulates what is wrong about modern languages by critiquing the absence of feeling and expression from works of art, claiming that if we would "[a]bolish the use of articulate sounds and writing among mankind for a century, [...] every man would be a painter, an actor, and an orator [presumably, Reid is stressing the physical delivery of the speaker]" (53). Reid indicates the power of language, a sign system that replaces bodily expression as well as other forms of signification. There is a cost, however, to this dominance: the rational subsumes the expressive.

The history of writing overlaps the decay of the human and natural presence of language. Blair rehearses a familiar history of writing, one that begins with pictures – the equivalent of onomatopoeia in writing – to the alphabet, characterized as an invention of genius (68). The problematic instrumentality of writing, as a possible site of alienation, has been addressed as early as Plato's *Phaedrus*. Writers lose control over their final products. Written discourse becomes detached and disembodied from an originating, human consciousness, and thus loses its expressive force (e.g., 275d-277a). Blair reminds us, that despite the precision and convenience that writing affords, it cannot replace oral forms:

> The voice of the living speaker, makes an impression on the mind, much stronger than can be made by the perusal of any writing. [...] Tones, looks, and gestures are natural interpreters of the sentiments of the mind. They remove ambiguities; they enforce impressions; they operate on us by means of sympathy, which is one of the most powerful instruments of

> persuasion. Our sympathy is always awakened more, by hearing the speaker, than by reading his works in our closet. (71)

In binaries that so-called "Great Divide" literacy proponents and critics alike will revisit in the twentieth century, oral discourse, which preserves the presence of the human speaker, is more powerful. The voice can persuade and change the ideas of interlocutors. Writing, however, remains only merely useful, the discourse to instruct and convey static facts.

The Implications of Authentic Voice

By situating Elbow's authentic voice in the linguistic problem of original language, I hope to demystify authentic voice and reveal the consequences of Elbow's nostalgia for an innocent, natural language. In the final chapter of *Writing With Power*, Elbow, perhaps unwittingly, enters eighteenth-century conversations[69] on the search for language in its natural state. Pointing to the "magical" language of children and "primitive" people (359), Elbow describes the state of writing in modern societies in the terms of an exchange of linguistic power for rationality (360). Students step away from something raw, natural, and powerful – their own voice, the perhaps uncontrollable, emotional language that represents the self (309-310) – and enter safer, less erratic writing classrooms, where their "real" voice must remain silent and buried, in order that the requirements of audience, genre, and academic style are met. Macrorie indicates one practical consequence of this movement: younger students who were less indoctrinated

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[69] Inquiries into the biological basis of language, the common, "proto-world" language, and even physiological (i.e., "glossogenetic") explanations for certain words are still twenty-first century linguistic research concerns (see especially Kennedy's summary of recent attempts to define the origins of language [*Comparative Rhetoric* 33-36]).

in "Engfish" were able to develop their writing abilities more quickly than more experienced students, such as high-school English teachers returning to the university; the younger students, presumably, still retain more of their authentic voice, or the ability to recover it.[70]

Depicting the movement away from the natural, Elbow produces a multitude of binaries:

> Words have to become less loaded, less magical, mere instruments of pragmatic use before people stop being fooled by them. Magic came first, logic later. Poetry came first, prose was a late development. Metaphor came first, literal language had to be invented. (360)

Besides the magic/logic, poetry/prose, and metaphorical/literal binaries above, Elbow implies a more general binary of presence/absence. Presence, the privileged term of the pair, denotes the involvement of the writer's natural speaking self in the written text. The authentic voice speaks through the writing, leaving traces of a "sound, a texture, a rhythm" (*Writing Without Teachers* 6). It is this presence which can give words "magic" and power, and endows written discourse with a performative force, an "energy that drives the meanings through his [i.e., the reader's] thick skull" (6).

Elbow spends a considerable amount of time urging writers to find the right words and names for the things and characters that populate their texts. Along with the common textbook adage cajoling students to use concrete sensory detail, these

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[70] The romanticist image of the primitive, poetic genius, which often appears in Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Emerson, is also warranted in theories of natural language. Rural commoners, for example, possess natural poetic ability because they have not stepped away from nature, God, and their rustic dialects.

expressivist prescriptions revisit a nostalgia for not only one-to-one correspondences between words and the things they signify, but for non-arbitrary, natural connections between signifiers and signifieds; when the writer finally comes across the "right" word for an object or character in a story, the word can, in some cases, replace the signified itself and take on the power of that object. This process represents Elbow's "magical view of language." Elbow writes

> A few parents on a few occasions manage to name their children right so that the name really does make a difference. Some writers on some occasions really do restore magic to language. They somehow put juice into words and thereby cast a long-distance spell over readers. (359)

Elbow's use of "juice" in the quotation above is a strong reminder of the return to a natural language, in which the distance between objects and words has been narrowed; obviously, the chance of miscommunication in this "magical" system is slight as the words possess almost a physical force. Again, Elbow later negates the mystical impact of these claims, specifying a keyterm like "context" as that which provides power to good writing (366); he does, however, hint that it may be a productive strategy for people to continue considering their writing in this fashion.

The final connection between natural language theory and authentic voice I want to make is Elbow's claims that academic writing is an anti-natural discourse and "utterly cut off from experience and things" (361). Reminiscent of Emerson's counterfeit analogy, Elbow deploys a metaphor of inflation to illustrate the weakness of much of academic prose: "For adults in a modern literate sophisticated culture, words are cheap. Images, too. It used to be that a printed word compelled belief and an image gave

experience. [...] Words used to be expensive, images precious. Now they are often tiresome noise" (361). Academic discourse is distant and detached, a mode of language that reflects back only to abstract concepts and simply more words. Elbow argues that the discourse of academics possesses "no sense of an actual self seeing a thing or having an experience" (361). Like the impotent written forms of modern languages that Blair describes, standard academic discourse is far removed from nature and human experiences; it cannot possibly move and affect readers, simply because it does not involve them.

Though taking into consideration the provisional, if not ludic, quality of Elbow's discussion of magic and writing, his adherence to authentic voice holds several related implications. First, the search for authentic voice creates the troublesome dichotomy of personal expression as a genre separate from objective, expository discourse. Whereas Macrorie simply questions the importance of "public" discourse altogether (137-141), Elbow devotes an entire chapter to it in *Writing With Power*, claiming that expository writing requires voice as well, in order to connect readers to a secondhand experience, that of the report of ideas, but not of real, concrete experiences (339-341). Elbow's theory thus depends upon two sources of experience: "real," first-order experiences, which directly involve the individual, her senses, and her desire to communicate; and, less natural, second-order experiences, which commence from the intellect, not life.[71]

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[71] These two ways of knowing proliferate in a multitude of binaries: for example, Emerson, providing an elegant account, defines understanding as the immediate, empirical relationship with nature, whereas reason allows for the intuition of innate ideas. More practically, bilingual education advocate Jim Cummins traces these ways of knowing in the development of students' linguistic abilities; students first use language as a means of socializing and situating themselves in a community; as their abilities expand, they gradually can use language for more decontextualized, logical academic purposes (29-32).

For Elbow, the problem of the expression/exposition dichotomy stems not necessarily from these different types of experience, but from writers who lack commitment in expressing events or ideas that have no personal urgency or immediacy. Elbow calls for writers of expository prose to "put all your attention into connecting wholeheartedly with your thoughts and get inside them instead of trying to find the right language for communicating them" (340). Yet, bad writing persists. Perhaps, students, when confronted with a teacher-sanctioned writing activity, are merely satisfied with having their readers understand their writing; like the current-traditional depiction of managers of discourse, they do not care if readers fully experience and feel their thoughts. This lack of commitment is a sign of alienation. Indeed, Elbow urges good writers to adopt the same relationship to language as that of early speakers to natural language, which involves a commitment especially of the body, the voice, and individual presence.

Elbow's emphasis on authentic voice may also represent a mistrust of the instrumentality of writing. Elbow, the great champion of an egalitarian stance of writing, must also control for the alienating effects of writing – conceived of as a transparent tool – that separate writers from their original voice and experiences. Writing, in the transformation of natural languages, represents the final stage, in which language loses the presence of the individual speaker and her experiences of the natural world. In "The Seventh Letter," Plato, in a foundational statement of the idealism that pervades this view of language, insists upon the inability of writing to capture "true reality," much less the conceptual knowledge of this reality (1590). Jacques Derrida, in his critiques of Plato, Saussure, and Levi-Strauss, questions the binaries of interiority/exteriority,

presence/representation, and reality/image that govern an essential, innocent location for "truth" and that denigrate writing as a tool of corruption. LeFevre, likewise, argues that one of the general motivations of the longing for natural language is an idealistic nostalgia for centering the origination of discourse within individual consciousness (12-15). Though I don't want to overstate my case against Elbow and place him in the same category as Plato, I am suspicious of a compositionist who characterizes good writing on the basis of it becoming more like speech, that is, including the presence of the individual speaker. Providing an example of "bad" writing and "good" writing (288), Elbow critiques the staleness and objectivity of the former: "That [writer] would never *talk* so. She must have had a sense of intended meaning and then *constructed* words to express it. The words lack breath or presence" (288-289). Again, Elbow emphasizes a failure of commitment. Writing got in the way of the writer's speaking.[72]

Finally, Elbow's privileging of individual presence, experience, and voice holds one unintended consequence, the exoticizing of texts that breathe with authenticity, with the raw, social experiences of marginalized students. I argue that Elbow's nostalgia for authentic voice situates his theory upon a racial terrain, of codes that mark "black" discourse,[73] for example, and yet ignore the racial construction of "white" discourse, which, instead, pretends to be universal, neutral, and "scientific." Below, I analyze how

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[72] S.S. Curry, in a late nineteenth-century text on speech pedagogy, provides an exaggerated version of the relationship of the voice and nature. Contending, for example, that "[o]f all forms of art, vocal expression is the nearest to nature" (11), Curry makes this claim based on the fact that the voice does not require an additional instrument, unlike more "mechanical" skills such as painting and carving.

[73] In this section, I use "black" discourse as a convenient marker for all dialects that proliferate from the seemingly neutral, non-raced "standard" of dominant English.

the theory of authentic voice, as a strategy to return to a more oral, natural language, participates in the problematic erasure of "whiteness."

In the past decade, conversations in *College English* and *College Composition and Communication* have responded to calls by Toni Morrison, bell hooks, and Henry Giroux to interrogate the implications of confronting "whiteness" in English classrooms (Keating 901). How do students respond, for example, once an instructor reveals the marks of white subjectivity in a Robert Frost poem? (Marshall and Ryden 249). For composition studies, these conversations of "whiteness" impact how teachers make generalizations about the "voices" of their students – and, perhaps more importantly, how the theories that inform their practice, even those intended to undermine racial stereotypes, may operate to reify racial differences (Keating 902).

The qualities of Elbow's authentic voice resemble the codes of black discourse, what is conceived of as a language of immediacy and presence, marked by instability and personality, the idiosyncrasies of specific social contexts. Black discourse remains dialect. Its rhythms, intonational patterns, and tones reveal the life of its community of speakers. The discourse of whiteness, on the other hand, attempts to remain invisible, outside of the effects of race, particular contexts, or specific speech communities; indeed, according to AnnLouise Keating, this stance of omnipresence and neutrality is what provides "whiteness" with its power, allowing it to become the standard by which all other dialects are evaluated (904-905). Ian Marshall and Wendy Ryden discuss how students, parents, instructors, and researchers fall back upon these codes when it comes to perceptions of language: "[B]lack is funky and improvisational, and white is stodgy and structured, sterilized, less' real.' Whiteness is power but lacks a kind of life force. Black

is powerless but more in tune with life" (243). "Blackness" represents a possibly dangerous loss of control yet a source of real life; "whiteness," seeping into the phoney academic texts that Elbow and Macrorie deplore, is cold, sterile, and rational (Barnett 11) yet still powerful; indeed, it is the hegemonic language of business and science.[74]

By placing Elbow's theory of authentic voice in the recent debate about interrogating "whiteness," I do not hope to condemn his rhetoric as yet another "colonial" text, one that contrasts the codes of the colonized – who possess an intimacy with their bodies and instincts – with those of the colonizers, who repudiate nature in order to perfect their minds and culture – and, in return, enter a state of self-alienation (see Marshall and Ryden 246). Though, interestingly enough, Elbow claims he first developed his expressivist teaching techniques for working-class African-Americans (*Writing Without Teachers* xix), he certainly does not specify how the truthfulness of a student's writing may emerge from a particular "black," "Latino," "working-class," or any other variety or dialect of English. His rhetoric, like many others, hopes to remain "color blind," yet instead, Elbow possibly constructs a universal audience for his rhetoric – the struggling writer – whose "whiteness," not to mention his masculinity or American-ness, become invisible.

Henry Louis Gates is an important source for determining what is at stake in discussions of how writing represents race, reminding us that "language use signifies the difference between cultures and their possession of power, spelling the difference

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[74] Researchers have utilized film as an excellent source to reveal the codes of the "blackness"/"whiteness" binary, interrogating *Dangerous Minds*, *City of Joy*, and *Night of the Living Dead* (Keating 907; Marshall and Ryden 248). For my purposes, the analyses of the linguistic transformations of African-Americans in *Finding Forrester* and *Bamboozled* may be productive, especially as the first exploits the audience's stereotypes of race and natural language (and how people learn to write).

between subordinate and superordinate" (50). Gates surveys numerous examples of Western thinkers – among them Bacon, Hegel, Kant, and Jefferson – who rejected the humanity of Africans by insisting they did not possess the natural ability to write and produce a literature (54-58). For Hume, because writing represented the essential criterion of what composed a human, Africans, supposedly devoid of writing and a voice, inherited the qualities of animals (64). Gates provides numerous counter examples of African writers who, by writing, attempted to validate their humanity. It took the authority of eighteen white judges, for example, to validate that Phyllis Wheatley indeed did have the aptitude to produce the poetry attributed to her name (52). Yet, Gates also reminds us that the evidence of an African literature did not destroy racism (65); a marginalized African-American literary tradition merely reproduced racial difference.

Importantly, I do not condemn writing instructors who deploy metaphors of authenticity, who celebrate their students' closeness to their communities, marvel at their students' inventive use of oral language, or who attempt to connect to their students by deploying hip-hop in the classroom (see "Educators Use Rap"). Yet, I believe that instructors and researchers need to be wary of attempts to form generalizations of students based upon the symptoms of "bad" language they may exhibit, what Villanueva condemns in literacy studies that aim to demonstrate how "[b]ad language equals insufficient cognitive development" (11). Villanueva in particular criticizes literacy research aimed at illustrating how writing transforms consciousness.[75]

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[75] Much of this "Great Divide" research, which attempts to illustrate how literacy has transformed human consciousness (see Goody and Watt; Olson; Ong; Welch, *Electric Rhetoric* 55-62), presents competing versions of discourse, of a social, highly contextualized orality contrasted with an autonomous, explicit literacy. Excessively strong versions of the Great Divide, I believe, exploit obvious racial and

For example, Walter Ong singles out members of Arabic culture, "who rely heavily on formulaic thought and expression" (*Orality and Literacy* 26) and African-American males, who, "growing up in a still dominantly oral culture," exhibit the agonism that marks oral discourse (44). To be fair, Ong does not base these differences on the inherent natures of Arabs or African-Americans;[76] however, he also does not provide a political or sociolinguistic rationale for why these two groups, in particular, remain as typical representatives of an oral, more natural language.[77] Additionally, Basil Bernstein draws conclusions about the thinking of working-class students, based upon their "verbal deprivation" (Street 21); Goody and Watt, meanwhile, cite research connecting the "concreteness" of Chinese thought with their script (23). More nefariously, contemporary nativist scientists closely link the biology of human beings to general statements of their language abilities or cognitive skills; in the case of the authors of *The Bell Curve*, language becomes a measurable quality of natural intelligence: extrapolating from SAT scores, Asian-Americans are less verbal and more logical and mathematical; women, on the other hand, are innately more inclined towards the language arts.

Unaware of the research precedents linking language to how well students think, instructors who express a nostalgia for an original language may exoticize the "authentic

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ethnic codes and thus become colonialist texts, instrumental in hypothesizing the cognitive differences between "natives" and their Western colonizers.

[76] According to Welch, the depiction of Ong as a proponent of a particularly rigid dichotomy of orality/literacy disregards his contribution of a third category, secondary orality, which reflects the effects of technologies on consciousness (*Electric Rhetoric* 60-61).

[77] John Ogbu is an important source for attempts to base educational disparities in the black community on socioeconomic reasons and not upon the effects of orality (227-228).

voices" of their students, especially those who exude Ong's "oral residue," Bernstein's "unelaborated codes," who enter writing classrooms as representations of the exotic, raw experience of the street, or, problematically for African-American students, as victimized oracles of the effects of racism in the United States. The logic of exoticism, however, cannot escape false generalizations and possibly dangerous and racist stereotypes, especially if it relies upon an essentialist view of students' natures and their inherent capabilities to express themselves (see Omi and Winant 71). Michael Apple warns those who resort to the commonsense of stereotypes: human beings, he claims, do not blindly follow racial constructions simply because they serve the interests of political and economic elites (i.e., the strong view of false consciousness); they consent to the ideological formation of race because it connects to their real experiences (27, 34; see also Omi and Winant 67). Teachers, thus, may profit from privileging certain racial codes that emerge in their students' writing. They can be safely multicultural and reward the therapeutic self-disclosure of students' painful experiences; their discourse of "blackness" (or "Latino-ness," "rural-ness," etc.) can remain exotic, representing authentic experiences that their teachers may never be able to feel; "whiteness," of course, returns to its omniscient and invisible location – boring and sterile, yet dominant and powerful.

Conclusion: An Expressivist Theory of Aptitude

More so than Elbow, Ann Berthoff emphasizes a creative linguistic capability that all human beings possess. Her theory of writing and writing pedagogy bases itself on a notion of human nature, one in the twentieth century often attributed to Noam Chomsky (e.g., *Language and Mind* 100), which claims that creative language capability is species-

specific; it is an essential attribute of being human. I will discuss Chomsky's position in the next chapter and explore how his version of essential human nature, though problematic for social-epistemic rhetoricians, leads towards a project of social justice. Berthoff, meanwhile, insists upon the holistic and internal, "organic" development of perceptive and expressive abilities. Consciously paraphrasing Emerson, she defends a foundational language ability that allows human beings to generate meaning and reminds writing teachers to "[b]egin with where they [i.e., students] are as language animals, endowed with the form-finding and form-creating powers of mind and language" (9). Even though I have delineated Elbow's commitment to an egalitarian, democratic rhetoric, one in which all human beings can participate, his propensity for praising the voice of canonical writers – for example, Stein, Woolf, and Yeats – may force some readers to ponder if they'll ever be able to discover their voices. Indeed, even though Elbow assures us that "if we are brave and persistent enough" we will find our specific voices and become better writers, we have no way of telling why an elite group of writers can write with power, while the rest of us struggle with our inadequate voices. Discussing the discovery of voice in a music analogy, Elbow acknowledges this mystery: "A few people, it is true, sing with ringing power, but no one seems to understand how they manage this" (*Writing With Power* 282).

Berthoff's defines the production of language as an innate, general ability, and thus discards writing theories that reduce the mind to specific categories, which in turn reflect specific writing genres. For example, Berthoff claims that writers do not exercise their "imagination" hemisphere in order to create expressive discourse, nor do they turn to a "logical" domain to produce an expository essay (27). Deploying Coleridge's

definition of imagination, "the living power and prime agent of all human perception" (64), she attempts to counter the troublesome expressive/objective dichotomy. Writing teachers can exploit their students' natural ability to perceive, experience, and form concepts (64-65), especially if they respect the role of "chaos," the nonlinear, messy moments of writing invention (70). Students, importantly, need not confine their expressive abilities to personal writing.

Berthoff may represent an excellent mediator between expressivist and social rhetorics because she undermines the boundary separating the writer's expression of experience from rhetoric, conceived as the outward projection of the writer, the rules that mediate her connection to the external audience. The relationship of personal expression (i.e., "poetics") and rhetoric has been a controversial one, with the latter often regarded by idealist figures like Plato, Rousseau, and Emerson as a corrupting force. Elbow, likewise, by claiming that beginning writers, at least at first, should not focus upon audience (*Writing With Power* 306), expresses the personal idealism of this anti-rhetorical tradition: the creative individual, in this case, is pitted against institutions, the public, and the media – all forces that want to nullify the writer's native and individual talents. Understandably, this position has been vigorously attacked by socially inclined compositionists (see Porter 31, 37-38).

On the other hand, Berthoff links the natural potentiality for linguistic expression with that of a social context, that which provides language with its means for existence. Berthoff links expressivist and social rhetoric, claiming that "the ability to speak is innate, but language can only be realized in a social context" (72). In other words, though almost all human beings possess the capability of expressing themselves

powerfully, this natural ability means nothing if it does not flourish in a social context. The necessary-but-not-sufficient theory of aptitude has been transformed; no longer is it based, as in Blair's account of a native ability, or genius, which can be "polished," controlled, and expunged of improprieties with instruction and practice (32). Berthoff presents a natural language aptitude that begins with the individual – indeed, the essence of what makes her human – and only flourishes in a context of social expression.

Berthoff's educational theory, which connects the private self to the public, is necessarily a mystical one.[78] It begins with the universalization of the individual as the originating center – an arhetorical, ahistorical linguistic potentiality. Teachers provide a nurturing role. They must understand the innate capabilities of their students and limit their desire to interrupt and affect the natural curriculum, the inherent ways of learning, of their students. Berthoff writes,

> To conceive of education as a matter of growth and development, of instruction as nurture, of learning as a natural process of assimilation and accommodation is the philosophical foundation of an organic pedagogy whose aim it is to liberate the innate powers of the mind, to guide the natural bent. (88)

Unfortunately, this "organic pedagogy" suffers from how it universalizes the generative processes of students. Describing a group writing activity, in which students begin to generate a structure out of the "chaos" of their individual responses, Berthoff argues for

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[78] In several passages, however, Berthoff does provide practical advice for writing instructors. For example, in order to improve editing abilities, Berthoff calls for students to read their essays aloud and backwards as well as write "interpretive paraphrases" of problem sentences (81). An additional activity she describes is a "dialectical notebook," in which students record observations and then reflect upon these observations as events (64-65).

the natural power of the mind to make abstractions, to "see in terms of classes and types" (75). Students, who start from a similar, holistic linguistic center, learn and develop their writing abilities basically in the same way, for their minds naturally develop abilities to categorize.

These attempts to naturalize and homogenize the cognitive operations of the mind again privilege the dominant modes of logic and inductive abstraction, those that appeared, according to proponents of the Great Divide, after the introduction of writing. Once Berthoff categorizes a certain way of learning as natural, she then erases the historical, ideological, and rhetorical agendas that constitute the "naturalness" of this position. We are left with the suspicious transparency of a theoretical universality. As I have already discussed before, in my critiques of Campbell's conception of human nature and Elbow's authentic voice, a commonsensical, universal position may disguise particular discourses of "whiteness" and masculinity (see also Keller's examination of the masculine universal in scientific language [16-17]). At stake here is what happens to students who fail to utilize the same procedures of observation and idea generation that Berthoff has prescribed: will they be conceived of as failures, as inherently incapable of thinking "right"? In Chapter 6, I return to these critiques in my investigations of how social rhetorics dispel universal conceptions of human nature and question notions of rhetorical aptitude.

Chapter VI

Conclusion: Social Rhetoric's Erasure of Nature

> [O]ur academic institutions abound in imposters who proclaim that genius is a capitalist myth. (H. Bloom 5).

Harold Bloom would categorize this dissertation as the work of an "imposter," one who questions essentializing explanations for why some individuals (i.e., Bloom's "geniuses") are better writers than others (i.e., the merely "talented"). Up to this point, I have described several historical attempts to construct this binary: pre-classical notions of divinity, an aristocratic essence of *areté*, a natural ability for eloquence (*physis*), mental faculties, verbal intelligence, a self-revelation of authentic voice, and, from Chomsky's attack on behaviorism, a general cognitive structure for language acquisition. In *Genius*, another text to enter the conversation about writing and innateness, Bloom contributes to an ill-defined category of "genius," with its connections to the "fierce originality" of hero-individuals (11-12), and revisits another foundational and highly exclusionary method of differentiating writing ability. Unfortunately, because of the immense body of literature devoted to genius,[79] I have only touched upon it tangentially, in my demonstration of how ideological critique operates to explain Hugh Blair's theories of taste (see Chapter 1). Also, genius is generally a term attributed to canonized authors

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[79] See Ede and Lunsford; Norris; Woodmansee and Jaszi. The construction of genius represents perhaps another attempt to step outside of the corruptive effects of ideology (and rhetoric). Original geniuses, unlike mere common individuals who require training and practice, can access an ideal reality. Christopher Norris writes, "The true mark of genius is the power to create such moments out of time, moments when the mind can contemplate nature and its own 'inner' workings with a sense of achieved harmony" (141). These leisurely, socially detached "moments" provide geniuses with the opportunity to discover original metaphors and fashion them into artistic productions.

(as well as, more recently, business executives and football coaches), and rarely to college students in writing classrooms.

Nonetheless, I am interested in the exploring the motivation for Bloom's agonistic, anti-relativist stance. Targeting the humanities and social sciences, it especially reviles contemporary academia's indebtedness to social construction. Bloom voices a humanistic anxiety, railing against the confusion that reigns in this "mindless era" (196), the academic "Age of Foucault" (195). No judgments of greatness can be offered. There exists no way for texts to gain legitimacy, for them to become part of the canon. Instead, texts and authors circulate in a temporary maelstrom of perhaps perverted, unqualified public opinion: "Our confusions about canonical standards for genius are now institutionalized confusions, so that all judgements as to the distinction between talent and genius are at the mercy of the media, and obey cultural politics" (2). Because of the effects of the Internet, the discovery of genius will become more difficult (195), and therefore, the purpose of English teachers will be to show students how to appreciate genius (3).

At first glance, Bloom's complaints appear simply as a nostalgia for a return to a "traditional" mode of interpretation. He resists situating authors and their texts in their specific historical, political, and social contexts. The works of geniuses should be examined, he insists, as universal objects, as they have overcome their contexts – what texts inspired by mere talent cannot do (ix, 5). Bloom's complaints largely critique literary studies, especially the selection of canonical texts and the narrowing of literature teaching to cultural humanism. Yet, his anti-relativist stance participates in a more

general debate, in English studies as well as cognitive and evolutionary psychology, about the role of innate ability in differentiating the performance of students.

This chapter explores the contemporary clash between the essentializing postures of scholars like Bloom, who hope to legitimate the excellence of texts by tracing them back to the natures of their writers, and rhetoricians committed to social construction and cultural materialism, who hope to ground the practices of writers and readers in the contexts of discourse communities, thus problematizing efforts to form universal criteria for determining rhetorical performance (see Carter 276-277). Invoking Thomas Kuhn, Richard Rorty, and Clifford Geertz, compositionist Kenneth Bruffee defines the impact of social construction upon categories often perceived as unquestionable entities:

> A social constructionist position in any discipline assumes that entities we normally call reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on are constructs generated by communities of like-minded peers. Social construction understands reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on as community-generated and community-maintained linguistic entities – or, more broadly speaking, symbolic entities – that define or "constitute" the communities that generate them. (774)

Social construction resists universals, a priori logical faculties, specific language learning structures, and conceptions of geniuses arising mysteriously to inhabit literary canons. Instead, it demands full disclosure – a well-examined honesty as to the motives, methodologies, and assumptions that all scholars hold as members of different, competing communities. For writing teachers, even the most mundane, "commonsensical" aspects of their teaching practices need to be closely examined, such

as the spatial design of their classrooms or the way they evaluate papers. The aim is to interrogate the naturalness of any practice or construct and to connect it to a social history, to question, that is, what often presents itself as unquestionable or ahistorical. Bruffee reminds us that even our attraction to social construction theory may in itself be self-interested. Since it foregrounds language as that which determines knowledge, social construction situates reading and writing in the center of the university curriculum, bolstering the status of the humanities (778).

In this chapter, I have three goals: to explore the current attacks against social construction, identifying what this debate means for composition and rhetoric; to examine social rhetoric's erasure of aptitude, especially in terms of how it resolves issues of evaluating students and constructing learning theory; and, to indicate future implications of the inquiry of this project. I feel that the last goal is especially important. As this project offers only one strand of an immense, interdisciplinary conversation, linking language with human nature, it does not offer any decisive close: at best it can open up the possibility for more conversations.

Legitimating Nature: Counterposing Social Construction

Harold Bloom's critique re-articulates the positions of those active in the academic Cultural Wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Allan Bloom, for example, calls for the clear delineation of the boundaries of academic departments, universal modes of reading, and a social grounding in liberal culture. Lynn Cheney laments the hegemony of political interpretations pervading academia: "Politics writ small had become politics written so large that it drove out the possibility of human beings doing anything nonpolitical – such as encouraging the search for truth" (15). E. D. Hirsch insists that his conception of a

national cultural literacy represents all Americans, not only the cultural vocabulary of elites. These arguments, I believe, reveal an anxiety towards the viability, in the university, of general standards and universals, the means of legitimating linguistic superiority. They endeavor to establish strong foundations, such as genius or truth, that can contest social construction, the propensity, that is, of socially committed academics to constantly implicate cultural practices – such as how literary texts are read or how writing should be taught – as products of power, ideology, and self-interest.

The politics of these anti-relativist stances are obvious. Cheney's nostalgia for a "truth" sanctified of ideology reveals an agenda for what should represent the culture of the United States, perhaps Harold Bloom's canon of geniuses, Allan Bloom's "Great Books," or Hirsch's vocabulary that claims to transcend class and racial interests. The cultural warriors also share a similar vision for the broad curricular goals of education, which, at all levels, should connect students to the traditions of the past, to other Americans, and to the values and ideals that all – or most – Americans share. Social construction, along with post-structuralism and post-modernity, operate, on the other hand, to fragment, question, deconstruct, and destroy. They revile Cheney's attempts to avoid politics in favor of aesthetics, Harold and Allan Bloom's desire to read ahistorically, and Hirsch's support of a disinterested unified national culture.

Recently, cognitive and evolutionary psychologists have begun to shape their own claims against social construction. They adopt an alternative form of honesty, one that places its faith in science as a neutral methodology, not in a transcendental aesthetic and culture. For my purposes, these scientists can be conveniently grouped according to two of the three categories I proposed for classical rhetoric. Pursuing a strong definition of

aptitude, "race realist" scientists, like Arthur Jensen, J. Philippe Ruston, and Herrnstein and Murray claim that heredity places definite limits on what individuals – and groups defined by class, race/ethnicity, or sex/gender – can accomplish; like their aristocratic predecessors in classical Athens, they argue that the hierarchies of societies reveal how intelligence and talent are naturally distributed. The second group, the interactionists, argue that heredity and environment both influence the behavior and abilities of human beings. They support a position similar to the necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine of aptitude – yet one safely mystified by the language of science

The "race realist" scientists are easy to detect, if simply because their texts echo Galton's nineteenth-century *Hereditary Genius*. J. Philippe Rushton, in *Race, Evolution, and Behavior*, deploys science – that is, psychometric data, statistics, and physiological measurements – to argue that stereotypes are not racist and politically motivated generalizations, but verifiable facts: Asians are the most intelligent, live longer, and have stronger familial structures; blacks score lower on IQ tests, are more sexually active, aggressive, and sociable; whites fall somewhere in between, but much closer to the Asian scores (9). Rushton's text is a racist one; yet, he hopes to show that his "racism" is not motivated by bigotry, but by a neutral scientific methodology that he has no control over. According to Rushton, however, this same neutrality does not support the positions that dispute his findings or that challenge the biological essentialism of race. Inevitably, these claims reveal the self-interests of groups and, perhaps, the guilt of his readers, whom Rushton addresses directly in the following question: "When it comes to race, do you really dare to say what you think?" (6). Truth-telling is Rushton's ethos, one that hopes to snare the pathos of his readers' self-doubt and fear of hypocrisy. Rushton's

question traps those who doubt his science: if his readers disagree, then they are afraid to tell the truth; they have become dupes of political correctness.

Similarly, Herrnstein and Murray, in *The Bell Curve*, share an enthusiasm for scientific method and its ability to capture a unitary human intelligence, contending that scholars cannot ignore the results of science or let politics occlude the investigations of inherited ability and difference (1, 8). According to Herrnstein and Murray, intelligence is something that is real and measurable; moreover, it is something that has always been with us: "Gossip about who in the tribe is cleverest has probably been a topic of conversation around the fire since fires, and conversation, were invented" (1). Also, connecting psychometrics to sociology, they celebrate the supposed capability of the United States to organize itself based upon strata of intelligence. *The Bell Curve* is a cognitive-capitalist text. It promises a rational society that rewards citizens with superior cognitive capability, regardless of their background, and reflects their natural, inherent differences (25, 105); in the United States, Herrnstein and Murray insist, a class of the cognitive-elite will soon emerge, regardless of the well-meaning egalitarian policies of the government.

The enthusiasm for science, psychometrics, and the rational hierarchization of advanced capitalist societies is tempered by Herrnstein and Murray's despair over dropping intelligence scores in the United States as well as anxiety over the weakening standards of English language education. They hypothesize two reasons for decreasing intelligence: well-educated women are having fewer children, and recent immigrants do not possess the same qualities and values as earlier European immigrants, who were "brave, hard working, imaginative, self-starting, and often of high IQ" (341; they hint

that the welfare state has much to do with the lack of initiative of new immigrants). The problems with the teaching of English, which are indicated by low verbal SAT scores, stem from "multiculturalism in the curriculum, the need to minimize racial differences in performance measures, and enthusiasm for fostering self-esteem independent of performance" (432). Because of the fears of inequality, of allowing student performances to mark general differences between individuals and groups, educators are lowering their standards of English teaching and the literacy levels of students (433). Unlike Hirsch and Allan Bloom, who hope to connect the mass of students with their elite conception of national culture, Herrnstein and Murray limit their educational objectives to those gifted few who have the natural ability to profit from what amounts to a classical rhetorical education, which allows students to analyze and evaluate texts and solve problems (442, 444).

Unlike the cultural warriors, whose conservative politics and liberal humanism are obvious, and the race realists, who attempt to conceal racist stereotypes behind a reverence for science, the interactionists, such as Stephen Pinker and Noam Chomsky, present a more significant challenge to proponents of social construction, especially Chomsky, who advocates a project of social justice based upon a universal conception of human nature and a biological capacity for language. For the rest of this section, I hope to describe Pinker's and Chomsky's position in the nurture/nature debate, explain the implications of their position for writing and ethics, and discuss one specific (and uncontroversial) application of the interactionist position to the development of writers by way of Howard Gardner's "linguistic intelligence."

Pinker, especially in *The Blank Slate*, articulates a customary, though significantly more nuanced critique of social construction (what he dubs the "standard social science model"). Sounding like Harold Bloom and Cheney, Pinker targets academia's allegiance to postmodern theory, which concludes that all knowledges are politically motivated, fragmented constructions:

> Postmodernism was even more aggressively relativistic, insisting that there are many perspectives on the world, none of them privileged. It denied even more vehemently the possibility of meaning, knowledge, progress, and shared cultural values. It was more Marxist and far more paranoid, asserting that claims to truth and progress were tactics of political domination which privileged the interests of straight white males. (411)

Pinker's sweeping generalizations about the effects of postmodernism upon academic research reflect the paranoia he wants his readers to feel. Indeed, he conveniently ignores the fact that professors in the humanities and social sciences hold diverse political allegiances and interests. Furthermore, even the most influential of the postmodern theorists, such as Baudrillard, Jameson, and Lyotard, are a good deal more complicated than what Pinker suggests.

This is Pinker's main trope: he agrees that egalitarian social theories made important contributions, evident, for example, in the civil rights movements for blacks and women, but then insists that the research agendas and methodologies of postmodern academics working in the social sciences and the humanities have become overly "paranoid" and politicized. According to Pinker, any claim that human behavior is partly

determined by "natural," biological forces immediately is treated as a justification for racism, rigid gender and sexual roles, and class-based generalizations about intelligence. In other words, the nature/nurture debate is a conversation held only in absolutes (150), even though there are many examples of scholars, who, though committed either to an innateness position or social construction, accept the importance and influence of the opposing side: Chomsky, for instance, a committed proponent of human universals, describes how "material deprivation and oppressive social structures" limit the expansion of cognitive capability to an elite few (*Reflections on Language* 124-125); conversely, Marxist psychologists like Vygotsky and Luria do not completely rule out a biological basis for thought and language (Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* 79, 83); and, as I will describe below, Gardner's theory allows for the performances of an individual's inherent linguistic intelligence to be judged by standards set by discourse communities.

I need to make one important qualification. Pinker and Chomsky might oppose the deployment of their theories of human nature in this conversation of rhetoric and aptitude by contending that their innateness hypothesis only implicates normal, everyday speaking, the type of language use that is not taught in formal classrooms (Pinker, *Language Instinct* 298). Writing (especially the literary genres that Harold Bloom discusses) and eloquence (which may be "written speech") are cultural processes, that require many years of formal schooling to be mastered. In *Writing (Is an Unnatural Act)*,[80] James C. Raymond underscores this binary, that everyday speech is "natural,"

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[80] Comparisons of Raymond's *Writing (Is an Unnatural Act)* with Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* are interesting. Though the premise of Raymond's textbook is that writing is a "tool" that allows humans to supplement the deficiencies of speech (especially for purposes of memory and learning), he also sounds like Elbow when he argues that students should not make their writing too unnatural (6). Raymond

whereas writing is "unnatural," a technology that provides humans with unnatural advantages, such as being able to establish a permanent, accessible vocabulary (xv, 2-6). Writing is a relatively recent invention, one that reflects less the innate powers of a single individual, and more the ability of societies to maintain stable institutions (Diamond 236).[81] Furthermore, according to Pinker, writing's recent history could not influence the evolutionary history of human beings; as of yet, the type of "dedicated machinery" or "specialization" necessary to make people biologically gifted writers would not have evolved (*The Blank Slate* 221).

Nonetheless, I feel that valuable contributions can be made to this project if I pursue an analysis of Pinker and Chomsky. The former, though he treats writing only tangentially, includes art and aesthetic appreciation as a contested area in the nature/nurture debate. Pinker hopes to establish a biological basis for standards of taste and motivations for artistic creation.[82] Generalizing from these claims, I believe I can demonstrate how Pinker, hypothetically, would respond to the influence of social construction upon current rhetorical theory. More importantly, despite the difference in focus of Chomsky's research, I feel that I cannot ignore Chomsky's counter-argument to the overriding thesis of this project, that conceptions of aptitude operate to exclude

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writes, "If it [i.e., the writing] is really good, really unnatural in the best sense of the word, it can be as easy to understand as ordinary speech" (7).

[81] Jared Diamond argues that writing requires the "institutional uses of early writing," often those for the purposes of rule and trade, and the "social and agricultural mechanisms for generating the food surpluses required to feed scribes" (236).

[82] Interestingly enough, Pinker invokes Bourdieu, in his attempt to show that human beings have a natural urge to consume art in order to indicate their status; Bourdieu certainly agrees with the connection of consumption and status, but he never indicates that there is anything natural or biological about this process. The appreciation – the consumption – of art is an active process of representing the individual's association with a class-specific lifestyle (see especially Bourdieu's definition of habitus and how it constitutes taste [*Distinctions* 169-173]).

undesirable individuals and groups from rhetorical training. Chomsky proposes an alternative thesis: conceptions of innate ability insure that all human beings share the same natural right to be free.[83]

Given my qualification above, Pinker's stance on contemporary composition and rhetoric would concentrate less on the biological abilities of students and more upon the failure of a postmodern, social rhetoric to identify clear criteria for what constitutes good writing. Following the pattern of critique in *The Blank Slate*, Pinker would first praise current rhetorical theory for challenging the excesses of the current-traditional paradigm; social rhetoric has blurred the artificial boundaries of genres, questioned the absolute individuality of the writing subject, and challenged the elitist assumptions of dominant dialects (see, for example, Pinker's critiques of "language mavens" upholding prescriptive usage standards [*The Language Instinct* 383]). However, Pinker would then rail against the postmodern excesses now radicalizing social rhetoric, a politicization of the English classroom that makes the formation of general standards of writing quality impossible. Third-wave feminist rhetoricians, for example, equate objective research, principles of clarity, and unified, thesis-driven paragraphs with patriarchal, historically specific dominant discourse (see Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford's discussion of how feminists have challenged "traditional" standards of arrangement and style [414-428]). Pinker

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[83] Claims of innateness, to essentialize the differences of sex, race, and sexual orientation, often have conflicting purposes and consequences. One of the main motivations for promoting a genetic basis for difference may be to counter popular assumptions that the most natural, "normal" biological position is one male, white, and heterosexual. Focusing upon the psychoanalytical examination of the last category, Nancy Chodorow explains that heterosexuality's position as the assumed, commonsensical default accounts for its invisibility (770-771); homosexuality, on the other hand, is a well interrogated abnormality, perversion, or disease. However, will defending a biological basis for homosexuality alter its "abnormality" – or, as Gates hints about attempts to essentialize "race," will it have the unintended consequence of removing homosexuals from a conception of "shared humanity"? (66).

demonstrates the excesses of social construction by including an example of Judith Butler's opaque prose (415). This jargon-laden paragraph, Pinker declares, is an example of what happens to postmodern writing, a discourse that accepts only shifting, contingent criteria and that refuses to appear as "natural," commonsensical, and readable.

Chomsky's innateness hypothesis serves as a more significant challenge to my suspicions of universalizing theories of human nature. Unlike Pinker, Chomsky is not concerned about the proliferation of fragmented, politicized views in academia. Indeed, Chomsky shares with socially committed scholars a political suspicion of how "pseudoscientific pretense" serves the "needs of dominant coercive ideologies" (*Reflections on Language* 124). However, Chomsky questions the primary contention of this project, that universalizing conceptions of innateness disguise the operations of self-interest and validate unequal distributions of political and cultural power. He argues instead that learning theories depending solely on experience and social input (e.g., behaviorism and empiricism) can be just as easily deployed to justify racist and sexist policies and beliefs and support acts of domination and colonialism. He writes, "The principle that human nature, in its psychological aspects, is nothing more than a product of history and given social relations removes all barriers to coercion and manipulation by the powerful" (132). Without a unifying theory of human nature, Chomsky suggests, the dominant classes can then categorize people by their most superficial features, such as skin color or sex (130). Pinker introduces another reason for why purely social learning theories do not necessarily reflect ethical models of society: if human beings are conceived as being equal, yet differences of wealth and status still exist, social theorists can certainly blame institutions, government policies, or cultural forces like

discrimination. Yet, there are alternative explanations. Individuals who remained unsuccessful could be blamed for not working up to their potential; on the other hand, those who occupied positions of power could be condemned as unethically greedy and rapacious, judgments that have led, according to Pinker, to the totalitarian, Marxist-inspired atrocities of the twentieth century (*The Blank Slate* 151-152).

Chomsky proposes a biological explanation for how languages are learned. All human beings possess an innate, species-specific linguistic faculty, a cognitive structure that embodies a universal grammar, enabling individuals to decode the structures of specific national languages. The explanatory power of Chomsky's theory is that, despite poor linguistic models and insufficient input, most human beings effortlessly develop an ability to speak: they create original and creative utterances, form infinitely varying utterances, and use language pragmatically. Especially important for Chomsky is the fact that an innate competency for language allows for the infinite generation of new utterances. Human beings, he concludes, are thus biologically programmed for creativity, a fundamental quality of human nature that can manifest itself in the ceaseless critique of unjust social systems and the hope to create democratic societies (*Reflections on Language* 133-134). In other words, if human beings share a common biological faculty for language, Chomsky argues, they also share the natural right to be free.

In this project, we have encountered this type of universalizing theory before. Protagoras, in the Myth of Prometheus, declared that all individuals had been provided with relatively the same values of *areté*, allowing them to become effective citizens. Campbell, placing eighteenth-century rhetoric firmly in the Enlightenment, claimed that all human beings inherently possessed common sense, a set of propositions that

predetermined how they would view the world and generate ideas. Berthoff agreed with Chomsky that human beings possessed a universal capacity to creatively observe and generate ideas.

Obviously, I will not be able to resolve Chomsky's challenge here. A 1974 debate between Chomsky and Foucault, though, provides an excellent illustration of the differences that exist between universalizing theories and their post-structuralist, historiographical counterparts.[84] Foucault first contends that whereas he is trying to erase the rational subject as the originator of truth in the history of knowledge, Chomsky is attempting to reclaim this subject, recovering it from behaviorism (Chomsky and Foucault 115, 125). Chomsky makes linguistic creativity an internal quality of human beings, who have been acquiring first languages, he claims, basically the same way for more than 20,000 years (126). Foucault, on the other hand, searches for the external rules for what constitutes the discursive role of creativity and human nature (109-110).

Perhaps a more important difference between Chomsky and Foucault is how their competing theories allow for ethical action. Taking on the role of Socrates, Foucault forces Chomsky to agree that he does possess an ideal of justice – of what needs to be done in order to change existing repressive social structures. Foucault asks, "[D]oesn't one risk defining this human nature [i.e., the desire for justice] – which is at the same time ideal and real, and has been hidden and repressed until now – in terms borrowed from our society, from our civilization, from our culture?" (131). Foucault sets the

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[84] Bourdieu's critique of Chomsky is also compelling. Once he constructs "universal norms of linguistic practice," Bourdieu claims that Chomsky hopes to eschew the problematic issues of how ideal competency is defined (44); in other words, Chomsky, by constructing an ideal and impossible rhetorical situation, ignores the political effects of legitimating standard and dominant dialects.

relativistic trap of social construction: an essential ideal, though it appears as a human universal, represents only one particular, self-interested position. Chomsky, however, does not fall as easily as many of Socrates' foils. Though he admits that he cannot define "justice," hinting that human beings will never be able to adequately describe this term, he declares that the consequences are too great to act without some sense of a contingent ideal (133, 136). The lives of real people are at stake; repressive societies, which continue to perpetuate their violent and destructive policies, need to be stopped.

In order to provide an example of how an interactionist position, one that accepts Chomsky's innateness hypothesis, relates directly to writing, I want to briefly discuss Howard Gardner's use of "linguistic intelligence" (see also Linda Flower's *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning*, an attempt to connect cognitive psychology to social rhetoric). What makes Gardner a sympathetic figure for social rhetoricians is his critique of overly dominant and restrictive theories of intelligence, such as those proposed by Piaget, who "limned a brilliant portrait of that form of human intellectual growth which is valued most highly by the Western scientific and philosophical traditions" (20). In other words, Gardner accuses Piaget of operating too closely within the ideological framework of what western academia privileges.

Arguing against unitary verbal-logical conceptions of intelligence, Gardner advocates the emphasis of skills often ignored by educators, such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, music, spatial, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. Educators have often used Gardner's theory as a way to adopt alternative evaluation methods and, hopefully, empower students whose strengths lie elsewhere than in those areas commonly associated

with academic success.[85] Gardner asserts that linguistic intelligence, one of the seven intelligences he defines, has a natural, biological basis, which is shared in varying degrees by almost all people (78). Gardner claims that unlike the aptitudes and abilities of gymnasts (who exploit bodily-kinesthetic intelligence) or mathematicians "linguistic competency is, in fact, the intelligence – the intellectual competence – that seems most widely and most democratically shared across the human species" (77-78). Gardner voices the more inclusive, less determining conception of aptitude.

Gardner generates criteria for strong linguistic intelligence, generalizing in some cases from the biographies of canonical writers (e.g., T. S. Eliot and Sartre). He includes a sensitivity to shades of meaning of words and their contexts, an "intuitive sense" of phonology, syntax, and pragmatics, an ability to vividly recall emotions and images, and, less importantly, a memory of other texts (77). Most importantly, Gardner isolates a fascination with language as being the key predictor of success: "Technical facility with words, rather than the desire to express ideas, are hallmarks [*sic*]of the future poet" (76). In one respect, this statement is remarkable. By separating "technical facility with words" from ideas and even the motivation to express them, Gardner unwittingly re-articulates the current-traditional definition of rhetoric, as a mechanical activity that is performed upon words once meaning has already been safely established. Citing Chomsky's theory, he claims that syntax and phonology occupy a distinct cognitive location separate from semantics and pragmatics; these latter two functions, he

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[85] See Wallach and Wing's discussion on how singular conceptions of intelligence can predict academic success, but determine little about creativity and a person's accomplishments outside of the classroom (127).

hypothesizes, may exploit more general cognitive capabilities, perhaps the logical-mathematical or personal intelligences (80-81).

Despite providing a cognitive rationale for the troublesome form/content binary, Gardner emerges as an important transitional figure, who links personal linguistic intelligence with the social values of discourse communities. First, Gardner emphasizes the role of practice and experience in developing the creative abilities of writers; linguistic excellence comes from hard work – and only secondarily from natural ability: "Future writers are those individuals in whom the linguistic intelligence has flowered through work and, perhaps as well, through the luck of the genetic draw" (84). Second, he rejects universal standards of rhetorical expertise. What constitutes good writing depends upon what a specific culture privileges. For example, certain African cultures may emphasize large verbal memory; others might valorize the agonistic "dueling" use of language (91-94; see also Heath's description of how verbal "warfare" plays an important role in the language development of African-American boys [75-86]).[86]

The Challenge of Social Rhetoric

Contemporary discussions of how human nature or aptitude impact language are accompanied, as I indicated above, with statements about truth-telling. In the1980s and 1990s, the cultural warriors searched for ways to return to the truth, opposing the incursion of "politics" in academia with the universalizing stances of humanism. Janet Atwill questions how innocent these academic battles were, especially since what was at

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[86] Silvano Ariete, who argues that creativity and genius arise from an interdependent relationship of culture and psychology (305-307), lists criteria for creativogenic societies, those that can provide the best conditions for creativity to flourish: free access to cultural media, tolerance of different viewpoints, access to funding and resources, rewards, and the interaction of significant individuals (324). Suspiciously, these criteria hint that late capitalist western democracies are the most creativogenic.

stake was the formation of students' subjectivities – their "values, views of reality, and relationships to cultural and political authority" (13). Likewise, the race realists propose their own honesty, mediated by the "neutrality" of science, and Pinker advocates a more truthful inquiry that focuses upon individuals and not groups (*The Blank Slate* 24-26). In another section, Pinker condemns politics for distracting researchers from the discoveries of objective scientific truth (198; see also Herrnstein and Murray [318]).

In rhetoric and composition studies, scholars have promoted their own values of honesty. As I indicated earlier, proponents of current-traditional rhetoric advocated a language theory based upon honesty: writers faithfully transferred objective facts to readers. Macrorie and Elbow, protesting this mechanical and formalist honesty, urge students instead to use their authentic voices in order to produce truer texts that better represent their selves, worlds, and experiences. All of these versions of truth-telling are opposed to a deceitful politics – the "lies" of social construction and postmodern theory, which question the essential position of the individual as well as the reality described by historical fact and scientific objectivity.

Social rhetoricians, such as Kenneth Burke, James Berlin, Richard Ohmann, Karen LeFevre, and Deborah Brandt, articulate an alternative form of honesty. Instead of telling the truth, they simply refuse to conceal their own motives and agendas, a position that a "postmodern" rhetorician like Vitanza would find difficult to accept: as I discussed in Chapter 1, how is it possible for proponents of Berlin's privileged social-epistemic theory to be so aware of their own motives, so capable of interrogating the political implications of their beliefs and actions? For these social rhetoricians, "lying" means to forward a stance of unproblematic truth, which, in terms of this project, could mean the

advocacy of unquestionable universals (e.g., Chomsky's universal grammar), neutral methodologies, or essentializing claims about groups of people (e.g., "scientific" reports that women are more verbal and less mathematical). As a social constructivist, telling the truth means to center inquiry upon language, which links writers, readers, and material conditions together. Berlin writes, "Interlocutors, audience, and reality are all defined by language and cannot be known apart from them. Language forms our conceptions of our selves, our audiences, and the very reality in which we exist" (*Rhetoric & Reality* 166). Language is no longer an instrument of thought, a transparent medium that encapsulates and conveys objective facts. According to Berlin, it shapes the rhetorical situation, determining how subjects will speak and what they will talk about ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 488).

The form of truth-telling of the social rhetorician should be familiar; indeed, it represents the inquiry of this entire project and disputes the reification of aptitude, condemning it as only another attempt to conceal ideology. I do not, however, only want to present social rhetoric as a negative response to the universalizing and essentializing stances that mark other rhetorics. Social rhetoric has contributed to, among other areas, our current conceptions of audience, genre, and style, as well as our attitudes towards non-dominant dialects, technology, collaborative writing, and textual ownership. Important for my purposes, I address below how social rhetoric and its rejection of a dependence on theories of aptitude affect the evaluation of students' writing and theories of language learning.

Evaluation

Social rhetoric complicates the judgment of texts by questioning the application of universal criteria, such as the current-traditional stylistic principles of unity, coherence, emphasis, and economy. The successful current-traditional text attempts to appear natural – a commonsensical structure for writing. The current-traditional Herbert Spencer, for example, argues that economy facilitates readers' comprehension by reducing the amount of energy they utilize. More recently, cognitive rhetoric has made similar claims: writers must be aware of the "natural" ways readers process texts; studies have demonstrated readers engage more with texts that follow a linear scheme connecting a general, explicit claim (i.e., the thesis) to more specific examples, that clearly link related arguments, and coherently group related ideas together (Charney 243-245). Berlin, who identifies cognitive rhetoric as the "heir apparent" of current-traditional ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 480), would not be surprised that both rhetorics espouse global criteria, which allow instructors to take on universal, general positions as readers, yank texts away from particular discourse communities, and make commonsensical judgments about what determines standard – or dominant – style. Though lacking the empirical support of readability data, Harold Bloom's humanistic mode of reading is a similar methodology of evaluating texts: the works of original authors should not be read within their historical and cultural contexts, but according to ill-defined criteria of genius; or, as Allan Bloom contends, we should read these texts "as their authors wished them to be read" (301).

The problem of evaluating texts – or similarly, of making judgments about writing expertise – stems from a conflict between what Michael Carter, using the

terminology of Clifford Geertz, calls "general knowledge" and "local knowledge." General knowledge includes the global writing strategies of idealized rhetors,[87] the skills that transfer across all rhetorical situations and discourse communities. Local knowledge, on the other hand, consists of the micro-strategies, lore, conventions, genres, and values of specific discourse communities, the material that may or may not be applicable to alternative situations, times, and locales. Though Carter attempts to create a common ground between cognitive and social rhetoric (274), defenders of a strong version of social construction will remain skeptical of universal standards of writing, those that link together the rhetorical practices of different geographical areas, time periods, classes, race/ethnic groups, and sex/gender. Consequently, social rhetoricians are especially suspicious of standardized testing, which attempts to collapse all differences into a statistic of verbal intelligence, and global rubrics to define the writing levels of students (for an example, see Sternglass 313-314).

Instead of universal standards and conceptions of ideal writers and readers, social rhetoricians adopt local and dynamic assessment procedures. Discussing the policies of basic writers, Sternglass asks for educators to be more sensitive to the different dialects of marginalized students and to be more aware of their developing linguistic abilities: "Because raters are not cognizant of the changes that occur over time in language development, they are frozen into demanding perfection from the very beginning" (15). Sternglass understands that her critique of standardized writing tests argues for their

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[87] In "Writing as Problem Solving," Hayes and Flowers contend they are constructing their model of the writing process around the "behavior of actual (rather than idealized) writers" (391). In one way they are correct: they generalize their model from the oral protocol analyses of participants. Yet, despite their qualifications regarding the differences of individual writers, their description of the writing stages reveals

abandonment; students should either be provided several weeks to complete drafts of a writing task or their instructors should be responsible for identifying early on what problem areas need to be resolved (298). Providing an international example, Irvine and Elsasser describe their participation in a study that examined the low writing standards of students at a college in the Virgin Islands. Similar to Andrea Fishman's study of Amish literacy, Heath's ethnography of working-class white and black children, and Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole's analysis of Vai literacy, Irvine and Elsasser refuse to form a single criterion of good writing (305); instead of importing the academic standards of a university in the United States, they sketch a program that would utilize native linguistic resources (such as a locally published newspaper), alter the negative attitudes towards students' use of English Creole, and incorporate local forms of personal writing (318-319).

Theory of Learning

Lev Vygotsky, unlike John Dewey,[88] one of many significant sources of social rhetorical theory (see Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 52; Bruffee 774; Hillocks 108-110), downplays the role of nature and biology in the development of an individual's linguistic abilities and consciousness. As James Moffett reminds us, however, it would be a mistake to argue that Vygotsky completely erases the effects of an innate language

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little about "actual" writers – and, indeed, says a great deal about Hayes and Flower's indebtedness to computational models (see also Berlin's agonistic critique ["Rhetoric and Ideology" 480-484]).

[88] Dewey defines heredity both as a limit to education, which can guide teachers' decisions about what activities are suitable for individual students (87), and as an "initiating" force that educators must be aware of when constructing curricular goals. Dewey warns that educators who fail to grasp the importance of native abilities construct false, external systems that students then need to conform to: "Natural instincts are either disregarded or treated as nuisances – as obnoxious traits to be suppressed, or at all events to be brought into conformity with external standards" (60). This stance does not make Dewey an expressivist, however. Though nature is important, it should not completely dictate the objectives of instructors (133).

faculty (232). Vygotsky hypothesizes that speech and thought originate in two separate, innate locations of the mind; speech, importantly, serves a purely social function in its preintellectual state, that is, in the phatic connection of the infant to her environment through laughter, babbling, and crying (*Thought and Language* 81). Vygotsky is not a behaviorist of the ilk of Watson and Skinner, who draw the ire of cognitivists like Chomsky and Pinker, for he does maintain a distinct function and development for individual thought. Yet, as a dialectical psychologist, Vygotsky was committed in establishing a strong role for the social, technological, and historical forces that shape consciousness – and that make attempts to universalize ways of thinking and speaking impossible: "Verbal thought is not an innate, natural form of behavior, but is determined by a historical-cultural process and has specific properties and laws that cannot be found in the natural forms of thought and speech" (94). Verbal thought, or "inner speech," which represents the consciousness of the individual, is the intersection of private thought with socially determined speech. Bakhtin articulates a similar position, but in terms of a conflict between personal and external, authoritative languages: "[C]onsciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it, and from which it cannot initially separate itself; the process of distinguishing between one's own and another's discourse, between one's own and another's thought, is activated rather late in development" (345). For Vygotsky and Bakhtin, consciousness – an intersection of thought, language, and ideology – is only partly the individual's and partly the society's, a site both public and private.

Vygotsky's theory of how speech and thought become connected, as a socially mediated site of consciousness, is important, especially considering the pervasiveness of

the competing expressivist theory in composition studies. As I explored in the previous chapter, in expressivist theory, language originates within the individual, as a primitive, powerful, and unalienated authentic voice and becomes enervated by the impact of formal education, the media, public opinion, and urbanization. It would be an oversimplification to contend that Vygotsky merely reverses the process, that is, external, social forces make up the inner life of the individual (the position of behaviorism). Thought and speech originally meet, according to Vygotsky, in external, social speech. Thought, therefore, becomes verbal in the social and rhetorical contexts of a child's activity and interaction with others.[89] Gradually, as the child matures, verbal thought becomes separated from social speech (i.e., as egocentric speech), and then becomes interiorized, transforming into what Vygotsky calls "inner speech" (*Mind in Society* 24-28).

For writing, what are the implications of verbal thought's external-to-internal trajectory? According to Vygotsky, since verbal thought is partly a social construction, its constitution is determined by the (unnatural) technologies that exist in the society. Vygotsky deploys a standard Marxist position in this case: as human beings change their environment, as in the adoption of a new technology, they will in return be changed. Writing, similar to the semiotic technology of memory aids (*Mind in Society* 38-39), is a thoroughly socially constituted practice. Obviously, it is unnatural (after all, it is a technology), but, importantly, Vygotsky does not then imply that it possesses only an

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[89] Vygotsky's psychological contribution to rhetoric here is enormous. Repudiating the powerful, current-traditional notions that language comes after meaning, as its stylistic garb, Vygotsky declares that meaning, like consciousness itself, is an interrelationship of thought and speech; without thought, speech is a meaningless sound, with no social force; without speech, thought cannot exist: "Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (*Thought and Language* 218).

instrumental function, that it is, in other words, a "tool" that human beings can choose to use or not (105-107). Like verbal thought itself, writing undergoes its own gradual public-private process, beginning with social gestures and play (109-110) and then ending with the first-order symbolism of "written speech" (116). Finally, Vygotsky does not rely on the speaking/writing binary. Vygotsky only distinguishes "written speech" and "social speech" by their formal qualities. Writing requires more syntactical elaboration, often in the form of a clearly defined subject, as it operates in the context of a monologue; writers cannot make the same assumptions about shared knowledge as speakers can (*Thought and Language* 242-243).[90]

Implications of Aptitude for Research

I hope that this project offers a new conversation for scholars in which to discuss rhetorical theory, and its interrelationship with composition studies, as well as its consequences for the ethical problems of critical pedagogy and social justice. Perhaps an unfortunate feature of this particular conversation is its tremendous breadth. This analysis of aptitude has spanned approximately 2,700 years of rhetorical history and has focused upon four broad categories of rhetorical theory, the multiple formations of classical rhetoric, the meritocratic current-traditional and expressivist rhetorics, and,

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[90]Vygotsky's notion that learning precedes development has influenced the writing pedagogy of George Hillocks, who, in his description of "environmental teaching," argues that instructors can use collaborative activities in order to support the learning of "complex strategies that students are not capable of using on their own" (55). Like Vygotsky, Hillocks refuses to isolate student writers and rejects static, age-based Piagetian levels of development. Borrowing Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development, " which spans the difference "between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance" (Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* 187), Hillocks contends writing teachers must be aware of their students' possibilities, which may reveal themselves with the support of collaborative activity. Unfortunately, psychometricians and educators still evaluate students independently. Vygotsky writes, "They never entertained the notion that what children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense be even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone" (*Mind in Society* 85).

finally, the social, anti-foundational rhetorics that currently dominate composition and rhetoric theory and practice. Again, I do not simply conclude that social rhetoricians, who argue that the performances of students are dependent upon social, political, and historical factors, have articulated the final and "correct" denial of aptitude and hence have formulated a rhetoric that best enables the construction of a just society, one that provides the most equal access to rhetorical training and the most ethical stance towards student evaluation. After all, social rhetoric may fail to satisfy composition teachers and researchers in three important tasks: first, its insistence upon community-specific evaluation standards and procedures complicates the grading of college instructors, who must defend the low grades they give students or, conversely, explain to administrators why their grades appear so inflated; second, it does not account for why many writing teachers feel that every day they come up against students with different abilities, interests, and levels of writing competency (especially in the areas of usage and syntactical and lexical complexity), even though these students share similar educational and social backgrounds; finally, it cannot reassure worried students who complain to their instructors that they are not "writers."

The proponents of social rhetoric, obviously, are unwilling to essentialize the impacts of ethnicity, race, class, and sex in order to account for the differences that exist among individuals. Instead, they have turned to the considerable body of literature that identifies the effects of environment and social attitudes upon student performance. Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words*, for example, demonstrates that differences persist between groups of students (in this case, working-class black and white elementary school students) because of micro-cultural influences, such as the question-

answer interaction of elders and children, the role of reading in the home, and the relationship of language to play. More research needs to be conducted in order to establish the social reasons why students at all levels enter writing classes with such varying levels of competence (unfortunately, this probably necessitates time-consuming, expensive, and often tenure-challenging longitudinal research projects). Importantly, social rhetoric does not tell teachers how to deal with individual difference.[91] Though to be fair, rhetorical theories have rarely dealt with difference successfully. Ann Berthoff, for example, champions the maxim, "Begin with where they are!" – yet this means little when students possess many "beginnings." Current-traditional rhetoricians erase the problem altogether. Differences in final texts, which often manifest themselves as errors or stylistic improprieties, reflect negative differences about the correctness of the minds of writers or their paucity of experiences. Difference itself becomes a means for grading and selection.

Despite these limitations, my project benefits from and shares many of the same motives of social rhetoric and social-construction theory. My analysis of aptitude shares the same methodology of social rhetoric, insofar as it rejects a reified definition of aptitude, as something that can either be empirically measured or examined as a mystical trait influencing the quality of a student's writing. Instead, I analyze aptitude as a rhetorical, social construct, something that describes the political motivations of the proponents of a theory and not simply a disinterested description of students, their natural gifts, and performances. Because of the similarity of social-construction theory and my

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[91] However, Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* and Sternglass's *Time to Know Them* are excellent resources for instructors who must confront difference in the classroom.

own (self-interested) motives and methodology, I am aware that my ideological critique of social rhetoric is perhaps not as trenchant as it could be. A major area of concern that I do have, however, is the tendency for composition and rhetoric scholars to essentialize the theories of Foucault, Vygotsky, and Bakhtin, important voices of social-construction that are often uncritically deployed in discussions of language, consciousness, and power. For example, Vygotsky's empirical studies on the interiorization of the egocentric speech of children – so central to his theory of how the social environment impacts consciousness – need to be critiqued and verified. Even though George Hillocks has indicated excellent results with a writing pedagogy that utilizes Vygotsky's emphasis on collaboration and learning (i.e., environmental teaching), additional research needs to be conducted on how Vygotsky's theory helps account for the development of writing ability at the collegiate level (see Hillocks 72-75).

In the following list, I close with several research strands to further the conversation of placing rhetoric in the well-contested nature/nurture debate. I have mainly restricted these possible research projects to theoretical and historical problems.[92]

- Though an issue I touched briefly upon in Chapter 5, terms like "genius" and "gifted" – as well as remonstrations against the inefficacy of teaching – may

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[92] A great deal of quantitative research has been conducted on the relationship of linguistic performance and aptitude, even though more empirical studies need to look specifically at writing. In the past 25 years, empirical research has correlated objective test measurements of aptitude (studies of this nature unfortunately provide poor, under-analyzed definitions of aptitude) with direct samples of student writing or with how well they predict college GPA or, more specifically, a student's performance in a first-year composition course (Bridgeman; Fowler and Ross; Huntley, Schmeiser, and Stiggins). Oftentimes, these studies challenge the use of direct writing measures, as they fail to test a large range of student abilities, are expensive to score, and notoriously time consuming. Recognizing how persuasive writing requires a different set of abilities than mechanical expository arrangement schemes or multiple-choice usage questions, studies have correlated SAT scores with an ability to brainstorm possible arguments and with a measurement of writing anxiety (Glynn). Finally, research has indicated how scores on aptitude tests may predict student retention in remedial writing programs (Hoffman and Kauffman 20-24).

currently have racial (if not racist) implications, especially as they are often used to describe the artistic and athletic performances of African-American men and women. My observations on this point are extremely tentative, though they are based upon the same logic that treats blacks as a conduit for the spiritual and the mystical, as a mouthpiece for less orderly, controlled, and repressed (i.e., middle-class white) ways of living and thinking about the world.

- A broad historical extension of this project would be to compare the trajectories of medicine and rhetoric, in regards to how they provide definitions of the nature of human beings. For example, the Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen helped in the formation of assumptions of what natural elements constituted the body (Hippocrates, *The Medical Works* 204-206); Juan Huarte, a sixteenth-century Spanish physician, described three levels of innate intelligence for human beings, the last of which, "true creativity," allows for genius and madness (Chomsky, *Language and Mind* 9-10).
- A composition-specific project would be to deconstruct writing into a set of skills, actions, practices, or strategies, including, for example, a sensitivity for audience and pathos, an ability to establish credibility, a strategy for incorporating and responding to external sources, a knowledge of invention devices, and a technical proficiency for editing. The aim of this project could be to identify how instructors (and possibly students) confront these sub-categories of writing; that is, do they conceive of these categories as demanding the conscious and reflective application of teachable rules, or as

relying upon unconscious, and perhaps unteachable capabilities of students. Nancy Mann addresses this binary of conscious/unconscious rule application – and its possible connections to natural ability – in her research on teaching a scheme for punctuation use (360-361).

- An important contribution may be a historical study on how natural ability was deployed rhetorically in the eighteenth century to argue for the development of copyright laws. As Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford examine in *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*, copyright laws necessitate the conception of the author as an individual subject, who become the originating centers for new ideas and specific forms of expression (see also Woodmansee and Jaszi). For writing classrooms, perhaps an implication of this powerful historical construction is one that appears in Vygotsky's challenge to Piagetian theory of development: why do students have to be judged as individuals, according to a static developmental norm? A compelling project would be to trace the assumptions of individuality and cognitive testing and explore how post-modern conceptions of writing as collaboration, now especially important because of computers, offer competing assumptions.
- In the 1980s, Mike Rose fought against the reification of intelligence (what Rose calls "cognitive reductionism"), a well-entrenched assumption that focused upon the qualities of students' cognition in order to explain success or failure in writing. In other words, standards of what constituted good writing were not difficult to ascertain; the problem lay in discovering what was wrong with the brains of students. As I indicated in my analysis of Peter

Elbow's return to authentic voice, what emerges in the research – in an intersection of psychology, race/ethnicity, and rhetoric – is a broad, yet powerful binary that, in many different ways, stipulates that certain groups of people think and produce texts one way (especially as a means to express identity and socialize within an immediate rhetorical situation), whereas others think and create in more privileged and more socioeconomically viable ways (especially the ability to think deductively and make generalizations). Rose lists the variables that supposedly determine this difference: field independence or dependence (268-274), left hemisphere versus right hemisphere dominance (275-280; see also Winterowed), formal operational versus concrete operational cognitive stages of development (281-285), and the effects of literacy versus orality (286-294). Several projects could emerge from the analysis of the binary, which, as I suggested in Chapter 5, is racially, ethnically, and sexually coded and often deployed to verify stereotypes of overly rational Asian and white males and, for example, overly social and emotional African-American males. One important investigation: if many of the assumptions of this binary are still prevalent in writing classrooms (and I believe they are), then in what ways are explanations being offered to account for them, especially given cognitive psychology's weaker position in current conversations of composition and rhetoric?

Many other research questions can be posed. I have only introduced a few additional strands to a broad conversation investigating difference, human nature, the role of education and assessment, and competing conceptions of social justice. As the United

States is poised to fight a war, I believe that these issues – and the site of rhetoric itself – are now of vital importance. At stake are the definitions of crucial keywords such as "freedom," "democracy," "interest," "justice," and "threat" – and, more importantly, the interrogation of how these terms will be defined, who will be allowed to define them – and under what constraints and in what restricted contexts. Rhetoric may be the only common ground that remains between the United States and its "enemies" – especially as the former's economic, political, cultural, and, especially, military dominance regulates binaries of (often unquestioned) difference: for example, West/East, democracy/authoritarianism, rational/insane, or self-interest/exploitation. War – the inevitable outcome of excluding rhetoric – reveals little besides the United States government's unethical abnegation of language, not only as a failure in negotiation and diplomacy, but as a refusal to critically evaluate the assumptions of its contested terms, as well as its own values and motivations. Noam Chomsky would contend that the failure of language in this case is a betrayal of human nature. I don't agree. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this project, the failure of language may indicate a dominant group's refusal to re-evaluate its construction of a less powerful group's nature: under-analyzed formations of nature, of course, can facilitate the unquestionable march towards exclusion and control – and towards war.

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Appendix I

Seven Commonplaces of Aptitude from Classical Rhetorical Theory

Below I summarize seven major commonplace arguments that to a large extent make up the classical discussions of the necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine of aptitude and that reveal how rhetoricians make assumptions about the goals of education, the efficacy of teaching, and the selection of students. Importantly, variations of these commonplaces reappear in nineteenth-century American rhetoric and in standardized testing of the early twentieth century. I believe these commonplaces still persist in the attitudes of writing instructors.

Commonplace 1. Aptitudes are not created equal. Best exemplified in Plato's tripartite social hierarchy in his ideal state, this commonplace reveals the fundamental assumption of aptitude: human beings (and, oftentimes, groups based upon sex/gender, race, ethnicity, and social class) differ from each other because of essential differences in traits like intelligence, memory, and character (e.g., bravery, honesty). For example, in the *Republic*, commoners occupy the least privileged social status not necessarily because of their lack of education, but because of an aptitude that only allows them to be successful if they engage in the specific vocation chosen for them.

Commonplace 2. Nature can be changed and improved. This argument completes the second half of the necessary-but-not-sufficient doctrine. Even though aptitude is important, education and experience are also necessary elements in developing the capabilities of students to their fullest extent. Without the possibility of transforming a student's natural ability, there is little need for *techné*, teachers, and formal schooling.

Indeed, Guthrie suggests, few educational theorists, even the most reactionary of them, actually believed that a quality like *areté* solely arose by *physis* and could not be impacted in any way by training (*The Sophists* 254). See Isocrates' analogy of the dancing bears (*Antidosis* 213-214) for the most enthusiastic account of this commonplace.

*Commonplace 3. Nature can be dange*rous. Proponents of this commonplace, which is often deployed as a counter-argument against an overemphasis upon aptitude, warn that students with excellent natural ability possibly represent a danger: natural ability, if corrupted by bad guidance, immoral models, and poor educational experiences, can make individuals more evil than those without any aptitude at all. In the *Republic*, Plato remarks that commoners who disobey their specific aptitudes and pursue another occupation will not endanger the state (421a). However, this is not the case for corrupted guardians and philosopher kings, "who do the greatest harm to communities and individuals" (495b). Consequently, for most of the classical authorities, this fear of the corruptibility of good natures results in the censorship of materials for the young, the introduction of moralistic texts, the concern for standard language models, the banning of inappropriate musical modes (Plato, *Republic* 398d-e), high education levels of the most influential caretakers (Quintilian 23), and the limitation of the child's interaction with slaves (Aristotle, *Politics* 1336a41).

Commonplace 4. Learning and teaching areté is impossible. Of all the commonplaces in this appendix, this one is the most important and contentious in the history of rhetoric. In the vocabulary of classical Athens, *areté* becomes a key rhetorical term for Protagoras and Isocrates, who wanted to defend rhetoric against the type of

attacks that appear in Plato's *Gorgias*. If they could show that *areté* was teachable – the sophistic definition of which represents the "art of citizenship," the ability of students to make value-based decisions regarding their selves, families, and country (Guthrie, *The Sophists* 38-39) – they could then better establish the disciplinary status of rhetoric.

Plato, the foremost promulgator of this commonplace, has several motivations for insisting that *areté* is unteachable and unlearnable. As a signifier for such essential and universal qualities as "respect" and "justice," *areté* must be "learned" in the same manner as other truths and principles, by a dialectic process of uncovering and remembering *a priori* knowledge, which Plato demonstrates in *Meno*[93] (though, Plato also argues in this dialogue that "divine dispensation" is the source of *areté*) and mythologizes in *Phaedrus*. Also, in *Gorgias*, Plato has an agenda to bracket off *areté* and other ethical values from rhetoric, in order that they remain universal truths innocent of the corrupting effects of language and persuasion. Indeed, *Gorgias* centers around a typical "victory" of Socrates, in which the philosopher forces the sophist to admit to his own internal contradictions; in

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[93] For many contemporary readers, Plato's exhibition of his belief that all knowledge is a remembrance is also unsatisfying. In *Meno*, Socrates deploys his question-answer dialectical methodology on a young Greek slave boy (conveniently, Socrates never questions the boy's status as a slave) in order to show that the boy already has the knowledge of geometrical relationships and principles – a knowledge, Socrates, concludes that he must have acquired in a former life, that only needs to be remembered, not taught. Yet, Socrates' dialectic, especially in this passage, is far from being a universal methodology neutral of the effects of teaching and persuasion. His "questions," by becoming statements of geometrical principles, shape the characteristic "yes"/"no" responses of his respondent. He is teaching – and not doing a very good job of it. After the demonstration of "remembrance," even Socrates intimates that it may yet again be a fiction:

> I shouldn't like to take my oath on the whole story [that knowledge comes from the remembrance of past lives], but one thing I am ready to fight for as long as I can, in word and act – that is, that we shall be better, braver, and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking because what we don't know we can never discover. (371)

Here, perhaps Socrates avows a convenient fiction for a pragmatic, educational goal: to motivate individuals to always struggle to inquire about truth, even if it appears that the answer will be impossible to discover.

this case, Gorgias admits that rhetoric can exist without ethics, though teachers should still attempt to convey such values (460a).

Commonplace 5. An education by association best accommodates aptitude. Association (*synousia*) represents the Greek aristocratic ideal of education, one that is based upon personal, often sexual relationships of students with older, well-established mentors (Marrou 26-32). This education amounts to a constant emulation of the teacher's responses, performances, and conduct, and undermines the application of a more formal, rule-based pedagogy. The major assumption of this commonplace is that the purpose of education is to guarantee that students can participate in and meet the social expectations of their respective classes. Even the sophists, who are often depicted as challenging aristocratic systems of education by collecting student fees (Guthrie, *The Sophists* 39), utilize this commonplace. Protagoras, for example, contends, "The very day you join me, you will go home a better man, and the same the next day. Each day you will make progress toward a better state" (Plato, *Protagoras* 318A). The personality itself of this celebrity orator will develop the *areté* of the young student.

Commonplace 6. Techné writers do not possess aptitude. For Isocrates, Plato, Cicero, and Quintilian, this trope accomplishes two objectives. First, it reprehends a specific group of writers, identified by Isocrates and Plato as sophists, and by the Roman rhetoricians more vaguely as eristic Greeks, who are "fonder of argument than of truth" (Cicero 18). Second, it calls into question the principles and practices of a large body of work governing the instruction of rhetoric, what Kennedy terms "technical rhetoric" and what amounts to a previous analogue of current-traditional rhetoric. What is at stake in this commonplace is that by withholding the classification of aptitude from sophists and

certain instructors, it makes it possible to denigrate and silence their educational theories and instructional practices. In *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates exemplifies this contempt for *techné*-driven instructors, writing that they are "so stupid and conceive others to be so dull that, although the speeches which they compose are worse than those which some laymen improvise, nevertheless they promise to make their students such clever orators" (9). Because of their lack of rhetorical talent, these sophists can only supply their students with rigid, mechanical rules that, though perhaps useful for teaching the alphabet, do not capture the dynamic, situated process of language use.

Commonplace 7. Only perfect orators matter. One of the main reasons why the classical writers I examine are so preoccupied with natural ability is the elitist trajectory of their educational projects. They are not satisfied with students who (merely) exhibit ethical standards, critical thinking skills, and an ability to speak persuasively in the political assemblies or legal courts. They focus upon engendering ideal and incomparable orators – individuals whose speeches and written texts possess the power to transform the state.

This commonplace has a positive consequence, in that it elevates rhetoric, especially in Cicero's definition, as a discipline that supercedes all others. Yet, it also has a negative consequence. An educational theory focused solely upon the selection and training of ideal students even further restricts the range of individuals who can become orators. The anticipation of the ideal orator promises yet another search for Athenian or Roman elites.

Appendix II

A Compendium of Aptitude Quotations

Pindar	Each of us differs in nature, for men were allotted a different life. (*Nemean Odes* 7.5)
Hippocrates	Instruction in medicine is like the culture of the productions of the earth. For our natural disposition is, as it were, the soil; the tenets of our teacher are, as it were, the seed; instruction in youth is like planting of the seed in the ground at the proper season; the place where the instruction is communicated is like the food imparted to vegetables by the atmosphere; diligent study is like the cultivation of the fields; and it is time which imparts strength to all things and brings them to maturity. ("The Law" 323-324)
Plato	The ability... to become a finished performer is probably, or perhaps certainly, like everything else: if it is in your nature to be a speaker, an eloquent speaker you will be if you also acquire knowledge and practice. If you are deficient in any of these, to this extent you will be imperfect. (*Phaedrus* 60 [269]).
Protagoras	Teaching requires natural endowment and practice. (Sprague 20)

Isocrates	If anyone, ignoring the other arts, were to ask me which of these factors has the greatest power in the education of the orator I should answer that natural ability is paramount and comes before all else. (*Antidosis* 293).
Aristotle	Now among the general public, some do these things randomly and others through an ability acquired by habit, but since both ways are possible, it is clear that it would also be possible to do the same by [following] a path (*On Rhetoric* 29).
Cicero	Nature and genius in the first place contribute most aid to speaking. [...] There ought to be certain lively powers in the mind and understanding, which may be acute to invent, fertile to explain and adorn, and strong and retentive to remember; and if one imagines that these powers may be acquired by art (which is false, for it is very well if they can be animated and excited by art; but they certainly can not be ingrafted or instilled, since they are all the gifts of nature), what will he say of those qualities which are certainly born with the man himself, volubility of tongue, tone of voice, strength of lungs, and a peculiar conformation and aspect of the whole countenance and body. (*De Oratore* 34)

Quintilian

Without natural gifts technical rules are useless. Consequently the student who is devoid of talent will derive no more profit from this work than barren soil from a treatise on agriculture. There are, it is true, other natural aids, such as the possession of a good voice and robust lungs, sound health, powers of endurance and grace, and if these are possessed only to a moderate extent, they may be improved by methodical training. In some cases, however, these gifts are lacking to such an extent that their absence is fatal to all such advantages as talent and study can confer, while, similarly, they are of no profit in themselves unless cultivated by skilful teaching, persistent study and continuous and extensive practice in writing, reading, and speaking. (*Institutio Oratoria* 19)

Bulwer

Nor doth the hand in one speech or kind of language serve to intimate and express our mind: it speaks all languages, and as an universal character of reason, is generally understood and known by all nations among the formal differences of their tongue. And being the only speech that is natural to man, it may well be called the tongue and general language of human nature which, without teaching, men in all regions of the habitable

world do at the first sight most easily understand. (*Chirologia* 16)

Blair

Whether nature or art contribute most to form an orator, is a trifling inquiry. In all attainments whatever, nature must be the prime agent. She must bestow the original talents. She must sow the seeds; but culture is requisite for bring these seeds to perfection. Nature must always have done somewhat; but a great deal of will always be left to be done by art. This is certain, that study and discipline are most necessary for the improvement of natural genius, in oratory, than they are in poetry. What I mean is, that though poetry be capable of receiving assistance from critical art, yet a poet, without any aid from art, by the force of genius alone, can rise higher than a public speaker can do, who has never given attention to the rules of style, composition, and delivery. (*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle Lettres* 338)

Spencer

There can be little question that good composition is far less dependent upon acquaintance with its laws, than upon practice and natural aptitude. A clear head, a quick imagination, and a sensitive ear, will go far towards making all rhetorical precepts needless. (*The Philosophy of Style* 9)

Genung	It is a work so individual, so dependent on the peculiar aptitude and direction of the writer's mind, that each one must be left to his own way of thinking... (*The Practical Elements of Rhetoric* 218)
Galton	By natural ability, I mean those qualities of intellect and disposition, which urge and qualify a man to perform acts that lead to reputation. (*Hereditary Genius* 37)
Curry	Art is founded upon the study of nature. Of all forms of art, Vocal Expression is the nearest to nature. [...] In all natural expression, man is impelled to speak as the bird is to sing. (*Lessons in Vocal Expression* 11)
Thorndike	A man's germinal inheritance is, so to speak, his capital, his stock in trade. He may foster or spoil it by good ante-birth acquistion; his nurture may increase or waste it. But without it he couldn't do business at all, and its nature must decide what sort of business he will do. (*The Human Nature Club* 183)
Dewey	If a being had no vocal organs from which issue articulate sounds, if he had no auditory or other sense-receptors and no connections between the two sets of apparatus, it would be a sheer waste of time to try to teach him to converse. He is born short in that respect, and education must accept the limitation. But if he has

	the native equipment, its possession in no way guarantees that he will ever talk any language or what language he will talk. *(Democracy and Education* 87).
Bingham	A person with literary ability can – is able to, has it in him to – write well, either at the present time or after he has had the requisite training and experience. (*Aptitude and Aptitude Testing* 19)
Macrorie	I could only say she failed because she was stupid and imperceptive, but I rather think she only needed more time. [...] I think her native good sense would have escaped the narrow cabin she lived in for so many years. (*Uptaught* 33)
Elbow	Virtually everyone has available great skill with words. That is, everyone can, under certain conditions, speak with clarity and power. These conditions usually involve a topic of personal importance and an urgent occasion. But the fact that everyone can sometimes rise to an urgent occasion shows that the capacity for spoken eloquence is there.
Berthoff	The ability to speak is innate, but language can only realized in a social context. (*The Making of Meaning* 72)