

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Rhetoric and Moral Reasoning

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I try to show that rhetoric can play a valuable role in rational argument, contrary to what many philosophers have thought.

In chapter 1 I offer a working definition of rhetoric.

In chapter 2 I present several arguments against the claim that rhetoric can promote rational assent and give grounds for rejecting them.

In chapter 3 I argue that rhetoric can promote rational assent through enabling hearers to grasp the argument better rather than by giving reasons, and in chapter 5 that rhetoric can itself give reasons for assent. In chapter 4 I provide some tools for use in chapter 5.

Finally in chapter 6 I try to show that another way that rhetoric can promote rational assent is to arouse appropriate emotions.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I will try to show that rhetoric can play a valuable role in ethical argumentation, that of promoting rational assent¹. Rhetoric can do this, I will argue, in at least three ways: it can help a speaker to give hearers² a better grasp of the argument by enabling him or her to present it in an effective manner, it can arouse emotions in the audience which promote rational assent and, more strongly, it can itself provide reasons for assent.

My views, which point to the possibility of a rational rhetoric, run counter to many previous philosophers' views, as well as to the current common sense view of rhetoric, which suggested that rhetoric and rationality are *necessarily* incompatible. Many philosophical writers, beginning with Plato and extending to philosophers of the present day, have been highly suspicious of rhetoric. They have felt that rhetoric, since it uses powerful emotional appeals to persuade the hearer to assent to what a speaker is proposing, is antithetical to truly rational arguments. These (they claim) involve a cool and dispassionate consideration of the alternatives, not the heightened emotions which rhetoric

¹ I will use the term "assent" as a semi-technical term to embrace changes in belief or attitude, or commitments to act, which are adopted as a result of the speaker recommending them.

² I will call the audience "hearers" rather than "readers" because I want to emphasise the role of speech as well as writing in argumentation; in addition, some features which are present in speech and which have an important role in rhetoric are not present in writing; e.g. the use of gesture or tone of voice to make a point.

brings to discussion. Rhetoric is perhaps unavoidable in the highly charged atmosphere of the political arena, on this view, but it is unsuited to serious attempts to resolve issues rather than to deceive a gullible audience. Indeed, the fact that rhetoric plays such an important role in politics has often led to a condemnation of the latter, and especially of those political systems, such as democracy, which make political debate an important element in the decision making process, rather than relying on the judgment of those supposedly most qualified to rule, the so-called experts³.

Analytic philosophers, while they have generally adopted unfavourable views about rhetoric, have paid very little attention to it, unlike earlier critics of rhetoric such as Plato, who discussed rhetoric in a number of his dialogues⁴. They often simply assume that rhetoric is incompatible with serious argument. One example of the way in which the incompatibility of rhetoric and rational argument is taken for granted, without any argument being given for this claim, occurs in R. M. Hare's discussion of the dispute between Judy Jarvis Thomson and John Finnis on abortion in his essay "Abortion and the Golden Rule":

³ See for example Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*, 456-460, in which Gorgias argues in favour of rhetoric by claiming that it can allow even a speaker ignorant of his or her subject matter to defeat an expert opponent in argument. Socrates forces Gorgias to admit that it is only before a popular audience that the rhetorician will be successful; before a group of experts, the expert will be victorious. The condemnation of rhetoric is also an implicit condemnation of rule by the people rather than rule by the experts.

⁴ See especially *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*.

I just do not know how to tell whether Mr. Finnis is on safe ground when he claims that "suicide is a paradigm case of an action that is always wrong"; nor Professor Thomson when she makes the no doubt more popular claim that we have a right to decide what happens in and to our own bodies. How would we choose between these two potentially conflicting intuitions? Is it simply a contest in rhetoric?

(*Philosophy and Public Affairs*,
Spring 1975, Vol. 4, No. 3, pg. 202)

Thomson and Finnis, according to Hare, cite clashing intuitions to back up their opposing arguments, each convinced that his or her own intuition is correct. It is important, then, in order to settle the dispute between them, to have some way of deciding between their differing intuitions. Hare suggests that the only way that someone could use to convince others that one set of intuitions is right is by employing rhetoric, and this method, he implies, is clearly unacceptable. On that account, he concludes that moral philosophy cannot be carried on the basis of intuition. The possibility that rhetoric has a role in moral reasoning is not even considered; the mere raising of the possibility of moral reasoning coming down to rhetoric is enough to show, according to Hare, that the picture of moral reasoning advocated by Thomson, Finnis and others cannot be right.

Similarly, although with a very different aim, Bertrand Russell tried to differentiate ethics from subjects which investigate facts by claiming that ethics simply came down to rhetoric:

But when we try to be definite as to what we mean when we say that this or that is "the Good," we find ourselves involved in very great difficulties. Bentham's creed that pleasure is the Good roused furious opposition, and was said to be a pig's philosophy. Neither he nor his opponents could advance any argument. In a scientific question, evidence can be adduced on both sides, and in the end one side is seen to have the better case - or, if this does not happen, the question is left undecided. But in a question as to whether this or that is the ultimate Good, there is no evidence either way; each disputant can only appeal to his own emotions, and employ such rhetorical devices as shall arouse similar emotions in others.

(*Bertrand Russell on Ethics, Sex and Marriage*, pg. 60)

On Russell's view also, then, if moral disputes come down to rhetoric no rational argument can be given on either side. Both those such as Russell who argue that rational argument about moral questions is possible and those such as Hare who deny this seem to agree that rhetorical arguments are not rational arguments.

What can account for the dismissal of rhetoric by most Anglo-American philosophers? It can be partly explained by the distrust of rhetoric in our culture as a whole. In general parlance calling someone else's speech "rhetoric" serves to condemn it as being highly emotional and of little substance. But also influential, it is plausible to claim, are certain distinctions made in twentieth century Anglo-American philosophy which seem a priori to leave rhetoric with no role to play in rational discourse. One of the

earliest of these distinctions was I.A. Richards' and C.K. Ogden's distinction between what they called "factual" and "emotive" meaning:

It is only when a thinker makes use of them [words] that they stand for anything, or, in one sense, have "meaning". They are instruments. But besides this referential use which for all reflective, intellectual use of language should be paramount, words have other functions which may be grouped together as emotive. These can be best examined when the framework of the problem of strict statement and the framework of communication has been set up. The importance of the emotive aspects of language is not thereby minimised and anyone chiefly concerned with popular and primitive speech might well be led to reverse this order of approach...But for the analysis of the sense of "meaning" with which we are here chiefly concerned, it is desirable to begin with the relations of thoughts, words and things as they are found in cases of reflective speech uncomplicated by emotional, diplomatic, or other *disturbances* (Italics mine).

(*The Meaning of Meaning*, pg. 10)

Given this sharp separation between emotive and factual meaning, together with the claim that the former is irrelevant to factual debates, except inasmuch as it acts as a disturbance, hindering rational thinking, it seems plausible to regard rhetoric as essentially emotive and on that account unsuited to factual discussion⁵.

⁵ Although see the journal *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, and, in the continental tradition, such figures as Gadamer and Grassi. Important works by these

Despite the lack of recent discussion of rhetoric among analytical philosophers, there is, I would claim, a common view among them about its nature, from which many of the objections to rhetoric on the grounds that it is irrational in nature, or at least non-rational, stem, a view itself arising from views in the philosophy of language central to the analytic tradition such as those of Ogden and Richards, as I tried to indicate above. This view holds that rhetoric is essentially a means of persuading people by appealing to their emotions. Rhetoric is viewed simply as a box of tricks which allows one to gain victory in arguments. Either rhetoric causes assent despite the weakness of one's case, and so causes its hearers to assent irrationally, or it merely sugars the pill so that people who would not be inclined to accept a sound argument if it was presented in a less attractive fashion are brought to do so. Whichever is the case, rhetoric, it seems, succeeds in influencing assent only as a result of the irrationality of its hearers. Either they assent irrationally when they should not have done so or, equally irrationally, they assent as a result of the attractiveness of the presentation rather than the force of the argument, so that although they may have assented to what they should assent to, they have not done so for the right reasons.

philosophers include *Truth and Method* and *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition* by Gadamer and Grassi respectively. Other works on rhetoric, which try to link the two traditions of analytic and continental philosophy, include Jeff Mason's book *Philosophical Rhetoric* and Jonathan Rée's *Philosophical Tales*.

According to the critics of rhetoric, rhetoricians often illegitimately try to exploit the positive or negative connotations that certain words have in order to create a favourable attitude towards the things that a speaker supports and an unfavourable one towards those which he rejects. As examples of such emotive use of language, critics of rhetoric would cite such things as calling the military of our country the defence forces, when in fact their role is as much aggressive as defensive, or of referring to enemy broadcasts as propaganda, and thereby arousing a feeling of distrust towards them. Such tricks have nothing to do with reasoned argument, it is claimed⁶.

Furthermore, due to the powerful emotions that can be generated by rhetoric, its opponents maintain, proper argument becomes impossible. Fallacious lines of reasoning tend to get accepted in the heat of the moment; appeals to particular and unrepresentative but dramatic cases are accepted as proof of some point, while such standard fallacies as affirming the consequent are unquestioningly swallowed. Rhetoric leads to a heightening of emotions and an increased susceptibility to persuasion on the part of hearers.

While the attacks on rhetoric, especially in recent times, have generally not been carefully developed, I suggest that there are at least two separate objections which can be distinguished. The first is that rhetoric is concerned with arousing the emotions to which,

⁶ See for example Susan Stebbing's *Thinking to Some Purpose*.

it is suggested, the concept of rationality cannot be applied beyond very narrow limits (perhaps rationally requires only that the emotions must be based on beliefs which are rationally held, for instance). As a result, it is claimed, rhetoric cannot give reasons for assent and so cannot promote rational assent. On this view, rhetoric is ruled out a priori from having a role in rational argument; an analysis of what rhetoric is yields the conclusion that it cannot be rational.

Another view sees rhetoric not as *necessarily* non-rational, but instead as *empirically* likely to lead to irrational assent on the part of hearers. Drawing from their experience of the way in which people's emotions can be aroused by a powerful speaker, those who hold this view object to rhetoric because they think that it is likely to prevent hearers from thinking rationally. While it may be possible for people to make rational judgments about rhetorical arguments, this view suggests that we should avoid the much more likely outcome, irrational assent, by eschewing rhetoric altogether.

Authors of books on clear thinking or critical reasoning, alarmed at the dangers of being misled by powerful rhetoric, try to put their readers on guard against it by making them aware of some of the tricks which rhetoricians use. Their realisation of the possibility of being fooled by rhetoric, however, does not lead them pay closer attention to its capacities, but instead to dismiss it as necessarily misleading; one should study rhetoric only in order to be inoculated against it, it seems. The ideal of many books on critical thinking appears to be a language free from rhetoric; only

if such a language were produced, it is thought, could we be sure that rational argument would be employed, instead of there simply being an exchange of sophistries.

Some recent French philosophers, on the other hand (most famously Jacques Derrida⁷), have tried to show that rhetorical elements are not only present, but are a vital part of works normally regarded as works of reason, including the texts of philosophy itself. Derrida, by means of reinterpretations of various important philosophical texts, argues that philosophical texts rest on certain metaphors which, if developed, undermine the conclusions they were originally used to support. Thus his claim (as I interpret it) is that rhetorical elements are inescapable and that the desire of the clear thinking school of thought for a language free from rhetoric is therefore unattainable. Furthermore, the presence of these rhetorical elements subverts the thesis presented in a piece of philosophical writing, showing its lack of rational grounding.

Whether Derrida's view is correct or not, what is interesting to note at this point is that he seems to share with the exponents of critical reasoning the assumption that rhetoric is non-rational; thus by showing that a text's arguments depend on various rhetorical devices, Derrida thinks he has succeeded in undermining an author's claim that his or her claims are rationally grounded.

⁷ See e.g. the essay "White Mythology" in *Margins of Philosophy*, which argues that the rhetorical device of metaphor is at the basis of much work in the philosophical tradition.

While critical thinking's distrust of rhetoric leads to a desire to dismiss it altogether, Derrida's claim that all discourse is inescapably rhetorical leads him to the view that reason is inevitably corrupted by non-rational elements.

In this thesis, I want to show that the common assumption that rhetoric is essentially irrational or non-rational in nature is incorrect. Thus, while I am sympathetic to the claim that rhetoric is more widely present in speech and writing than people often think, I do not wish to accept the view that the very presence of rhetoric makes these texts necessarily irrational or non-rational. I am not of course alone in taking this view; the idea that rhetoric can be rational is becoming increasingly common in some philosophical circles (e.g., among theorists of hermeneutics as exemplified in German Philosophy by Hans-Georg Gadamer and in French philosophy by Paul Ricoeur⁸). I do not however think that anyone has clearly shown how rhetoric can be rational. This is what I propose to do.

It might be suggested that I should offer a definition of rhetoric which will allow further discussion to take place with a fixed understanding of what I mean when I talk about rhetoric. I will not adopt this strategy here, however. Instead, in order to meet the attacks of the opponents of rhetoric, I will begin by developing a definition based on *their* understanding of rhetoric,

⁸ See Gadamer's *Truth and Method* and Ricoeur's *The Rule Of Metaphor*.

which I will present in Chapter 1. In this way I will not be vulnerable to the objection that I and the critics of rhetoric are talking about different things when we talk about “rhetoric”. Later, having hopefully disarmed their criticisms, I will suggest that a different concept of rhetoric, one based on the classical understanding of the nature of rhetoric, should be adopted instead. This view, on which rhetoric subsumes the whole argumentative process, will only be acceptable when I have shown that those elements which opponents label as rhetoric can promote rational assent. Accordingly, I will offer an initial characterisation of rhetoric only to discard it later, when it is seen to be misleading.

In this thesis I will talk mainly about spoken rhetoric. The type of rhetoric I will consider aims to change the degree of belief, the attitudes or the intentions of the members of the audience; I will refer to these aims collectively as being to change the hearers’ degree of assent. I will refer to any part of a speech as a passage.

In trying to demonstrate my theses I will encounter a number of difficult philosophical issues. While I will attempt to resolve some of these, I will avoid trying to deal with others. My aim will instead be to fashion an account of a rational rhetoric which is to as little an extent as possible dependent on substantive theses about other areas of philosophy.

My purpose in doing this is twofold. First of all, it is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to tackle all of these questions; some of them, questions about the best form of moral reasoning or about what makes emotions appropriate, would require to be dealt

with in a thesis of their own. But secondly, and more importantly, I will try to avoid commitment on these issues so that my account of rhetoric's role in moral reasoning can be accepted independently of the truth or falsity of claims about these other issues. Accordingly whenever the question arises I will try to show that I do not need to assume any particular view on an issue for my own account to work.

To summarise, then, I want to argue, against both analytic philosophers who want to exclude rhetoric from rational discussion, and also against those who claim that reasoned discourse cannot be free from rhetoric, that while rhetoric is widely present in discourse it *can* be rational in a number of senses, which I will explore in detail. For the present, I will review some areas where it is plausible, I will argue, to say that rhetoric *can* and *does* play a role which is rationally acceptable.

I will begin with an example which is particularly striking - the area of mathematical logic. I want to suggest that even in such seemingly non-rhetorical disciplines as mathematics or logic, rhetorical or quasi-rhetorical elements can play an important role⁹, a role which is not in any way anti-rational, but which instead promotes rationality. Consider these two formulations of the same argument:

⁹ Though some will fail to be convinced by my example of "rhetoric". It is important to note though that even if one does not regard the example that I give as a case of rhetoric, it shares some of the features which are maligned when found in rhetoric; the decision about whether to use Gentzen's or Lemmon's system is a purely presentational matter, which does not affect the force of the argument, but nonetheless affects the degree of assent.

Gentzen:

$\{P \text{ hook } Q\}$	entails $P \text{ hook } Q$	Rule Of Assumption
$\{Q \text{ hook } R\}$	entails $Q \text{ hook } R$	Rule Of Assumption
$\{P\}$	entails P	Rule Of Assumption
$\{P \text{ hook } Q, P\}$	entails Q	Modus Ponens
$\{Q \text{ hook } R, P\}$	entails R	Modus Ponens
$\{P \text{ hook } Q, Q \text{ hook } R\}$	entails $P \text{ hook } R$	Conditional Proof

Lemmon:

1	(1) $P \text{ hook } Q$	assumption
2	(2) $Q \text{ hook } R$	assumption
3	(3) P	assumption
1, 3	(4) Q	modus ponens from 1, 3
1, 2, 3	(5) R	modus ponens from 2, 4
1, 2	(6) $P \text{ hook } Q$	modus ponens from 3, 4

The differences between the two different formulations of the same argument are solely presentational, but nonetheless the choice of one over the other will affect the degree of rational assent to the argument. The Lemmon formulation makes the argument easier to follow and so increases the chance that it will be seen to be valid. So even in this comparatively non-rhetorical realm, there are some grounds for supposing that rhetoric (or at

least quasi-rhetorical, presentational elements) does have an important role; the role of making it easier for the audience to see that an argument is a good one.

In other areas of inquiry rhetoric is much more central. In most discussions it is impossible to provide decisive reasons for one possible view rather than another, as it is in such disciplines as mathematics and logic. It is however possible to weigh up the various lines of argument and make a decision on the basis of the reasons for and against particular views. Rhetoric can help us to do this by making the various considerations more vivid to us, so giving us a better idea of which ones are particularly important.

Moral cases provide especially good instances of the use of rhetoric. Such figures as the preacher, the politician and the social activist, known for their employment of rhetoric, frequently use it to urge action on certain ethical issues.

Suppose, for example, that we are considering some course of action which, while it will lead to many people enjoying increased prosperity, will result in severe hardship for others. We may be inclined to overlook the latter or regard it as relatively unimportant, not giving it sufficient weight in our thinking.

How can we be brought to acknowledge its importance by someone who argues that we should change our current policies because of the suffering they cause? Simply stating the facts of the matter will not be enough. We are perfectly aware that hardship exists; the problem is that we do not sufficiently appreciate this fact. Rhetoric can help here by conveying to us a vivid picture of

the suffering which will result from our actions if we do not reject the current plan. We can thus get a more balanced perspective on the questions at issue.

In this thesis I will claim that rhetoric is not incompatible with good argumentation or with rational assent. Rhetoric should not be discarded, as its opponents propose. Instead, it can play an important role in our discussions with others. Here I will try to show that this is the case by looking at just one kind of argumentation; argumentation about moral and political matters. That rhetoric should be of importance in moral and political reasoning should not be surprising, since rhetoric has a very important role in arousing the emotions, while emotions are normally recognised as being very important in ethics; the ability to sympathise with some group, for example, may be necessary for me in order to realise that the suffering of that group should be averted. What I will try to do is to show in detail what the connection is.

Although the cases that I will discuss will be ethical ones, it seems likely that rhetoric also has an important role in other cases than moral and political ones. Examples might be such things as decisions about courses of action which are not moral in nature as well as debates in many of the humanistic disciplines such as history, political science and sociology¹⁰- even philosophy!

¹⁰ See e.g. Ricca Edmondson's book *Rhetoric in Sociology*, Macmillan: London, 1984 which argues that rhetoric is present in most sociological texts and that the use of rhetoric in sociology can play a valuable role.

Many issues in the philosophical literature seem to be susceptible to rhetorical analysis. One important example is the debate about the justification of induction. One group of philosophers argues that there is no reason to believe that induction is a particularly good form of inference. A response to this is that it is the best form of inference available to us (as compared to counter-induction and other exotic modes of inference) - so what more could we want? It seems to me that here we have a kind of rhetorical stand-off with two different claims, that there is no reason to suppose that induction will work and that it is nonetheless the best form of inference available to us both being accepted by the two sides which however draw different conclusions from them. While further arguments will continue to be offered by both sides, it is unlikely that the opposing sides will come to any agreement, since each side will frequently accept premisses which render the other side's arguments ineffective. It might be that rhetoric can be employed here in order break the deadlock; through rhetoric, one can alter the differing weight which the competing theorists attach to various considerations, weights which make agreement impossible, and do so rationally. Of course new lines of argument may be developed making it possible to demonstrate the superiority of one set of reasons over the other, but this does not eliminate the possibility of a stand-off at some stage in the dispute, at which point rhetoric is (perhaps) properly employed in order to validate one view over another (another area to which similar

considerations might apply is in the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists about free will, which similarly seems to reach a deadlock).

So this thesis should be seen as merely a preliminary to a large amount of further work which could be done on the role of rhetoric in all kinds of rational discourse. Rhetoric's role in ethics may be of importance, but its importance to rational thinking is not limited to that role.

Chapter 1

A Provisional Characterisation of Rhetoric

Introduction

Now that I have set the scene by discussing some of the reasons for studying rhetoric in ethics, I must, before I start to deal with these questions, try to say something about what it is we are actually studying. What is rhetoric? I will discuss two questions, questions about what type of thing rhetoric is, how to differentiate it from other things of the same type.

In history of rhetorical theory people have argued not only about what rhetoric is, but even about what *type* of thing rhetoric is; is it an activity, a product of an activity, the study of an activity or a way of speaking? I will briefly mention some of the competing views about what type of thing rhetoric is.

In ancient education, rhetoric was a discipline concerned with public speaking. The twentieth century theorists Richard Weaver, who defines rhetoric as “truth plus its artful presentation” and Chaim Perelman, who identifies rhetoric with argumentation, on the other hand, both seem to view rhetoric as a form of activity, despite their differences about what that activity is. On other theories, rhetoric is the product of an activity; Edwin Black’s book *Rhetorical Criticism*, for example, is a discussion of how to analyse the rhetoric of various texts; it is what is studied, the product of

writing, which is the rhetoric. One might also use the adjective “rhetorical” to describe how someone speaks: “Mr. Churchill’s speeches are highly rhetorical”, one might say.

So rhetoric can be looked at in several different ways: as the study of public speaking, as an activity, as the product of an activity or as a mode of speaking¹. While it is of course perfectly allowable to apply the term “rhetoric” to all these types of things, different characterisations of rhetoric tend to focus on a particular type of thing to which the term “rhetoric” can be applied, in order to stress different aspects of it. As a first step in producing a characterisation of rhetoric, then, we need to decide what type of thing it is.

Even after we have done this, however, there are still a whole variety of different definitions of rhetoric to decide between. These different definitions are based on different views about what the scope and function of rhetoric is. For example, there has been a long standing dispute among theorists of rhetoric, each regarding rhetoric of the study of how to speak in public, about whether argument should be regarded as part of rhetoric or as separate from it². This dispute resulted partly from differing

¹John Baker suggested these distinctions to me.

² Aristotle seemed to view argument (what he called dialectic) as being contained in rhetoric (although there is some dispute about this); he spends much of his *Rhetoric* discussing invention; i.e., how to construct a powerful argument. This picture was overturned by Ramus, who removed invention and organisation (the study of how the arguments which have been discovered should be arranged) from rhetoric and placed them within dialectic; the result was that rhetoric, now consisting only of style and delivery (the study of what linguistic choices one should make when presenting an argument and of how the speech should actually be

views about what role rhetoric could play: whereas some claimed that rhetoric was merely a means of convincing the ignorant and gullible, or a collection of stale and rigid rules of discourse, others argued that it was suitable for the highest level of discussion. Accordingly, some avoided placing argument under rhetoric, while others adopted a characterisation which required this.

So there are two questions to answer in producing a provisional characterisation. Firstly, what type of thing is rhetoric? Secondly, what subclass of that type does it pick out?

In keeping with the methods of this thesis, which involves the discussion of many examples of written texts and transcripts of speeches, I will concentrate on rhetoric as the product of an activity, whether of speech or of writing, rather than dealing with its other aspects. Fortunately, this will be compatible with the provisional characterisation of rhetoric that I will adopt, which is based on the conception of rhetoric that is held by many of its critics.

Given the diversity of views about what rhetoric is, I need to give my own characterisation of rhetoric in order to avoid confusion about what I am talking about when I discuss rhetoric. My characterisation is a provisional one, adopted solely for the purposes of the thesis, and is not offered as an ideal characterisation for the study of rhetoric in general. My aim here

delivered), could be regarded as separate from argumentation. See Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500 - 1700*, pg. 148.

is purely to capture the concept of rhetoric held by those who criticise it. By doing this I hope to avoid the criticism that, since my use of the term “rhetoric” is different from that of its critics, I am simply failing to answer their arguments in showing that “rhetoric”, in my sense of the term, is not open to their objections.

At the end of my thesis, however, I will argue that the provisional characterisation should be rejected, not as wrong but because it is most useful if one assumes that one can make a clear distinction between rhetoric and argument, so making it possible to study each independent of the other. If, as I shall argue, there is not a clear distinction, then there will be less reason to continue to employ this characterisation. Instead, I will suggest that the classical view of rhetoric, which placed argument within the domain of rhetoric, should be reinstated. This view allows a great emphasis to be laid on the role of rhetoric in argument, since it holds that rhetoric is the study of how arguments should be constructed and presented.

On the classical view, rhetoric is not the product of an activity, but instead the study of how to speak in public. By splitting up speech construction into different stages, from the initial discovery of arguments to the eventual delivery of the speech, and giving rules for each stage, the classical theory of rhetoric aims to improve the speaker's ability to construct arguments which are both valid and persuasive. Rhetoric, then, is seen as an integral part of argumentation.

The reasons for reinstating this conception of rhetoric, however, will not emerge until we have seen how rhetoric can be used to promote rational assent. And to show this we need, at least temporarily, to adopt the provisional characterisation of rhetoric. Let us, then, proceed to construct it.

The Two Component View of Rhetoric

Consider the following example:

This is a rich country. It is the richest country under the sun; and yet in this rich country you have hundreds and thousands of people living under conditions of poverty, destitution and squalor that would, in the words of an old Welsh poet, make the rocks weep. This is a stain upon the flag. And it ought to be the duty of every man in this country, for the honour of his native land, to put an end to it. There are men in this country, of course, who are in such easy circumstances that they need not apprehend anything from the dread spectre of unemployment. The wolves of hunger may not be awaiting winter to prey upon their child. But still, I am one of those who believe that human sympathy is in the end capable of a deeper and more potent appeal to the human heart than even interest.

*(Slings and Arrows, Sayings Chosen
From The Speeches of David Lloyd George, pg. 10)*

Now contrast it with this:

The just person is disposed to comply with the requirements of the principle of minimax relative concession in interacting with those of his fellows whom he believes to be similarly disposed. The just

person is fit for society because he has internalised the idea of mutual benefit, so that in choosing his course of action he gives primary consideration to the prospect of realising the co-operative outcome. If he is able to bring about, or may reasonably expect to bring about, an outcome that is both (nearly) fair and (nearly) optimal, then he chooses to do so; only if he may not reasonably expect this does he choose to maximise his own utility.

(David Gauthier, *Morals By Agreement*, pg. 157)

Most people would agree that the first quotation is an example of rhetoric and that the second is not. The second is a piece of exposition, couched in rather formal and technical prose. It is quite difficult to follow. It makes no appeal to the emotions.

The first quotation is completely different. It rouses the emotions powerfully. It makes extensive use of metaphor: "make the rocks weep", "the dread spectre of unemployment", "the wolves of hunger". There are personal appeals to the audience to do something about the poverty of their fellow citizens: "This is a stain on the flag", "I am one of those who believe that human sympathy is in the end capable of a deeper and more potent appeal to the human heart than even interest".

Whereas the second piece presents the points the writer wishes to make with maximum economy, the first seems to add many features which are extraneous to the argument. Metaphors and personal appeals do not increase the force of an argument for the suppression of poverty; all they do is to increase the likelihood that the hearers will assent to that argument. By arousing the pity

and indignation of the audience, they make it more likely that the audience will change its views about poverty, and, more importantly, act to alleviate it.

Looking at these two examples, then, it seems plausible to say that a passage of rhetoric has two properties which together distinguish it from other passages; it contains features, such as metaphor, which do not make the argument stronger but nonetheless tend to influence hearers. So it is reasonable to adopt this as a characterisation of rhetoric: something is a piece of rhetoric on this view, then, if it contains certain features (we will call them rhetorical features) which do not strengthen the argument but nonetheless make the audience more likely more likely to assent.

The critics of rhetoric seem to hold this view of what rhetoric is. Let us look, for example, at a commonly used textbook of critical reasoning, Fearnside and Holther's *Fallacy-The Counterfeit of Argument*. Fearnside and Holther state at the start of their book that they are worried about the way that rhetoric is used in contemporary society to persuade people by counterfeiting argument, using language "to deceive and obfuscate"; their role, they think, is to inoculate their students against it. In their view, the situation is extremely grave: "The triumph of rhetoric is like the spread of a virus infection". What is it that worries them so much about rhetoric? It is not the fact that rhetoric employs colourful and dramatic language that concerns Fearnside and Holther, but rather the fact (on their view) that in rhetoric such

language oversteps its limits, taking over the role rightfully reserved to argument:

One is not troubled by ellipsis, that is, by the omission of words expressing an idea that can be taken for granted. Nor does it matter that speakers employ the embellishments, the metaphors, the richness and complexity of the living language. Ordinary speech, arising in a live situation, is not designed to satisfy the formulas of the logicians. What does matter is the taking advantage of ellipsis, complexity and verbal display to deceive and obfuscate.

(*Fallacy-the Counterfeit of Argument*, pg. 3)

Fearnside and Holther rightly point out, in opposition to some of their fellow teachers of critical reasoning, that complex or elegant uses of language are not in themselves a barrier to good argumentation. What makes rhetoric dangerous, according to them, is that such language, whose presence in a passage has no effect on the strength of an argument, can nonetheless influence the judgment of hearers, causing them to assent when, given the weakness of the argument, it is irrational for them to do so.

Fearnside and Holther, then, hold what might be called a two component view of rhetoric. What they object to is not figurative language as such, but rhetoric: the use of figurative language in order to persuade through deceit. So on their view, it seems, a passage is a piece of rhetoric if and only if a) it contains features

whose presence or absence does not alter the force of the argument of the piece, but are instead simply embellishments and b) these features are such as to influence the degree of assent of the hearers. Their view of rhetoric, then, is identical to the one which I suggested emerged naturally from looking at the examples of rhetorical and non-rhetorical passages.

Condition b) above could be fleshed out in several different ways, of which I will briefly discuss two, neither of which is completely satisfactory. I will mention a problem that each account faces, so that neither seems wholly acceptable.

One way of interpreting the phrase “such as to influence the degree of assent of the hearer” is that the features of the passage in question should be intended by the speaker to influence the degree of assent of the hearers. The problem with this characterisation is that according to it a passage would be a piece of rhetoric if it contained features which the speaker quite unreasonably thought would be likely to have an influence over the audience. For example, imagine a highly ingenious speaker during the French Revolution, who, hoping to influence his hearers by his cleverness, put an anagram of the sentence “The king should be executed” in the middle of the speech, not realising that his hearers, less ingenious than he, would be unable to detect it. The speaker intended his anagram to make his audience favour the execution of the king. Furthermore, its presence certainly does not strengthen the force of the argument. So according to the proposed characterisation, the speaker’s speech would be rhetorical.

However, it seems implausible to claim that an obscure anagram in a speech really does make the speech rhetorical, so the construal of clause b) in terms of the intentions of the speaker is unsatisfactory.

Another possibility is that “such as to influence the degree of assent of the hearer” should be interpreted, not in terms of the influence which *the speaker intends to have* on the audience, but rather with reference to the influence the features of a speech *tend to have* on hearers; one might suggest, then, that a speech, to be rhetorical, should contain the sorts of features which generally influence the degree of assent of hearers.

This interpretation, however, has the possible disadvantage that one can be rhetorical without knowing that one is being so (although this implication is perhaps not undesirable; in some cases, a speaker who was unintentionally pompous and bombastic might reasonably be said to be being rhetorical without knowing it). If the speech does in fact contain elements which are such as to influence the degree of assent of the audience, without strengthening the argument, then it counts as rhetoric regardless of the speaker’s intentions (perhaps, for example, to give a clear and calm presentation of the facts). So there may be grounds for rejecting this second interpretation as well as the first.

Despite the difficulty of finding the best construal of the second clause, I will not discuss further its exact interpretation³.

³We might, for example, produce a conjunctive interpretation which requires both that a piece should be intended to influence the audience and

Whichever option is chosen, it will not affect the strength of the arguments that I will give later in the thesis. The alternatives that I have briefly sketched are simply designed to give the reader more of a flavour of what the second condition involves.

So we have now looked at the two component view of rhetoric. An indication of its suitability as an analysis of how critics of rhetoric use the term "rhetoric" is that, given the characterisation, one is naturally led to voice some of the main objections that people have levelled against rhetoric. The basic claim of those who are suspicious of rhetoric is that it can not influence hearers through argument but only by irrational means. A very appealing argument for this claim quickly emerges from the two component view. On this view, rhetoric is defined as being separate from argument, and so, it seems, can only induce an irrational assent on the part of hearers, ungrounded in reasons, if it influences the hearers' assent at all. Rhetoric, then, is either dangerous or useless.

The two component view of rhetoric, then, is suitable for the purposes of this thesis. It appears to capture the difference between rhetorical and non-rhetorical passages well, so it is not too implausible to serve as a working definition of rhetoric. As required, it is a good analysis of the concept of rhetoric held by its critics. Finally, it leads naturally to the suspicions against rhetoric held by those critics. So there are good grounds for its adoption. It

also that some of its features should tend to have this effect and see whether this was adequate.

will, however, be necessary to slightly modify the account; at present it does not specify closely enough what the rhetorical features actually are and furthermore at present it commits one to the claim that rhetoric cannot strengthen the force of an argument, a claim that I will later try to reject. I will therefore remedy these deficiencies in the next section.

A Modification To The Two Component View

Before I continue, then, I will describe the ways in which the two component view as it stands is not suitable for my purposes. The upshot of these comments will be a modification and closer specification of what the two component view is.

First of all, we have not yet determined what the rhetorical features mentioned in clause a) of the characterisation as having to be present in a passage for it to be a piece of rhetoric actually are. I will try below to enumerate the main examples of the kind of features which the opponents of rhetoric regard as being rhetorical. While I may not be able to produce a complete listing of these features, I will try to come up with a suitably representative sample so that my later discussion, attempting to show how these features can actually contribute to rational argument, will be on target.

Looking further at clause a), it is clear that, if I am to continue to make my claims about the relevance of rhetoric to moral argument, I cannot completely accept the current

characterisation of rhetoric, even provisionally. While clause a) assumes that the features which make a passage a piece of rhetoric are irrelevant to the force of the argument, I, on the other hand, am going to argue that the features which make a piece rhetorical are *not* always irrelevant to the force of the argument: in chapter 5 I will try to show that rhetoric can give reasons for assent. In order to prevent this clash of views from making even an initial agreement on the scope of rhetoric impossible, I will modify clause a). Instead of stating in that clause that the features which we are concerned with are extrinsic to the argument, then, I will identify the features which opponents of rhetoric consider extraneous to the argument and simply enumerate them. I can agree with the opponents of rhetoric on the enumeration of rhetorical features, while still disagreeing with them about the claim that the features are extrinsic to the argument, and so there will be a ground on which the debate can take place.

So the listing of rhetorical features will allow me simultaneously to do things: to make the characterisation of rhetoric more specific and also to make it neutral on the question of whether or not rhetoric can increase the force of the argument of a passage by giving reasons. In order for the definition to continue to class those passages that the critics regard as rhetorical as such, I will list those features which the critics of rhetoric would probably regard as rhetorical (i.e. as not strengthening the argument of a passage).

What features, then, do the opponents of rhetoric have in mind? Any of the following features would be conventionally regarded as being irrelevant to the argument of a passage: metaphors and similes, the use of evocative language, the use of examples, where the examples serve to influence the hearers as well as simply to illustrate the points made (in some cases, examples would be regarded as part of the argument; for example when they are used to refute some generalisation, so it is necessary to tread carefully here) and irony. The fact that these features are present in a passage, opponents of rhetoric would claim, does not add any strength to the argument presented by a speaker. So these features are extraneous to the argument, according to these theorists.

But as well as these features which are present in the passage, there are other features of a passage as a whole which make it rhetorical. Such features as the ordering of points or the space given to each point are not features which are contained within the passage, but are instead global features. The fact that a passage exploits these features to influence the assent of the hearers seems good grounds for regarding it as rhetorical, since choices about these features do not alter the force of the argument but can influence the degree of assent of hearers.

So our characterisation of rhetoric is as follows:

A piece is rhetorical if and only if:

a) It contains some of the following features: metaphor, simile, evocative language, etc. which are taken by the critics of rhetoric to have no effect on the force of the argument.

b) These features are such as to influence the degree of assent of the hearers.

As we have seen, the two component view of rhetoric is a plausible way of looking at rhetoric. While, as I said, I will later give reasons for supposing that this characterisation should not be adopted, I will temporarily adopt it in order to have initial agreement about what we are discussing. I will use the characterisation to identify those passages which are rhetorical, citing those features of a given passage which make it rhetorical. My provisional characterisation will allow meaningful argument as to the role of rhetoric to take place, without the risk of failure to communicate due to a disagreement in subject matter.

Possible Connections Between Rhetoric And Argument in Ethics

While I have given an overview of the general aims of this thesis, I have not yet provided any specific statement of the various claims that I will be discussing. Now, when we have a provisional characterisation of rhetoric, I will be able to present these various claims. In this section, I will set out a number of different possible claims which could be made about the relation between rhetoric and argument in ethics. The task of the thesis will then be to consider some of these.

One claim which is made by opponents of rhetoric is that rhetoric and rationality are essentially incompatible. Good argument aims at rational assent. Rhetoric, its critics assert, *cannot* promote rational assent. In chapter 3 I will try to show that this is not the case; rhetoric can promote rational assent by setting out reasons so that hearers can grasp them better; or, as, I will abbreviate this claim, rhetoric can be rational.

Another claim is that those features which make a speech rhetorical cannot give reasons for assent; i.e., that there are no reasons to assent which result from the rhetoric of a passage. In chapter 5 I will try to show that this view is false, i.e., that rhetoric *can* provide reasons.

People have often thought that rhetoric's capacity to arouse emotions makes it dangerous, since a rhetorician can exploit the emotions of his or her audience in order to gain irrational assent.

In chapter 6 I argue that while rhetoric can be used in this way, it can also be used by the rhetorician to influence emotions so as to promote rational assent, by altering the negative attitudes that the audience may have to the speaker's claims, attitudes which might prevent people from even taking these claims seriously, and by arousing emotions which promote rational assent.

There are some other questions about rhetoric which I will not be able to tackle here. These concern various claims one might make about whether and in what way rhetoric can play a uniquely valuable role in argument. For example, it might be asked whether one needed rhetoric to give reasons to a particular individual in a particular situation or whether certain arguments can only be formulated in rhetorical terms. There are many other issues which concern the uniqueness of rhetoric, but I will not be able to tackle them here.

As well as these questions, there are a number of questions relating to the ethics of rhetoric which will not particularly concern me in this thesis; I am here dealing with rhetoric in ethics, not the ethics of rhetoric. I will not consider such questions as whether or when it is morally permissible or even perhaps morally required to employ rhetoric when trying to urge others to act as one thinks best. My conclusions will, however, have an important impact on these questions, since they require a revaluation of the rationality of rhetoric. One of the reasons why ethical questions about rhetoric might arise is that it is thought that rhetoric is irrational in nature and that therefore the employment of it in argument must involve

deceiving hearers as to the strength of the argument. This creates a *prima facie* reason for avoiding rhetoric, which can be defeated only if it is necessary to deceive hearers in order to avoid some great ill. If rhetoric can be rational then some of these ethical problems do not arise, since rhetoric need not be deceptive.

So my main aims in this thesis will be to show that rhetoric can set out reasons, that it can give reasons and that it can arouse emotions which promote rational assent. I will not, on the other hand, concern myself with whether rhetoric is necessary, nor with the ethics of rhetoric as opposed to rhetoric in ethics.

The Ontology of Rhetoric

Before we continue, I would like to consider a view which is closely related to the two component view of rhetoric, a view that I will call the embellishment view. On some formulation of this view it can be used to present an initial case against rhetoric. I will therefore try to refute it in these formulations. The embellishment view holds (not surprisingly, given its name) that rhetoric's function in a passage is simply to embellish it; all it does, on this view, is to present arguments in a more attractive manner to hearers.

This idea about rhetoric has been one of the causes of the disapproval which many feel towards it. On this view, rhetoric is not an integral part of the passage; it is at best a slightly frivolous decoration of it and at worst can, by presenting unsound arguments in an attractive light, deceive people into accepting them.

The embellishment view about the nature of rhetoric fits in well with the first version of the two component characterisation of rhetoric that I gave. Recall that on that characterisation rhetoric was explicitly defined in clause a) as adding no force to the argument of a passage. It might then seem that if rhetoric does not strengthen the argument, then it can have little role in rational argument; at best, it can serve to adorn the bare bones of the argument itself.

The two component view, then, is the basis for an initial attack on rhetoric. At best, it is a decoration; at worst, it can lead people to mistake ornamentation for argument and to assent when there are not good grounds for doing so.

I will now consider the view that rhetoric is an embellishment in order to see whether or not it is adequate. I will try to show that while it fits some cases reasonably well, in many cases it is inappropriate. Most examples of rhetoric are best analysed by another model, which I will call the adverbial view of rhetoric³. This view is simply the negation of the embellishment view. On this view, rather than rhetoric being an ornamental addition to the main body of the argument, it is integral to it; rhetoric provides a particular way of presenting the argument, rather than just a way of decorating it.

The adverbial model is fully compatible with modified version of the two component view, however. So the fact that it fits many cases of rhetoric does not allow us to discard the latter view; I will continue to use it, therefore, in the rest of the thesis.

In order to decide whether rhetoric is or is not an embellishment, we need to find out what it would mean for rhetoric to be an embellishment. I will give several possible suggestions as to what could be meant by saying this. Whichever one is accepted, I will try to show that it is not an a priori truth that rhetoric is an embellishment; no obvious argument can be

³ This name was suggested to me by John Baker.

given to prove this claim. So in order to decide whether rhetoric is an embellishment we need to look at examples of pieces of rhetoric and see whether or not the rhetoric in these passages can be regarded as embellishing some central argument. Furthermore, a consideration of some examples, drawn from the speeches of Churchill, will show that the embellishment model can not be readily applied in a number of different cases, especially those in which the rhetoric used is good rhetoric. The adverbial model fits these cases of good rhetoric much better. So the embellishment view does not provide a successful attack on rhetoric; those cases which it fits are ones which can already be ruled out as examples of good rhetoric; while it does not fit those which *are* good and so does not show that these also ought to be rejected⁴.

Rhetoric Cannot Be Shown to be an Embellishment As a Matter of A Priori Truth

It might be thought that it is an a priori truth that rhetoric is an embellishment; that this follows from the very nature of rhetoric. On this view we do not have to bother to look at examples of rhetoric; we can know in advance that rhetoric is an

⁴ There is a difference between good rhetoric and rational rhetoric, so the argument is a little tricky here. But it seems at least plausible that all candidates for being rational rhetoric will be cases of good rhetoric. In that case, no candidate for being rational rhetoric will fit the embellishment view, so that this view cannot be used to dismiss the possibility of a rational rhetoric

embellishment. In this section I will deal with three arguments for this claim, and try to show that none work.

Each of the arguments rests on a different conception of embellishment. But how can we get at a conception of what an embellishment is? Let us start from the connotations that the term “embellishment” has.

If rhetoric is an embellishment, it is an embellishment of something. The term “embellishment”, which might be used to describe ornamentation on a building, or painting on a box, implies that what is described as an embellishment is an addition to some separately identifiable object. But what, then, is rhetoric an embellishment of? As I have noted above, writers on critical reasoning suggest that this something is what they call “the argument”. But this reply, of course, still leaves us with the question of what the argument is. Once we have worked this out we will be able to tackle our initial question. We need, then, to try to find some element, which I will call the basic argument, of which rhetoric can be plausibly said to be an embellishment.

Perhaps those who hold an embellishment view of rhetoric think that basic arguments are sets of token sentences. A piece of rhetoric would then be some kind of rewrite of the basic argument so as to make it more attractive to the hearer. But this view seems to be mistaken. Arguments cannot be identified with sets of sentences, since several *different* sets of sentences can be used to present the *same* argument.

For example, someone might suggest that something like the following is a basic argument:

1 All men are mortal.

2 Socrates is a man.

So,

Socrates is mortal.

But this set of sentence tokens cannot be *the* argument, since the argument can be expressed using a different set of sentence tokens, for example, the following:

1 $(x)(Mx \rightarrow Dx)$

2 Ms

So,

Ds

Where,

M = “___ is a man”

D = “___ is mortal”

s = “Socrates”

There are, then, at least two ways of formulating what appears to be the same basic argument. So if we want to talk about rhetoric as being an embellishment of some basic argument, we cannot consider a basic argument to be a linguistic token. Thus one possible suggestion is ruled out: the idea that rhetorical phrases

are literally added on to some basic linguistic entity as ornamentation might be added on to a building.

We need, then, a better view of what "the argument" is - an ontology of argument. The view that an argument is a linguistic token is clearly inadequate. Instead, the view that an argument is an abstract entity which can be presented through a variety of linguistic acts is more appropriate, since it explains how there can be a number of different formulations of the same argument. What kind of abstract entity an argument is - whether, for example, it is eternally existent or whether it is brought into existence through being formulated - has no bearing on my discussion. Therefore I will not try to resolve this question.

But this new view of arguments, as abstract entities rather than as linguistic tokens, again raises the question of what it means for rhetoric to be an embellishment of an argument; the answer can scarcely be the same as before. I will venture a new suggestion. Perhaps what the critics of rhetoric mean by saying that rhetoric is an embellishment is that, while some specific formulations of a given argument present that argument and do nothing else, other formulations of the argument have additional features which have nothing to do with the argument. One might contrast a plain and straightforward presentation of the argument with one in which the way that the argument was put was deliberately designed to be evocative, moving or striking. And then one might say that the second presentation had features which were simply irrelevant to the matter in hand, namely the

presentation of the argument, and so that this second argument is an embellished instance of the argument.

But this suggestion fails to pick out embellished from non-embellished formulations of an argument. In our example, while the possession of certain features might be irrelevant to the question of whether or not the argument was presented, this is also the case for the first presentation. The features of plainness and of strikingness are both just as irrelevant to the formulation of an argument, since the argument can be presented without them as well as with them.

The proponent of the embellishment view might suggest in response to this that rhetoric is an embellishment because it contains elements which actually serve to make the structure of an argument less clear. The ideal presentation of an argument, it would be claimed, would be the one which made its structure as clear as possible; i.e., which enabled the hearer to grasp its logical form. Rhetoric does not allow this, it might be argued, since the rhetorical features are meant to achieve goals additional to the exhibiting of the structure of an argument, thereby obscuring the structure of the argument itself.

The idea here is that rhetoric is an embellishment because it contains features which make it more difficult to grasp the structure of arguments. However, as I will try to show in chapter 6, this characterisation fails to yield the result that rhetoric is an embellishment. Although rhetoric *can* be used to obscure an argument, it can often be used to help to bring out an argument's

structure more clearly than do other formulations of the same argument. So this argument, too, will ultimately prove to be ineffective.

In response to the thought that there may be some a priori grounds for thinking that rhetoric is an embellishment, I have tried to consider some possible views which might give grounds for this claim. I have not, however, succeeded in finding characterisations of what an embellishment is which yield even plausible a priori arguments for the claim that rhetoric is an embellishment. I hope to remedy this deficiency by showing on empirical grounds that the embellishment view does not fit many cases of rhetoric. If this is the case, then clearly no a priori argument for the embellishment view can work; one cannot succeed in proving something that is in fact false.

The Inadequacy of the Embellishment Model

So we were not able to find any characterisation of what it would be for rhetoric to be an embellishment which leads to it being an a priori truth that rhetoric is an embellishment of language. This does not of course show that none can be given, but lacking such a characterisation, in order to continue to investigate whether or not the embellishment theory is correct I will look at some examples of rhetoric to see whether the theory gives an adequate description of how rhetoric operates in them. I will take a number of passages from the speeches of Winston Churchill, well

known for his rhetorical style of speaking, and try to show that the embellishment model does not fit some of them at all well.

Since we have not so far found a satisfactory definition of embellishment, I will rely on a working notion of what counts as an embellishment. As the term is normally used, "embellishment" refers to extra elements added on to a basic structure which do not themselves play any role in its workings. For example, in a building, ornamentation counts as an embellishment since it has no structural role in the building. All it does is to prettify the structure. So in investigating whether rhetoric is an embellishment we need to look at whether it plays a functional role in a passage (and so is not an embellishment), or whether its sole purpose is to make the passage more attractive (so that it *is* an embellishment). The functional role of the passages that we will be dealing with is clear: to present arguments to the hearers. Rhetoric, then, will be functional and hence not an embellishment if and only if it helps the presentation of arguments.

Note that on this characterisation of rhetoric, as well as on the others we looked at previously, there is no obvious a priori argument that rhetoric is an embellishment. There seems to be no way to show that rhetoric cannot have a functional role in a passage. So we must turn to examples in order to decide whether rhetoric is an embellishment or not.

Some passages fit the embellishment model well:

A world organisation has already been erected for the prime purpose of preventing war. UNO, the successor of the League of Nations, with the decisive addition of the United States and all that means, is already at work. We must make sure that its work is fruitful, that it is a reality and not a sham, that it is a force for action, and not merely a frothing of words, that it is a true temple of peace in which the shields of many nations can some day be hung up, and not merely a cockpit of the Tower of Babel. Before we cast away the solid assurances of national armaments for self-preservation we must be certain that our temple is built, not on shifting sands or quagmires, but upon the rock. Anyone can see with his eyes open that our path will be difficult and also long, but if we persevere together as we did in the two world wars - though not, alas, in the interval between them - I cannot doubt that we shall achieve our common purpose in the end.

("The Iron Curtain", *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat*, pg. 298)

In this passage, the rhetoric is indeed well characterised as being an embellishment of the main argument of the passage. This, however, is a result of the bombastic quality of the passage and not simply due to the fact that the passage is rhetorical. The various metaphors employed do not fit the institution which Churchill is discussing particularly well, nor do they help him to express his argument. Instead, they simply add an air of impressiveness which is in fact spurious. The United Nations should not be a temple in which hostilities are temporarily abated, but instead should work to keep peace in the outside world. The metaphor of a temple built on rock rather than sand is a mere cliché, having no particular pertinence to the matter under

discussion. The metaphors that Churchill uses do not help us to understand the nature and task of the United Nations; instead, they are employed purely for their associational value.

Furthermore Churchill's constant switching of metaphors prevents any of them from conveying any clear message to the reader.

Suddenly, after being in a temple, we find ourselves taking a long path to a distant goal. So the rhetoric is not functional in this case, but is used purely for decoration, and so fits the embellishment model well.

Those who hold the embellishment view of rhetoric, it seems, regard examples like this one as typifying what rhetoric is, instead of seeing them as cases of rather vague and unfocussed speech making. As a result, they think that rhetoric is simply a series of dramatic flourishes, with little connection to the actual subject matter of the speech.

I will try to rebut this view by quoting two of the most famous passages from Churchill's speeches. In these examples, while they have a tendency to hyperbole, the rhetorical features are not embellishments, but rather help Churchill to convey his point better. Take the first:

What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us on this island or lose the war. If

we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."

("Their Finest Hour", *ibid.*, pg. 177-8).

This passage is undoubtedly rhetorical, but fits the embellishment model poorly. The various rhetorical phrases such as "new Dark Age" or "broad sunlit uplands", while being somewhat hackneyed, nonetheless succeed in conveying the alternatives of disaster and victory in a vivid manner. The metaphor of a journey, continued throughout the passage, makes clear the choice facing the hearers and the possible consequences of their choice. Rather than the rhetoric being a series of flourishes, then, it succeeds in conveying to the hearers the weightiness of the task before them and the dangers of failure; the rhetoric is functional, helping Churchill to say what he wants to say, so that, according to our working characterisation, it is not an embellishment of his argument.

The same could be said of another well-known passage:

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo, and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we

shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength on the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until in God's good time, the new world, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the old.

("Wars Are Not Won By Evacuations"

ibid., pg. 165)

Churchill's use of the Dunkirk evacuation as a symbol of the possible retreats and struggles that are necessary for final victory, is a vital part of the point that he is trying to make, vividly conveying his point to his hearers. The repetition characteristic of this passage makes much more vivid to the hearers the lengthiness and the difficulty of the struggle that will be required if they are to achieve the final goal. Again, the rhetoric enables Churchill to say what he wants to say as clearly as possible; it is functional, helping him to present his argument, rather than being an embellishment.

What do these examples tell us? They do provide us with two counterexamples to the embellishment thesis. However, it is clearly not sufficient just to provide a few counterexamples. It may be that while there are *some* counterexamples to the thesis, it

fits most cases fairly well. How, then, do I hope to use these examples to rebut the embellishment thesis?

I suggest that what the examples do is to show how rhetoric can be constructed so as not to be an embellishment, but instead to play a vital role in a passage. Consider the two examples again. In them, we see how various rhetorical devices - the use of phrases such as "the broad, sunlit uplands" and "the new Dark Age" of the first, the use of Dunkirk and of repetition in the second - can be used to convey a point powerfully. Clearly, similar techniques can be used in other cases with the same effect. So the point of the examples is that they indicate how an indefinite number of passages of rhetoric can be constructed which do not fit the embellishment model; they are not just two isolated cases.

Looking at these last two passages, then, we can see that in some cases (and note that these will tend to be cases in which good rhetoric is being employed, being those cases in which the rhetoric is an integral part of the speech), we should not regard rhetoric as an embellishment of some basic argument. Instead, my view is that we should talk not so much of rhetoric, but rather of certain pieces as having a rhetorical character, involving a particular way of expressing ideas. What some of Churchill's best speeches do is to convey his arguments by means of rhetoric. So I suggest that the following view of the nature of rhetoric is the best one for most cases of rhetoric: the adverbial theory.

According to this theory, rhetoric is not a component separate from the argument, but instead a rhetorical passage

represents a particular way of formulating arguments. Looking back at the two counterexamples to the embellishment thesis, we saw that what rhetoric did was to allow arguments to be formulated in a particular way; a way which made them particularly concrete and vivid to the hearer.

The embellishment view, then, cannot be accepted. While it fits bad rhetoric quite well, good rhetoric is much better analysed by the adverbial model.

The adverbial thesis is not incompatible with the two component view. On this model, rhetoric still consists of such features as metaphor, irony, ordering etc. and still influences the degree of assent. Thus rhetoric continues to fit the two component view. So at least so far there is no reason to reject the two component view.

In this section, then, I have tried to show that the embellishment view, which might lead people to reject rhetoric out of hand, does not apply to good rhetoric. I still have to show that rhetoric can deal with other attacks against it, a task which I will turn to in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Case Against Rhetoric

Introduction

In this chapter, I will consider some important arguments against the idea that rhetoric can be rational (i.e. against the claim, which I will be arguing for later in chapter 3 and 5, that rhetoric can promote rational assent). I will not try to give a complete refutation of these arguments here. Instead, I will try to show that if certain claims about rhetoric are true, each of the arguments fail. Later on in the thesis I will attempt to demonstrate that these claims *are* indeed true, and so it will follow as a consequence that the arguments against rhetoric are ineffective. The purpose of considering these arguments, then, is to see whether there is any argument which can be used to prove in advance that my attempt to show that rhetoric can be rational must necessarily prove unsuccessful. I will show that none of the arguments that I will discuss can do this.

The claim that rhetoric is not rational seems to amount to this: rhetoric, it is thought, is incapable of promoting rational assent. The only way of promoting rational assent is by giving reasons. The only reasons to assent are provided by arguments, the assent being given for those reasons, and rhetoric is not part of the argument of a passage. Rhetoric, then, cannot promote rational assent.

Conversely, the claim that rhetoric *is* rational (or rather that it can be - there are plenty of cases in which rhetoric is used to achieve an irrational assent) involves the assertion that rational assent can be promoted by rhetoric.

My claim, then, is not that the *use* of rhetoric *by speakers* can be rational; it is clearly rational in some cases to use rhetoric to secure *irrational* assent if rational assent cannot be attained (whether it is ever morally justified for people to do this is debatable). Rather, I am concerned with trying to show that the assent of hearers whose assent is influenced by rhetoric can be rational; that as a result of rhetoric the hearer can be brought to grasp the reasons for assent and can assent for those reasons.

Arguments That Rhetoric Cannot Be Rational

The arguments against rhetoric stem from a view about its nature. Rhetoric has traditionally been seen as essentially persuasive in character, the purpose of using it being to persuade others to adopt certain beliefs or to perform certain actions. This has led many thinkers to disapprove of rhetoric; they claim that the persuasive role of rhetoric is fundamentally incompatible with rational argumentation; the two aims, of persuasion and of rationality, must necessarily conflict, they think.

In his arguments against rhetoric, Plato presented a particularly stark contrast between the rhetorician and the supremely rational man, the philosopher. He identified the practice

of rhetoric with the practice of the sophists, the travelling teachers of his day. On his account, the aim of the sophists was simply to achieve assent; their greatest boast was that they could make the weaker argument defeat the stronger through their skill in rhetoric. The sophists were not at all concerned about truth or rationality in presenting their arguments. Their sole aim was to get their audiences to accept whichever assertions they wanted them to accept, regardless of the truth of their claims or the quality of the evidence that was offered for them.

In his dialogue *Gorgias*, Plato portrays a discussion about rhetoric between Socrates and the sophist and expert rhetorician Gorgias. Socrates, in the course of an exchange with Gorgias, manages to obtain from him the admission that rhetoric cannot produce knowledge, but only belief:

SOCRATES: May we then posit the existence of two kinds of conviction, one which gives knowledge and one which gives belief without knowledge?

GORGIAS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now which kind of conviction about right and wrong is created by oratory in courts of law and elsewhere, the kind which engenders knowledge or the kind which engenders belief without knowledge?

GORGIAS: The kind which engenders belief, obviously.

SOCRATES: So it appears that the conviction which oratory produces about right and wrong is of the

kind that is followed by belief, not the kind which arises from teaching?

GORGIAS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the orator does not teach juries and other bodies about right and wrong - he merely persuades them; he could hardly teach so large a number of people matters of importance in a short time.

GORGIAS: Of course he couldn't.

(*Gorgias*, 454-455, trans. Walter Hamilton).

If it is indeed the case that the goal of promoting rational assent is not open to practitioners of rhetoric, then by definition rhetoric cannot claim to be rational, or so the argument goes¹.

But in order to prove this, those who object to rhetoric must show that no ends can be served by rhetoric except that of persuasion, or at least that rhetorical persuasion must necessarily be non-rational. If rhetoric can enable one to prove to a given audience that some claim is correct, then a rhetorician can aim to give rational grounds for assent.

So any claims about what goals are open to those who employ rhetoric must be made after an investigation into what the

¹ Richard Robinson, in his essay "Plato's Conception of Fallacy" (see his *Essays in Greek Philosophy*) argues that Plato did not have a clearly worked out concept of fallacious argument, although there are glimmerings of it to be found in his work. If he is correct, then it is mistaken to ascribe the modern concept of rationality to Plato. So my way of interpreting Plato's argument against rhetoric may not serve as an adequate account of what Plato really meant. However, it seems that it does represent a good translation of Plato's attack on rhetoric into modern terms.

capacities of rhetoric actually are. One cannot therefore employ claims about the goals open to rhetoricians in order to show that rhetoric is not rational; instead, once one has answered the question of whether or not rhetoric can be rational, one can then use the answer to decide whether rational argument is open to users of rhetoric.

In order to consider the claim that rhetoric cannot be rational, then, we must look at the nature of rhetoric rather than at the nature of rhetoricians.

Here again there are a number of arguments which purport to show that rhetoric cannot promote rational assent. I will discuss two possible objections to the suggestion that rhetoric can serve the ends of rational argument. The first is that rhetoric cannot be rational since it cannot give reasons. This argument is an a priori one; it starts from claims about the incapacity of rhetoric which are supposed to hold of necessity. The second is a more empirical argument; the claim here is that while rhetoric perhaps could promote rational assent for highly unusual individuals, in actual fact it prevents most people from thinking clearly, due to the powerful emotional effect that it tends to have on them, so that irrational rather than rational assent is promoted. I will discuss each of them in turn.

The first objection follows naturally from the initial formulation of the two component model of rhetoric that I set out in chapter 1. As we saw, on this view, a piece is rhetorical if and only if:

a) it contains features whose presence or absence does not (according to the opponents of rhetoric) alter the force of the argument of the piece (i.e. metaphor, analogy, irony etc.), and

b) these features are such as to influence the degree of assent of the hearers.

On the view of the opponents of rhetoric rhetoric does not have any effect on the force of the argument. So it seems that rhetoric cannot have anything to do with the achieving of rational assent. If rhetoric does produce assent, then it can only produce irrational assent; i.e. assent which is ungrounded by reasons. Rhetoric is at best non-rational, at worst irrational.

The argument can be set out more clearly as follows:

a) For rhetoric to promote rational assent it must provide reasons for assent.

b) Rhetoric cannot provide reasons for assent.

So rhetoric cannot promote rational assent; i.e., rhetoric cannot be rational.

Despite the apparent strength of this argument, both of its premisses ought to be rejected.

Both assumptions are needed if the argument against rhetoric is going to work. In order to refute the argument, then, I only need to disprove one. I think, however, that it is possible to reject both. One of the aims of the following chapters will be to show that they are incorrect.

It is possible to show that the argument is suspect without doing this, however. Even in a discipline such as logic, rhetorical, or at least quasi-rhetorical, elements can play an important part. A variety of different ways of presenting arguments have been developed by logicians to show the inferential connections between different propositions as clearly as possible. While the choice of a particular way of presenting arguments does not alter their force, certain systems make it easier to see that the argument is valid by presenting it in a more perspicuous manner. Contrast Lemmon's method of presenting arguments with a previous method devised by Gentzen; I again (see introduction for a previous presentation) give a derivation of $P \text{ hook } R$ from $\{P \text{ hook } Q, Q \text{ hook } R\}$, using first Gentzen's mode of presentation, and then Lemmon's:

Gentzen:

$\{P \text{ hook } Q\}$	entails $P \text{ hook } Q$	Rule of Assumptions
$\{Q \text{ hook } R\}$	entails $Q \text{ hook } R$	Rule of Assumptions
$\{P\}$	entails P	Rule Of Assumptions
$\{P \text{ hook } Q, P\}$	entails Q	Modus Ponens
$\{Q \text{ hook } R, P\}$	entails R	Modus Ponens
$\{P \text{ hook } Q, Q \text{ hook } R\}$	entails $P \text{ hook } R$	Conditional Proof

Lemmon:

1	(1) $P \supset Q$	assumption
2	(2) $Q \supset R$	assumption
3	(3) P	assumption
1,3	(4) Q	modus ponens from 1, 3
1, 2, 3	(5) R	modus ponens from 2, 4
1, 2	(6) $P \supset R$	conditional proof from 3, 4

Many people find the second derivation considerably easier to follow than the first. But hardly anyone would claim that this made the use of the second rationally inadmissible.

But while an example like this one of the choice between different ways of presenting the same argument may not be an example of rhetoric, it has the characteristics which the critics of rhetoric regarded as objectionable in rhetoric. These characteristics, irrelevance to the force of the argument and influence on the degree of assent (the choice of the second way of presenting the argument did not make it any stronger; it was already valid, but nonetheless made the audience more likely to assent to the claim that it was valid), showed, according to the argument against rhetoric, that rhetoric could not promote rational assent. If this is the case, then they would be objectionable wherever they are found. But clearly, the use of the Lemmon system *does* promote rational assent; it allows readers to see that

an argument is valid and so promotes assent to it. So the argument against rhetoric cannot work, at least as it is currently formulated; the properties of rhetoric which are used to derive the conclusion that rhetoric is irrational also hold for other examples, such as the logical example that I have given here, while the conclusion that is drawn does not hold true of these cases; the use of different ways of presenting logical arguments in order to improve understanding promotes rational assent rather than irrational assent.

Having shown what I need to do to show that the first argument is ineffective, as well as having given a reason to reject it immediately, I will now turn to the second argument against rhetoric which I mentioned above. While the first argument relied on a priori reasoning from the nature of rhetoric, the second argument, by contrast, makes use of empirical evidence. According to this argument, while it may perhaps be possible for super-rational individuals to think rationally when listening to rhetoric, rhetoric impairs the judgment of ordinary people, making them less capable of attending to the argument and more liable to be persuaded of something that it would be irrational for them to accept. As a result, rhetoric does not promote rational assent but rather irrational assent.

Those who hold this view would probably give as evidence cases of accomplished speakers carrying their audiences away by manipulating their emotions and confusing their thinking. The speeches of Hitler are a good example of such deceptive rhetoric; his speeches often consist of series of points with no logical

connection between them, but designed to rouse feelings of resentment and hatred against other groups and a feeling of solidarity among his supporters. Nor are tactics like these confined to wholly disreputable individuals. One of the most famous of all orators, Cicero, was highly adept at using such techniques, for example in his defence of Aulus Cluentius Habitus against a charge of murder (*Murder Trials*, ed. and trans. Michael Grant, pg. 111-255). Instead of dealing with the evidence for and against the charge, he spends most of his speech discussing earlier trials in which the victim and his alleged murderer were involved in an effort to discredit the murdered man. This has nothing to do with the question which the trial is supposed to discuss; whether or not the victim was a disgraceful character, punishment would be due to the accused if he was guilty of murder. Nevertheless, Cicero's methods brought about the acquittal of the accused man; the effect of his powerful rhetoric confused the judgment of the members of the court, making them sympathetic to the accused and unsympathetic towards the victim. As he himself reportedly said in a private letter, he had thrown dust in the eyes of the judges (*ibid.*, pg. 19, pg. 119).

Must rhetoric confuse the judgment of its hearers as these examples suggest?

This accusation against rhetoric is clearly far too sweeping. While there are cases in which audiences are swept away by powerful oratory, this is far from always the case. When a speaker

does have such an effect the audience is often predisposed to respond as the speaker desires, for example in wartime. When such external factors are not present it is rare that speakers can exert the same kind of influence over their audiences, as most speakers realise; to gain assent is often a highly difficult task.

It is only rarely, then, that rhetoric has the effect of disabling the judgment of the audience. Often, the hearers of a speech are quite able to appreciate the strength of the argument that is presented to them and to accept and reject it on its merits. Some examples of rhetoric, then, may be open to the charge that they lead to irrationality on the part of the hearers, but this is by no means true of all.

One can go further. As I shall argue later (see chapter 6), rhetoric can aid rather than hindering the judgment. It can be used not to confuse the emotions, but instead to arouse appropriate emotions, which promote rational assent. By contrast, methods of moral argument which do not confront the emotions which hearers already have towards the issues which are being discussed may be unable to overcome the resistance that people have to the positions which the speaker is arguing for. It is necessary to pay attention to the emotions in order to prevent them from clouding the judgment; simply ignoring the emotional state of the audience will not mean that the emotions will not affect the audience's assent. The fact that rhetoric arouses the emotions, then, should not be a ground for rejecting it but rather a reason for

recommending it; because of this, rhetoric can be used to promote rational assent.

Alternatively, despite the fact that the speaker has succeeded in proving his or her point, the hearers may not assent unless they can be brought to look favourably on what the speaker is arguing, even if they do not start with a strong emotional commitment to the issue. Rhetoric can be used to arouse emotions which bring about a favourable view and so promote rational assent, I will argue, rather than simply being able to arouse emotions which produce irrational assent.

This chapter has discussed some major objections to rhetoric. While I have not in the main tried to answer them so far, I have indicated what I need to do in order to do so. In later chapters I will attempt to demonstrate the theses which will enable me to refute the objections.

To summarise, what I need to do to defeat the objections is to show three things; that rhetoric can promote rational assent without giving reasons for assent, that, even so, rhetoric *can* give reasons, and finally that rhetoric can often aid rather than confuse the judgment by arousing appropriate emotions.

Chapter 3

Rhetoric's Role in Bringing Out the Force of Reasons

Introduction

Let us turn, then, to the first of these tasks: the discussion of how rhetoric can *promote* rational assent without *giving reasons* for assent. As we saw, one of the premises of the main argument against rhetoric that I discussed was that this could not be done.

But this premise neglects other roles that rhetoric can have in promoting rational assent apart from providing reasons. One of the things that rhetoric can do, I will argue, is to ensure that a strong argument will be appreciated as such and that, as a result the audience will assent to it.

It is clearly not the case that if a sound argument, whose premises the audience accept, is offered, then rational assent will automatically follow. Instead, in order to get the audience to assent rationally, one must see to it that various conditions are fulfilled. Rhetoric, I will try to show, promotes rational assent by enabling these conditions to be fulfilled.

Before we proceed, we must consider in what sense rhetoric enables hearers to appreciate an already existing argument. In a strict sense, the rhetorical formulations of arguments which I will give are not precisely the same arguments as those which the speaker or writer may be presumed to have had in mind when composing the piece. One of the ways in which rhetoricians can

formulate arguments, I shall argue, is by using examples to gain concreteness of expression. Now in one sense when concrete examples are being used a different argument is now being given than if one presents a more abstract argument; in the first case, particular cases are the evidence upon which the argument is based, while in the other, general claims are used to prove one's claims. But in another sense the same argument is being give in both cases; the two formulations are based on the same general principles. One of the examples I will use is Bertrand Russell's formulation of the argument from evil. He uses particular cases of evil to make the claim that the existing evils in the world are incompatible with the existence of a God as traditionally conceived. But once one grasps the argument from particular cases one sees how a more generalised argument can be produced by citing as one's evidence all the evils of the world; so both formulations are both constructed on the same principles.

What are the conditions necessary for rational assent, then? First of all, of course, the hearers must pay attention to the subject at hand; otherwise the hearers will not even know what arguments they are being asked to assent to. Secondly, they must understand the arguments presented; i.e., there must be uptake, as J. L. Austin termed it (see *How to Do Things With Words*). Thirdly, the hearers must realise how strong the arguments are; someone might

understand an argument, so satisfying the second condition, but fail to realise that it has the strength that it does¹. Finally, it is not sufficient for the hearers to realise that the arguments are strong for them to alter their degree of assent. One might realise that an argument has power and yet irrationally fail to be moved by it. For example, someone could fail to assent to an argument that she realises to be strong by dismissing it as a case of how misleading arguments can be, sticking instead to her old beliefs. In ethical arguments especially it is important for speakers to consider how to move their hearers to assent. Judging that something ought to be done, and still more doing that thing, typically involves having a pro-attitude to that thing being done². So in order to gain assent one must arouse favourable emotions in the audience³.

What a speaker needs to do, in effect, is to ensure that these four conditions are fulfilled:

¹ In some cases, it seems, seeing that an argument is strong is contained within understanding it, though not identical to understanding. For example, in mathematics, I do not understand an argument fully unless I see how each step follows from the previous steps. But if I see this then I see the strength of the argument; i.e., the fact that since it is valid, then assuming the premises are true then the conclusion must also be true. In more disputatious subjects, however, the strength of the arguments is rarely so easy to grasp, so that even those who can be reasonably said to understand the arguments may not be certain as to their force.

² It is not clear what the connection is. Some philosophers, such as R. M. Hare, want to draw a very close link; Hare regards all cases of choice, including ethical choice, as involving a preference for one option over others. In that case, it seems that any sincere ethical judgment must necessarily involve a favourable attitude towards that thing being done. While this seems an attractive line of thought, I am not sure that it is correct, and do not have any alternative to put in its place. So I invite the reader to agree that it is at least plausible that there is a quasi-necessary link between assent in an ethical issue and having a favourable attitude towards that which one assents to.

³ I will not give examples here since I will discuss this in chapter 6.

- 1) The audience pays attention.
- 2) The audience understands the argument.
- 3) The audience grasps the force of the argument.
- 4) The audience changes its degree of assent to the extent justified by the argument, and as a result of it⁴.

These conditions are both necessary and sufficient for rational assent. If they are fulfilled, then the audience will assent as a result of the argument and because the argument gives reasons for assent. On the other hand, if any one of the conditions is not satisfied then either the audience will fail to assent at all, or it will do so irrationally. So if and only if the speaker enables these conditions to be fulfilled rational assent will be secured. My claim in this chapter is that rhetoric can play an important role in enabling any or all of these conditions to be fulfilled.

⁴ If the second condition is fulfilled, then the first will be (barring unusual cases). Similarly, the fulfillment of the third condition will normally mean that the second has been fulfilled too. The point of distinguishing the various conditions is not to produce the most economical statement of some conditions necessary for rational assent; instead, it is meant to indicate how it is possible for a speaker to produce rational assent. When trying to do this, a speaker must concentrate on achieving each of the four aims; each serves as the prelude to the others. Sometimes, of course, several different aims will be achieved by the same means; e.g. if the argument is a simple one, then once one has attracted the hearers' attention they will understand it.

How Rhetoric Can Help To Fulfil The Four Conditions

I will demonstrate the contribution of rhetoric to the satisfaction of each of the four conditions⁵ described above by analysing quotations from the transcripts of various speeches and from some essays. I will go through the various conditions in turn, showing how rhetoric can contribute to their fulfillment. In many cases the examples will promote the satisfaction of other conditions than the one that I specifically mention; this should not be taken to present any problems, since I only need to claim that an example promotes fulfillment of the aim in question and not that it excludes the fulfillment of other aims; it suffices that I can show that they promote the aims that I have in mind.

The examples are intended to give some idea of the variety of ways in which rhetoric can be used to promote rational assent, but I do not claim that they provide an adequate representation of the uses to which rhetoric can be put. Given the relatively limited number of texts which I was able to include, I may have completely failed to discuss some important cases of rhetoric or I may have overemphasised some rhetorical devices as compared to others. I have however, tried to give examples of most of the uses of rhetoric to promote rational assent which I have observed, so I hope my list may not prove too incomplete. Even if it does turn out to be incomplete, however, this will not affect my main argument,

⁵ See footnote 1 for a discussion of the way in which the satisfaction of one condition is related to the satisfaction of others.

which is that rhetoric can promote rational assent. For this I only need some examples; I do not need to cover all cases. If there are more possible examples of rhetoric promoting rational assent than I have been able to cover, this can only strengthen my claim that rhetoric can promote rational assent.

As some readers may notice, my choice of examples in general reflects certain political and philosophical biases. I do not, however, regard this as a problem, although I have not deliberately chosen examples which fit my biases. What I did do was to choose examples of arguments which I thought gave powerful reasons for assent; naturally, I ended up picking examples which mainly support the views that I hold; if I thought there were arguments for other views which ought to be assented to, then I would change my views.

So I do not think that the bias of my examples undermines the case for my claim that rhetoric can promote rational assent; differences in the assessment of the examples will represent a difference in the assessment of the arguments which are presented by rhetoric rather than in the role of rhetoric itself.

The first condition for rational assent, as we saw, is simply that the members of the audience should attend closely, so that they are able to know what the speaker is arguing. One way in which speakers try to gain the attention of their hearers is by the use of vivid examples, which make the audience listen carefully to what is said.

Instances of this method of attracting attention occur frequently in the novels of Charles Dickens, in which attractive child characters, such as Oliver Twist or Nicholas Nickleby, are used to bring the social problems of the day into focus. Some of Dickens's readers would not have been well disposed to read abstract arguments about the plight of the disadvantaged, but by using concrete individuals who dramatise the problems faced by some of the poor he makes even these readers pay attention to the arguments for reform⁶.

Bertrand Russell also uses vivid examples as a way of making his arguments more arresting, although, in this case, in a manner different from that of Dickens:

Men, quite ordinary men, will compel children to look on while their mothers are raped. In pursuit of their political aims men will submit their opponents to long years of unspeakable anguish. We know what the Nazis did to the Jews at Auschwitz. In mass cruelty, the expulsions of Germans ordered by the Russians fall not very short of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis. And how about our noble selves? We would not do such deeds. Oh no! But we enjoy our juicy steaks and our hot rolls while German children die of hunger because our governments dare not face our indignation if they asked us to forego some part of our pleasures. If there were a Last Judgment as Christians believe,

⁶ I do not of course wish to suggest that Dickens's sole motive for writing his novels was to deal with social evils; this must however be regarded as one of the things that he achieved through his books.

how do you think our excuses would sound before
that final tribunal?

(*Bertrand Russell's Best*, pg. 117)

Russell first grabs our attention by means of a very powerful example. After going on to describe other cruel acts which people have performed, he then involves us personally by comparing the way we behave to the way those who we regard as supremely cruel behave; "And how about our noble selves?" he asks. As a result, Russell gets us to pay attention to the degree which is demanded by the seriousness of his subject.

The two authors work in different ways. On the one hand, Dickens interests his readers by describing characters for whom they are likely to feel concern. As a result, his readers will be closely attentive to matters relating to the characters' fate. The examples that Russell gives in the passage I quoted, on the other hand, seem to be somewhat tangential to the main point that he is going to discuss, namely our own cruelty, rather than that of the Germans or the Russians. Thus he gets our attention through a kind of deception. Someone might start reading because he or she is interested in finding out how cruel these people are, and as a result will have been misled into confronting his or her own cruelty. I will discuss this example further when I look at rhetoric's role in bringing out the force of an argument.

We have seen some ways in which the speakers can try to get the attention of the audience through rhetoric, thus fulfilling the first condition. How can rhetoric promote the satisfaction of the

second condition? The second condition for rational assent, as we have seen, requires uptake on the part of the hearers. This is often a very difficult task: the scope for misunderstanding is immense. There is an especial risk of misunderstanding if the arguments that the speaker gives conflict with some prejudice that the hearers hold.

Philosophers, in particular, should be highly aware of this problem. On many occasions, philosophers have been taken to be arguing for something that they in fact oppose; partly, of course, due to a failure by many to read what the philosophers wrote, but partly also because the misinterpretation fitted in well with common views held at the time; an example of this was the appropriation of Nietzsche's ideas by the Nazis to support their own views, despite his consistent opposition to the German nationalist cause espoused by the latter. The Nazis already held fixed political views, and were inclined to read Nietzsche as confirming them⁷. Prejudice may lead, then, not only to failure to accept any arguments the speaker gives which contradict this prejudice, but even to a strengthening of the prejudice, if the audience takes him or her to be arguing in favour of, rather than against, their prejudices.

There is a problem of exposition even where prejudices do not provide obstructions to understanding. Often even the simplest

⁷ See Walter Kaufmann's book *Nietzsche* for an account of how Nazi scholars misread (and also deliberately distorted) Nietzsche's thought, making it correspond to their own thought.

argument can be fail to be understood. It is therefore important for a speaker, if possible, to use methods which will make misunderstanding less likely. In the passage below, Garrett Hardin tries to make his argument clear by using an analogy, allowing his hearers to imagine a situation which is readily comprehensible to all:

So here we sit, say fifty people in our lifeboat. To be generous, let us assume it has room for ten more, making for a total capacity of sixty. Suppose fifty of us in the lifeboat see 100 others swimming in the water outside, begging for admission to our boat or for handouts. We have several options: we may be tempted to live by the Christian ideal of being "our brother's keeper", or by the Marxist ideal of "to each according to his needs". Since the needs of all in the water are the same, and since they can all be seen as "our brothers", we could take them all into our boat, making a total of 150 in a boat designed for sixty. Complete justice, complete catastrophe...

Suppose we decide to preserve our small safety factor and admit no more to the lifeboat. Our survival then is possible, although we shall have to be constantly on guard against boarding parties.

(*Contemporary Moral Issues*, ed, White, pg. 153)

Hardin's choice of example here is clearly derived from rhetorical considerations, his aim being to produce an analogy which will make his argument clear and memorable to his readers⁸. The alternative interpretation of this passage, that he is

⁸ See Jeff Mason's book *Philosophical Rhetoric*. Mason draws our attention to the fact that often the details of a philosopher's argument escape our

simply providing an alternative example in order to argue for new moral judgments by using the universalisability principle, is implausible. The example clearly has another function; to provide a readily understandable symbol which serves as a summary of his central argument; otherwise Hardin would not have chosen such a powerful example as the lifeboat.

In this case, Hardin was not faced with a particular problem of overcoming prejudice on the part of his audience in order to be understood. Although prejudice might hinder the understanding of his argument by some, it does not seem likely that it would present a major barrier to understanding for most. In the following case, however, prejudice certainly *was* present, which the author tried to overcome by the use of rhetoric. Marie Stopes, in her book *Married Love*, faced the problem of trying to show that it was not vicious or even inappropriate, in a book available to the general public, to deal with some of the topics she discussed, such as sexual relations and birth control. Seeking to avoid an automatic dismissal of the book as pandering to depraved minds, she states in her preface that:

In the following pages I speak to those - and in spite of all of our neurotic literature and plays they are in

memory after a comparatively short time. Belief change, on the other hand, is a process that often takes a long time. In this process, philosophical metaphors can play an important part. Such metaphors, such as Plato's cave or indeed Hardin's lifeboat, are often highly memorable, serving as a kind of summary of the arguments of a philosopher when the arguments themselves are largely forgotten in detail. They have a powerful hold on our imaginations and gradually have an effect on our views, shifting them over a long period of time.

the great majority, who are nearly normal, and who are married.

(*Married Love*, pg. 19)

Throughout the book, Stopes constantly stresses that her intended audience is “healthy”, “normal”, “decent”, etc. Now this constant repetition does not strengthen her argument that instruction about sex is perfectly respectable. However, what it does do is to keep a possibly prejudiced readership from failing to understand what her argument is. By sheer force of repetition, she prevents her audience from mistaking her motives, and so regarding the book as simply a piece of pornography.

So rhetoric can enable hearers to understand the arguments that a speaker gives. It is not enough for the audience simply to understand the arguments presented, however. One must also make the force of argument one is giving apparent to the audience. Rhetoric has an important role to play in the fulfillment of this condition also; indeed, rhetoric is particularly important here. In many cases of spoken rhetoric, it is not too difficult for people to understand a speaker's arguments, which are generally fairly simple and also familiar (which partly explains why up till now my examples have been drawn solely from written sources, in which examples are frequently considerably more complex). The problem for the speaker is to make the arguments tell; something which is made especially difficult by their very familiarity.

Examples can allow one to achieve such effects; they can help the audience to see the force of an argument, since they avoid the abstraction which might otherwise prevent people from seeing the force of the points being made:

Apart from logical cogency, there is to me something a little odd about the ethical valuations of those who think that an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent Deity, after preparing the ground for many millions of years of lifeless nebulae, would consider Himself adequately rewarded by the final emergence of Hitler, Stalin and the H-Bomb.

(ibid. pg 150).

Here Russell criticises religious views by means of specific examples of the evils of the world, rather than in more abstract terms (e.g. a mention of the suffering in the world); as a result, his point has much greater persuasive force than it would otherwise have had. This is despite the fact that, logically, by using just a few examples rather than all the evils in the world to back up his claims Russell makes his argument weaker; it would be more difficult to explain how a benevolent deity could allow all the evils in the world rather than just the ones which Russell mentions. The effectiveness of this device is simply a result of the much greater grasp that almost everybody has of concrete examples rather than abstract arguments.

Extreme examples are especially useful for making one's arguments more persuasive:

The desire for legitimate offspring is, in fact, according to the Catholic Church, the only motive which can justify sexual intercourse. But this motive always justifies it, no matter what cruelty may accompany it. If the wife hates sexual intercourse, if she is likely to die of another pregnancy, if the child is likely to be diseased or insane, if there is not enough money to prevent the utmost extreme of misery, that does not prevent the man from being justified in insisting on his conjugal rights, provided only that he hopes to beget a child.

(ibid., pg 70).

As we can see by looking at these two cases, examples clearly have powerful persuasive force. It is not sufficient for our purposes to show this, however. For we must also ask in any given case whether an example causes assent as a result of the correct perception by the hearers of the force of a certain argument, or whether it actually has too great an effect, distorting the judgment of hearers. Since we are concerned with whether rhetoric promotes rational assent, rather than just any sort of assent, only the first possibility leads to a positive answer to our question.

For instance, in the 1988 presidential election, the Republicans made much of the fact that Michael Dukakis, the Democratic candidate, had, as Governor of Massachusetts, released a black man, Willie Horton, from jail. Horton later raped a woman. The Republicans used this case to attack Dukakis, claiming that his liberal instincts prevented him from making good judgments.

Despite the effectiveness of this argument in drawing supporters away from Dukakis, it seems that this case should not

have persuaded people to the extent that it did. This was only one case in a whole programme for the rehabilitation of offenders into society, which had mainly been successful. If voters accepted the Republicans' claim that Dukakis could not be trusted to maintain law and order, then they did so irrationally.

So an objection to the use of rhetorical examples might be that while they persuade people to assent they do not give reasons for assent. In answer to this objection, I would claim that the problem here lies not so much with rhetoric as with the fact that in cases like

that of the attack on Dukakis the examples given do not adequately support the conclusion. In order to gain rational assent from the hearers the speaker must choose examples which, while being persuasive, also give good reasons for the conclusion the speaker draws.

In order to avoid promoting irrational rather than rational assent, then, the speaker needs to give examples which genuinely support the conclusions drawn, rather than ones which are merely persuasive⁹. Provided that these restrictions are observed, examples, by making the arguments given more concrete, can enable the hearers to assent rationally. If the hearers have some rational capacities, then in some cases at least they will see that the example provides reason to assent and will therefore assent

⁹ Criteria for determining whether or not examples support a conclusion are to be found in textbooks of informal logic, see e.g. Vincent E. Barry, *Practical Argument*, for a discussion of the role of examples in argument.

rationally. Concrete examples make it more likely that this will take place, given the way that most people think.

Analogy, also, is a valuable tool for bringing out the force of an argument; Russell uses it effectively here to deflate the claims of those who claim that the competition of those involved in pure capitalism has the commendable qualities which competitive sport has:

If two hitherto rival football teams, under the influence of brotherly love, decided to cooperate in placing the football first beyond one goal and then beyond the other, no one's happiness would be increased. There is no reason why the zest derived from competition should be confined to athletics. Emulation between teams or localities or organisations can be a useful incentive. But if competition is not to become ruthless and harmful, the penalty for failure must not be disaster, as in war, or starvation, as in unregulated economic competition, but only loss of glory. Football would not be a desirable sport if defeated teams were put to death or left to starve.

(Bertrand Russell's Best, pg. 113)

The use of analogy (or metaphor, which has a similar role), by a speaker can be used to make the hearers realise the force of an argument by making reference to different situations about which the hearers are able to make better judgments. We all know that a game in which defeat meant death would be absurd and monstrous; for some reason those who regard capitalism as a game

seem unable to see that here, too, the penalties for failure ought to be limited. By exploring the analogy between the two further than it is normally taken, Russell helps to get his hearers to see this; he uses the fact that, in this particular case at least, people's judgments about sport are more sensible than those about capitalism to improve their understanding of the ethics of competition. The metaphor of sport, used to support free market capitalism, is turned against it by Russell.

Russell's use of metaphor is clearly rhetorical and not purely expository. The metaphor of economic competition as a game is one which has a powerful emotional charge attached to it, which is normally used to make people view such competition favourably. Russell's passage is thus particularly effective since it seeks to undermine the favourable attitude felt towards capitalism.

Again, as in our previous discussion of the use of examples in argument, we are concerned with rational assent rather than just any sort of assent. As in those cases when examples are used to make a point more persuasive, the speaker must make sure that the formulation of the argument that he or she gives still supports the conclusions drawn. The standard criteria for the use of analogies in reasoning should be applied here; what is necessary for an analogy to support a claim is that it is a genuinely good one; i.e. that the items related do have many relevant similarities and few differences, and so on¹⁰.

¹⁰ Again, I will not try to give precise conditions for the use of analogy in argument. John Burbidge's book *Within Reason* regards analogy as the

Irony is another device which can be used to get others to see the force of an argument. By supposedly propounding a thesis which is opposed to the one that one is actually espousing, one is able to show the absurdity of holding the opposed view. If one simply tried to construct a straightforward proof of one's contentions, one would not succeed in ridiculing the opposite view, and so would be less likely to convince others that their opposing view was not a perfectly sensible one to hold; irony shows the strength of an argument by showing the opposed view as completely unfounded and indeed absurd. A good example of the use of irony is Byron's maiden speech in the House of Lords, denouncing the conditions of the workers in England:

Considerable injury has been done to the proprietors of the improved frames. These frames were to them an advantage, inasmuch as they superseded the necessity of employing a number of workmen, who were left in consequence to starve...The rejected workmen, in the blindness of their ignorance, instead of rejoicing at these improvements of arts so beneficial to mankind, conceived themselves to be sacrificed to improvements in mechanism. In the foolishness of their hearts, they imagined that the maintenance and well-doing of the industrious poor were of greater consequence than the enrichment of a few individuals by any improvement in the implements of trade that threw the workman out of

central form of practical reasoning, from which other types of argument can be built up, and contains a good treatment of the use of analogy in argument.

employment, and rendered the labourer unworthy of his hire.

(*A Treasury of The World's Great Speeches*, pg. 120)

Whereas the argument that the interests of many poor made worse off by innovations in technology outweigh the interest of the rich industrialists who prosper from them would make many realise that there was a strong case for a different system for managing change, it would still not close off an attempt to support the status quo; through irony, however, Byron is able to show the lengths to which his opponents would have to go to defend their position, and so can demonstrate that the opposed position is untenable.

Allied to irony is deception. We saw earlier how Russell temporarily tricked us into thinking that he was going to inveigh against the cruelties of other nations, but instead ended up by criticising the indifference of the British public. This deception, I would claim, is not illegitimate, but instead serves the end of education. We discover at the end of the passage that the Germans are not so singularly cruel; we too are cruel in our own thoughtless way. The mode of presentation, with the readers being deceived and then becoming aware of their own deception, is much more effective in altering people's opinions than a straightforward one.

When trying to show the force of an argument, deception can be particularly effective. Consider, for example, this well-known example, which is often used to show people their unconscious

prejudices. The story is told of a father and his son who are involved in an accident and are both taken to intensive care. The son is immediately taken into the operating theatre. But when he arrives, the surgeon cries out in horror "Oh my son!" The question asked is "Who is the surgeon?"

The answer, of course, is "The patient's mother". But many people (myself included) are unable to see this answer when they first hear this story, instead trying to think up various complicated and far fetched solutions. This would surely not be the case if the story had talked about a mother and her son having an accident.

The deception used in telling this story (setting it up as a puzzle), then, is especially effective in demonstrating to the members of the audience their own prejudices, whereas a survey of the research on the issue would be unlikely to be so. The hearers are made to look ridiculous, failing to see the correct solution, and are likely to be more wary of the influence of stereotypes in the future.

What is important to note here is that assent is not achieved because the hearers are still subject to deception. Instead, a vital part of the working of argument by deception is that the deception is eventually revealed. The improved understanding which is gained as a result of being deceived will enable one to better appreciate the arguments against one's current prejudices, since one has become more aware of their existence. So the deception improves rather than damaging people's grasp of the facts.

Another strategy to get people to grasp the force of an argument is to appeal to certain values that they already accept. While it might seem that the members of the audience are perfectly aware of their own values, and so are not in need of reminder, this is often not the case; it is frequently difficult to know exactly what one believes. The rhetorician can try to make his audience aware of the fact that they place great value on something, in order to show that they should logically accept a certain conclusion.

In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King does just this, appealing to the value that Americans place on liberty in his effort to secure the rights of black people:

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. That note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on that promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a blank check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds". But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity in this nation. So we have come to cash this check - a check that will give us on demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

(Exploring Philosophy, pg. 170)

In this passage, King's aim is not to convince people that people of all races should be treated equally; he assumes at the start that the Constitution requires this. What he seeks to do is to get people to act in order to secure these rights. To do this, he knows it is not sufficient simply to point out the facts of Constitutional law. Instead, what he does is to stress the value that people actually place on equality, liberty and justice, so making it clear to them that they, if they are to be true to their own beliefs, ought to act to ensure that these values are adequately protected. By showing America as defaulting on the great promises it has made to all its peoples, he is able to awaken a sense of shame in his hearers at the failure to keep constitutional promises.

One can achieve the same sort of goal, that of making people aware of the values that they already hold, by showing the parallels between a position that the hearers currently accept and one that they would reject.

Pitt the Younger, in one of his speeches against the slave trade, used this strategy:

Why might not some Roman Senator, reasoning on the principles of some honourable gentlemen, and pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness, "There is a people that will never rise to civilisation; there is a people that is destined never to be free; a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of

slaves for the rest of the world"? Might not this have been said in all respects as fairly and as truly of Britain herself, at that period of her history, as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa?...

If, then, we feel that this perpetual confinement in the fetters of brutal ignorance would have been the greatest calamity which could have befallen us; if we view with gratitude and exultation the contrast between the peculiar blessings we enjoy and the wretchedness of the ancient inhabitants of Britain; if we shudder to think of the misery which would still have overwhelmed us if Great Britain had continued to be the mart for slaves to the more civilised nations of the world, God forbid that we should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge, and preclude the light of knowledge, which has reached every other quarter of our globe, from having access to her coasts!

(*A Treasury of The World's Great Speeches*, pg. 226-227)

One of the things that Pitt is doing in this passage is arguing by analogy that since the British, despite their unpromising origins, were able to achieve civilisation, the negro slaves should also be able to do this eventually. But in addition Pitt is trying to get his audience to draw certain ethical conclusions: he is making his hearers aware that they already hold certain values about how people ought to be treated; his aim in using the example of Britain under the Roman Empire is to make them feel indignation at the idea of their being denied the chance of civilisation. As a result, they become aware of the fact that they already think that is a bad thing to deny this chance to people, and will hopefully act to prevent the continual denial of this opportunity to the slaves.

On my view of this example, then, Pitt is not introducing new considerations into the debate, but is instead trying to make people grasp the power of an existing argument. An alternative view, which eliminates the role of rhetoric in this argument, is that Pitt is trying by means of his example to make his hearers accept new beliefs about how people ought to be treated. By giving an example in which they find themselves inclined to judge that a particular case of hindering civilisation is wrong, it would be claimed, they come to accept the claim that to deny the chance of civilisation to others is wrong in all cases by applying the universalisability constraint to their judgments.

This interpretation of the passage, however, is unconvincing. It is unlikely that the hearers would have dissented from the claim that hindering civilisation is wrong if asked for their opinion, even before Pitt started to speak. So those who are persuaded by Pitt are not persuaded because they have adopted new moral beliefs, but instead by being induced to apply their existing beliefs to new cases.

So the speech should be viewed in the way that I recommended above rather than construed as non-rhetorical. Pitt does not provide new premises, then, but rather makes people aware that they already accept certain premises. By presenting an example to which a strong moral response is likely, he succeeds in making his hearers believe that hindering civilisation is wrong not as a mere abstraction to which they give habitual assent, but as an

important moral precept, which must be followed as a matter of urgency. They come to see one case (the case of the slaves) in the light of another case (the case of Britain under the Roman Empire) and as a result are much more likely to strive for the liberation of slaves.

As we have seen, then, the speaker by using such rhetorical devices as vivid examples, analogy, metaphor and irony, can present ideas in such a way as to make the audience see the force of the considerations given. In order to do this, though, the speaker must guard against prejudice, which may prevent the hearers from really appreciating the arguments in favour of his or her point of view. Another example from the debate over the abolition of slavery can be employed here.

Many Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century were so prejudiced against the anti-slavery movement that they were unable even to take general arguments for the abolition of slavery seriously, let alone campaign for the cause. The success of a novel such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in influencing the debate about slavery was partly a result of the fact that it was able to circumvent prejudice against slaves by presenting readers with a concrete example of the kind of injustice which could be caused by the institution of slavery. The readers, identifying strongly with the slaves and their struggles as depicted in the novel, would be much more likely to take the anti-slavery movement seriously. Here, then, the use of examples has another role in rhetoric: examples can be used to circumvent general prejudices by

awakening a concern with a particular case of injustice, a case which may influence people even though, according to the ethical principles that they hold, no injustice is being done.

Wilberforce deals with prejudice in another way, by bringing the audience to see that it exists by citing an extreme example. He quotes a slave trader, who, he claims, is so influenced by prejudice that he is unable to see the fact that the conditions of the slaves on ship are intolerable:

the situation of the slaves has been described by Mr. Norris, one of the Liverpool delegates, in a manner which I am sure will convince the House how interest can draw a veil over the eyes so thick that total blindness could do no more...“Their apartments,” says Mr. Norris, are fitted up as much for their advantage as circumstances will admit. They have several meals a day; some of their own country provisions, with the best sauces of African cookery; and by the way of variety, another meal of pulse, etc. according to European taste...their apartment are perfumed with frankincense and lime juice. Before dinner they are amused after the manner of their country. The song and dance are promoted,” and, as if the whole were really a scene of pleasure and dissipation, it is added that games of chance are furnished.

(ibid., pg 214-215)

Wilberforce goes on to show the falsity and distortion involved in all of these claims. As a result, he at the same time makes his audience more aware of the possibility of prejudice, and more on guard against it. While their own rationalisations of slavery are unlikely to be as extreme as those of the slave trader,

their consciousness of the risk of being influenced by prejudice is likely to make them more wary of defending the slave trade.

Finally, as well as achieving the goals that I have previously discussed (getting the audience to pay attention to, understand and see the strength of their arguments), speakers should try to get people to absorb the full impact of some existing argument. Sometimes, despite the fact that people recognise the intellectual force of some argument, they fail to change their degree of assent as a result. Beliefs tend to suffer from a kind of inertia; more is needed for belief change than simply a sound argument in favour of a new belief.

Social psychologists, who have done experiments on subjects who are given misleading information about themselves for the purpose of the experiments, have found that people often continue to hold beliefs they acquired as a result of being told this “information”, even when they have been told that they have been lied to. People who have supposedly been given aptitude tests, for example, having been told that they either had or didn’t have certain abilities, tend to continue to believe what they have been told even after it had been revealed to them that the test was a fake.

Beliefs, then, can be highly resistant to revision. Given this fact, it will in many cases to do more than simply show people that their beliefs are ill-founded in order to get them to revise them. The psychologists have developed a technique of what they call

“debriefing” which is aimed at doing just this, although often despite the use of this technique the false beliefs tend to persist¹¹.

In the case of ethical belief, and especially in the case of ethical action, this is especially the case. Not only are there the usual problems that people tend to persist in holding their current beliefs or in acting as they have done in the past (i.e. they retain their old habits despite good reasons being given to change them) but also logical problems concerned with the nature of ethical belief and action. As I will try to show in the next chapter there is a close relation between having ethical beliefs and acting on them and having pro-attitudes towards those actions. I will argue that speakers can by arousing appropriate emotions thereby create pro-attitudes which promote assent on ethical issues.

At the moment I will deal with problems of gaining assent which are not specific to ethical arguments. I will give a few examples showing how rhetoric can be used to get hearers to respond to rhetoric.

Russell tries to deal with the problem of changing people's beliefs by a sudden twist in a familiar argument that most people would probably accept as correct but would see no need to apply to their own lives:

Organisations are of two kinds, those which aim at getting things done and those which aim at preventing things from being done. The Post Office is

¹¹ See chapter 13 of Crane and Brewer's book *Principles of Research in Social Psychology* for a discussion of debriefing.

an example of the first kind; a fire brigade is an example of the second. Neither of these arouses much controversy, because no one objects to letters being carried, and incendiaries dare not avow a desire to see buildings burn down. But when what is to be prevented is something done by human beings, not by nature, the matter is otherwise. The armed forces of one's own nation exist - so each nation asserts - to PREVENT aggression by other nations. But the armed forces of other nations exist - or so many people believe - to PROMOTE aggression. If you say anything against the armed forces of your own country, you are a traitor, wishing to see your fatherland ground under the heel of a brutal conqueror. If, on the other hand, you defend a potential enemy state for thinking armed forces necessary to its safety, you malign your own country, whose unalterable devotion to peace only perverse malice can lead you to question. I heard all this said about Germany by a thoroughly virtuous German lady in 1936, in the course of a panegyric about Hitler

(*Bertrand Russell's Best*, pg. 115).

By suddenly introducing a new element into a familiar picture, the story about the German lady, Russell unsettles us. He makes us realise how those who we think of as thoroughly different actually hold very similar beliefs to the ones we do. Since we think of *their* beliefs as thoroughly erroneous, this realisation will tend to overturn our own beliefs.

Byron, on the other hand, urges his hearers, the members of the House of Lords, not so much to a change of belief as to a commitment to act. By reminding them of a case in which they had previously acted, he makes it easier to act in a similar way now:

When the Portuguese suffered under the retreat of the French, every arm was stretched out, every hand was opened - from the rich man's largesse to the widow's mite, all was bestowed to enable them to rebuild their villages and replenish their granaries. And at this moment, when thousands of misguided but most unfortunate fellow countrymen are struggling with the extremes of hardship and hunger, as your charity began abroad, it should end at home.
(ibid., pg 322).

We have now looked at a variety of different uses of rhetoric. I will summarise these below:

- 1) Getting the audience to pay close attention, by:
 - i) alerting hearers to the importance of what is being discussed.
 - ii) vividness of presentation.
- 2) Exposition of Argument, by:
 - a) Simple exposition, using:
 - i) Metaphor, and,
 - ii) Simile.
 - b) Overcoming of prejudices to enable people to grasp what the argument is.
- 3) Getting people to see the force of the argument:
 - a) By good presentation through:

- i) Examples,
- ii) Metaphor,
- iii) Simile,
- iv) Irony.

b) Making people aware of what they already accept.

4) Securing change in degree of assent.

Rhetoric and Rationality

Having discussed the various uses of rhetoric in argument, let us now consider what conclusions can be drawn from them about the relation between rhetoric and rationality. There are a number of issues worth discussing here.

Firstly, can we regard those who assent as a result of the presence of rhetoric in a passage as assenting rationally, at least in some cases? If we can, how can we distinguish cases in which rhetoric is appropriately employed for the purpose of achieving rational assent from those in which it is not? Finally, can we go further and claim that rhetoric itself can be in any sense rational?

In the examples we looked at, the fact that rhetoric was employed did not prevent assent from being rational. The effect of the various devices was to allow people to grasp the argument

presented, and to assent to it rationally. The devices were not designed to short-circuit the reasoning process so that assent was given on insufficient grounds. Looking at the examples, we can claim that if people assented it was likely that they did so rationally on grounds of psychological plausibility.

Of course, it may be that these device would cause some individuals to assent irrationally. For example, someone might be powerfully affected by a particular example due to the strong emotional associations connected with it, and might as a result assent irrationally; a person who had an irrational fear of blood might be induced to agree that war was unjust because the speaker described blood being shed. Unexpected irrational assent, however, can happen in non-rhetorical contexts as well. Some people are particularly disposed to accept certain types of argument, leading them to assent even when it is inappropriate to do so. In his book *Emile Durkheim, His Life and Work*, Steven Lukes claims that Durkheim was particularly fond of argument by elimination, despite its weakness. In this form of argument one sets out a number of alternative possibilities and proceeds to show that all but one of these possibilities is ruled out by the evidence and therefore that the only one that has not been ruled out is the case. This form of argument is weak because it is often difficult to discover all the possible ways things could be. So the fact that unexpected irrational assent is possible in response to rhetoric does not show that rhetoric cannot promote rational assent;

unexpected irrational assent can occur even in non-rhetorical contexts.

When the speaker is not aiming for rational assent, but only for assent of whatever type, then, of course, rhetorical devices can often be exploited in order to obtain unwarranted assent. What, then, differentiates cases in which the use of rhetoric has rational legitimacy from those in which it does not?

Given the large range of different rhetorical devices that are available, it is impossible in this thesis to give an adequate account of what the canons which apply to each type of device are. But we can spend some time considering what canons apply to the use of examples, in an attempt to bring out more fully the force of an argument.

A good example will be one in which the principles underlying the more abstract skeleton argument can be seen. Suppose that a speaker is complaining of the hardships faced by immigrants to the country. He could proceed by speaking in general terms of the various problems which people face. On the other hand, he could take a particular case and discuss that in some detail. In the course of this the different problems would be dealt with in a way which made it easier to see their importance and so to grasp the force of the argument that these problems are so great that something ought to be done about them.

In order for the example to be an acceptable one several conditions must be met. First of all, the example must be a relevant one; it must actually be drawn from the group in question

or from a group suffering under similar burdens. Secondly, it must be representative; a case in which some person faced problems of a kind completely different to those faced by the normal member of the group would not count as a good example if the intention was to use it in an argument about the problems generally faced by the group. This does not mean, however, that the case has to be typical; the use of extreme cases can be used to bring out problems and is legitimate provided that hearers are aware that they are extreme cases.

Another condition has to do with the character of the hearers rather than with the formal properties of the argument. It is designed to ensure that the hearers do not regard an argument as strong for the wrong reasons.

This condition is that the example must have the influence it does on people's degree of assent based on the reasons used in the skeleton argument; i.e., the personal attractiveness of the individuals used in the argument should not influence the degree of assent of someone except inasmuch as it makes people pay more attention to the plight of immigrants and so enables them to come to a better understanding of their problems and of the need for change (there could be some cases in which this condition does not apply, e.g. in cases in which the hearers have false beliefs about immigrants or in which they do not like them). For this condition to be fulfilled it is clear that the hearers must have some reasoning capacities. They must be capable in normal cases of telling the difference between a good argument and a bad one. Provided that

this is the case then as long as the speaker takes care to avoid an irrational response (in effect trying to avoid the use of the sort of devices which those who do aim at irrational assent employ) then rational rather than irrational assent is likely. There is no way of completely avoiding the risk of irrational response on the part of the audience; the careful rhetorician can reduce the risk considerably, however. But what is important to recognise is that provided the audience has the capacity to recognise some reasons as good, then there will be some cases in which rational assent in response to rhetoric takes place. This is all I need to show; I do not wish to claim that irrational assent never takes place.

The point of my third question, about whether rhetoric is truly rational, is as follows. One may achieve rational assent by means that work in a way which is clearly non-rational. For example, one lecturer in medicine at Cambridge University used to give his students a break in the middle of his lectures by showing them his holiday snaps. Other lecturers use similar types of techniques; they tell jokes, or walk around waving their arms, and so on. Other factors, such as the temperature of the room or the quality of the seats, could also affect people's concentration and thereby their ability to respond appropriately to the arguments that they are being offered. The fact that the students became better able to concentrate on the arguments which they were hearing as a result of such factors would not render their assent non-rational or irrational; instead, we would say that they had become better able to grasp the lecturer's argument because the

impediments to doing so had been removed, and as a result they were more capable of rational assent. So by giving students some light relief or by altering the physical conditions of the lecture room, a lecturer could increase the proportion of students who rationally assented to his arguments. However, there is no sense in which the alteration could be regarded as appealing to the rationality of the students; they merely affected the physical and psychological conditions in which they operated.

It might be suggested that the effect of rhetoric, as I described it, is analogous to the showing of photographs by the medical lecturer. According to this view, rhetoric may be perfectly compatible with rational assent, and even make such assent more likely, but nonetheless has nothing to does not appeal to the rationality of the hearers.

If this view is correct, then I have shown little. I have succeeded in showing that rhetoric is not incompatible with rational assent, contrary to the arguments of the opponents of rhetoric, but I have not differentiated its role from that of a hand clap, designed to wake up sleepy listeners.

However, the examples that I have given so far will allow me to demonstrate that rhetoric has a closer connection to rationality than the above argument would suggest.

Firstly, I showed how rhetoricians got the attention of their audiences. In these cases, what Dickens and Russell did was different from simply making a noise to draw attention. What they

did was to give the audience reasons, not to accept what they said, but rather to take their discussion seriously.

Dickens, by using his child angels, gives his readers reason to be interested in the plight of the poor. They might have thought that most of the poor deserved their fate or that they were largely untouched by it; in the case of the sensitive and innocent creatures that Dickens describes, it is impossible to think this, and so the barriers to a concern about the poverty of at least *these* individuals is broken. Later, Dickens can increase our sympathy towards other, less attractive paupers, and as a result to see poverty as a serious problem which ought to be tackled.

Russell, by starting his discussion with the examples that he does, which are some of the cruelest acts performed by people, implies that what he will talk about will be of great moral importance. He thereby gives his readers reason to take what he has to say very seriously.

In the other examples of rhetoric that we looked at, the rationality of the hearers comes into play in a different way. In these cases, instead of being given reasons to attend, the hearers are presented with a different way of looking at things to those that they have previously used. From this new point of view, things become clear that would otherwise have remained obscure. So what the hearer is doing in responding to a piece of rhetoric is taking up a position from which it is easier to discover certain facts.

Irony, for instance, involves looking at a position in a different light, with an eye to its ridiculous qualities. Examples involve looking at those general properties which are exemplified in an individual case. Metaphor and simile involve attending to particular features of the situation, namely those features that are related to the thing to which comparison is made. New features of a situation thus become salient to the hearers

The various rhetorical devices, then, get us to grasp an argument by taking a new angle on it. This way of improving people's grasp of some argument is often used in non-rhetorical contexts. Frequently, someone is able to explain something that we have previously not been able to understand by presenting it in a different way. In order to understand this way of looking at things and so to see the truth of what is being shown, we need to exercise our reason. Since, as I have claimed, rhetoric works by getting people to look at things in new ways, we need to exercise our reason when we respond to various rhetorical devices too. Thus rhetoric is rational in a way that hand clapping to attract attention is not. Whereas no exercise of reason is necessary to respond to the hand clapping, reason *is* needed in order to respond to rhetoric. So rhetoric is rational in that it secures rational assent on the part of hearers through the reason of the hearers.

Procedures designed to gain rational assent to an argument might seem unnecessary for rational discourse. In a sense, they are. The ideally rational beings of *some* philosophical theories would not need an argument to be well presented in order to

understand it and to respond appropriately to it. Such beings would be able to grasp an argument and its force, and to adjust their degree of assent according to the weight of the reasons presented, without having to be brought to do so by skilled speech making.

But of course we are not such beings; what might be appropriate procedures for them are not appropriate for us. So we should not reject the use of rhetoric to convey reasons merely because, to the ideally rational beings of certain philosophical theories, it is unnecessary.

Rhetoric, then, can promote rational assent by enabling hearers to grasp arguments better. In chapter 5 I will try to show that it can promote rational assent in another, more surprising way; by giving reasons for assent. But first I will develop the tools that I will need for that purpose.

Chapter 4

Universalisability in Ethics

We have seen that rhetoric can help in conveying reasons to an audience. In this chapter I will provide some tools which will be used in the next chapter, where I try to demonstrate the stronger conclusion that rhetoric can itself give reasons for assent. My argument there will start from the claim that rhetoric can enable us to know what other people's experience is like and what things are like. What I will do in this chapter is to show that there is a logical property of ethical judgments, universalisability, on account of which knowing what people's experience is like and what things are like can be shown to be relevant to ethical judgment. Once I have done this I will then be able to show in the next chapter that since rhetoric provides such knowledge it is relevant to moral reasoning.

R.M. Hare first introduced the principle of universalisability into ethics (although similar notions long preceded his work) and showed its relevance to knowing what the experience of other people is like. I will therefore spend some time discussing his theory in order to explain what role these two notions play in ethics. The stage will then be set for employing these notions later in the thesis.

While I will make use of some of Hare's insights, I do not think that the acceptance of my account of reason in rhetoric

requires that one adopt Hare's overall theory of ethics. As I will try to show briefly later on in this chapter, the views that I am taking over from Hare fit in well with a whole range of alternative views about the nature of ethics. The most distinctive aspects of Hare's ethical theory, his claims that moral judgments are prescriptive and that they override other "ought" judgments, will not be discussed in this thesis since their truth or falsity has no bearing on what I will argue. Hare's value for my purposes is simply that he provides valuable discussions of some important aspects of ethics.

Universalisability

The idea that moral judgments are universalisable is far from new. It has a close affinity with the so-called Golden Rule, which requires that people do to others what they would desire others to do to them. Something like universalisability is employed in Kantian ethics, also; two of Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative are "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" and "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature".

What Hare has done is to come up with a formulation of the principle of universalisability which has considerable force but which he has nonetheless argued to be required as a matter of

logic. Instead of being expressive of a certain ethical outlook, as the Golden Rule and perhaps Kant's formulation seem to be, the principle of universalisability is a logical principle and is therefore binding on all moral reasoners regardless of their ethical beliefs.

Hare's formulates the principle of universalisability as follows: the principle requires that if someone accepts a moral judgment about a particular situation, then he or she must also accept the same judgment when applied to a situation which is identical in all relevant respects. So, if I judge that A should do X in situation S, then I am committed to doing X in conditions in which my situation is similar in all relevant respects to that of A; i.e. when all relevant features of the two situations are identical. I am also committed to the claim that anyone else, e.g. B, ought to do X if B is in relevantly similar circumstances to those of A in S. As I have said above, the commitment in question is not moral commitment, but logical commitment; I would be engaging in self-contradiction if I claimed that different judgments should be made in two cases which I acknowledged to be identical in all relevant respects.

Why should one accept the view that moral judgments are universalisable? Hare's view is that universalisability follows from a consideration of the nature of judgment in general. If I judge that proposition P holds of a particular situation, S, then I commit myself to acceptance of the further claim that there are some features about S that make P true. But then I am also committed to a further claim, that if there is another situation S', in which the

same features obtain, and no other features obtain which are relevant to the truth of P, then P must be true in S' also.

The thesis about the universalisability of moral judgments follows from an application of this line of reasoning to a particular class of judgments, namely moral judgments.

If I say on a particular occasion that a certain individual, A, ought to do action X, then I must accept a further claim, namely that there are some features of the situation that A is in which make it morally correct for A to do X. In other words, I must accept that there are some features of the situation S, F_1, F_2, \dots, F_n , say, such that by virtue of these features the action in question is right. We should note here that the acceptance of the existence of these features in no ways commits me to claiming to know what they are, let alone being able to say what they are, even to myself.

Now suppose that some other individual B is in a situation S' which has all the features F_1, F_2, \dots, F_n . Then there are two possibilities; either these are the only features of the situation relevant to deciding what B ought to do, or there are further relevant features. In the first case, I must endorse the claim that B ought to do X; if in S the features F_1, F_2, \dots, F_n required A to do X, then if these are the only relevant features in S', they require X of B as well. Only in the second case am I logically permitted to judge differently about the two situations.

Universalisability, Knowing What the Experience of Others
is Like, and Knowing What Things are Like

So if someone makes a moral judgment, then he or she is committed to accepting the same moral judgments in situations which are deemed relevantly similar.

In particular, anyone who makes a moral judgment must be prepared to accept the same judgment about relevantly similar situations, no matter what position he or she is in. For example if a Nazi makes a judgment about Jews, to use one of Hare's most famous examples, he must be prepared to accept that, if he were a Jew, the same judgment would apply in similar situations.

Hare considers the case of a Nazi who thinks that the Jews ought to be exterminated. The Nazi, as a result of holding such a view, is then committed to the claim that there are certain features which Jews have which make it obligatory to exterminate them. The Nazi must claim that:

anyone having the characteristics which make him want to exterminate the Jews should likewise be exterminated. And from this it follows that, if he is sincere and clear-headed, he desires that he himself should be exterminated if he were to come to have the characteristics of the Jews.

(*Freedom and Reason*, pg. 172)

The Nazi, then, must, to be consistent, accept that if he were a Jew, he should be exterminated.

This example illustrates that the universalisability principle is really quite powerful. It is unlikely that most Nazis would have been prepared to accept the judgments that they were logically committed to. If they had scrutinised their moral views more carefully they would have been forced to reject them. Of course, as Hare points out, it is always open to the Nazi to continue to hold to the view that all Jews should be exterminated, provided that he is prepared to accept the consequence that if he were a Jew, he should be exterminated. But only the most zealous Nazis would be likely to accept this conclusion. So despite the fact that getting people to universalise does not force them to accept particular moral conclusions, since different individuals can with perfect consistency maintain different views about the morality of the extermination of Jews, doing so often exerts considerable pressure on people's convictions.

As we have seen in the case of the Nazi, thinking up various cases (such as one in which the Nazi comes to have the characteristics of Jews) can be a valuable way of testing our moral judgments. In order to decide whether we want to accept a particular moral judgment, we must consider whether we can really accept the same judgments in relevantly similar situations, actual or imagined. In particular, we can imagine situations in which we occupy a different position from the one which we currently occupy, in which our physical characteristics, our preferences, even our whole personalities may be different, and see whether we can accept the same judgments about a given

situation when we are in a different situation as we can in our present one.

Among the factors which should influence us when we decide whether to continue to accept our current judgments is what our experience would be like in those situations. For if we are not prepared to endure the experience that we would have if someone acted towards us in a certain way, then we should not endorse a judgment that permits or requires a person to act in that way towards someone else.

What exactly knowing what someone else's experience is like involves is difficult to specify; I will make some attempt in chapter 5. At present, I will not discuss this; it suffices for now that we have some intuitive grasp of what knowing what someone else's experience is like, even if we have not yet got a theoretical account of it¹.

Another type of knowledge, knowing what things are like, can be important in that it enables us to know better what it would be like for us to be in a certain situation². For example, if I

¹ One of the problems, for example, is that of false consciousness. In certain circumstances it is reasonable to claim of people that they do not interpret their experience correctly; i.e. that they are suffering from false consciousness. In that case it is difficult to decide what imagining as being in another person's situation involves; can one only bring the knowledge that would be available to one in that situation into play or is it permissible to bring some of one's own knowledge to bear on the situation? I will briefly discuss this in chapter 5.

² But there may be many issues, for example debates about environmental policy, in which the primary question, assuming a non-instrumentalist view of the value of nature, is not about what destruction of the environment would be like for human beings, but what things would be like if some aspect of the natural world were destroyed. So I am not able to give a very complete account of the relevance of knowing what things are like by

know that a district of a city is very unpleasant, then I have some idea of what living in that area will be like for the inhabitants. As another example, experience of war will give me greater insight into what it feels like to be involved in battle. So knowing what things are like is important to moral reasoning in at least one respect; that such knowledge helps us to understand better what it is like to experience these things, and the latter type of knowledge is of great importance in moral reasoning.

Hare's argument that moral judgments are universalisable is an important one, as we have seen, since it allows one to show that knowing what it is like to be a particular individual (and knowing what things are like where this is relevant to the experiences of some individual) in a situation which differs considerably from one's own, is relevant to moral reasoning for all moral reasoners. Hare himself explicitly draws attention to this consequence of universalisability in chapter 11 of *Freedom and Reason*, in which he shows how his theory can be applied to moral reasoning. One of the grounds which he regards as relevant to discussion of whether or not different racial groups should be treated differently is the alleged difference in the experience of different races; if black people really were not made unhappy by being denied self-government, then some arguments against the denial of self-government to black people would be defeated. So knowing what it

relating it to knowledge of what other people's experience is like. I am not sure how to give a better account, however.

is like to be deprived of political power is of great importance in reasoning about the issue of black self-government.

Judging whether or not this is the case may be difficult for those who are not themselves denied political power (as is evident from the statements of those who defended the denial of political power to black people on the grounds that they are happy without it; some of these people were no doubt sincere in their claims). So if one is engaging in ethical argument one must often try to get the audience to understand other people whose experience is very different from their own. In Chapter 5, I will try to show how rhetoric can help a speaker to do this.

Two types of imagined situations are especially important for moral reasoning. Firstly, we could consider situations in which we are in other people's positions but nonetheless retain our current desires. This form of reasoning is frequently used, for example when parents ask their children "How would you have liked it if she had done that to you?".

But this argument may be insufficient to get the desired response on the part of the hearer. The child may reply, "I wouldn't have minded much, so there!" Another method of checking our judgments may be necessary; instead of thinking about cases in which we are in other people's situations with our own desires, we should now consider cases in which we are in other people's situations with *their* desires; by doing this we can to some extent overcome the limitations in insight which our own biases tend to impose on us.

Some Further Comments

So we see that the universalisability principle is not a principle which is in any sense egoistical in character. When we are trying to see whether we can really accept a given moral principle, we are required to adopt other people's point of view, even their own desires. The universalisability principle, while it is compatible with egoism, does not give any reason to adopt it.

It is not necessary for one to accept some principle of benevolence for the experience of others to be relevant to moral reasoning, since, as I showed before, it is a logical principle, the principle of universalisability, which requires that one should accept the same moral judgments in relevantly similar situations regardless of what position one is in. So my claim that rhetoric can give reasons for assent through its ability to convey what a situation is or would be like for someone does not require that one accept some particular moral principles but instead depends on what I claim to be a logical feature of moral judgments.

Since it is a logical rather than a moral thesis which implicitly underlies our moral thinking it is not surprising that many current ethical theories incorporate something like universalisability³. I will illustrate this by briefly discussing John Rawls' views about moral thinking.

³ Although perhaps not with the views of moral philosophers such as Annette Baier, who argue that the heavy emphasis placed on the derivation of moral principles by philosophers is misplaced. In chapter 5 I will try to show that despite the opposition of these theorists to universal principles,

Rawls, in his book *A Theory of Justice* proposes what he calls the method of reflective equilibrium as at least part of one method of arriving at good ethical judgments and ethical principles. In this method, one starts off with a set of one's own considered judgments about certain particular moral situations. One then attempts to produce principles from which one's considered judgments can be derived. It is likely that this attempt will not prove completely successful; probably, some of the considered judgments will be in conflict with the judgments required by the proposed moral principles. In this case, one is faced with a choice between changing one's considered judgments and modifying or abandoning the proposed principles. Eventually, by carrying out this process for several steps, one should reach a point at which the principles and the judgments are compatible with each other, the stage which Rawls calls "reflective equilibrium".

As a result of applying the method of reflective equilibrium one's judgments must of necessity conform to the principle of universalisability. This is the case because the end product of reflective equilibrium is a set of moral principles and a set of moral judgments which conform to those principles. The principles specify a set of relevance conditions for moral judgments, and since the judgments conform to the principles, the individual will

the conclusions that I am drawing about the role of rhetoric in moral reasoning apply even if one accepts such views about the nature of ethical thinking.

make the same judgments in all relevant situations, so conforming to the universalisability criterion.

As I showed above, the importance of knowing what other people's experience is like for moral judgments follows from universalisability, so, given that the product of reflective equilibrium must conform to the principle of universalisability, knowing what other people's experience is like turns out to be important for reflective equilibrium as well as on Hare's story of moral thinking.

Finally, I will briefly discuss Hare's distinction between level 1 and level 2 reasoning, which will be of some importance later in the thesis. Hare distinguishes between the intuitive level of moral thinking at which we normally operate and the more reflective, "critical" level of moral thinking, which tries to develop a consistent and rationally grounded account of our moral duties (in *Moral Thinking* he also introduces an additional level, level 3, the metaethical level, which embraces the discussion of "the meanings of the moral words and the logic of moral reasoning" (*Moral Thinking*, pg. 26). In our everyday moral thinking we often seem to have conflicting duties; our moral rules requires us to do two incompatible things. Hare gives an example in which he has made a promise to his children that he will take them for a picnic, but is suddenly faced with the arrival of a lifelong friend from Australia, who can only stay in Oxford for an afternoon and who wishes to be taken round the colleges with his wife. Our normal moral rules of thumb do not allow us to cope with such problems; they assign us

two conflicting duties; in this case, Hare would have a duty both to take his children on their picnic and to take his friend on a tour of Oxford. The conflict can only be resolved at level 2, where a weighing of the obligations can take place. Hare wants to make a "complete separation" between the two levels. While I do not propose to discuss whether or not such a separation is justified, there is clearly at least a rough distinction that can be made between the two forms of reasoning. This can be used to formulate a possible objection to rhetoric; that it can only work on level 1 and not at level 2. I will later try to show that this claim is false.

Conclusion

As we have seen, both universalisability and knowing what people's experience is like are of great importance in Hare's theory of ethics. Indeed, at the end of *Freedom and Reason*, Hare takes the view that the ability to exercise one's imagination to understand the experience of others and the willingness to universalise are central to the success of moral reasoning and its influence on people's actions:

...no doubt there are some white South Africans (a few) who will be quite unmoved by being told that they are causing the Bantu to suffer. It seems that I am required to say what has gone wrong in such cases.

A number of different things may have gone wrong. The commonest is what we call insensitivity or lack

of imagination. The bear-baiter does not really imagine what it is like to be a bear. If he did, he would think and act differently. Another way of putting this is to say that these people are not paying attention to the relevant similarities between themselves and their victims...

It is also possible that, though fully aware of what they are doing to their victims, they are not reasoning morally about it. That is to say, they are not asking themselves whether they can universalise their prescriptions; though they may make play with the moral *words* that they use, they are not, in their own thinking, using these words according to the logical rules which are implicit in their meaning.

(*Freedom and Reason*, pg. 223-224)

I will accept and employ Hare's insights on moral reasoning during the rest of the thesis. I only wish to disagree with, or perhaps merely to amplify upon, his account of the role of knowing what the experience of others is like in moral reasoning, which I shall discuss later. Hare, in his various examples of imagination in morals, deals with such cases as the suffering of slaves or of tortured animals. These examples only illustrate what might be called the affective aspect of experience; that aspect which concerns how it feels to be some individual. As I will try to show later, knowing what other people's experience is like can and should extend to other aspects of experience; one should be concerned not just with how it feels to be a particular person in a given situation, but also with what it is like to think in the way that person does, and with what their motivational structure is like.

We should also note that the fact that the relevance of knowing what things are like for someone else to moral reasoning has been shown by looking at what is involved in imagining various moral "test cases", this does not mean that moral argumentation has to proceed by explicitly requesting that the hearers imagine themselves into the experience of others. In most cases, indeed, the speaker will make no such request; the experience of others is described and it is left to the hearer to draw the requisite moral conclusions.

Chapter 5

How Rhetoric Can Give Reasons for Assent

Introduction

One of the arguments against rhetoric that I gave in chapter 2 made two assumptions. The first was that rhetoric could only promote rational assent by giving reasons. Accordingly, I tried to show in chapter 3 that rhetoric can promote rational assent *without* giving reasons, by enabling hearers to gain a better grasp of the argument. The second assumption made in the argument against rhetoric was that rhetoric could not give reasons for assent. In this chapter I want to show how, in some cases, rhetoric *can* give reasons for assent.

By rhetoric giving reasons, I mean this. As a result of the presence of rhetoric in a passage, there are some reasons for change in assent. In some cases the reasons provided by rhetoric will be necessary for assent. If rhetoric sets out reasons, as I discussed in chapter 3, then it only makes it easier for hearers to grasp the reasons; the reasons are not there because of the rhetoric.

When first formulating this definition of what it means for rhetoric to give reasons I considered adding to the requirement that some reasons resulted from rhetoric the qualification that the reasons would not otherwise have been present. I rejected this on two grounds. First of all, the clause seems somewhat superfluous;

how could reasons have resulted from the presence of the rhetoric if they would have been present even if there was no rhetoric in the passage? Secondly, it is not clear what the “otherwise” could be. It might be suggested that we should take a rewrite of the passage without the rhetoric to represent what the passage would have been like without rhetoric. But it is far from clear that there always is such a rewrite, and if in a given case there is not, then it seems impossible to give any meaning to the phrase “not otherwise present”. So I have decided to do without this clause.

In this chapter I will proceed as follows. I will first give some examples of how rhetoric can be used to give reasons for assent. I will then assemble the building blocks required to show that rhetoric can give reasons for assent. I will first give an account of what knowing what someone else’s experience is like involves. I will then try to show how rhetoric can be used to convey knowledge about other people’s experience to hearers. Finally, I will review and extend the discussion of the last chapter on the relevance of knowing what other people’s experience is like to ethical argument.

I will then be able to show how rhetoric can give reasons. My argument will be that rhetoric can convey knowledge of other people’s experience is like, that, in some cases, facts about the experience of others gives reason for assent and so that rhetoric, being able to convey knowledge about this, can give reasons for assent. I will conclude with some brief remarks about how rhetoric

can give reasons for assent by conveying knowledge of what things are like.

In this chapter I will use the terms “knowledge” and “understanding” as variants of each other. This is partly to suggest that what I am talking about is somewhere between knowledge and understanding.

Some Examples of Rhetoric Giving Reasons

I will start with a few examples which will illustrate some of the different ways in which rhetoric can give reasons. I will not now try to show that rhetoric *does* give reasons in these cases; my argument for this claim will come later in the chapter. At the moment I just want to show that it is plausible to regard them as doing so.

One way in which rhetoric can give reasons for assent, and the one which will be central to this thesis, is by conveying knowledge about what other people’s experience is like. Consider the position of a military commander whose task is to attack an enemy position. He is called upon to decide between two different plans of action which have been developed by his subordinates.

The first plan involves an intensive aerial bombardment on the area held by the enemy, which will undermine most resistance. The commander knows that this will lead to relatively few casualties on his side, due to his army’s control of the air. On the

other hand, it will lead to considerable losses on the enemy side, including the deaths of some civilians trapped in the combat zone. An alternative strategy open to him is to launch a ground attack without bombing the enemy in advance. This will lead his own side to suffer somewhat more casualties but will not involve the complete devastation of the enemy which the first plan envisages.

The commander is concerned to do the right thing, not simply what is most advantageous for his own troops. He has so far reviewed both plans and is inclined to favour the first. How could the advocates of the second plan give him reasons for adopting this plan, despite the higher number of casualties which are expected to result on his side?

A standard answer provided by the philosophical tradition is that they should offer the commander some ethical principles, and either to try to show him that he must (for some reason or other) accept them, or simply to request that he does so. Once they have persuaded the commander to accept these principles, they should then try to show that the acceptance of these principles, together with an acceptance of certain facts about the situation with which he is confronted, logically commits him to regard the second plan of action as the one which morally ought to be followed. On this picture it might seem that there is no scope for rhetoric to give reasons.

There are of course other stories of moral argumentation. What I want to do is to show that even on this view of moral argumentation, which is apparently ill suited to rhetoric, rhetoric

can provide reasons for assent. Rhetoric, then, as well as serving as a means of conveying an argument (as we saw it could in chapter 3) also provides reasons for people to assent. What I maintain is that rhetoric can provide us with good reasons for adopting new beliefs.

How can rhetoric do this? Consider again the way the advocates of the second plan might operate. Instead of presenting an argument based on the claim that the facts entail that he should act in a certain way, given certain moral principles, they could try to awaken the commander's sympathy for the enemy by getting him to imagine what a prolonged air attack would be like; the constant terror, the feeling of helplessness against a powerful and relentless force. The way they could get him to do this is by presenting the plight of the enemy under the first plan in powerful and moving language; in other words, by using rhetoric. The commander might then be moved to select the second plan, in order to avoid the potentially disastrous consequences which the first plan is likely to produce. Rhetoric here provides reasons for belief, since it is the rhetoric of the argument which makes the commander see what the consequences of the first plan will be. Rhetoric directs the imagination of the commander so that he comes to a new understanding of the situation.

How does rhetoric give reasons in this case? What rhetoric does, I claim, is to convey to the commander not the fact that suffering will occur if the first plan is chosen but instead what the suffering is like. Facts about what people's experience is like,

together with certain moral principles that the commander accepts, will give him reasons for changing his plans.

One of the important ways in which rhetoric helps in ethical argumentation, then, I want to suggest, is by helping the audience to understand what it is like to be another conscious being. These facts about what people's experience is like, conveyed by rhetoric, I will argue, give reasons to the commander for changing his views about what ought to be done when, provided that he holds certain ethical beliefs.

It should not, however, be thought that rhetoric's role is limited to providing this type of knowledge alone. So even if my claim that rhetoric can give reasons through conveying an understanding of other people's experience is rejected, there are other ways in which, it may give reasons for assent.

Rhetoric can, for example, enable people to know not what the experience of others is like but instead what things are like, and as a result give them reasons for assent. An advertisement in a newspaper, for example, might say "While you are reading this advertisement, X children will have died of starvation". This is an alternative way of presenting the information that a certain number of children die every year, since one can obtain one figure from the other simply by a change of units. Despite this, the effect of the first version is to get the reader to understand the magnitude of the problem, something which would have been much less likely to result if an annual death rate was given as in the second version. The time required to read an advertisement is

readily grasped, and people realise how short it is. It comes as a shock to realise how many have died in so short a time. Through this way of presenting the figures, then, the reader is able to see the problem as one which demands action.

In this example the reader has not gained any further knowledge of what anyone's experience is like; instead, he or she could be said to have arrived at a better understanding of what things are like.

The fact that rhetoric can enable an audience to grasp what things are like as well as what the experiences of conscious beings are like means that rhetoric can be applied to ethical arguments dealing with our treatment of non-conscious entities as well as of conscious beings. Suppose, for instance, that one was arguing that the rain forests of South America should be much better protected from clearance than they are now. As in our previous example, there are several different ways of doing this. One might say, "Y-thousand acres are being cleared each year". But this would probably make little impression. The numbers involved are too large for people to really comprehend. A more effective approach would involve a transformation of this information into another, more rhetorical form: "Y trees are being cut down for every man, woman and child". Here the members of the audience, seeing the situation in a way which relates to their everyday life, can get a grip on the way things are like, to see more clearly the excess involved in current levels of consumption, which they would not get from the statement of some vast annual figure.

In these cases, a transformation of the way in which information was presented led to a new understanding of what things were like. It is possible in these cases for hearers to make the transformations themselves, rather than relying on the speaker to do this. In other cases, however, this is not possible; the audience is given wholly new facts which they could not have been deduced from what they already knew. Consider Engels' description of housing in Manchester:

The...most disgusting spot of all is one...called Little Ireland. It lies in a fairly deep natural depression on a bend of the river and is completely surrounded by tall factories or high banks and embankments covered with buildings. Here lie two groups of about two hundred cottages, most of which are built on the back to back principle. Some four thousand people, mostly Irish, inhabit this slum. The cottages are very small, old and dirty, while the streets are uneven, partly unpaved, not properly drained and full of ruts. Heaps of refuse, offal and sickening filth are everywhere interspersed with pools of stagnant liquid. The atmosphere is polluted by the stench and is darkened by the thick smoke of a dozen factory chimneys. A horde of ragged women and children swarm about the streets and they are just as dirty as the pigs which wallow happily on the heaps of garbage and the pools of filth. In short, this horrid little slum affords as hateful and repulsive a spectacle as the worst courts to be found on the banks of the Irk. The inhabitants live in dilapidated cottages, the windows of which are broken and patched with oilskin. The doors and the doorposts are broken and rotten. The creatures who inhabit these dwellings and even their dark, wet cellars, and who live confined amidst all this filth and foul air - which

cannot be dissipated because of the surrounding lofty buildings - must surely have sunk to the lowest level of humanity.

(Engels, in *The Portable Victorian Reader*, pg. 66)

Facts about what the housing of the poor in Manchester was like would not have been available to readers who had not visited the parts of the city where the poor lived, and most readers would not have done so. Engels, then, does not transform facts which are already known by the readers to obtain facts which are not known by them; he supplies the hearers with new facts. Engels uses rhetoric, rather than plain description, to convey to this readers the full horror of what he has seen¹.

Rhetoric, then, can help in giving people knowledge of what things are like and by giving it give people reasons to change the way things are. In this chapter, however, I will have considerably more to say about how rhetoric can enable us to know what other people's experience is like than about how it can help us to know what things are like. This is not because I think that the former is more important; in fact from my study of sources of rhetoric, I have reason to believe that examples of the latter tend to predominate. I have chosen to focus on rhetoric's role in conveying facts about what other people's experience is like rather than facts

¹I will not try to show how the rhetoric works, since I am not going to discuss how rhetoric helps one to know what things are like in detail; it seems clear, however, that Engels' rhetorical description gives us a much better idea of what the housing was like than a straightforward, non-rhetorical description.

about what things are like because it is easier to see how the former fit into current ethical theories; as I shall remark later, most theories do not provide a place for the latter, so that many will perhaps wish to deny that they do have relevance to moral thinking; about the former there can be no such contention. In some cases knowledge of what things are like can easily be fitted into my account, since it can be used to discover what the experience of those who encounter those things, is like, but it does not seem as if all examples can be accommodated in this way - imagine, for example, an argument against the use of nuclear weapons which describes the scene after all the human beings in an area have been destroyed. Furthermore this approach makes the relevance of knowing what things are like to moral reasoning depend on that of knowing what other people's experience is like, so I need to prove my contentions for the latter first.

So rhetoric's role is not restricted to providing people with a better understanding of what the experience of others is like; it can also provide knowledge of what things are like. Both forms of knowledge can be conveyed by rhetoric and both give reasons for assent.

Four Types of Knowledge About Other People's Experience

I will divide knowledge about other people's experience into four categories, which I will call knowledge of what it is like to be someone cognitively, perceptually, affectively and conatively. I will look at each in turn, giving examples of their relevance to a particular example of ethical deliberation, the ascription of responsibility to individuals.

One type of knowledge about the experience of others is like that I am distinguishing is knowledge of their affective experience. This sort of knowledge allows one to understand what someone else's emotional experience is like; for example, one can understand why someone else is angry, or tell what is likely to please a person.

Such knowledge is often of importance in ethical cases; for example, a knowledge of how someone is affected by provocation is needed in order to make judgments about his or her responsibility. For example, a man may claim that he murdered his wife in a fit of uncontrollable anger and that therefore he should not be held fully responsible for what he did. Understanding what he felt will allow us to decide if his claim is correct.

Frequently, knowledge about what someone else's affective experience is like is taken to be the only sort of knowledge that one can have about what it is like to be that person (together, perhaps with a knowledge of what someone else's perceptual experience is like; i.e. knowledge of their experience of colour or

sound). Knowing what it is like to be someone else however also includes the other two dimensions which I shall discuss here, knowledge of the cognitive and conative aspects of experience. Facts about these aspects of experience, too, are relevant to ethical reasoning.

If we understand what it is like to be someone cognitively we know such things as what will be difficult, and what will be easy, for that person. We are able to predict how someone is likely to proceed when searching for a solution to a problem, and what sort of ideas could occur to them in the search for a solution. We can tell what will be salient to someone in a given situation, what is likely to be overlooked, and so on.

Such knowledge is typically displayed by the skilled teacher, who must understand the difficulties faced by pupils in order to overcome them. It differs from a purely predictive knowledge, which would allow someone to predict that people would be likely to make errors or fail to understand when faced with various problems without really understanding *why* they were making these mistakes (for example a teacher might have found out through bitter experience that pupils find it difficult to solve problems in algebra, but not realise why these presented special difficulty).

In ethical reasoning, such knowledge will be required, for example, when it is necessary to decide questions of responsibility; whether or not some piece of knowledge would or ought to have been known by someone is often crucial in deciding the

responsibility of that person. If one understands what someone else's cognitive experience is like then one is able to tell whether or not some fact would have been obvious to, or likely to be known by, that person. If it is the case that there was a high chance that an individual knew certain facts, the one should not excuse the person from blame on the grounds of ignorance. The question may come up if, for example, one is trying to decide whether a drunk driver should have known that her drunkenness was affecting her ability to drive. Similarly, knowing what someone else's cognitive experience is like allows one to tell whether it was reasonable to expect a person to know something. If knowledge could have been expected, then ignorance will be blameworthy.

One can also know what someone else's perceptual experience is like. This involves such things as knowing how the world looks to other people, what sensations they are feeling, and so on.

It might be thought that this type of knowledge is contained within knowledge of someone else's cognitive experience. I am not sure whether or not this is the case; I am distinguishing the two because there is reason to think that some aspects of perceptual experience, such as the feeling of pain, or the way that the colour green appears to someone, are not cognitive. They do not perhaps inform us about the world, but are rather the ways in which we apprehend the world. Two individuals who saw green differently from each other could nonetheless apprehend the same facts about the world, it could be argued. So there may be reason to make a

distinction between cognitive and perceptual experience; nothing important to this thesis turns on whether it is right to do this or not, however.

Finally, one can know what it is like to be someone conatively. This allows one to understand the motivational structure of an individual, so that one is able to see which actions will prove attractive or unattractive to someone, as well as which will be difficult or easy to execute.

Conative understanding, also, is of great importance in ethical reasoning. A legal example was the case of Blomly in 1991, tried by a provincial court in British Columbia. In this case, a woman was sexually harassed on a lift. The judge refused to ascribe much blame to the man responsible, Blomly, claiming that any reasonable person would have retaliated or left the lift, rather than remaining on it, as the woman had done. In doing so, critics of his decision argued, he failed to understand the strong social conditioning operating on women, urging submissiveness on them and disapproving of any efforts at acting as an agent in social situations. This conditioning, they claimed, make actions which involve taking an active and non-acquiescent role very difficult for some women. Given the different ways in which people act, one must therefore be careful before making glib judgments about what the reasonable person would have done in cases like this one. So again, knowing what other people's experience is like can be useful in moral reasoning.

While it is useful to separate these four factors for analytical purposes, one must recognise their interdependence. For example, I will not be a good judge of how difficult certain problems will be for people if I do not know what their current emotional experience is like; for example, people may be frightened by mathematics and as a result be unable to grapple even with elementary problems; if I did not realise this I would not be able to understand why they cannot do them. Similarly, the fact that certain actions are difficult for me to perform will make my experience in certain situations much more stressful than it would be if I found the actions easy; if I find it difficult to speak in front of others, I will be nervous before having to do so. In most cases, then, all four types of knowledge will be needed, at least to some degree, if any one type of knowledge is to be adequate.

What rhetoric can do is to enable all four types of understanding to be extended, so that increased knowledge of what it is like to be someone else can be gained. As a result, as I will argue, rhetoric can give us new reasons for assent in ethical argument.

What Knowing What Other People's Experience is Like
Involves

My claim then will be that rhetoric, by conveying facts about what other people's experience is like, can give reasons for assent. But what does knowing what other people's experience is like involve? I will now explore this question. After looking at some discussions drawn from the literature I will give my own account of what knowing what someone else's experience is like involves, an account I will call the two component view (this has no relation whatsoever to the two component characterisation of rhetoric). I will also consider the related question of how one can *come to know* what someone else's experience is like.

These two questions, about what knowing what someone else's experience is like and what coming to know this involves, should be carefully distinguished; an answer to the second, such as that in order to come to know what someone else's experience is like one must imaginatively put oneself in that person's place, does not directly yield an account of what the knowledge that one arrives at consists in. Most writers, who do not make this distinction clearly, often seem to suggest that it does.

Thomas Nagel has provided a useful starting point for investigation. Nagel claims that in order either to know or to come to know (it is not clear which) what someone else's experience is like we need to see things from a particular point of view: "every

subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view", he says.

Nagel suggests that it is only through the exercise of imagination that we get some idea of what the experience of being an organism of a particular type is like. This may well prove to be a difficult task:

Our own experience provides the basic material for our imagination, whose range is therefore limited. It will not help to imagine that one has webbing on one's arms, which enables one to fly around at dusk and dawn catching insects in one's mouth; that one has very poor vision, and perceives the world by a system of high-frequency sound signals; and that one spends the day hanging up by one's feet in an attic. In so far as I can imagine this (which is not very far) it tells me only what it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task. I cannot perform it either by imagining additions to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of additions, subtractions, and modifications.

("What is it Like to be a Bat?", Rosenthal, pg. 423)

Nagel, then, is making two main claims about conscious beings. Firstly, he claims that they have experience. From this premise he draws the conclusion that there is something that it is

like to be a conscious being (in the particular case which he is dealing with, that there is something that it is like to be a bat). So there are facts about the experience of conscious beings. I will take this series of claims for granted, as Nagel does; they are part of our commonsense understanding of what it is to be conscious.

What I want to focus on is his second claim; that we can only know facts about the experience of conscious organisms other than ourselves by being able to take a certain point of view, the point of view of the organism in question. This leads to the conclusion that coming to know what someone else's experience is like involves developing the capacity to adopt the point of view of the person whose experience one wishes to comprehend.

This, of course, is a commonly held view. But it is unclear what putting oneself in another person's point of view would involve. As it stands, the idea of "putting oneself in another person's point of view", though we have some intuitive grasp of what it means, is too undefined a notion to be useful.

One way of putting oneself in another's point of view would be to engage (imaginatively!) in the sort of body swap that is described in the thought experiments of philosophers. John Locke's used the example of a prince whose mind entered the body of a cobbler, whilst the cobbler's mind entered his body (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2, Chapter 27, "Of Ideas of Identity and Diversity"). But, as Locke points out, even if one could engage in a body swap of this kind, doing so would not be sufficient to allow one to know what another person's experience

was like. Instead, the result would simply be that one would take on the other person's physical characteristics while retaining one's own mental characteristics. What one would learn through such a swap would be what it would be like to be oneself with another person's physical characteristics, not what it would be like to be that person. As Nagel points out when discussing the difficulties of trying to grasp what it is like to be a bat, what it is like for me to have certain characteristics is very different from what it is like for some other being to have those characteristics. My experience of hanging upside down all day, for example, might be very different from that of the bat. While I might find it excessively boring, the bat perhaps feels no displeasure at having to stay in the same position for such a long time. In Locke's example, the prince has a very different experience of his new situation than the cobbler used to have before the swap.

So something like an imagined body swap cannot be exactly what is meant by putting myself into someone else's position. How then can we understand this notion?

The problem of an imagined body swap as a method of trying to discover what the experience of some other conscious being was like was that it led us to imagine what it would be like for *us* to have certain *physical* characteristics, whilst our mental characteristics remained unchanged. As a result we were not brought much closer to understanding the experiences of others. In order to avoid this problem, some philosophers have argued that what we ought to do is to imagine what it would be like for us if *all*

our characteristics changed to become identical to those of the person whose experience we are trying to understand.

R.M. Hare, for example, suggests that in order to come to know what someone else's experience is like, I must imagine what it would be like for me to have the experiences that the other person has if I had the same preferences as him or her, as well as his or her relevant physical characteristics; "I am to imagine myself in his position with his preferences" (*Moral Thinking* pg. 94-95). Hare gives an example which seems intended to back up his case:

Now consider our knowledge of what it is like to be *somebody else* who is suffering (e.g. because his neck is being broken). Can I properly be said to know what it is like for him (not just to know that his neck is being broken) unless I myself have an equal aversion to having that done to me, were I in his position with his preferences?...

I emphasise that the imagined situation must be one in which I have *his* preferences. If, by some quirk of nature, I were a person who knew that he did not feel pain in that situation, or if I knew that I was going to become such a person by being anaesthetised, then I might sincerely say that I did not mind being subjected to the experience (ignoring for the sake of argument the consequences). But this would be irrelevant; and so would it be if I knew that I would feel pain, but for some reason did not mind it.

(*Moral Thinking*, pg . 94)

Later, Hare says:

Suppose that I said "Yes I know just how you feel, but I don't mind in the least if someone now does it to me": should I not show that I did not really know, or even believe, that it was like *that* ? Would not my lack of knowledge, or else my insincerity, be exposed if somebody said "All right, if you don't mind, let's try"?

(Moral Thinking pg. 94)

These passages are apparently the only grounding that Hare gives for his claim that coming to know what someone else's experience is like requires one to imagine what it would be like if one was in the same position as that person with the same preferences. I want to suggest that Hare has too narrow a view of how we might come to know what other people's experience is like. One way, for example, in which one can convey the experience of someone else to a third person is by describing the expression of the former to the latter. In this case the hearer does not need to imagine himself or herself into the other person's position in order to understand that person's experience better.

Hare's argument, as I interpret it, is something like this:

- 1) In order for one to know what someone else's experience is like, one must have the same degree of desire or aversion to having the same experiences as

that person, if one were to have the same preferences.

2) But in order for one's desire or aversion to correspond to that of the person that one is trying to understand, one must imagine what it would be like for oneself to be in the same situation as him or her with the same preferences.

So,

In order to come to know what someone else's experience is like one must imagine what it would be like to be in the same situation and with the same preferences as that person.

This is the best construal of Hare's argument that I am able to give. He gives no reason for accepting premise 2) and, furthermore, the premise turns out to be incorrect.

One could, it seems, come to have the same desire or aversion as someone else towards having the same experience as he or she does by the following process. One comes to know what someone else's experience is like. As a result, one comes to know what it would be like if one had that type of experience, if one had

the same preferences. So, due to this knowledge, one then has an equal desire or aversion towards having those experiences as the other person has. To claim that one couldn't possibly come to know what someone else's experience is like without imagining what his or her experience is like would be to beg the question. Since he provides no other backing for premise 2), Hare needs to assume his conclusion for his argument to go through; his argument therefore becomes circular.

One of the ways in which I could come to know what someone else's experience is like without having to imagine myself into a position in which I share the other person's desires is by using analogy; to understand the procrastination by someone else on what seems to me to be a trivial task, I could think about some other trivial task which I tend to put off. Without having to imagine the experience of the other person, I could thereby come to understand of his or her delay.

But I do not even need to go through any process of imagination in order to know what someone else's experience is like; one of the ways of doing this is just to get to know that person. It may be that some degree of imagination is needed to arrive at such understanding, but there is no reason to suppose that any specific imaginative acts are needed.

While it may be true that knowing what it is like to be someone else in a certain situation involves the *capacity* to imagine what it would be like if one were to have the experiences that the other person is having with the same preferences, this does not

entail the claim that in order to *come to know* what someone else's experiences are like one must imagine what it would be like if one were to have those experiences.

So Hare's attempt to characterise what coming to know what someone else's experience is like is unsuccessful. He gives no reason to suppose that coming to know what someone else's experience is like involves imagining what it would be like for me to have the same desires and preferences as that person. And as I have pointed out, there are perfectly plausible ways of coming to understand what it is like to be someone else without imagining what that person's experience is like - through analogy, for example and even without trying to imagine anything at all - through one's acquaintance with the other person².

Hare's view should be distinguished from another view which is, I think, perfectly acceptable. Hare's claim, as we have seen, seems to be that to know what it is like to be someone else I must imagine what it would be like for me to be in that person's situation with the same preferences as him or her. A more sensible claim, I would suggest, is that this is just one of the ways by which I can come to know what other people's experiences are like. But this may not always be the best method for coming to an understanding of the experience of others. It will often be very

² It might be suggested that when one is using analogy one employs it to help in imagining what other people's experience is like; I am not sure how to respond to this suggestion, since I am not sure whether or not it is correct. If it is, then I can simply withdraw this counterexample and rest my case on the example of learning what someone else's experience is like through knowing that person.

difficult for people to imagine themselves into other people's experience; other methods may then be more effective (such as the use of analogy, which does not require the imaginer to depart so far from things which are familiar to him or her).

As well as failing to back up his claims about what is involved in coming to know what someone else's experience is like, Hare increases the confusion by failing to give any account of what is actually involved in knowing what someone else's experience is like, as opposed to coming to know this. If we are not clear about what is involved in knowing something, our account of what is involved in coming to know it is likely to be flawed. Accordingly, I will offer an account of what knowing what it is like to be someone else. I will call it a two component³ view of knowing what it is like to be someone in a certain situation (see also Zeno Vendler's essay "Changing Places", which suggests a similar picture). It is this: A knows what it is like to be B in situation S if and only if:

i) A knows what it is like to have a certain type of experience.

ii) A knows that B has that type of experience.

In order for i) and ii) to be satisfied it is not necessary for A to have had the same experience that B is having; for example, as

³ As I said above, this should not be confused with the two component account of rhetoric.

was mentioned above, analogy can be used in order to understand what the experience of others is like.

The main idea behind the two component view is that there are various ways things could be like for conscious beings which are in no way tied to particular beings. Instead, they are ways things are like for conscious beings with certain properties in certain situations.

Why accept the two component view? I will attempt to demonstrate it, strangely enough, by using an argument similar to the one that I used in when discussing universalisability.

If I have a certain type of experience in a certain situation, then there must be certain features of the situation and certain facts about me that make it the case that I have the sort of experience that I have. But if these features and properties make it the case that *I* have a certain type of experience, then if anyone else has the same, or relevantly similar properties, then that person will also have the same type of experience in similar situations. If the character of my experience differs from that of someone else's experience, the difference between my experience and that of the other person cannot simply be a result of the fact that *I* am having this experience; if there is a difference, it must be due to some difference in my situation or properties. So it seems then that there are certain ways experience is like which are associated with certain properties of persons and features of situations. Accordingly, if one knows what experiences of a certain

type are like, then one can determine that someone has experiences of that type in a certain situation provided that one is able to tell that he or she has the properties needed for having that type of experience in that type of situation.

This account makes it easier to see how I might come to know what someone else's experience is like. If I know what the relevant features of a situation are, I can grasp what it is like by, for example, imagining what it would be like if *I* was in that situation. Once I have done this I am then able to know what it would be like for certain conscious beings in a certain situation; i.e., for beings whose relevant properties (i.e. properties which are likely to have some influence on the ways things are like to a person) are like mine.

Alternatively, I could imagine a similar experience. For example, if I am trying to grasp what the experience of bungee jumping⁴ is like, I may think of what it was like when I rode on a roller coaster.

If, however, the other person's properties differ from mine in relevant respects, then I need to go somewhat further. As well as imagining a given situation, I must also try to imagine that some of my properties have changed (e.g. that I am afraid of water or that I like eating yoghurt). This can often be a difficult task. However, if I can accomplish it then I will know what it is like to be a being having certain properties. If I now know that someone

⁴ I owe this example to Jill Gatfield.

else has relevantly similar properties, then I will be able to tell what his or her experiences are like.

Instead of doing this, I can grasp what the other person's experience is like without imagining my preferences changed but rather by imagining what a relevantly similar situation would be like with my preferences unchanged, the question of which experiences are relevantly similar being decided by the type of question being asked. For example, if I want to understand why someone is so keen on knowing all about baseball, I might try to make an analogy with my own keenness to know a lot about philosophy. In respect of the relevant feature of the situation, namely the interest of someone in some subject matter, the two situations are similar, despite the different areas of interest involved. So I do not necessarily have to imagine myself into the other person's position in order to come to know what that person's experience is like.

In order to come to know what other people's experiences are like, then, I can make use both of experiences similar to those that the other people are having, or, alternatively, of experiences which are in some way analogous. In the first case, past experience gives me knowledge of what experiences are like through memory; in the other case, the experiences I have had provide a resource by which I am able to gain some idea of those which I have not had.

So the two component view shows how it is possible for one to come to know what someone else's experience is like. Note that often I do not need to know exactly what someone else's

experience is like, but only about those features of it that are relevant to moral reasoning. So I need only imagine situations in which the relevant features are the same in order to gain an understanding of other people. For example, if someone else's intense desire for something needs to be taken into account in my reasoning, then if the only relevant aspect of the desire is its strength I need only imagine situations in which I have an intense desire in order to decide what should be done; I do not need to imagine having the particular desire that the other person has.

How Rhetoric Can Help In Coming To Know What The Experience Of Others is Like

So knowing what it is like to be someone else involves the understanding of what certain experiences are like, coupled with the knowledge that the experience of others is like that.

Through the use of various rhetorical devices, as I will show, speakers can enable their hearers to know what it is like to be someone else.

Good examples of rhetorical modes of presentation are to be found in novels. Situations and states of mind are described using all the "embellishments" which attract the suspicion of those who feel that argumentation should be produced in a kind of transparent prose. It is these features, however, which are generally held to produce something seen as being an important

result of the reading of novels; namely, increased understanding of what someone else's experience is like.

Similarly, one would expect that by listening to rhetoric properly so-called (i.e. in addresses to an audience urging them to assent to something) increased understanding of what it is like to be someone else can be gained.

But why should rhetoric be particularly helpful in letting us know what other people's experiences are like?

I will use Ronald de Sousa's account of the emotions to suggest a way of explaining how rhetoric can help us to understand the experience of others.

De Sousa, in his book *The Rationality of the Emotions*, suggests that one of the things that emotions do is to make some features of a situation particularly salient to us.

De Sousa uses this effect of emotions to give an evolutionary explanation of why the emotions exist. Human beings are faced with the so-called Frame Problem; the problem of having more information than one is able to make use of. According to de Sousa, having a particular emotion cuts down the information which will be considered, so that one is no longer faced with an information overload, and can deal effectively with the situations one encounters.

I will not here discuss whether de Sousa's evolutionary hypothesis is correct; but I will employ his insight that one of the things that emotions do is to bring some facts into focus while obscuring others.

Those things which are salient to an individual tend to remain so, unless other features of a situation force themselves into prominence. If one attends particularly to a certain type of information, then one will gather more information of that type, and so it will continue to bulk large in one's consciousness. For example, if I am angry at someone else's rudeness, then the rudeness becomes especially central in my view of things. My focussing on the rudeness will tend to maintain and intensify my anger, since I will continue to find new features of the way in which the other person behaved which were particularly rude; as a result I am likely to become more angry.

But this suggests another possibility; rather than letting the anger make the rudeness salient, I can cause anger by making the rudeness salient. By telling someone how rude another person is being, I can often make him or her angry at this rudeness. De Sousa gives an example drawn from Shakespeare's *Othello* :

Consider how Iago proceeds to make Othello jealous. His task is essentially to direct Othello's attention, to suggest questions, to ask: "Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady / Know of your love?" and then to insinuate that there are inferences to be drawn without specifying them himself, so that Othello exclaims (Act 3, Scene iii, 106- 108):

By heaven, he echoes me
As if there were some monster in his
thought
Too hideous to be shown.

Then more directly Iago advises, "Look to your wife."...

In the example, the emotion is changed via the manipulation of what Othello thinks about, notices, and infers.

(*The Rationality of the Emotions*, pg. 195-196)

I will use the idea that by making certain things salient one can get people to experience things in a particular way, in order to explain how rhetoric can help us to understand what other people's experience is like.

Recall the different aspects of knowing what other people's experience is like: cognitive, perceptual, affective and conative.

As we saw above, understanding people's cognitive experienced involved such things as seeing what sorts of procedures they were likely to follow when thinking. To do this one had to see what features of a situation were salient to the people one was trying to understand.

Knowing what people's affective experience was like meant understanding their emotional experience. As we saw in the discussion of de Sousa, emotions can be generated as a result of certain features of one's experience becoming salient to one. So one could understand other people's emotions if one could learn to see situations in such a way that these features are particularly salient.

Conative understanding involved grasping the another person's motivational structure. When someone has a given motivational structure, certain considerations about possible outcomes appear more pressing than others. So one could come to understand someone else's conative experience better by coming to see how some features of a certain situation could appear particularly salient to that person.

Finally, an important aspect of perceptual experience is picking out certain features of the world rather than others as being especially worthy of attention.

The fact that each of the aspects of knowing what the experience of others is like involves certain features of the world being more salient to one than others suggests a way in which one can get others to understand what certain experiences are like. One must get others to see how certain features of the world, which they currently regard as comparatively unimportant, can be especially salient to other people. But how can one do this? I will try to explain this, using Frank Sibley's account of aesthetic criticism as my starting point.

Sibley discusses how the art critic operates when trying to convince others that a work of art is good. The critic does not appeal to general critical principles, according to Sibley, but instead tries to get others to *see* that it is good. He or she does this by pointing out various features of the painting; i.e., by making these features salient to someone else so that person, regarding

different features of the painting as important, judges differently about the work:

To help understand what the critic does, then, how he supports his judgments and gets his audience to see what he sees, I will attempt a brief description of the methods we use as critics.

1) We may simply mention or point out non-aesthetic features; "Notice these flecks of colour, that dark mass there, those lines."...

2) On the other hand, we often simply mention the very qualities we want people to see. We point to a painting and say, "Notice how nervous and delicate the drawing is" or "See what energy and vitality it has."...

3) Most often, there is a linking of remarks about aesthetic and non-aesthetic features: "Have you noticed this line and that, and the points of bright color here and there...don't they give it vitality, energy?"

4) We do, in addition, often make extensive and helpful use of similes and genuine metaphors: "It's as if there were small points of light burning," "as though he had thrown the paint violently and in anger"...

5) We make use of contrasts, comparisons and reminiscences: "Suppose he had made that a lighter yellow, moved it to the right, how flat it would have been"... "Hasn't it the same serenity, peace and quality of light as those summer evenings in Norfolk?"...

6) Repetition and reiteration often play an important role. When we are in front of a canvas we may come back again and again to the same points,

drawing attention again and again to the same lines and shapes, repeating the same words, "swirling," "balance," luminosity," or the same similes and metaphors, as if time and familiarity, looking harder, listening more carefully, paying closer attention may help...

7) Finally, besides our verbal performances, the rest of our behaviour is important. We accompany our talk with appropriate tones of voice, expression, nods, looks, and gestures. A critic may sometimes do more by the sweep of the arm than by talking. An appropriate gesture may make us see the violence in a painting or the character of a melodic line.

("Aesthetic Concepts" in Margolis, ed. pg.

80-82)

What the rhetorician can do is to point out features of a situation in a similar way to the art critic. As a result, he or she can give the members of the audience access to a different way of looking at the situation; that of the people they are trying to understand.

Sibley's schema can readily be applied to show how rhetoric can be used to make certain features of experience salient. Each of his categories corresponds to a group of rhetorical devices which can be used to get people to understand the experience of others:

1) Mention of features particularly salient in someone else's experience: "Imagine how the loss of their freedom must constantly come to mind".

2) Description of feelings of the individuals: "Their anger is burning within them".

3) Linking of features with the reaction to them: "The loss of their child brings new grief to them".

4) Use of metaphors and similes to illuminate experience. The employment of irony.

5) Use of comparisons and reminiscences. "Remember how we felt when under the iron rod of oppression".

6) Repetition and reiteration, making vivid to the hearers the state of mind of those one is trying to understand by driving certain features into salience.

7) Behaviour; gestures and use of the voice to "express" what one claims the others are feeling (of course, one cannot genuinely express what others are feeling unless one feels it oneself), etc.

My claim, then, is that one of the ways in which rhetoric works is by making certain aspects of a situation particularly salient to the hearer. As a result, the hearer, who normally regards other features of the situation as particularly relevant, comes to see the situation in a different light; a light in which certain responses to what is presented become appropriate. So the hearer now understands what some people's experience of the situation is like; what the experience of those for whom these particular features of the situation are especially salient is like.

While rhetoric's ability to make certain things salient to others plays a very important role in helping them to understand what someone else's experience is like, some features of experience will not be much illuminated by such an approach. These are the inward rather than the outward aspects of experience, what one might call the sensuous aspect of experience, for example a feeling of pain. In order to get hearers to understand what others feel, a different tack is needed.

There are two cases to consider here; firstly, one in which people have experienced the feeling in question, but do not currently fully recall what it was like, or have experienced a milder form of the feeling in question (e.g. a mild pain rather than an excruciating one) and secondly, those who have not felt a feeling of that type at all.

In the first case, what is needed is to make the feeling more vivid to the hearers than it now is.

In the second case, vividness isn't enough; the hearers have simply not had the experience required to understand the experience of the other person. Here, the hearers must be enabled to make connections with the previous experience which they *have* had through the use of analogy and metaphor.

Knowing What People's Experience is Like and Ethical Argument

We have now looked at what knowing what other people's experience is like involves and how rhetoric can convey this knowledge. Facts about what other people's experience is like are highly relevant to ethical argument. As I showed in chapter 4, universalisability yields the conclusion that what it is like for other people is important in moral reasoning, without involving a principle of benevolence.

One way of checking proposed moral principles and judgments or of producing new ones is to imagine alternative situations and to see whether one is prepared to accept the judgments that one is committed to by the principles and judgments that one previously held. In order to make judgments about situations in which I occupy a different position, I need to know what it is like to be a particular individual in a particular situation, as we saw in my discussion of universalisability.

Rhetoric can play several different roles in moral reasoning. Firstly, it can justify certain statements made about someone else's experience, for example, the claim that some act is difficult for that person to perform. By understanding better what it is like to be some person in a particular situation, we can see that performing some actions is difficult for the person involved, although we did not realise that before. Secondly, rhetoric can justify certain ethical premisses; as a result of knowing what someone else's experience

is like, I am given grounds for making certain moral judgments. But as well as allowing new premises to be produced, rhetoric can lead to the abandonment of previously held premises, concerning both what someone else's experience is like and what ethical principles follow from the nature of that experience.

As Nagel's example of the bat shows, it is not sufficient for me to understand what it would be like for *me* to be in some situation; I must rather grasp what the situation is like for the other being. Without access to a particular point of view, we are unable to apprehend what it is like to be some being in a given situation and so are unable to take facts about this into account in making ethical decisions.

Of course, as normal human beings we do have some capacities to take up positions other than our own. If we could not do this then we would be unable to interact at all successfully with other people, for we would be unable to understand their point of view and so what they were going to do or why they behaved in the way that they did.

However, our understanding of what it is like to be other people is often very limited. If we are dealing with people whose experience or culture is different from our own, it can be very difficult to understand what their experience is like. For example, judges often seem unable to understand the people they are trying. As a result, they often make poor judgments about how the defendants are likely to have behaved or about the degree of blame that should be attached to these people's actions. Instances

of misunderstanding have been highlighted especially in cases in which male judges have been involved in judging the reasonableness of the actions of female victims or witnesses. Male judges have recently been much criticised for judgments about cases in which women were accused of murdering their husbands, after suffering years of abuse. Judges have often refused to regard the women as acting with diminished responsibility due to provocation, claiming that the time between the provocation and the crime that was later committed was long enough to allow the women to have "cooled-off". The women were therefore fully responsible for their actions, the judges claimed. Many people have argued against this view, claiming that the judges have failed to understand what it is like to be in the kind of situation involved (for example, that of a woman in an abusive relationship) and so have failed to have a proper understanding of the cases they were trying.

While cases involving women have been especially prominent in recent debate, those involving people from different social or cultural groups can be just as or more difficult for the judges, who often have a somewhat narrow experience of life.

Given the difficulties of understanding, rhetoric's ability to improve our knowledge of other people's experience makes it of great importance in ethical deliberation.

It is not necessary in ethical argument to gain an exact knowledge of what people's experience is like; it is sufficient to understand the relevant aspects of the experience of others. For

example, if I am trying to understand the feelings of injustice felt by some of those who are politically opposed to me, I only need to understand their experience inasmuch as it is necessary to grasp their feeling of injustice. Only those aspects of experience which are pertinent to the point in question need to be grasped, not the totality of experience.

Before we proceed further, we should note that my account of the importance of knowing what other people's experience is like is compatible with a range of views about what good ethical reasoning consists in. As we saw in chapter 4, the views of both Hare and Rawls, two of the most important moral theorists, about moral reasoning claim that it involves imagining other situations that one could be in in order to check whether one could accept the moral judgments about them that one is committed to by one's current moral principles and judgments, and if one cannot, rejecting one's previous moral views. In order to make adequate judgments about such situations, one must know what it would be like to be in those different situations. And in order to know this, one must know what other people's experience is currently like, so that one knows what one's own experience would be like if one was in that situation with that person's preferences.

Indeed it is difficult to see how *any* plausible theory of moral reasoning could regard facts about what people's experience is like as irrelevant to ethical questions. A very important consideration in moral thinking (perhaps the only one) is the effects of our actions on the experiences of others. No moral theory which

ignores this is likely to be acceptable. So, since rhetoric can help us to understand other people's experience all plausible moral theories will have to acknowledge the relevance of rhetoric to moral reasoning.

These remarks apply especially to those moral theories which reject any form of moral reasoning which is based primarily on moral principles (e.g. Annette Baier's views on ethics, see "Theory and Ethical Practices" in Rosenthal and Shehadi). Such theories are often supported by the claim that morality is too complex to be subsumed into a set of principles. Individuals are too different, and the situations that they find themselves in too complex, to allow "tidy codification", as Baier terms it ("Theory and Ethical Practices", pg. 34).

If this is the case, then clearly what one needs to do when thinking morally is to gain greater insight into the complexities of a particular case. So knowing what people's experience of specific situations is like will be of great importance in moral thinking; through this, one is able to gain a better understanding of the particular case.

On the other hand, principles based theories of the kind that Rawls and Hare advocate, allow one to check one's moral views by testing them in imagined situations. So on these views, knowing what people's experience is like must play at least some role, even if not the central role advocated by Rawls and Hare themselves.

So whichever view about moral reasoning is adopted, rhetoric, by conveying knowledge about other people's experience will be relevant to moral reasoning.

Knowing What Other People's Experience is Like: Some Complications

The two component theory shows that there is no essential difference between knowing what things will be like for me, and knowing what they will be like for other people. In both cases, I must grasp what a given experience is like, given certain properties and a certain situation, and know that the individual, either I or some other person, will be in that situation with those properties.

The sole difference between knowledge of what it will be like for me and what it will be like for others is an epistemological one; it is normally easier for me to know what my properties are than it is for others, and furthermore, since I have already had my own experiences, I can more readily grasp what future experiences, being to some extent similar to those I have already experienced, will be like.

It is not always the case, though, that I will be better placed than others to determine what my future experience will be like. Some facts about me will be inaccessible to me, while they are readily apparent to others; others may be able to see that I will

not be able to keep up with a routine of exercise that I have set myself, whilst I continue optimistically to expect success.

In addition, my character may change later in life to such an extent that my experience, too, is radically changed. For example, a young person who is urged to give up smoking on the grounds that the habit is likely to lead eventually to severe health problems may not be too worried; he or she fails to grasp sufficiently what it is like to have these problems and is more willing to take the risks involved than is sensible (of course there are other factors involved here as well, such as the feeling of personal invulnerability and the distance in time of the potential harm; but the feeling that the harm risked is not really all that bad is undoubtedly an important factor).

Knowing what one's own experience is like is also of great importance in ethical deliberation. Only, perhaps, if I am able to see that my current experience is intolerable will I act in order to improve it. We tend to think that we do know what our own experience is like; after all, it is we who are having it. But this is incorrect. I may be unaware of certain features of my experience (for example, that it is intolerable) because I have failed to look at my experience in the right way. Rhetoric can help here because it can make various aspects of my experience particularly salient, leading me to change my attitude towards it and so perhaps to change the way I act. So rhetoric can have a yet wider application, being useful in those circumstances in which an understanding of what my own experiences are like (i.e., the whole range of

prudential as well as moral reasoning) is important for deciding what we should do.

The analysis of how understanding one's own experience better can be relevant to practical reasoning leads to an important conclusion about knowing what the experience of others is like.

Trying to know what another's experience is like may not simply involve trying to produce in my mind a representation of the other's experience which is similar to my grasp of my own experience; instead, if the individual's self-interpretation is judged to be incorrect, it could involve trying to recast it in a form different from that of the experiencer. Just as I could fail to look at my own experience in the right way, so making it necessary for my experience to be interpreted differently in order to be properly understood, so similarly others could misinterpret *their* experience, so that in order to know what their experience is like I must reinterpret it.

This leads to a problem about what knowing what other people's experience is like really involves. In some cases, our perspectives on other people's experience will lead us to judge their own experience differently from the way that they do.

Some will want to argue that people's interpretation of their own experience is essentially mistaken; adhering to an ideology into which they have been indoctrinated, these theorists claim, people fail to look at their experience in its true light. Betty Friedan, in her book *The Feminine Mystique* claimed that this was

the case for women in the early 1960s, when she was writing the book:

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night - she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question - "Is this all?"

(*The Feminine Mystique*, pg. 15)

American women, then, according to Friedan, were suppressing their dissatisfaction with the restricted life that they were leading. In order to understand their experience properly it was necessary, Friedan thought, to reinterpret it so as to reveal the discontent that the women were trying to conceal from themselves. They, perhaps, thought that they were reasonably content, but afflicted with certain frustrations. Friedan, on the other hand, argued that, properly interpreted, their experience was of emptiness.

So understanding what the experience of others is like will not always be as straightforward as has been supposed in much of the philosophical discussion about understanding the experiences of others (for example, Hare does not give any discussion of ideology), and in my discussion up to this point. The question of

whether people are influenced by ideology can often be very important, for example when deciding whether to campaign for the change of the living conditions of some group. The claim that people are happy as they are and do not want change might be a good argument for not promoting change, but this argument would be rebutted if one discovered that they were really misinterpreting their experience due to the influence of ideology, and that their experience, if looked at correctly, was one of resignation and dissociation from any real hope in life.

I will not discuss any further the concept of ideology and its role in the interpretation of the experience of other people⁵. Some recognition of the role of ideology in understanding the experience of others is necessary however in order to avoid adopting oversimplified models of what is involved in knowing what someone else's experience is like.

The Structure of Rhetorical Argument

How exactly does rhetorical argument work, then? On my view, the various facts that are conveyed by the speaker about what other people's experience is like serve as premises for an ethical argument, explicit or implied.

⁵ There is a vast literature on this subject; for a useful survey of the area see David McLellan's book *Ideology* or John Plamenatz's book of the same name.

This helps us to see how rhetoric can give reasons for assent. As premises for an argument, the facts that rhetoric conveys give reason for assent. So rhetoric gives reasons for assent by conveying facts about other people's experience which, together with certain moral premises, entail the conclusions that the speaker is arguing for.

It might be thought that rhetoric cannot give reasons for assent. For rhetoric, on my account, succeeds through its effects on the hearer, getting him or her to grasp what someone else's experience is like. But reason giving, it might be thought, does not depend on contingent effects on the hearer of some utterance; instead, if the speaker has given reasons to assent, he or she has done so regardless of what the effect on the hearers is.

If rhetoric's role is seen as supplying premises for an argument, however, a parallel can be drawn between the use of premises in non-rhetorical argument which shows that it is perfectly admissible for rhetoric to rely on certain effects in order to give reasons. Suppose that I am trying by means of a non-rhetorical argument to convince someone of the claims that I am making. I have not given someone reason to assent if he or she does not know what premises I am using to draw my conclusions. I cannot, for example, give reason to assent to someone who cannot understand a word of English if I formulate my argument in that language, nor if I speak so indistinctly that none can hear me. In order to give reasons for assent, then, I must at least make sure that the hearers know what my premises are. So reason giving is

dependent on my utterances having some effect on my hearers, namely their coming to know what my premises are. Similarly then in the case of rhetoric the fact that some effect on the audience to give reasons for assent does not defeat my claim that rhetoric can give reasons.

The Rationality of Assent in Response to Rhetoric

Under what conditions, then does rhetoric give reasons for assent? In order for there to be reasons for assent, two conditions must be satisfied:

a) The audience must be given grounds for thinking that people's experience is as the speaker has portrayed it.

b) The fact that people's experience is as portrayed gives reason for assent.

The need for the two conditions is fairly obvious. If no grounds are given for thinking that people's experience has a certain character, then there is no reason to accept the claim that it has this character, and so the supposed fact cannot be used in an attempt to derive any conclusions about how we should behave. With regard to the second condition, if the fact that people's experience is as portrayed does not give good reasons for a change

in the degree of assent, then one cannot rationally change one's degree of assent. Furthermore, if the two conditions are satisfied, then rational assent is possible, provided that the audience realises that it has been given good grounds to believe that people's experience is as portrayed and realises that this gives good reason for a change in their degree of assent⁶.

What could give one grounds to accept a speaker's portrayal of someone else's experiences or the way things are like? What one must do is simply to judge whether the description is plausible. Provided that one's judgment is good, there will then be reason to accept the claims. On the other hand if the description is implausible, if for example the speaker has not succeeded in presenting a coherent state of mind, which fits in with the facts about how people behave, there are grounds for rejecting claims made about others people's experience. So speakers' accounts of people's experience can be checked through the exercise of judgment about what people are like.

One's judgment about when the second condition is satisfied will depend on which ethical principles one accepts. Two questions need to be asked; firstly, which experiences are relevant to deciding what should be done? Secondly, how should one weigh up the different experiences against one another in order to decide what to do?

⁶ The rhetorician does not necessarily need to *show* that there are good reasons for assent, if the grounds are sufficiently obvious; in other, more complicated cases, the speaker may have to draw the link for the audience.

In some situations, the experiences of some people will be irrelevant to deciding the question of what should be done. For example, the fact that air force pilots feel disappointed at not being able to use their skills in battle should not be a factor in deciding whether war should be waged, given the vastly more important interests of others who might be involved in the conflict (the great suffering which will be inflicted on those who are subject to bombing, for example)⁷. So assent to the claim that we should wage war which is a result of our understanding of how the disappointed pilots feel is irrational (provided that one accepts certain principles concerning the importance of avoiding suffering). Certain experiences, then, will be ruled out as irrelevant according to the weight that a given ethical system places on certain values (here the value of preventing great suffering as opposed to the gratifying of some people's personal ambitions).

So some considerations about what people's experience is like will be ruled out. Following this, though, one must ask, "How should one weigh up relevant considerations about people's experience?" What is needed is an ethical system which will allow us to decide this.

Utilitarianism is one possible system. Using our understanding of what various possible outcomes will be like for people, we will be able to weigh the various pleasures and pains against each other in order to work out which course will yield the

⁷ This example was suggested to me by John Baker.

greatest happiness, and, according to utilitarianism, we should then pursue that course.

Hare's modified utilitarianism as presented in "Ethical Theory and Utilitarianism" also provides a possible decision procedure for ethics which would help in our current problem. Hare's idea is that we can arrive at correct moral judgments by internalising the preferences of all individuals and then choosing for all of them together.

Contractarian theories are also perhaps able to yield definite results⁸. Through understanding what the experiences of choosers would be like, given various outcomes, we are able to work out what those who are making the initial contract would be likely to choose.

Many theories of ethics, however, do not give us any firm guidance as to how our knowledge of what other people's experience is like should be used to make ethical decisions. This should not however be seen as a problem for my theory of the role of rhetoric in ethics, but rather as one for the ethical theories themselves. They fail to live up to a requirement which they ought to live up to. As I have argued earlier, for an ethical theory to be at all plausible it should give an account of how other people's experience is relevant to moral thinking; if many existing theories fail to live up to this requirement adequately then this is a defect of those theories, not of my own views.

⁸ See for example David Gauthier's book *Morals By Agreement* with its Principle of Minimax Relative Concession.

The question of when rhetoric gives reasons for assent must then be answered partly by appeal to ethical theories, whose validity it is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss. Once an ethical theory is decided on, however, we will have clear guidance as to when rhetoric does give reasons for assent; it does so when the facts it conveys, together with certain moral premises, give the hearers reason to assent to what the speaker is arguing.

It will clearly be possible for a speaker to fulfil the two conditions. If a plausible account of another's experience is given, then the hearers will have reason to accept it. Moreover, it is not difficult to find cases (such as the example of our commander) in which what someone else's experience is like can give good reasons for assent by the hearers. So it *will* be possible to fulfil the two conditions, and so a rational rhetoric is possible.

Possible Objections To The Suggestion That Rhetoric Can Give Reasons for Assent

It might be argued that rhetoric cannot possibly have the value in giving reasons that I have attempted to give to it. My claim rests partly on the idea that rhetoric can enable us to know what the experiences of others is like. But the problem, it could be claimed, is that such knowledge is not available to us at all. Some have taken this to be an implication of Thomas Nagel's well known article "What is it Like to be a Bat?", which I discussed earlier in

the chapter. In this article, Nagel claims that it is impossible, except to a very limited degree, to know what it is like to be a bat. Some might argue that even in the case of human beings our capacity for understanding their experience is highly limited.

Perhaps Nagel is right to argue that we cannot know what it is like to be a bat. But his reason for making this claim is that the experience of a bat is so different from any type of experience that we have had that it is impossible for us to make extrapolations from our experience to that of the bat. If, as we generally are when we are thinking ethically, we are thinking about humans rather than non-human conscious organisms, the gaps between our experience and that of those whose experience we are trying to understand are considerably narrower. We share the same basic anatomical structure as other human beings, so that we are not faced with the task of imagining what it would be like to possess completely different body parts. Our various ways of life, also, are much more similar than the way of life of the bat is to any of our lives, while we share many common experiences with other human beings. While there are still difficulties in understanding what it is like to be someone else, especially if there are considerable differences in experience, these are unlikely to be so grave as to make a fair degree of mutual understanding impossible.

Another objection to the claim that rhetoric can give reasons for assent might stem from the view that rhetoric, while suitable for the rough and ready world of public disputation, is not fitted for the more careful argument required in ethical theorising and so

should not be considered when we are trying to discover what the ideal methods of ethical argumentation are. The examples that I gave in the first section should not mislead readers into supposing that I concur with this view. They were simply designed to provide vivid examples of the use of rhetoric in reasoning, not to be representative of all uses of rhetoric in ethics. I do not wish to suggest that rhetoric is more suited to everyday, intuitive moral reasoning (what Hare calls level 1 moral reasoning; see the previous chapter for a discussion of this and of level 2 reasoning) than to systematic reflection (Hare's Level 2). Rhetoric is in fact particularly suited to level 2 reasoning; while level 1 reasoning generally uses various maxims and intuitions in order to arrive at a conclusion, and so often does not require much use of an understanding of others, level 2 reasoning, with its close adherence to the principle of universalisability, places a heavy reliance on understanding what experience of others is like and what things would be like in order to decide whether one could continue to accept the same judgments in different situations. Indeed, Hare has sometimes claimed that level 2 reasoning required one to internalise all the preferences of other individuals (see his "Ethical Theory and Utilitarianism"); this would really demand a good understanding of other people's experience! Since, as I am trying to argue, one of rhetoric's main characteristics is that it extends people's ability to understand what the experience of others is like and what things are like, rhetoric will be very useful at level 2 as well as at level 1.

Rhetoric and Knowing What Things Are Like

In this section I will briefly discuss how rhetoric can give us an understanding of what things are like.

Recall some of our earlier examples. In the passage I quoted previously, Engels gives us a shocking picture of what slum housing in Manchester was like in the nineteenth century. My claim is that his rhetoric provides reasons for doing something to improve the conditions. The rhetoric informs us of something that we would otherwise not know about unless we had in fact visited the streets of Manchester; namely, what the streets were like. Knowing this can give us reasons for changing our views about the problems of poverty.

So it is fairly straightforward to see that description of the kind that Engels gave can give reasons for assent. But how about the other cases that I discussed, in which by transforming the data one was able to convey better what was being said. Can rhetoric be regarded as giving reasons in these cases as well?

I would argue that it can; by reformulating data one is able to make features of it apparent to hearers that were previously concealed. So one is genuinely giving reasons; new facts are made available which yield new conclusions. Even though these facts could have been discovered by the hearers if they had been sharp enough to grasp them, in actual fact they were not; they had to be pointed out by the speaker.

Few if any current ethical theories give much guidance as to how knowledge about what things are like gives reason for assent. In some cases, one might claim that a knowledge of what things are like tells one what they would look like to the clear sighted individual, and so one might then try to use this fact to yield ethical conclusions. But in most cases, for example if one is thinking about what the destruction of the environment is like, it seems difficult to fit such information into any theory⁹. Nevertheless, my claim is that it is highly plausible that such facts are relevant to moral thinking; the problem is to find a theory which will account for this relevance. It seems plausible, then, that rhetoric can give reasons for assent by conveying a knowledge of what things are like; this provides another way in which rhetoric can give reasons for assent as well as by conveying a knowledge of what other people's experience is like.

⁹ Perhaps an ideal observer theory is an exception.

Chapter 6

Rhetoric and The Emotions

Introduction

In chapter 2 I discussed the objection that rhetoric has a bad effect on the judgment as a result of its power to stir up the emotions. The fact that the emotions were aroused, according to this objection, made it difficult for people to judge well about moral matters.

As I pointed out then, this claim is grossly overstated; it is far from always the case that rhetoric has the powerful effect that its critics claim it always has, the effect of clouding the judgment.

However, some suspicion of rhetoric may still remain. Even if it does not always have the dire effects that the opponents of rhetoric fear, the use of rhetoric still seems to create the danger of arousing emotions in the hearer which confuse their judgment. Only a form of discourse which did not have such powerful emotional effects would be suitable for rational discourse, it might be thought.

In this chapter, I aim to show that this worry about rhetoric is in fact not well grounded. The fact that rhetoric works on the emotions makes it a powerful instrument, but it is an instrument that can be used for the purpose of promoting rather than preventing rational assent, if that is what the speaker desires. Instead of being used to rouse inappropriate emotions, then,

rhetoric can be used to rouse appropriate ones. Alternatively, it can be used to quell emotions which prevent the hearers from even taking the speaker's proposals seriously. Since having the appropriate emotions makes it more likely for the hearers to make good judgments, rhetoric can promote rational assent by rousing appropriate emotions in the audience. Furthermore, rhetoric can arouse appropriate emotions in a rationally appropriate manner.

But what does it mean for emotions to be appropriate? Let us look, for example, at anger. One might become angry with someone else because one is in a bad mood when one sees this person, without him or her doing anything to provoke anger. The mere presence of the other person, and not anything that he or she did, was enough to trigger anger.

Alternatively, one might take offence at something to which one should not have taking offence; some minor insult, for example, might provoke one into a rage.

In both cases the anger felt is inappropriate; in neither case did the actions performed warrant anger. On some occasions, then, people's emotions will not be appropriate to the situation. What the conditions for people having appropriate emotions are is a difficult question, which I do not propose to discuss in detail. I will, however, spend some time looking at a few of the questions that need to be asked in order to answer this larger question.

The first question to be asked is whether "appropriate" is a term which *permits* people to have some emotion, or whether it *requires* that people have some emotion. It does not seem that a

uniform answer can be given to this question. For example we might say of someone else's indignation at being treated rudely that it was appropriate, while recognising that a milder soul would (perfectly reasonably) not have felt indignation. On the other hand, one might say of someone who had achieved a long-standing ambition that, for this person, joy is appropriate, and regard it as unreasonable not to feel joy. So it seems unlikely that a uniform account of appropriateness can be given; in some cases to call an emotion appropriate permits someone to have it, while in another case it requires it.

Secondly, one needs a theory which specifies what counts as appropriate. Two possibilities which suggest themselves are an extreme subjectivist and an extreme objectivist view. On the former view, emotions are appropriate if and only if they fit in with the standards of appropriateness of the individual or alternatively of the society in which he or she lives. On the latter view, there are objective standards of appropriateness. Whichever is adopted, the accounts will specify which emotions are appropriate, given the beliefs that the individual has about the situation he or she encounters¹.

¹ There may be added complexities here. For example, someone might come to feel that he had been wronged because he was angry with someone else. But believing that one has been wronged might well be taken to be a belief that makes anger appropriate, so if appropriateness is purely dependent on belief then this person's new belief seems to make his anger appropriate. But this seems intuitively false. So one needs also to look at the causal mechanism behind belief formation and the origination of the emotions; for the emotions to be appropriate the beliefs that make the emotions appropriate must cause the emotions and not vice versa.

Neither view seems to be correct, however. The subjectivist view prevents us from saying that people's emotions are inappropriate even if they fit in with the standards that they have set for themselves. For example, we might want to say that the adherents of a strict code of honour, who are outraged when the smallest insult is done to them, react inappropriately, even though both they and other members of their society consider their anger entirely appropriate in such a case.

The need to have some standard external to a given culture which will allow us to judge the criteria of appropriacy employed within that culture might tempt us into an objectivist view; that there are universal and objective standards of appropriateness of emotions. But this view seems no more satisfactory than the previous one. In some societies, in which it is customary to let one's emotions show, strong emotions may be appropriate which would not be in a more restrained society. In some cultures, for example, it is considered appropriate not to show one's grief when mourning a dead relation, while in others it would be inappropriate not to wail and tear one's hair². So the standards of appropriacy cannot be cross culturally universal. The discussion, then, takes on a similar character to debates about the nature of ethical values with the same sort of tension between subjectivity and objectivity, though the outcome will probably be different since we are more inclined to accept differences in emotional

²This example was suggested by John Baker.

reactions than differences in moral behaviour, probably due to the greater effects of the latter on the life of other people.

Related to these issues is the question as to whether appropriateness is a moral or perhaps a prudential notion; i.e., do moral and/or prudential considerations come in when deciding whether an emotion is appropriate? Both seem relevant; for example, looking again at anger, feeling this emotion may be appropriate when someone has behaved unjustly, but also when someone has ruined one's own hopes, even though this person has not behaved immorally in doing so. How this question is resolved will have important implications for the answer given to the previous one; if appropriateness of emotions is closely tied to moral considerations, for example, then the standards of appropriateness will be drawn from morality rather than from prudential considerations.

Clearly, I cannot hope to resolve these issues here. What I do wish to show, as I shall try to do later, is that given virtually any account of what makes emotions appropriate, my account of how rhetoric can arouse appropriate emotions will be applicable. Let us turn, then, to consider how rhetoric can arouse appropriate emotions.

Rhetoric and the Emotions

The fact that the speaker is giving a speech without considering the emotional state of his or her hearers clearly does

not mean that the emotions of the audience have no effect on their assent.

The fact that the audience does not feel the appropriate emotions, perhaps due to prior prejudice, may render assent by hearers highly unlikely. If the audience does not feel well disposed towards the point that the speaker is trying to make, then assent is unlikely.

The speaker may claim that this has nothing to do with him or her, that the problem rests entirely with the audience. "If they are all bigots, that is no fault of mine", it might be said. "I have proved what I set out to, though no one in the audience realised it".

But there is something rather ludicrous in this response. It suggests that the speaker should not be concerned about getting the audience to understand what is said. Provided that the point which needed to be demonstrated was in fact demonstrated, then the failure by the audience to appreciate this point does not detract from the speaker's success, on this view.

But one of the aims of any speaker³ is to gain assent, or at least proper consideration of the views which he or she expresses; one of the aims of the honest speaker should be to get rational assent. After all, this is the point of presenting an argument to an audience, rather than simply talking to oneself. One can prove something without the collaboration of an audience. The purpose of

³ Remember we are dealing with speakers who are trying to secure rational assent!

presenting the proof to the audience, then, must be to get them to appreciate the argument and accordingly to assent.

So it seems foolish to simply ignore procedures for obtaining rational assent. Furthermore, it is inconsistent to castigate rhetoric because it can lead to irrational assent through arousing people's emotions while failing to recognise that the capacity of rhetoric to produce rational assent by the same means counts as a point in its favour.

We shall now look at how rhetoric can promote rational assent through its effect on the emotions.

Rhetoric's Role in Rousing Appropriate Emotions

Rhetoric can be used to confuse the emotions. The way in which this is done, however, provides an indication of how appropriate emotions can be appropriately aroused through rhetoric. Hitler often exploited the emotions of his audience in his speeches. In this passage, Hitler is trying to get his audience to accept compulsory service to build fortifications:

I can imagine one or another saying - or rather he would say if he could, only now he can't say it - "I cannot see why my son must now go to the compulsory Labour service. After all, he was born to something better than that! Why should he now go about with a spade? Couldn't he be employed differently, given some intellectual work?" What an

odd idea, my dear friend, you have of the intellect! If your boy has worked for six months for Germany on the fortification of our Western front, he has perhaps done more practical good than all your intellect could do for Germany its whole life through...

That we love peace I do not need to stress. I know that a certain type of international journalist puts forth his lies day after day, and covers us with his suspicions and his slanders. That does not surprise me, for I know these creatures; some of them were in Germany. They are also an article of export, but only as the spoiled goods of the German nation. In the American union a boycott of German exports was organised; it would have been more sensible, I feel, to have imported German goods rather than these most inferior German blackguards... I do at least know my political "Friends" from the time before we came into power, folk who at the time were always declaring that they knew no fatherland. That is true, for they are Jews and therefore have nothing to do with us.

(The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April
1922 - August 1939, pg.1659- 1661)

In this passage, Hitler mentioned a number of hate figures who opposed his increasing militarisation; social snobs who resented the fact that they or their children had to serve, journalists in other countries and, connected with these, the Jews. By arousing anger against these figures, Hitler, by a kind of transference, aroused an inappropriate anger towards any other opponents of his also, an anger that was inappropriate because there was no reason to suppose that all or even most of his opponents fitted into the categories of people he described, and if, as seems likely, they did not fit into these categories, then there

was no reason to feel anger towards *all* opponents rather than just some.

This is the kind of example that the opponents of rhetoric point to when criticising it. But in doing so they ignore the possibility that the techniques that served Hitler in gaining irrational assent could be instead employed to produce rational assent. When rational assent would be promoted if people felt the appropriate emotions, rhetoric can help by arousing these emotions, just as it helped Hitler to arouse inappropriate emotions in order to yield irrational assent. The very effectiveness of Hitler's techniques in arousing inappropriate emotions gives reason for thinking that rhetoric can also help in arousing appropriate emotions.

Furthermore, appropriate emotions promote rational assent, at least in ethics. It is a commonplace of the philosophy of action that at least one reason for action, and perhaps the only reason, is that the actor has a pro-attitude⁴ towards a certain course of action. The term pro-attitude is used to cover any kind of positive attitude towards something (Nowell-Smith lists liking, approval, enjoyment, love, wanting, pleasure, happiness and several others).

One type of assent that speakers may try to gain is action on the part of hearers. By arousing emotions which make the hearers

⁴ The term was originated by Nowell-Smith in his book *Ethics*. See especially pg. 111- 121 for a discussion of the term and for argument for the claim that not only is a pro-attitude a logically sufficient reason for action, but also that any logically sufficient reason for action requires a pro-attitude.

look favourably on a given course of action, the speaker can create a pro-attitude which will give people reason to act.

Alternatively, the speaker may aim simply at getting people to change their beliefs. The beliefs that we are concerned with here, however, are *ethical* beliefs. Having an ethical belief seems to be intrinsically connected to having pro-attitudes towards people, including oneself, acting as one's beliefs requires. Hare draws a particularly close relation between ethical beliefs and action:

If we were to ask of a person "What are his moral principles?" the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he did. He might, to be sure, profess in his conversation all sorts of principles, which in his actions he completely disregarded, but it would be when, knowing all the relevant facts of a situation, he was faced with choices or decisions between alternative courses of action, between alternative answers to the question "What shall I do?", that he would reveal in what principles of conduct he really believed.

(*The Language of Morals*, pg.1)

While it is unreasonable to claim that in order to hold an ethical belief sincerely one must act on it on all possible occasions (this seems to ignore such problems as weakness of will on the part of actors), we would say that someone who "completely disregarded" his or her professed ethical beliefs when acting did not sincerely hold them. So one of the ways to change ethical beliefs is to arouse a pro-attitude towards acting in the way required by the belief.

So appropriate emotions can promote rational assent. There are two ways in which the members of the audience may fail to assent as a result of their emotional state:

a) Failure by the audience to feel the appropriate emotion, e.g. lack of outrage at famine, war.

b) Audience has strong and inappropriate emotion against some course of action; e.g. great anger against some other nation for inflicting a relatively minor injustice on their country may make it impossible for people to accept peace measures.

So one way of promoting assent is to ensure that people do have the appropriate emotions. How can this be done?

One reason why people may not feel an appropriate emotion in response to a situation is that they have false beliefs about it. If, for example, I view famine as a natural disaster which is beyond anyone's power either to prevent or to alleviate (e.g. the inaction by the British Government during the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s; the government declined to aid the Irish, believing that to do so would represent an interference with the laws of the market and so could not actually help, but would instead harm the starving), then I will not feel outrage at the failure to help the starving, though I may feel sorrow for their suffering.

So one thing that the speaker needs to do in order to arouse appropriate emotions is to correct the beliefs of his or her hearers.

But frequently an alteration in the beliefs of the hearers may not be sufficient to alter the emotional attitudes of those one is addressing. Someone may have the right beliefs about a situation without having the appropriate emotions. At an extreme one can have psychotics who are unable to feel any emotion towards others, while their understanding of the facts of a situation may be completely unimpaired. Normal individuals, too, can sometimes suffer from an incapacity to feel appropriate emotions. It is often held, for example, that our frequent exposure to suffering on the television screen has "blunted our sensibilities" rendering us unable to respond to it. Despite the fact that we have been informed by television what is going on in the world, we are nonetheless often unaffected emotionally by it. More generally, the speaker may find that he or she has been unable to grip the emotions of the audience, and so has failed to secure assent, despite the power of the argument which was given.

Another problem, contrasting with that of the failure by the hearers to feel appropriate emotions, is that other emotions may preclude assent to what the speaker wants to advocate. Instead of having their emotions aroused, as they were by Hitler, and as a result assenting, the members of the audience may already feel strong emotions which lead to them refusing to assent to what the speaker advocates, having already accepted some other claims⁵.

⁵ The influence of the prior emotions on the beliefs and intentions of the hearers may be either rational or irrational; rational if the emotions are logically relevant to assent, irrational if they are not or if they just prevent people from thinking clearly.

How can rhetoric help? If, as most accept, rhetoric can rouse the emotions, then it would be strange if it could only arouse inappropriate and not appropriate emotions. So one would at least hope that problem a) can be solved by rhetoric.

But merely arousing the right emotions, it might be argued, is not enough for the emotions to be appropriate; for people to have appropriate emotions they must feel these emotions for the right reasons. If I become indignant about the Nazis because they conducted themselves in a "foreign" way, walking in a strange manner and making bizarre salutes, then while it may be appropriate for me to feel indignation at the Nazis, *my* indignation is not appropriate, since it was not their style that makes them worthy of indignation but rather their actions. So for rhetoric to arouse appropriate emotions rhetoric must be used to evoke emotions in response to those features of the situation which make a given emotion appropriate.

How, then, can emotions be aroused in a way that avoids accusations that one has only succeeded through the irrationality of the hearers? In order to do this, one should, as de Sousa recommended (see earlier discussion, chapter 5), make certain features of a situation salient. But not any features which might bring about the desired emotion should be brought to the attention of the hearers. What one needs to do instead is to arouse emotions by bringing relevant features of the situation into prominence. Consider the following example from one of Churchill's speeches:

I wish I could tell you that all our toils and troubles were over. Then indeed I could end my five years of service happily, and if you thought you had had enough of me and that I ought to be put out to grass, I tell you I would take it with the best of grace. But on the contrary, I must warn you, as I did when I began this five years' task - and no one knew then that it would last so long - that there is still a lot to do, and that you must be prepared for further efforts of mind and body and further sacrifices to great causes if you are not to fall back into the rut of inertia, the confusion of aim, and the craven fear of being great. Though holiday rejoicing is necessary to the human spirit, yet it must add to the strength and resilience with which every man and woman turns again to the work they have to do, and also to the outlook and watch they have to keep on public affairs.

(“Forward, Till the Whole Task is Done”, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat*, pg. 265)

In this example, Churchill rouses up his audience for a final effort to end the war. He reminds his audience that, despite their exhaustion and desire to cease from struggle, there still remains much to be done. Rhetoric, then, can be used to arouse emotions on good grounds as well as on bad ones.

Here is another example, this time showing how a conflicting emotion can be overcome and how appropriate emotions can be aroused. In this passage Lloyd George is arguing against a proposal by Chamberlain that foreign trade carried by British ships should be charged a tariff:

Mr Chamberlain is going to tax the foreigner. Is he? How much? Ten or fifteen millions - so he says. Why,

we are doing it now. The foreigner is paying the bulk of our naval expenditure at this moment. And we are asked to throw over this real tax, this *bona fide* tax, for the sake of a sham, a chimera of Mr. Chamberlain's brain. "Ah," they say, "Britain is alone." So she is. "Look all over the world", say these patriots, who believe in every country's intelligence but her own. "Look at Germany," they say. "Look at Russia." Yes, look at her. "Look at France and the United States." They are all protecting, save Britain, and they say: "It is time that you gave up this Free Trade and followed these wise foreigners." It is not the first time that Britain has stood alone. Yes, and the world has to thank heaven for it.

Britain has stood alone practically in the world for constitutional freedom, not for sixty years, as she stood for Free Trade, but for generations - for freedom, for a free press, for free speech, for free conscience, and for a free Parliament. She stood alone, and there were Tories in those days. In those days they said: "Look at the great countries of Europe - France, Germany and the Spanish Empire. Why don't you follow their example?" But we had men of courage and convictions in those days: we had men of principle, and we stood alone. What happened? The great nations of the Continent began to examine what Britain was doing, and they saw the splendour of her isolation in her fight for freedom. They talked to their own countrymen, and the best of the Continental nations learnt their lessons of freedom from Britain.

(Slings and Arrows, pg. 64)

Lloyd George combats Chamberlains demand for taxes on foreigners by redefining the fees paid to transport goods as a tax. As a result, his hearers are likely to feel less indignant about what they saw as a failure by Britain to get its just payments. He can then follow up with an attempt to win his audience over by

making them proud of pursuing a good cause alone, rather than following the apparently more profitable line taken by other nations.

So the way that rhetoric works to arouse appropriate emotions appropriately and so promote rational assent is as follows. The speaker must first decide which emotions are both appropriate and would promote rational assent. The speaker should then try to present his or her arguments in such a way that those facts which make the emotions in question appropriate salient, using the methods of making facts salient through rhetoric which we discussed in the last chapter. Then, if the emotions are in fact aroused through apprehension of these facts, then they are appropriately aroused, and so will promote rational assent.

Note, then, that a view about what makes emotions appropriate is not contained in the account of how rhetoric operates. Instead, it is required that the rhetorician should ascertain in the particular case which emotions are appropriate and what makes them so, and then try to arouse these emotions through bringing out what makes them appropriate (of course, the rhetorician can choose to arouse emotions which are in fact inappropriate, either unintentionally or intentionally, as one might expect; it would be highly surprising if rhetoric constrained one to arouse appropriate emotions). So my argument is not tied to any theory of the appropriacy of the emotions. Provided that it makes sense to talk of emotions being appropriate, rhetoric can be used to appropriately rouse appropriate emotions.

Rhetoric, then, seems to be able to promote rational assent through arousing appropriate emotions. Its effect on the emotions, then, should not be condemned.

Conclusion and a Glimpse Beyond

In this thesis I have tried to show that rhetoric can play a valuable role in promoting rational assent. I have considered some important criticisms of rhetoric which suggested that rhetoric must *necessarily* be non-rational or even irrational and have tried to show that they are mistaken. I have tried to show that rhetoric can both bring out reasons for assent and can itself provide reasons for assent. Finally, I have countered the criticism that rhetoric must confuse the emotions of hearers by showing how it can instead enable them to feel appropriate emotions, which promote rational assent.

I will now sketch out a way in which the conclusions of the thesis could be developed.

As a result of what we have found about rhetoric, we are led to change our conception of rhetoric, abandoning the two component view that I have been employing so far. As I said before, I have been using this view so far in order to have a common ground on which I could dispute the claims of the opponents of rhetoric. At this stage, however, I am in a position to discard this view, and to advocate an alternative view, the classical view of rhetoric which has been developed in the long tradition of the study of rhetoric.

My reason for finally rejecting the two component view is not that it is untenable. Instead, I believe it should be disposed of because the reason for adopting it rests on a false assumption.

This assumption is that there is a clear distinction between the argument of a passage and those elements, the rhetorical elements, which are regarded as separate from the argument. Once this assumption is made it then becomes important to separate off the argument from another element, the “rhetoric” of a piece. Very different accounts of the function of each element can be expected.

As we have seen, however, rhetoric can play a highly important role in argument. So it there is no reason to come up with an account which tries to separate them off from each other. Instead, what is needed is a characterisation which will unify the two, while retaining the sense that rhetoric is essentially concerned with the way in which an argument is put.

Such an account is provided by the classical theory of rhetoric. The classical view regards rhetoric as the art of constructing a speech that will persuade rather than as a product of speech making, as the two component view does. It divides up this process into five elements or canons: invention, arrangement, elocution, delivery and memory.

Speech construction starts with invention. The aim of this is to find arguments likely to persuade an audience. Then follows arrangement, in which these arguments are placed in a coherent order. Elocution involves making linguistic choices about how the arguments are to be presented. Delivery concerns the actual presentation of a speech before an audience. Finally, memory is concerned with techniques to help the speaker to remember the speech he or she is giving without consulting notes.

Classical rhetoric gives the speaker techniques for all these stages of speech making¹.

Given the conclusions that I have reached, I suggest that this conception of rhetoric should be readopted. It can provide the basis for a renewed attempt to study rhetoric seriously, as something linked with rather than separated from argument.

¹ For a discussion of classical rhetorical theory see Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, a comprehensive discussion of rhetorical theory as well as a guide to using it in the contemporary world.

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