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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC IN CAMPBELL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC*

Joel Weinsheimer

*My view of this question is, as it happens, very simple....It is not in the nature of man to attain a science [episteme] by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say.*

— Isocrates, *Antidosis*

In recent years George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776)<sup>1</sup> has been so often and thoroughly contextualized in the history of rhetoric, the history of logic, and the history of ideas that I can plead some excuse for treating here it in a different way. Rather than repeating or even extending the admirable work of Howell, Bitzer, Ehninger, Bevilacqua, and Bormann—that is, instead of situating *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* historically—I propose to treat it as philosophy. By that I mean taking seriously its truth-claim and thinking through some of the fundamental questions it raises in order to say something not just about Campbell and his book but about the philosophy of rhetoric.

By employing the title *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell meant to emphasize that his work occupies the third among

<sup>1</sup> Cited below from Lloyd F. Bitzer's second edition (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

the three levels of rhetorical knowledge. The first level is that the orator himself, who though no philosopher is not entirely without knowledge, since he knows how to speak well. Second, as distinct from the rhetor's largely intuitive know-how, the rhetorician possesses reflective knowledge, including the taxonomy of rhetorical kinds and devices as well as rules for deploying them to best effect. Finally, a third-level knowledge distinguishes the philosopher from both the rhetorician and rhetor. This too is reflective knowledge, but the philosopher knows not just the rhetorical rules per se; he knows the principles that explain why they work.

One reason for Campbell's concentration on the third, or philosophical, level of rhetorical knowledge is that he believed the second had been already perfected and exhausted by the early rhetoricians: "Considerable progress had been made by the ancient Greeks and Romans, in devising the proper rules of composition," he writes; "and I must acknowledge that, as far as I have been able to discover, there has been little or no improvement in this respect made by the moderns" (lxxv). With the territory of rhetoric proper thus already occupied, the "new country" still remaining to be discovered by rhetorical reflection could only be that of philosophical principle.

For Campbell, the specific philosophical principles that explain the functioning of rhetorical rules are those of human nature—which, since Locke and Hume, meant the principles of psychology. Nothing is more characteristic of Campbell's philosophy than his appeal to empiricist epistemology, and yet this dependence also explains in large part why *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* has rarely received much attention as philosophy. Lloyd Bitzer argues that "major elements of Hume's view...were taken over by Campbell without significant modification."<sup>1</sup> Dennis Bormann, on the other hand, shows that "Campbell's overall philosophical outlook, was almost identical" to that of the explicitly anti-Humean Scottish

<sup>1</sup> In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), 7, I. A. Richards affirms, "[Whatley's] claim—that Rhetoric must go deep, must take a broad philosophical view of the principles of the Art—is the climax of his Introduction; and yet in the treatise that follows nothing of the sort is attempted, nor is it in any other treatise that I know of." Richards' sweeping denigration is clearly meant to include Campbell.

<sup>2</sup> "Hume's Philosophy in George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 2 (1969): 140.

Common Sense School.<sup>4</sup> Still others consider Bacon the predominant influence.<sup>5</sup> We need not attempt to resolve this dispute here, for the relevant point is that in the general rush to identify Campbell's sources no one has made a serious claim for his philosophical originality; and insofar as Campbell's empirical epistemology merely reiterates that of his predecessors, it does not repay our attention.

Campbell's claim to our interest, then, must rest not on the philosophy *per se* but on its application to rhetoric. What is indeed striking about this application, I think, is that it shows how very unsuited was eighteenth-century philosophy to the purpose of conceptualizing rhetoric. Particularly, as I will try to show, the epistemological conception of knowledge and instrumental conception of language that Campbell inherited from his predecessors could not do justice to the nature of rhetoric, even as Campbell himself conceived it. And it is in just these respects, namely the ways in which his views cannot be comprehended within the Locke-Hume tradition, that Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric is of more than historical interest.

Campbell offers us two touchstone definitions of rhetoric: first, it is "the grand art of communication, not of ideas only, but of sentiments, passions, dispositions, and purposes" (lxxiii); second, rhetoric is the "art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end" (1).<sup>6</sup> Most evident in the generality of these definitions is Campbell's centrifugal impulse toward broadening and indeed universalizing the province of rhetoric.<sup>7</sup> By expanding its end beyond persuading to include informing as well, and by including the transmission of not only ideas but

<sup>4</sup> Dennis R. Bormann, "Some 'Common Sense' about Campbell, Hume, and Reid: The Extrinsic Evidence," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 71 (1985): 396. G. P. Mohrman argues that Campbell's filiation with Scottish Common Senseism led him to reject empiricist psychology in many respects. See Mohrman's "George Campbell: The Psychological Background," *Western Speech Journal*, 32 (1968): 99-104.

<sup>5</sup> See Vincent Bevilacqua, "Philosophical Origins of George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*," *Speech Monographs*, 32 (1965): 1-12; and W. S. Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), 577-612.

<sup>6</sup> In Campbell's *Cura Prima*, this second, instrumentalist definition had pride of place. See Dennis R. Bormann, "George Campbell's *Cura Prima* on Eloquence—1758," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 74 (1988): 35-51.

<sup>7</sup> W. S. Howell makes this point in *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 579.

also emotions and desires, Campbell makes rhetoric all-inclusive, spanning the entire gamut of linguistic communication. "It is the intention of eloquence," he writes, "to convey our sentiments into the minds of others, in order to produce a certain effect upon them. Language is the only vehicle by which this conveyance can be made" (139). No longer limited to a special use of language (say, the persuasive) nor to a special kind of language (say, the ornate), the sphere of rhetoric expands under Campbell's touch to become coextensive with the sphere of language generally.

Whatever the real advantages of emancipating rhetoric from its confines as a special and occasional art (and we will return to them in conclusion), the disadvantages are many. Most important, equating rhetoric with language works not to define but to eliminate it, insofar as philosophy of rhetoric is reduced to and displaced by philosophy of language. This displacement is especially unfortunate when that language philosophy is preoccupied with the limits, dangers, and imperfections of its object. Campbell's definition of rhetoric as the "art of communication" sounds relatively innocuous and vague, but the word *communication* resonates with the special associations it had accrued from philosophy of language during the preceding century. Locke, for example, recommended that his readers "distinguish between the method of acquiring knowledge, and of communicating it; between the method of raising any science, and that of teaching it to others" (4.7.11). In this respect, he follows the *Port-Royal Logic*, which distinguished two kinds of method: "one for discovering truth... and the other for explaining it to others."<sup>8</sup> Adopting this distinction between inquiry and instruction, Campbell himself asserted in his *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence* that "to know is one thing, and to be capable of communicating it another."<sup>9</sup>

Defining rhetoric specifically as communication implies not only its enlargement to comprehend the sphere of all language but its confinement, disenfranchisement, and tacit depreciation, insofar as the sphere of all language is itself circumscribed and belated. Like his predecessors, Campbell makes the common-sense assumption that you must know something before you can tell it to others. The consequence is that language and

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Vincent M. Bevilacqua, "Philosophical Origins," 5n.

<sup>9</sup> Reprinted in *Preacher and Pastor*, ed. Edwards A. Park (Andover: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell, 1845), 154.

rhetoric are relegated to a strictly secondary and contingent position.

This thesis—that knowing is prior to and independent of saying—means that knowing is an essentially private act. Humans are mute and insular beings, and the human way of knowing is correspondingly solitary. The secondariness of language (and of the social compact, the locus of which is language) is a corollary of the epistemological individualism fundamental to philosophy of knowledge from Descartes to Kant. Its basic tenet is that a single mind can, and in fact must, know alone. By contrast to a dialogical epistemology for which knowing means (inter alia) being able to say what one knows, eighteenth-century epistemological individualism is essentially monological. The basic question raised by Campbell's definition of rhetoric as communication, then, is whether monological epistemology can produce anything but implicit denigration of rhetoric, since on this view rhetoric appears pedagogical at best and at worst prejudicial.

Campbell's second definition of rhetoric, "the art by which discourse is adapted to its end," is even more emphatically monological. From this definition it follows that rhetoric is a means to an end, namely affecting one's hearers, and the art of rhetoric consists in maximizing the efficacy of means to ends. On a dialogical view of human nature, one that begins from the premise that man is a social animal, rhetoric is always an expression of that nature, and need have no other end. For monological epistemology, by contrast, rhetoric is never autotelic; it is always instrumental, always in the service of some end other than itself.<sup>10</sup>

As practice of rhetoric is utilitarian, so the second-level art of rhetoric is tactical in character. By universalizing rhetoric, Campbell's monological philosophy of rhetoric subjectivizes language. "Discourse adapted to its end" is language at the service of consciousness and will. Conceived as an instrument at the disposal of the speaking subject, rhetoric can hardly escape the stigma of being intrinsically self-interested and

<sup>10</sup> Douglas W. Ehninger states that Campbell is in fact one of the originators of "the common assumption that rhetoric studies the adaptation of means to ends." See "George Campbell and the Revolution in Inventional Theory," *Southern Speech Journal*, 15 (1950): 270.

manipulative." The ends it serves are manifold (informing, pleasing, motivating, etc.) but, generally speaking, Campbell argues, they all involve various kinds of effect on the audience. "It is not," he writes, "ultimately the justness either of the thought or of the expression which is the aim of the orator; but it is the effect to be produced in the hearers" (215). Such an assertion betrays its monological, individualist roots in two ways. Most conspicuously, Campbell describes the end of rhetoric as an effect. Monological rhetoric elicits effects, not replies. Second, the effect on the hearers is monological in being unilateral: effective speaking does not view itself as affected reciprocally by the audience.

Such rhetoric, then, consists in a one-way transaction whereby the speaking subject causes, by verbal means consciously adapted to their ends, desired effects in the hearing object. Monological rhetoric not only subjectifies the speaker; it objectifies the audience. When hearers are conceived not dialogically as potential respondents but monologically as a field of effects, men (as Campbell admits) rhetoric can disavow responsibility for not only the "justness of the thought"—its truth—but even "the justness of the expression"—its correctness in grammar and diction (215). If, as Campbell affirms, "the merit of every kind of rhetorical excellence is to be ascertained by the effect" (332), then the speech producing that effect need not be elegant, or precise, or true. It doesn't even matter whether it is speech. Indeed the cause-effect terminology typical of monological philosophy of language finally removes rhetoric from the province of language altogether: many kinds of forces can cause effects; only language can elicit rejoinders. Replies are not effects; they cannot be caused in any strict sense. In monologue, what is specific to language is precluded, and rhetoric which had seemed coextensive with all language is now excluded from it.

Rhetoric, monologically conceived, can be abstracted not only from reference to language but from reference to hearers as well. We have seen that in Campbell's view rhetoric and its effect stand in a relation of means to end. Now we need to

"The custom of classifying speeches in terms of the purpose of the speaker rather than the function of the judge (hearer) stems ultimately from Campbell," writes Douglas Ehninger in "Campbell, Blair, and Whately Revisited," *Southern Speech Journal*, 28 (1963) 181.

see that the means-ends relation obtains between language and its speaker, not just between language and audience.

In contemplating a human creature, [Campbell writes] the most natural division of the subject is the common division into soul and body...Analogous to this there are two things in every discourse which principally claim our attention, the sense and the expression; or in other words, the thought and the symbol by which it is communicated. These may be said to constitute the soul and the body of an oration...For, as in man, each of these constituent parts hath its distinctive attributes, and as the perfection of the latter consisteth in its fitness for serving the purposes of the former, so it is precisely with those two essential parts of every speech, the sense and the expression. Now, it is by the sense that rhetoric holds of logic, and by the expression that she holds of grammar. (32)

At this point, monological individualism comes into its own. We lose sight of hearers and audiences entirely, as Campbell defines rhetoric by reference to one person only, the speaker. Like the single human being, rhetoric is of a hybrid character. Composed of sense and expression, logic and grammar, matter and form, the dual nature of rhetoric corresponds to that of body and soul. Just as important here, it corresponds to the dualism immanent in epistemological individualism as well. If "to know is one thing, and to be capable of communicating it another," as Campbell writes, it is patent that discourse has two elements (sentiment and symbol), and one is a means subservient to the other. As body serves soul, grammar assists logic, expression conveys sense—or, as the common phrase has it, "language is a means of communication."

Campbell's instrumental conception of expression parallels his utilitarian conception of rhetoric, except that it is still more individualist, since "expression," as Campbell defines it, is expression-of, not expression-to. Monological rhetoric, that is, need not be defined as communication, since the process "by which the discourse is adapted to its end" (1), of fitting expression to sense, can be entirely mute and inward. As monological rhetoric anticipates no reply, this fit too is unilateral insofar as sense is prior to and unaffected by the choice of means for expressing it. Campbell's image is perfect-

ly familiar: rhetoric, the art of adapting discourse to sense, consists in selecting words for a pre-given idea from a pre-given pool. The philosophy of language implicit in this image reflects the commonsense notion not only that knowing precedes saying but that there are lots of ways of saying something. Some expressions are more, some less exact, and the task is to find the ones that are more so.

Finding them constitutes what Campbell calls "grammatical truth." As "logical truth" consists in the correspondence of "sentiment to the nature of things," so grammatical truth "consisteth in the conformity of the expression to the sentiment" (214).<sup>12</sup> That is, grammatical truth or perspicacity consists in the coincidence of what is said and what is meant. Abstracted from reference to the audience, then, monological rhetoric, composed of logic and grammar, has respectively two kinds of truth as its ends, both of which understand truth as a kind of correspondence. Many objections have been raised to the correspondence theory of "logical truth," of course, but it is "grammatical truth" that is of more interest here. Are there similar problems with the correspondence theory of grammar, and the pool image of choosing diction? What could be objected against conceiving rhetoric as finding the right (grammatically true) words for one's ideas? This is the question whether language can be rightly understood as a means and rhetoric as communication.

To answer this question, we need to recall the three levels of rhetoric with which we began: that of the rhetor, the rhetorician, and the philosopher of rhetoric. Insofar as Campbell expands the province of rhetoric to comprehend language and speech generally, the three rhetorical levels correspond to the knowledge of the speaker, the grammarian, and the philosopher of language. All of these levels involve knowledge, Campbell insists, even the first.

Though in all the arts, the first rough drafts, or imperfect attempts, that are made, precede every thing that can be termed criticism, they do not precede every thing that can be termed knowledge...This knowledge must of necessity precede even those rudest and earliest es-

<sup>12</sup> On the former, see C. W. Edney, "George Campbell's Theory of Logical Truth," *Speech Monographs*, 15 (1948): 19-32.

says...Something must be known, before any thing in this way, with a view to an end, can be undertaken to be done. (lxxvi)

Even talking, speech untutored by the rhetorician, involves what might be called precritical knowledge. Does it also involve using language instrumentally, "with a view to an end"? On the one hand, Campbell expands the sphere of rhetoric to coincide with that of all language. On the other, he conceives of rhetorical practice in terms of cause / effect and means / end relations. Thus, identifying rhetoric with language requires him to think of not only oratory but language generally as a "means" of communication, a "use" of language. If it turns out that not all language can be understood instrumentally, then either rhetoric must be confined only to language that is "used" or, if it is broadly identified with all language, then rhetoric can no longer be conceived solely in terms of utility. The question Campbell raises, then, is this: how does the precritical knowledge implicit in artless speech relate to the epistemic knowledge characteristic of the rhetorician and philosopher of rhetoric.

Campbell wants to claim that all three are continuous, for practical know-how is knowledge too. Not all knowledge is of the same kind, however, and practical knowledge does not belong to the highest kind. "The imperfect and indigested state in which knowledge must always be found in the mind that is self-taught," he writes, "deserves not be dignified with the title of Science" (lxxvi). Thus the earliest attempts have no claim to be called art, for "All art is founded in science." In this emphatic maxim, with which Campbell opens his book, he presents the art of rhetoric, like all art, in a technological way—namely, as the application of science—and science he conceives as theoretical knowledge. Campbell's technological philosophy of art is a function of his epistemic philosophy of knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> In "Rhetoric Resituated at the End of Philosophy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 71 (1985): 168, Calvin Schrag shows that the deconstruction of philosophy which undermines the epistemological paradigm invites a parallel deconstruction of rhetoric. The latter would begin with "an examination of the factors that have contributed to the development of rhetoric into a manual of techniques and classification of tropes in discursive practices. With the advent of modern thought, in which everything becomes 'method,' these tendencies...become sedimented and formalized. Hence, the first moment in a deconstructionist

The premise underlying his technological vision is that epistemic or theoretical knowledge is higher than practical knowledge. Rhetorical practice not governed by science must be "awkward," just as the practical knowledge that precedes theoretical or scientific knowledge must be "imperfect and indigested." We have seen above that in Campbell's monological philosophy of rhetoric, knowing is prior to saying. Now we can add that for his epistemology knowing is prior to doing as well. The theoretical knowledge of the rhetorician and philosopher of rhetoric precedes and enables artful practice, for that practice (technologically conceived) is applied theory. Or in Campbell's words, "All art is founded in science."<sup>14</sup>

Like that of physics, optics, and other natural sciences, the future of rhetoric justifies a Baconian optimism about the new prospects it promises to open up: "our acquaintance with nature and its laws is so much extended, that we shall be enabled, in numberless cases, not only to apply to the most profitable purposes the knowledge we have thus acquired, but to determine beforehand, with sufficient certainty, the success of every new application" (lxx). Understood on this technological model, science consists of general laws and principles that enable prediction and control; art is nature controlled by science. Correlatively, rhetorical science consists in the rules and principles of language; rhetorical art is natural language self-consciously governed by them.

Campbell does not employ the technological model wholly without reservation, however, and in fact the ways he suggests of superseding it are the focus of his interest for us. Even if rhetorical science is logically prior to the art it governs, Campbell is enough of an empiricist to insist that the science of rhetoric is itself dependent on artless practice. No less than any other empirical science, rhetorical knowledge is founded wholly upon experience and derives all its authority from it. The difficulty which this derivation presents to Campbell's

approach to rhetoric falls out as a thinking against method, particularly when method is construed as mere technique." The present essay participates in the general project Schrag sketches out, though it allies itself not so much with deconstruction as hermeneutics. See n 16 below.

<sup>14</sup> In "All Art is Founded in Science," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 13 (1983): 14, Lloyd Bitzer contends that this maxim "led to [Campbell's] central error, which was the (often forced) reduction of rhetorical terms and principles to psychological terms and principles." My contention is that the error is still more basic, namely the reduction to science of what is no science.

technological view of art becomes most apparent in his treatment of logic and grammar, the two subsiences of which rhetoric is composed. We recall that "it is by the sense that rhetoric holds of logic, and by the expression that she holds of grammar" (32). Significantly, Campbell's most memorable and influential arguments explicitly reject the notion that logical and grammatical practice is improved by the application of rules and laws. That is, he undermines the fundamental premise of technology.

With respect to logic, Campbell argues, "The method of proving by syllogism, appears...both unnatural and prolix. The rules laid down for distinguishing the conclusive from the inconclusive forms of argument, are at once cumbersome to the memory, and unnecessary in practice. No person, one may venture to pronounce, will ever be made a reasoner, who stands in need of them" (62). In the headlong rout of scholasticism, it comes to seem that the logical rules of validity, so laboriously raised to theoretical explicitness over the centuries, not only do not govern practice; they are "unnecessary" to it—unnecessary in the sense of being already obvious and immanent, and so unnecessary to import, as it were, from without. Likewise, the rules of grammar have no authority over grammatical usage." Quite the contrary, Campbell warns, "it ought to be remembered, that use well established must give law to grammar, and not grammar to use" (392). Thus, "to the tribunal of use, as to the supreme authority, ...we are entitled to appeal from the laws and the decisions of grammarians; and this order of subordination ought never, on any account, to be reversed" (141).

The main point to be emphasized here is that if usage is the authority of last resort, then grammatical practice is superior to every possible codification of it, that is, to all purely theoretical knowledge of it. The criterion of good usage is not a rule, an abstraction extrinsic to usage; it is usage itself. The standard of grammar is not theoretical; it is grammatical practice. This hardly means that in grammar anything goes, which is patently not the case. The point is not that grammatical use obeys no law; it is auto-nomos, its own law; and it obeys none separable from itself. Practices such as grammar,

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed treatment, see Thomas Frank, "Linguistic Theory and the Doctrine of Usage," *Lingua e stile*, 20 (1985): 199-216.

which are subject to immanent critique alone, are not lawless, though their laws are indivisible from the application of them. More exactly, autonomous practice cannot be described in terms of application—the application of a universal law to the concrete instance. If such application is the defining characteristic of technology, we can say that precritical practice is not implicit or imperfect technology; it is no technology—and no worse off for that.

If neither logic nor grammar, the two constituent parts of rhetoric, can be theorized technologically, in terms of abstract universals, the question arises whether the same pertains to rhetoric itself. Aligning himself with the tradition of Aristotle rather than Isocrates, Campbell very much wants to show that the art of rhetoric has formulable rules and so can claim the dignity of being a science. “In almost every art, even as used by mere practitioners,” he asserts, “there are certain rules...which must be carefully followed” (lxx). The notion of art as “following rules” makes it seem that in rhetoric, as in any other art, first the rules exist—at least implicitly—and the rest “follows.” And if the rules precede practice, they can be abstracted from it and made explicit—that is, made into a science. For Campbell and the epistemological tradition, all knowing consists of knowing rules, and following even implicit rules counts as knowing them. So Campbell is willing to admit that practice involves knowledge—though until the rules are formulated, it is dim knowledge, “imperfect and undigested.” Campbell’s negative valuation of practical knowledge results from his taking science as normative for all knowledge, and science is understood epistemically: as the kind of knowledge that is abstractable from practice.

Yet we have seen that, even for Campbell, logic and grammar represent a kind of knowledge that is not susceptible of abstract theorization and is nevertheless not inferior to theoretic knowledge. This nonscientific cognition can be called practical knowledge so long as we keep in mind that what distinguishes it is not the absence of norms but their immanence to practice, just as the distinctive quality of theoretic knowledge is the duality of the two. If like logic and grammar, rhetoric too belongs to the sphere of practical knowledge, then Campbell is not compelled to make the impossible choice between forcing rhetoric into the natural-scientific model of knowledge or disparaging it as at best unscientific. If there is another kind of knowledge—the practical—then either some

nonsciences have a claim to dignity or else there are real sciences—moral sciences, perhaps, or human sciences—which do not conform to the epistemic model.<sup>16</sup>

Campbell in fact goes a good way toward displacing the rule-based model of rhetoric because he continually calls into question the sufficiency of rhetorical rules to rhetorical practice. Underlying their insufficiency one fundamental reason stands out: rhetoric is always concrete practice insofar as addressed (to a concrete audience) and occasioned (by a concrete situation). Concerned wholly with audience, chapters 7 and 8 of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* are paired together as their titles indicate: "Of the Consideration which the Speaker ought to have of the Hearers as Men in general" and "Of the consideration which the Speaker sought to have of the Hearers, as such Men in particular." Writing about men in general, Campbell, the epistemologist in the Locke-Hume tradition, is in his stride. By his definition, philosophy of rhetoric consists in explaining rhetorical rules by reference to the principles of human nature, that of "men in general." But whereas chapter seven, devoted to generalizations about a generic audience, occupies some twenty five pages, its companion piece occupies only one. When it comes to dealing with rhetoric proper, concrete discourse addressed to "men in particular," the epistemologist has nothing to say.

We recall that for Campbell rhetoric consists in conveying "our sentiments into the minds of others, in order to produce a certain effect upon them" (139). Yet in regard to producing effects on particular rather than generic audiences, he admits, "It is impossible with any precision to reduce these effects to rules; so much depending on the different tempers and sentiments of different audiences" (89). Even though "the difference between one audience and another is very great"

<sup>16</sup> In his pioneering article, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic" *Central States Speech Journal*, 18 (1967): 9-17, Robert L. Scott concludes, "In human affairs, then, rhetoric...is a way of knowing; it is epistemic" (16). I follow Scott's lead in insisting on the cognitive function of rhetoric, but my point is that episteme, strictly understood, is not the highest or the sole ideal of cognition. That is, not all real knowledge—and, in particular, not all rhetorical knowledge—is epistemic. See also Scott's "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later," *Central States Speech Journal*, 27 (1976): 258-66. There (261) Scott alludes to the new conception of rhetoric which follows from Gadamer's hermeneutic subversion of epistemology in *Truth and Method*. See my *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

(95), Campbell the philosopher has virtually nothing to say about particular audiences—the audiences specific to rhetoric—for the simple reason that generalizations, broad rules, epistemic generalizations are designed precisely to obviate consideration of the particular and the concrete—the province of rhetoric.

Thus he closes his empty chapter—the chapter on the audience of rhetoric as such—as follows: "As the characters of audiences may be infinitely diversified, the influence they ought to have respectively upon the speaker must be obvious to a person of discernment" (96). Even if this dismissive gesture is designed to mask the chapter's vacuity, it nevertheless raises questions concerning audience influence and rhetorical discernment that repay our attention. Once a speaker begins thinking about addressing a particular audience and adapting himself to it, then it becomes clear that along with the speaker's effect on the audience, the audience is likewise exercising an influence on the speaker. At the point of particularity, the point of rhetoric as concrete practice, we can no longer view rhetorical effect as unilateral, for the rhetorical situation becomes at the very least a tissue of reciprocal effects. Just as important, the particularities of the audience problematize the technological view of rhetoric as well. At the point of particularity, where general rules suited to generic audiences leave off and the rhetorical technologist is consequently at a loss, the person of discernment steps in. Neither lawless nor merely obedient to abstract rhetorical laws, discernment consists in seeing the law immanent in the concrete particular. To the discerning speaker it is evident from the situation itself what needs to be said and done. When it comes to the particular, practical knowledge can claim superiority to epistemic science.

The discernment necessary for the discourse in general is no less needed at the level of the sentence:

Rhetoricians have generally prescribed that a period should not consist of more than four members. For my own part, as members of sentences differ exceedingly both in length and in structure from one another, I do not see how any general rule can be established to ascertain their number. . . . The only rule which will never fail, is to beware of both prolixity and of intricacy; and

the only competent judges in the case are good sense and a good ear. (372)

If so—if rules and principles can never obviate the need for good judgment, and if rhetoricians and philosophers of rhetoric can therefore never supply all the rhetor's needs—then perhaps it is not entirely the case that “all art is founded on science.”<sup>17</sup> Practice cannot be wholly theorized because it always involves an element of nontheoretic knowledge—whether that is called practical intuition, judgment, or good sense. For this reason, rhetorical practice cannot be exhaustively described in terms of epistemic knowledge and its application in technology. In brief, there can be no epistemology of rhetoric, as long as episteme retains the meaning it has had since Plato.

Campbell recognizes as much when he writes, “The science is of little value which does not serve as a foundation to some beneficial art...Valuable knowledge...always leads to some practical skill, and is perfected in it” (lxix). The notion that the value of knowledge consists in its utility already suggests that practice is the ultimate criterion of cognitive value, but practical utility is usually understood in a technological way. This understanding is precluded in Campbell's last clause. There he affirms that knowledge is “perfected” in practice, and thus practice cannot be conceived merely as applied science, as technology, since it alters and perfects that science. This is a far cry from Campbell's assertion, discussed above, that the knowledge of an orator untutored in rhetoric remains in an “imperfect and undigested state.” For now Campbell's point is not that practical knowledge needs to be refined, abstracted, and raised to the dignity of science. Quite the opposite, he is asserting that rhetorical science is perfected in concrete practice. Rhetoric becomes most scientific—though least epistemic—in

<sup>17</sup> It is at such moments, when Campbell is willing to trust good sense over science, that he is closest to the common sense philosophy of Thomas Reid. On the relation of the two, see Bormann, “Some ‘Common Sense,’” cited in n4 above; and Vincent M. Bevilacqua, “Campbell, Priestley, and the Controversy Concerning Common Sense,” *Southern Speech Journal*, 30 (1964): 79–98. In “Campbell, Vico, and the Rhetorical Science of Human Nature,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 18 (1985): 23–30, Bevilacqua does not mention that Campbell's common sense also relates him to Vico. For the hermeneutic significance of Reid, see my own “Thomas Reid on Common Sense,” in *Eighteenth Century Hermeneutics: Philosophy of Interpretation in England from Locke to Burke* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 135–65.

the process of addressing particular audiences in specific rhetorical situations.

It follows that the perfected science of rhetoric can only be found in concrete examples of it. Campbell the epistemologist grudgingly concedes that "by the mere influence of example on the one hand, and imitation on the other, some progress may be made in an art, without the knowledge of the principles from which it sprung" (lxix). Yet if there is another, uncodifiable kind of knowledge, it cannot be learned from precepts and principles: practical knowledge can only be learned by example. If knowing the formal rules of logic, as Campbell the rhetorician argues, is not what makes a good logician, then "true logic...is best studied not in a scholastic system, but in the writings of the most judicious and best reasoners on the various subjects supplied by history, science and philosophy."<sup>18</sup> So also, we recall, for Campbell it is usage that gives the law to grammar, not grammar to usage. Good usage can therefore be learned only by imitating "whatever modes of speech are authorized as good by the writings of...celebrated authors" (145). Rhetoric, like all knowledge irreducible to rule, must be learned by example and imitation.

Campbell the epistemologist raises the usual charge against imitation: it precludes innovation and creativity. "Improvements...are not to be expected from those who have acquired all their dexterity from imitation and habit"; what they produce is "commonly no more than a mere copy" (lxix). Those who know only the particular example, and not the general principle underlying it, can do no more than duplicate it. Of course, those who learn only to follow the rule can only produce more instances of it. What they cannot learn is when to break the rule. The notion of a grace beyond the reach of art is fundamental to anything claiming to be rhetorical knowledge. In Campbell's view as in our own, rhetoric is not merely perspicuous expression that achieves clarity by obeying the laws prescribed by common usage. Eloquence must have vivacity as well, and striking expressions are typically uncommon and unconventional. For this reason, neither parroting the particular nor following codified usage can account for the highest rhetorical achievements. However unqualified Campbell's assertions, he is quite aware than

<sup>18</sup> *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence, in Preacher and Pastor*, 359.

rhetorical art neither is or should be governed by the rules of epistemic science. "To render the artificial or conventional arrangement, as it were, sacred and inviolable, by representing every deviation... as a trespass against the laws of composition in the language, is one of the most effectual ways of stinting the powers of elocution, and even of damping the vigour both of imagination and of passion" (365). No laws are inviolable, for some violations are always justified.

In the violations endemic to metaphor, Campbell finds what is always "an apparent, if it cannot be called a real impropriety" (294). Yet he hardly recommends avoiding all metaphors because he recognizes that deviation from accepted usage is essential to eloquence, and so there must be such a thing as rhetorically appropriate deviation. Since no rule can teach deviation as anything but improper, however, the question arises where, if not from the rule book, the aspiring orator is to learn it. Campbell's answer is this: "Sometimes indeed it is necessary, in order to set an eminent object in the most conspicuous light, to depart a little from the ordinary mode of composition as well as of arrangement. The following [from Zachariah 1: 5] is an example in this way: "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" (364). Knowing whether, when, and how much to depart from the prescriptions of usage constitutes the very creativity essential to eloquence, and far from precluding creativity, imitating is the only way of learning it. The judgment capable of discerning proper impropriety, as it were, can be sharpened only by example.

Wittingly and unwittingly, Campbell shows that rhetorical knowledge is indivisible from concrete example; it is practical knowledge, and that comes only from practice itself. This means, ultimately, from other people's practice. Rhetoric can only be learned dialogically, from one's predecessors. We have seen above that rhetoric cannot be conceived epistemically nor, therefore, technologically; moreover, it cannot be conceived as unilateral because it always registers the influence of the speaker's particular auditors. We can now conclude that rhetoric cannot be conceived monologically either, since it is learned from others, and nowhere else.

Perhaps we should have anticipated this conclusion, for it is implicit in Campbell's expansion of rhetoric to coincide with the sphere of all language. In this sphere it is most apparent that speaking is learned dialogically, by hearing and imitating.

Learning to speak is no epistemic process. As Campbell is fully aware, "The knowledge of all the rules, both of derivation...and of construction, nay, and of all the words in the language, is not the knowledge of the language" (190). What constitutes "knowledge of the language," then, if it is not to be found in dictionaries and grammar books? And what is rhetorical knowledge, if identified with it?

We take our clue from Campbell's assertion, repeated in various contexts and various ways, that the knowledge in question does not mean knowing all the rules of grammar and diction. Knowledge of the language is not just epistemic and theoretical, then. Language is most itself in the concrete, in the speech act, in dialogue and conversation—which means in practice. Knowing language is, simply, knowing how to speak, and this is practical knowledge in the sense that it need not involve any theoretical knowledge of definitions and grammar at all. More than knowing-that, it consists in knowing-how. Knowledge of the language does not mean knowing all the rules; it means instead knowing how to apply them.

But what more, we might ask, does knowing how to apply involve if it is not the same as knowing the rule itself? We have seen that it involves discernment, which is knowing when not to apply a rule, or when to break it, or when to apply it to something so new that the rule itself is altered by the very application of it. The point is not just that every speaker doesn't need to be a grammarian, but that every grammarian who can speak knows more than just rules. Knowing how to apply is in principle creative, and so is never just a matter of applying rules. Knowledge of language is not knowledge of some definable thing, for language is not an entity but a power to create.

The same holds for words. Knowing how to use a word never just means knowing its definition. A speaker who cannot use a word metaphorically, according to no previous definition or convention of usage, does not know how to use it. Perhaps for that very reason it is inexact to talk about "using" words, as if they were tools in a tool box—given, predefined, just waiting to be employed and returned unaltered.

So too knowing how to speak does not mean "using" language, as if language existed somewhere, apart from the use of it before it is put to use. What can be known of language in the abstract can be used, but it is not language. A dictionary or grammar book can be used, but knowing what is in

them does not constitute knowledge of language. Speaking cannot be imaged in the epistemological way as first coming up with an idea to be expressed and then mentally thumbing through vast language books, muttering to oneself, "Let's see, I want to say, 'Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.' Now, what grammar and vocabulary can I find to express this?" To know what one wants to say is always already to know how to say it. Speaking, then, cannot be understood as choosing from among a pool of pre-given expressions the ones that will convey some pre-given sense. The instrumentalist view of speaking must be discarded. Language is not a "means of communication" because, in speaking, choosing one's means is the same as choosing what one means. In fact, it is much closer to the ordinary experience of speaking to say that it involves no choosing at all, no reflection on verbal means as separate from nonverbal ends.

But isn't it precisely this reflection that constitutes the *art* of rhetoric—that is, the rhetor's practice as governed by the rhetorician's knowledge of devices and rules, and explained by the epistemologist's knowledge of the principles of human nature? If rhetoric consists in means / ends reflection, there is good reason not to equate it with speaking generally, where such reflection does not always occur. Rather, rhetoric must be confined to and defined as the technology of language. If, however, we want to follow the line of Campbell's thought that identifies rhetoric with language, and if we want to begin with his premise that knowledge of language does not mean knowing rules and words, then rhetorical knowledge too becomes something much different than Aristotelian rhetoricians<sup>19</sup> and Campbell himself had understood it to be.

On this new view, the philosopher's task is not to explain second-level knowledge, namely why the rhetorician's rules work, but to explain first-level knowledge, namely why the rules, however useful, are always limited and never ultimately sufficient to rhetorical practice. If the art of rhetoric cannot be understood in a technological way, in terms of rules and application, a philosophy of rhetoric devoted to first-level knowledge stands epistemology on its head by refusing to reduce rhetorical practice to theory. It refuses to admit the

<sup>19</sup> For the view that ancient rhetoric had never been rule-based, see Douglas McDermott, "George Campbell and the Classical Tradition," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 49 (1963): 403-09.

primacy of episteme and thus consign rhetoric to the secondary place of "communication." Moreover, if rhetoric cannot be explained in instrumental way as the "art by which the discourse is adapted to its end," then philosophy of rhetoric will need to explain what rhetoric is, if not the mongrel creature painted by epistemology, monstrously compounded of end and means, what and how, sense and expression, logic and grammar. A monistic philosophy of rhetoric as one and whole will explain with Campbell against Campbell why it is not the case that "to know is one thing, and to be capable of communicating it another."