VARIETIES OF ETHICAL ARGUMENT, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHOS IN THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

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Much of what follows may seem remote from the customary interests and uses of Freshman English News. To be sure, there is some risk that in the end all of what follows will both seem and be distant from the journal's usual concerns. I hope otherwise, of course, but do concede that I have begun far off from composition. Briefly, what I want to do is to examine what ethos means in a rhetorical context, then to propose a way of differentiating among different forms of ethos, and then at the last to explore what all of this means for the teaching of composition.

But since the route is twisty and since I am asking to be tolerated, I should be more specific in forecasting what is to follow. In the first section, I want to try to account for what brings me to ethos as a subject. The second section will record a minor exploration of other approaches to the nature of ethos and of ethical argument. The third section introduces a primary problem: since all discourse may be taken as ethical discourse, then talking about ethos and ethical argument means taking on the hopeless task of talking about all discourse without any means of differentiation. The section closes with particular instances of ethos which suggest that differentiation is possible. Section four, then, proposes a scheme of classification and explores some examples. Section five amplifies the discussion of one kind of ethos and uses that discussion as a base for suggesting a model for communication and for outlining a conception of commodious speech. At the last, section six wants to show what bearing all this has upon the teaching of composition.

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The manifestation of character or ethos in discourse, together with the origin, nature, and consequence of this process, compels attention for many reasons, both private and public. I cannot account in any single or simple way for focusing on this particular feature of rhetorical study. I can give some partial explanations.

Lemuel Gulliver provides a place to start. When I was young, I read Gulliver's Travels, and I believed what Lemuel Gulliver said. Now I still believe in Lemuel Gulliver, but I don't accept everything he says. Sometimes he gets things wrong. Sometimes his way of looking at things is peculiar. He reports his perceptions accurately enough, but his report also gives us evidence enough to question his perceptions. In all of this there is much that continues to interest me. Why did I believe all that Gulliver says when I first read him? Why do I respond differently now? What happens in the text to elicit first the one response and then the other?

In the second place, a general interest in argument and its outcomes can always arise easily enough from disguised or open megalomania. I sometimes think that I know the truth about things. Apparently other people sometimes think that they know the truth. Yet each of us knows that we are sometimes unable to say the truth we fully know to another so that he or she may hear it as truth. Sometimes we make splendid arguments and no one listens. Sometimes other people listen and then disregard and repudiate what we say. I want to know — I think I need to know, and I expect others in their way also need to know — why apparently good arguments sometimes evanue in nothing. We have all seen sweet, clear logic disavowed, and we have all seen decent, honorable emotional appeals denied. I'm interested in the nature of ethos and ethical appeal, then, on the possibility that understanding this feature of discourse will explain accords and rebuttals where knowledge of logical arguments and emotional appeals will not.

In the third place, Aristotle's brief early remark is compelling:

Ethical proof is wrought when the speech is so spoken as to make the speaker credible; for we trust good men more and sooner, as a rule, about everything; while, about things which do not admit of precision, but only of guess-work, we trust them absolutely. Now this trust, too, ought to be produced by means of the speech, — not by a previous conviction that the speaker is this or that sort of man. It is not true, as some of the technical writers assume in their systems, that the moral worth of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness; nay, it might be said that almost the most authoritative of proofs is that supplied by character.
Although the skepticism we sometimes seem to have learned from our age may lead us to wonder whether the absolute trust suggested above ever occurs, Aristotle's judgment that character affords "almost the most authoritative of proofs" demands attention.

And the passage suggests a fourth reason for focusing on ethos and inquiring about the nature of ethical proof. The preoccupation with credibility on all sides during these last ten years or so indicates that we have been involved in fact in learning about ethos whether we knew it or not. We are already interested in the process by which words are used to constitute a view of the speaker's self, and we have had many occasions to learn that words are sometimes used to create a self that replaces or masks the speaker's real self. During the Watergate hearings we heard speakers use language apparently intended to cleanse their character and thereby to promote credibility: when a motive or an action is located "at that point in time," it is, one presumes, liberated from its antecedents and consequences so that the speaker is purified for a given moment. But we learned that this kind of purification may work in many ways. "Failure to call dirty business by its rightful name," according to a 1975 interim report of the Senate Intelligence Committee, "may have increased the risk of dirty business being done." It has sometimes seemed, as Christopher Lasch puts it, that "The very distinction between truth and falsehood has receded into obscurity. In politics, as in advertising, truth has given way to credibility, facts to statements that sound authoritative without conveying any authoritative information." 19

The subject requires attention, I think, for a fifth reason, or rather I should say, a related and messy set of reasons. Along with everyone else, I notice that people often don't listen to each other even when they're making sense. I'd like to know why. Along with everyone else, I notice that we have the habit of diminishing each other's words. When another person speaks, we're likely to register and accept only those words that fit a discourse that we have already in our minds. I'd like to know why this is so. We have to wonder whether the truth will ever get heard. Supposing someone should learn the truth and want to announce it to others? What will cause people to listen to the truth? And if we cause people to listen, have we already disturbed the truth? What is it that transpires when one person speaks and another truly listens?

In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), the first of his books, Goffman argued that we are all essentially performers. . . . "A correctly staged and performed scene," he writes in The Presentation of Self, "leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation — this self — is a product of a scene that comes off, and is not a cause of it." When a performance "comes off," he adds, "the firm self accorded each performed character will appear to emanate intrinsically from its performer."

What Goffman seems to be denying, then, is the possibility of precisely the sort of authenticity our society values most highly. A being is authentic, Lionel Trilling tells us in Sincerity and Authenticity, "by reason of its entire self-definition: it is understood to exist wholly by laws of its own being." Conversely, inauthenticity is a condition to which we fall when "the sentiment of individual being depends upon other people."

If, then, in Goffman's world the self is no more than an optical illusion which merely "appears" to emanate from the actor — if the self is, as Goffman says, an "imputation" — the notion of personal authenticity can hardly be more than an arrogant conceit. "In this enterprise of presenting the self, of putting ourselves on the social stage, sincerity itself plays a curiously compromised part," Trilling observes. "Society requires of us that we present ourselves as being sincere, and the most efficacious way of satisfying this demand is to see to it that we really are sincere, that we actually are what we want our community to know we are. In short, we play the role of being ourselves, we sincerely act the part of the sincere person, with the result that a judgment can be passed upon our sincerity that it is not authentic." 24

Sixth, I come to this subject, I think, partly because of what Kenneth Burke taught us. We are, after all, apart from each other, and it may be, as Burke said, that the only thing we have in common is our separateness. Distances open between us. We keep trying to tell ourselves to others across the way. We keep trying to enter their world or bring them into ours. Often we fail, but we keep trying. The trouble is that our speaking-forth — the primary need and issue of any age — is complex, confused, and messy, and often creates as many problems as it solves. Language is our way of composing ourselves. It is our first and last line of defense, and we are vulnerable on each line.

A seventh reason for coming to this study is that, quite simply, nothing else seems so important right now as the questions generating and generated by such study. Can we learn how to say the truth? If we learn how to say the truth, can we say it to another? Whom will we listen to? Who will listen to us? Can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Will we recognize it if we hear another sing it? Somehow or other, everything depends on our speaking-forth. In a recent essay on the relation of rhetoric to poetic, Stanley Plumly remarks that, "Rhetoric, whatever the year, and whatever the aesthetic, establishes credentials, establishes voice." A little later, he adds, "What pulls us into the good book, the whole book, what keeps our attention, from poem to poem, part to part, is the accumulating strength and complexity and interest and full character of the speaking voice." 25 Plumly's remarks are useful reminders of that clue from Aristotle. We can learn from rhetoric, at least, where to look — to character as it emerges in language. But while rhetoric may tell us where to look, traditional forms of rhetorical study won't tell us all we need to know. S. M. Halloran has explained why the study of ethos has become so crucial and why traditional rhetorical wisdom won't suffice. He points out that while classical rhetoric rested on the assumption that wisdom is open and publicly available, in the modern world the speaker can scarcely know where to begin. No commonly accepted process of invention is available to us. There is no widely accepted set of common values that he or she can assume. There are no universally accepted topoi that he or she may use as places of argument. Modern man, Halloran suggests, has been denied the possibility of achieving knowledge on which to base his life. 26 Assumptions about knowledge, Halloran goes on to say, are no longer tenable — external reality is paradoxical, and the effort to know something alters what we
seek to know. Modern rhetoricians, Halloran says, face the fundamental problem of discovering why the gap between a speaker's world and a hearer's world is so broad and learning how one might bridge it successfully. When a speaker and a hearer inhabit the same world, it is enough, commonly, that both attend to the argument. But when a speaker and an audience inhabit different worlds, the audience may never be able to hear what the speaker is saying. When speakers are deprived of a given world, Halloran concludes, they are deprived, too, of a given rhetoric. They must create their own *topoi*, their own schemes and tropes, their own way of inventing. They must constitute their own world and themselves by their language. They must create their own rhetoric. Rhetoric, then, won't tell us all we need to know, but we can learn from rhetoric where to look — at the ways character emerges in language, at the ways worlds are constituted in individual discourses.

And finally, there is an eighth reason for coming to this study. There's always that ominous curse: "Let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." It both is and isn't a curse, of course. Great gaps open between us because we speak different tongues, and we face the extraordinary dilemma described by Georges Gusdorf in *Speaking*:

It seems that the use of speech obliges us to choose between two opposite forms of alienation. On the one hand, like the madman or the mystic, we can speak as no one else speaks. On the other hand, like the practitioner of a "basic" language, we can speak as everyone else does. In both cases the very meaning of personality is done away with. The more I communicate, the less I express myself; the more I express myself, the less I communicate. It is necessary to choose between incomprehensibility and inauthenticity — between excommunication and self-denial.  

But because we do speak different tongues we can be different and say different things. And since we do speak different tongues, we still face intriguing questions: Whom will we listen to? Who will listen to us? What transpires between us? How do we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? To be sure, no study will answer all the questions, or locate and solve all the problems, but surely there are reasons enough to study *ethos* and ethical argument.

The passage from Aristotle cited a little earlier suggests strongly that ethical argument is central in human discourse. (Halloran proposed that *ethos* is all we are left with, the chance capacity to constitute a world and compose ourselves with language. If they are right, then the questions that Richard E. Vatz poses ought surely to be a focus of study among rhetoricians: "What *ethos* creates salience?" and "Who has the *ethos* to infuse meaning?"") Many have examined the nature of *ethos*, of course, but as often as not their studies have been incomplete, or they have left us where we do not want and cannot bear to be.

Certain obvious qualities might be expected to account for the incidence of authentic speech, the ethical appeal that binds a revealed character and an audience, but they do not. We might expect a compelling *ethos* to emerge where lofty learning and a thoughtful personality converge at some grand occasion, but we look through our history and find unlearned speakers and erratic personalities gaining hearers on trivial occasions.

The standard sources that we rely on for so much else in rhetorical studies don't tell us enough, or they tell us a great deal that does not turn out to be useful. Aristotle, having already proposed that "almost the most authoritative of proofs is that supplied by character," says that these things make a character trustworthy — intelligence, virility, and goodwill. That is difficult to dispute, and it is needless to do so, but we still know that intelligent, virtuous, and benevolently-disposed speakers have failed to win hearings. Quintilian gives a just and appropriate account of the truly virtuous speaker:

For however we strive to conceal it, insincerity will always betray itself, and there was never in any man so great eloquence as would not begin to stumble and hesitate so soon as his words ran counter to his innermost thoughts. Now a bad man cannot help speaking things other than he feels. On the other hand, the good will never be at a loss for honourable words or fail to find matter full of virtue for utterance, since among his virtues practical wisdom will be one.  

But we know that speakers only perceived as good seem never "at a loss for honourable words," and we know that bad men have won audiences who thought they heard virtue speaking.

Compounding our difficulty with some traditional discussions of *ethos* is that, despite best intentions, they seem so easily convertible to artifice and calculation, as in this passage from Cicero:

A potent factor in success, then, is for the characters, principles, conduct and course of life, both of those who are to plead cases and of their clients, to be approved, and conversely those of their opponents condemned; and for the feelings of the tribunal to be won over, as far as possible, to goodwill towards the advocate and the advocate's client as well. Now feelings are won over by a man's merits, achievements or reputable life, qualifications easier to embellish, if only they are real, than to fabricate where nonexistent. But attributes useful in an advocate are a mild tone, a countenance expressive of modesty, gentle language, and the faculty of seeming to be dealing reluctantly and under compulsion with something you are really anxious to prove. It is very helpful to display the tokens of good-nature, kindness, calmness, loyalty and a disposition that is pleasing and not grasping or covetous, and all the qualities belonging to men who are upright, unassuming and not given to haste, stubbornness, strife or harshness, are powerful in winning goodwill, while the want of them estranges it from such as do not possess them; accordingly the very opposites of these qualities must be ascribed to our opponents.  

If a speaker sets out on purpose to win a hearing by displaying his or her "mild tone," or "countenance expressive of modesty," or by demonstrating intelligence, virtue, and good
will, then we shouldn't be too surprised if what we get, at times, is a contrived image and a staged virtue.

A little earlier, I suggested that some studies of ethos leave us where we do not want and cannot bear to be. What if it turns out that our reasons for listening to another person are selfish and ignoble? What if it turns out that we respond to a speaker as a trustworthy ethos only if we have something at stake in what he or she says? "The trinity of Aristotle," Otis M. Walter says, "cannot explain many whose styles of thought, styles of living, and styles of hair-do are cherished and imitated. Aristotle's analysis may be a good statement of whom we ought to believe, but it is inadequate to account for many in whom we do believe." Walter suggests that the speaker having a trustworthy ethos for us fulfills a strong need that we perceive as worthy or moral but are unable to fulfill ourselves, the speaker having some sort of exclusive ability to fulfill the need: "Ethos arises only when there is a strong need, only when the need can be best gratified by another, and only when such needs are perceived to be (correctly or incorrectly) worthy." Perelman's concept of presence admits a similar possibility. Things may exist, Perelman says, and we may perceive them, without accepting them into consciousness: "it is not enough indeed that a thing should exist for a person to feel its presence." A thing has presence for us only when we are aware of it; we are aware of a thing only if it has meaning for us, and it has meaning for us only if it satisfies a need we have. The circumstances that determine presence, Perelman says, are time, place, relation, and self-interest. When a speaker proposes change, for example, he or she is asking the hearer to change, to risk self, to engage self in the discourse. Presence is essential in argumentation, Mader says, "not only because it compels one to attend to a problem but also because it compels one to recognize his own significance in relation to reality." If a thing is to enter our consciousness, engage us, Perelman says that it must be over-estimated, that is, isolated from all else in the hearer's mind. "Basically, then," Mader adds, "the argumentation must be of such a nature that on the one hand it focuses the hearer's attention on the attitude to be adopted or the action to be performed, while on the other hand, it distracts the hearer from taking into account other matters that might impede the adoption of the attitude or the performance of the action." Perhaps in the end that's all there is. Perhaps we have to acknowledge that we will listen to a speaker only when gratification is possible or when self-interest is at stake. I don't think so. I do know, however, that good ideas sometimes don't get a hearing, and it may be that they don't because they have not yet been spoken into existence in such a way as to engage our self-interest. Most arguments on energy conservation and development, for example, have apparently not yet become present to us.

We are alone, separate from each other, trying to define ourselves to each other, trying to bring others into our world, ourselves into the world of others. It is difficult to face the possibility that we can only be heard if we offer gratification, or if we manipulate others so that they think they need what we offer.

If that is the way we are, we plainly need to know. We need to know why we are sometimes frightened or self-seeking in our relations with others, why we are sometimes so exclusive in our convictions about who is a friend and companion, who is a stranger and perhaps an enemy. Understanding the nature of ethos will not, to be sure, end wars and alarms. It may help us to understand better.

Accepting for the moment Aristotle's classification of the persuasive modes, we know or should know that pathos does not account for all the arguments that occur between speakers and hearers and, indeed, seems curiously ineffectual at critical moments. The prospect of thermonuclear disaster or of complete energy shutdown seems to offer bases for ultimate emotional arguments, yet speakers addressing those subjects have not yet persuaded us to study war no more or to discover new skills. In all likelihood, as Halloran says, logos generates accord only when speaker and hearer inhabit the same universe of language and value. If neither emotional argument nor logical argument can account for all discursive accords, we must turn back to ethical argument and inquire how the presentation of one self to another creates acceptance or agreement, or fails to do so.

About this it is difficult to learn how to talk. Conventional discussions of ethical argument focus on its demand for the speaker to demonstrate his or her good sense, good character, and benevolent disposition. Yet the moment we tell a potential speaker that he or she must be certain to demonstrate good sense, good character, and easy disposition, we are, as I have already suggested, close to advising artifice and the exercise of calculated design upon an audience. We have already more than we need of good images and designed credibility. It is, perhaps, more important for us to ask just how character is revealed in language, or just what qualities of character in particular reveal good sense, good character, and good will and so elicit accord, or just how are we to discriminate among ethical appeals. But since ethical argument appears to be contingent upon a presence emerging in discourse, the real voice of a genuine personality, it may be that the mode cannot be defined or described for general purposes and that we must content ourselves with observation of its particular manifestations.

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Certainly a host of problems stands in the way of learning about ethical argument, whether we wish to describe the mode generically or seek only to describe the operation of ethos in a single discourse. One presiding problem is that all discourse is ethical, revealing speakers' characters by design or by default. Style is the revelation of identity, the syndrome of character, open to diagnosis. If all discourse is ethical, then talking about ethical discourse means talking about the whole range of human discourse. One who sets out to talk about emotional argument, for example, can probably exclude a number of discourses that are not emotional in mode and thereby focus attention upon the residue. But if one sets out to talk about ethical argument, nothing can be excluded. And that generates another major problem: if all discourse is ethical, how shall we distinguish among discourses, or mark the fruitful and the perverse?

Both worthy and unworthy discourses have won hearings in their own time or after the passage of time has brought new versions of truth, new audiences with new needs. Many have found ethical appeal in and believed pathological speakers. Indeed, ethos may win us for insufficient or bad reasons, and the perverse, neurotic voice may exercise for some the same appeal that the virtuous voice generates. Walter's account of ethos, cited earlier, suggests that ethos always operates in the same way, regardless of associated virtue or vice: "Ethos arises only when there is a strong need, only when the need can best be gratified by another, and only when such needs are perceived to be (correctly or incorrectly) worthy."

The first problem posed above, that no discourse can be excluded in the study of ethos, cannot be solved. But we can be in the process of solving it as we examine individual discourses, facing the issue of our presentation to each other and learning ways of talking about ethos. The second problem, that we have no means of discriminating among forms of ethos, can at least be considered, if not solved.

One way to approach this second problem is, for the moment at least, to abandon the rhetorical monism that we find in Walter's work elsewhere and thereby discard the notion that ethos always works in the same way. Clearly, there are different forms of ethos, and it may be possible to discern not just individual instances, but also reasonable groupings.

To begin with, I want to suggest two forms of ethos, neither of which can be satisfactorily explained by a monistic insistence, for example, "presence" or gratification.

The first is literary. Ethos does not belong to argument alone. Ethos is character, particularly as it may emerge during the process of a discourse. (An ethos emerges in any literary work in which a fivestory character becomes believable.) Characterization creates ethos. The ethos of the speaker in "My Last Duchess" emerges pretty plainly to us while at the same time the speaker aims a different ethos at the hearer in the poem. An ethos forms as Ulysses speaks in Tennyson's "Ulysses," and in fact Ulysses makes an interesting, though largely inadvertent, ethical argument in favor of his own abdication. We know the characters in At I Lay Dying as separate entities. Any well-realized literary character is well-realized by virtue of his or her language. This form of ethos does not appear to depend upon "presence," or upon need-gratification, or upon intelligence, virtue, and good will.

A second form of ethos occurs that does not appear to be explicable by monistic standards. To show what I mean, I must turn for a moment to some other features of rhetorical study and then, at somewhat greater length, to Jack Schaefer's novel, Shane.

Inventio, by its nature, calls for openness to the accumulated resources of the world a speaker lives in, to its landscapes, its information, its ways of thinking and feeling. Dispositio and elocutio, by their nature, are closures. When speech emerges as structure and style, choices have already been made, consciously or otherwise, and the speaker is no longer in a state of openness. (I'd not presume to say that we all open ourselves freely to the possibilities of our inventive world before we speak, only that the nature of invention is such as to invite openness.)

It is reasonable to say, then, that characteristically inventio is larger than dispositio and elocutio. It holds more. There is always more to be said than can be said in a given discourse. Inventio is the world the speaker lives in. Whatever its dimensions, it is normally larger than any structure the speaker can make or any style he can command. Inventio is greater than dispositio and elocutio.

That is at least "normally" true. In certain circumstances, it is not true.

At least in a certain kind of hero it does not appear to be true. In this hero there is a perfect economical balance. Inventio is equal to dispositio and elocutio; dispositio and elocutio are equal to inventio. This hero appropriates and owns all that is in his inventive world, and he can make all the structures and styles that his inventive world will generate. He uses his world fully. His invention makes fully possible a range of structures and styles; his structures and styles use up his invention. He is master of his world, and its model. He owns all its resources, uses all of its structures, all of its styles, and he is not tied to or limited by any one of them. Beowulf, I think, is such a hero. Shane is another.

Shane's inventive world stretches far, and he commands it all. His world reaches in time from a deep past to a distant future. Back of the events of Shane, he has a past "fenced as tightly as our pasture." In a scene with the boy-narrator he tells and then shows the boy how to draw and point his gun, the demonstration causing him to slip back into his past:

As the words came, he was doing it. The old gun was bearing upon some target over by the corral and the hammer was clicking at the empty cylinder. Then the hand around the gun whitened and the fingers slowly opened and the gun fell to the ground. The hand sank to his side, still and awkward. He raised his head and the mouth was a bitter gash in his face. His eyes were fastened on the mountains climbing in the distance. "Shane! Shane! What's the matter?"

He did not hear me. He was back somewhere along the dark trail of the past. (p. 79)

In a discussion of the screen western, Peter Homans says that the hero is characteristically

... a transcendent figure, originating beyond the town. Classically, he rides into town from nowhere; even if he is the marshall, his identity is in some way dissociated from the people he must save. We know nothing of any past activities, relationships, future plans, or ambitions. Indeed, the hero is himself quite ambiguous about these.
But if we do not know the details of Shane's life outside the context given in the novel, we do know that his capacities stretch not only out along "the dark trail of the past," but also far into the future. Shane was, the boy says, "one of us, unchangeable and always." (p. 102) Later the boy remarks, "he came to us and you knew that the spirit in him would sustain him thus alone for the farthest distance and forever." (p. 137) And the boy comes to know that even though Shane has gone,

He was there. He was there in our place and in us. Whenever I needed him, he was there. (p. 212)

But the range of Shane's inventive world is best revealed by the variety of structures and styles he commands. He can do all there is in his world to be done. He knows how to bow over Marian's hand when they are introduced (p. 10), and he knows how to dissemble when they try to draw him out (p. 11). By contrast, he holds violence and knows its ways. At first, he evokes in the boy a "sudden chill terror, and there were sharp hidden hardnesses in him. But these were not for us. He was dangerous as mother had said. But not to us as father too had said." (p. 30) At the same time, he masters simple, if demanding, chores. As Shane settles in to work on the tree stump, the boy is impressed by "the easy way the power in him poured smoothly into each stroke. The man and the axe seemed to be partners in the work." (p. 32) Whenever a need arises, whenever "a call came,"

...there would be a concentration in him, a singleness of dedication to the instant need, that seemed to me at once wonderful and disturbing. (p. 62)

He commands a variety of styles — all that his inventive world generates. His manner is potent from the start. "Anything he does," Joe Starrett says, "will be done right." (p. 59) Even at the first and from afar, he is seen to be decisive and durable (pp. 2, 3). He is "nice and polite and sort of gentle"; at the same time, "he's dangerous all right." (p. 15) He handles six runaway steers "neat as pie," (p. 72) yet becomes "the full sum of the integrate force that was Shane" only when he buckles on his gun belt (p. 181). The consummate gunfighter, he also has the gentleness to hear and to reassure the boy following the climactic gunfight:

"I don't care," I said, the tears starting. "I don't care if he was the fastest that ever was. He'd never have been able to shoot you, would he? You'd have got him straight, wouldn't you — if you had been in practice?"

He hesitated a moment. He gazed down at me and into me and he knew. He knew what goes on in a boy's mind and what can help him stay clean inside through the muddied, dirtied years of growing up.

"Sure. Sure, Bob. He'd never even have cleared the holster." (p. 202)

Shane owns the styles that will let him speak to man in various contexts — to farmers, ranchers, to the young cowboy he beats and then gently tends — to a woman, Marian Starrett, and to the boy who is narrator of the book.

Shane's mastery of his world is apparent from the start, though at the outset observers respond only to his depth since they have not seen him in action. He is clearly special:

the first people in the valley to see him up close, two cowhands, "stop and stare after him with curious intentness." (p. 1) "The boy-narrator is immediately struck by the "impact of the man himself." (p. 3) The boy senses early on the power and depth in Shane. Potent in him, the boy knows, is "a burst of indescribable deadliness," (p. 28) and in his eyes there is reflected "some pain deep within him." (p. 29) By the time of his systematic beating of Chris, the young cowboy, Gerald Haslam remarks, "The full capabilities of Shane's mysterious potency are now unmistakable." (p. 18) Shane is efficient at everything he undertakes; the breadth of his inventive world is revealed by the variety of structures and styles he masters.

Broad and deep and various as Shane's world is, however, it hasn't size enough for the other world that is waiting. "The open range can't last forever," Joe Starrett tells Shane, and he continues:

"The fence lines are closing in. Running cattle in big lots is good business only for the top ranchers and it's really a poor business at that. Poor in terms of the resources going into it. Too much space for too little results. It's certain to be crowded out."

"Well, now," said Shane, "that's mighty interesting. I've been hearing the same quite a lot lately and from men with pretty clear heads. Maybe there's something to it." (p. 12)

Shane recognizes the interface of the two worlds when he learns that Fletcher, the big rancher, is crowding Starrett and the other farmers:

He moved his head to look out the window over the valley to the mountains marching along the horizon.

"It's always the same," he murmured. He was sort of talking to himself. "The old ways die hard." (p. 57)

The old ways are Shane's ways. Bob recognizes that Shane "was not a farmer and never really could be":

He never shirked the meanest task. He was ever ready to take the hard end of any chore. Yet you always felt in some indefinable fashion that he was a man apart. (p. 60)

"A man is what he is," he tells the boy, "and there's no breaking the mold." (p. 203)

Being what he is, Shane won't go into that new world. He departs, and "no word or thought could hold him." (p. 203) He is different from the people of this new world; he is "in the past fenced off so securely" (p. 74), "far off and unapproachable at times even when he was right there with you." (p. 54) He cannot go into the new world without forfeiting himself. As soon as the hero identifies himself entirely with a community his nature changes." (p. 28)

Learning why this is so provides a way back to the second problem I mentioned a little earlier, the need to find a way of discriminating among different kinds of ethos.

While the study of ethos needs no defending, it justifies itself, I think, as central to rhetoric and vital to our hopes for generous and perceptible human relationships. "Language is always a disclosure — more or less deliberate, profound, and honest — of the one who speaks, of his personal view of the
world," Halloran says. "The concept of ethos is crucial to rhetoric," he continues, "because the object of rhetoric is man speaking." And if we are to learn more about ethos, it seems clear, we must learn more about how to distinguish among different kinds of ethos, and refrain from supposing that ethos always emerges to us in the same way.

Shane is a particular kind of hero, and he presents a particular kind of ethos. He is a master of his world, but he is fenced off from the new world of the Starrettts. The new world will not hold all of the structural and stylistic possibilities that could be realized from Shane's inventive world. To live in the new world, then, Shane would have to close off a part of his inventive world, and he would have to accept the structures and styles that the new world offers. This, incidentally, is precisely what the Virginian does in Owen Wister's novel: he comes out of the old world and settles into a particular structure and style given by the new world, thereby surrendering his old inventive world and accepting a new one. This Shane cannot do. At the end of the book, he rides away, preserving his identity, keeping—for a little while at least—the balance between his inventive resources and his structural and stylistic powers.

This balance is a clue to the identification of one kind of ethos. Shane is what I shall call an "efficient ethos." He fully uses his world, without waste. All that is in his inventive realm realizes itself in an array of structures and styles so varied that some of them reach over into use in another world. Invention in Shane's world equals structure and style. The same thing, I think, might be said of Beowulf and of Robin Hood and of many of our heroes. The perfect economy of invention, structure, and style makes them heroic realities to us, and makes Shane a presence to the boy. But this kind of ethos is self-completing—hence Shane's departure at the end. It is not self-renewing. Shane will be a memory, not a model for behavior. Neither Shane nor Robin Hood can live in a world devised by others.

This self-completing ethos is not the same as the ethos described by Walter, Perelman, and others. Clearly ethos occurs in more than one kind of form.

The first four categories I have suggested above are, it seems to me, fairly well, if simply, defined, though I certainly don't assume instant acceptance of either the categories I have suggested or the names I have proposed. The last category, what I have called "generative ethos," is more troublesome, and more important. I want to try to explain what I mean for this fifth category, first by looking at some discourses that seem to belong in this grouping, and then in the following section by exploring further the compelling possibilities of this ethical form. No doubt there are many qualities that constitute what I call a "generative ethos." Perhaps in each discourse there is a web of qualities indistinguishable from the discourse. Still, I think it is possible to isolate some attributes of "generative ethos" by looking at particular texts.

Richard Weaver's discussion of the Gettysburg Address provides a useful starting place. It suggests a transcendent capacity, an ethos torn by the tragedy of a particular time and place, yet awake to the great reaches of time and space beyond the moment and compelled to stewardship of the future:

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Again tremendous perspective, suggesting almost that Lincoln was looking at the little act from some ultimate point in space and time. "Fourscore and seven years ago" carries the listener back to the beginning of the nation. "This continent" again takes the whole world into purview. "Our fathers" is an auxiliary suggestion of the continuum of time. The phrase following defines American political philosophy in the most general terms possible. The entire opening sentence, with its sustained detachment, sounds like an account of the action to be rendered at Judgment Day. It is not Abe Lincoln who is speaking the utterance, but the voice of mankind, as it were, to whom the American Civil War is but the passing vexation of a generation. As for the "brave men, living and dead, who struggled here," it takes two to make a struggle, and is there anything to indicate that the men in gray are excluded?
The form of *ethos* I am trying to describe no doubt occurs in many ways. Lincoln’s speech opens wide space for all of us; it embraces us. Time past is in his speech, and hope for time future begins to take shape in his call for dedication. Quite a different manifestation occurs in Pope’s “An Essay on Criticism,” though what emerges there is still what I call a “generative ethos.” An attack on pride, the poem escapes the sin it castigates because of the dimensions it reaches. Pope’s speaking is not under the yoke of a single, fixed view, nor is it merely reaction to folly; his speaking is commodious. What makes it so, first of all, is the perspicuity of his observations, an attribute I will not try to demonstrate except by remarking the frequency with which his lines are borrowed into common use. What further gives room to his speaking is the tempering, balancing, aggregating character of his verse. When he has flailed the poet’s error in being preoccupied with the conceit, for example (II. 289-292), he leaves off and tempers the attack by turning to a principle that counters such preoccupation:

Poets like painters, thus, unskilled to trace
The naked nature and the living grace,
With gold and jewels cover every part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.
True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but ne’er so well expressed.

(II. 293-298)

And he frees himself from the tyranny of the bound view by structurally balancing view against view in single sentences or in extended passages:

’Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dangerous is the offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our ear.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this;
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss.

(II. 1-6)

Or again at the end:

Content, if hence the unlearned their wants may view,
The learned reflect on what before they knew:
Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame;
Still pleased to praise, yet not afraid to blame;
Averse alike to flatter, or offend;
Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.

(II. 741-746)

He gains room, too, through aggregating predications in which an initial assertion is enlarged through a following series or some other method of expression. In the following passage, for example, Pope expands a predication (“So by false learning is good sense defaced”) by means of two examples that by their variety enlarge its meaning:

But as the slightest sketch, if justly traced,
Is by ill-colouring but the more disgraced,
So by false learning is good sense defaced;
Some are bewildered in the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs nature meant but fools.

(II. 23-28)

“An Essay on Criticism” moves riskily, without the comfort and assurance of a fixed system of thought. Opening from the small views that prevail to the larger views waiting in the wisdom of the poets and critics catalogued in the concluding section of the poem, the discourse wins an extension forward in time: nothing is final; all is movement toward wholeness, from incompleteness.

Stewardship of a kind similar to Lincoln’s may be seen in Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village.” A sense of the speaker’s range is established early in the poem. Lines 76-96 make it clear that he has wandered widely across the earth; his experience (call it his range in space) enables him to see and to understand the contrast between the peace of the past and the desolation of the present, between the innocence and health of former times and present grief, between the frugality and vigor of old and modern luxury and corruption. Even if it does nothing else, his experience abroad distances him from the village so that he can see its alteration. His range in space is apparent in other ways. He lives in space large enough to house contradictions, knowing that the changes he sees bring “increase of our luxuries,” but understanding at the same time that the same changes that bring good also bring evil. Out of this range grows a command of time, particularly its extension into the future: he has looked and seen and knows that present actions thrust themselves into the future, which he can know (and we can testify to the accuracy of his predictions by looking around). In old time, man and seasonal change set the tempo of life:

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer’s lingering blooms delayed;
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o’er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighboring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blessed the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o’er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round; 
And still, as each repeated pleasure tired, 
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired; 
The dancing pair that simply sought renown, 
By holding out to tire each other down; 
The swain mistrustless of his spotted face, 
While secret laughter tittered round the place; 
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love, 
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove —

These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these, 
With sweet succession taught even toil to please; 
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed; 
These were thy charms — but all these charms are fled.

(II. 1-34)

But in the new world coming there will be a new tempo, set by things, and it will be hurried, crowding life:

If to the city sped — What waits him there? 
To see profusion that he must not share; 
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined 
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind; 
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know 
Exorted from his fellow-creature's woe. 
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade, 
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade; 
Here while the proud their long-drawn pomp display, 
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way; 
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign, 
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train; 
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square; 
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.

(II. 309-322)

In Johnson's Rambler No. 154 the speaker is transformed in the course of the essay; the process of speaking extends the ethos. It is important to remember the essay as a transforming process, for at its opening, the speaker is not singularly endowed, except in a special way with learning. Johnson calls on Virgil and his translator, Dryden, for epigraph, not solely to cause his audience to know that he is learned, but to introduce immediately the sense of sequentiality so important to the essay. He will "treat of arts disclos'd in ancient days," and "Once more unlock for thee the sacred spring." The early citation of Virgil and Dryden and, in the first paragraph, of Aristotle, establishes briefly the speaker's learning, to be sure, but more importantly his capacity for bringing learning to bear on issues at hand; he can bring Aristotle's injunction on politics to his use in discussing "any other part of knowledge." Thus Aristotle is not simply an authority, though he is that: "The direction of Aristotle to those that study politics, is, first to examine and understand what has been written by the ancients upon government; then to cast their eyes round upon the world, and consider by what causes the prosperity of communities is visibly influenced, and why some are worse, and others better administered." Aristotle is also the means for moving into Johnson's real subject; the passage cited above is the entire first paragraph. The opening sentence of the second paragraph moves us from Aristotle's to Johnson's subject: "The same method must be pursued by him who hopes to become eminent in any other part of knowledge."

The rest of the second paragraph (it has only three sentences) suggests by stylistic means a quality of ethos that will grow with the essay. The effect of the paragraph, as its opening sentence, quoted above, indicates, is to transfer Aristotle's direction from politics in paragraph one to sequential education in paragraph three. To get to this effect Johnson restates Aristotle's direction generally, as it applies to all parts of knowledge, in the second sentence, "The first task is to search books, the next to contemplate nature." He then restates the direction again in the third sentence, this time amplifying: "He must first possess himself of the intellectual treasures which the diligence of former ages has accumulated, and then endeavour to increase them by his own collections." What is important to the ethical argument here is that neither sentence is exclusive; by means of coordinate constructions in both sentences, the speaker is able to include both study and original effort, but he states the sequences clearly — first study, then original work. This is an early specimen of the contribution, not fully examined here, of stylistic excellence to the writer's ethical image.

With the opening of the third paragraph the speaker appears to move to the attack, castigating those who violate the sequence established with Aristotle. Having stated Aristotle's dictum generally in paragraph two, he can now move to the matter of immediate concern, the violation of sequence: "The mental disease of the present generation is impatience of study, contempt of the great masters of ancient wisdom, and a disposition to rely wholly upon unassisted genius and natural sagacity." While this sentence has the force of an attacking proposition, the later development of the ethical argument modifies the statement. Again in the third paragraph certain qualities emerge in the character speaking, not yet ethos, but under transformation. First, in the sentence just quoted there is a thoroughness, an inclusiveness in the attack. The antagonists are guilty of, first, impatience, then contempt, finally, of "a disposition to rely wholly upon unassisted genius"; that is to say, we are conducted in one sentence through a catalogue, from mere folly (impatience) to sin (pride). Second, despite the sharp attack in this sentence, there is in the long second sentence that concludes the paragraph no marked vindictiveness. The speaker accepts his antagonists' terms (they are the "wits of these happy days") and expands his attack by restating their error in such a way as to give it with each restatement a wider range: "The wits of these happy days have discovered a way to fame, which the dull caution of our laborious ancestors durst never attempt; they cut the knots of sophistry which it was formerly the business of years to untie, solve difficulties by sudden irradiations of intelligence, and comprehend long processes of argument by immediate intuition."

An ethical character, not yet fully formed, begins to emerge in these opening paragraphs. The speaker uses learning wisely, he is inclusive both in his attack and in his willingness to accept options (first study, then original work), and he is relatively free of vindictiveness even in the midst of attack.

The fourth paragraph restates and reinforces the speaker's attack, describing men "who have flattered themselves into
this opinion of their own abilities," and who thus condemn study.

The fifth paragraph advances the attack with Johnson's deflating reversal of the flattering opinion men have of themselves: "It is however certain that no estimate is more in danger of erroneous calculations than those by which a man computes the force of his own genius." This paragraph also introduces some further qualities of the *ebus* addressing us. The deadly deflation in the sentence just quoted is accomplished not with a sudden brutal thrust, but rather through the slow accumulation of the loose construction. Then in the long sentence that completes the paragraph Johnson accepts his share in the fault with the self-condemning first person: "It generally happens at our entrance into the world, that by the natural attraction of similitude, we associate with men like ourselves young, sprightly, and ignorant, and rate our accomplishments by comparison with theirs; when we have once obtained an acknowledged superiority over our acquaintances, imagination and desire easily extend it over the rest of mankind, and if no accident forces us into new emulations, we grow old, and die in admiration of ourselves."

This vanity is made to appear more pervasive in the sixth paragraph. A great breadth of experience is pulled into the long coordinate constructions of the third sentence: "He then listens with eagerness to the wild objections which folly has raised against the common means of improvement; talks of the dark chaos of digested knowledge; describes the mischievous effects of heterogeneous sciences fermenting in the mind; relates the blunders of lettered ignorance; expatiates on the heroic merit of those who devote from prescription, or shake off authority; and gives vent to the inflations of his heart by declaring that he owes nothing to pedants and universities." Through the sequence of verbs, Johnson telescopes a life of prideful folly into one sentence; his antagonist "listens," then "talks," then "describes," then "relates," then "expatiates," and finally "gives vent" in a rhetorical history of the development of youth to maturity.

The tentative summation of the seventh paragraph is unassumingly assertive, the attack moderated by "very often": "All these pretensions, however confident, are very often vain." His series of charges brought in this way to a preliminary conclusion, Johnson turns temporarily in the eighth paragraph in another direction to accept his antagonist's argument that ground may be naturally fertile. "But though the contemplations of books had neither been deceived by others nor himself, and was really born with a genius surpassing the ordinary abilities of mankind; yet surely such gifts of providence may be more properly urged as incitements to labour, than encouragements to negligence. He that neglects the culture of ground, naturally fertile, is more shamefully culpable than he whose field would scarcely recompense his husbandry." Johnson uses even his recognition of natural endowment as a means of rejecting the pride he has been attacking — the gift is from providence.

To this recognition in paragraph eight Johnson has developed, after his introduction and the preliminary proposition in paragraph three, what is essentially a *confutatio*. Following paragraph eight, he develops an expanding *confutatio*, moving toward the enlarged proposition in the last paragraph of the essay. Beginning with paragraph nine he renews his charges, but with a difference, for the *ebus* undergoes further transformation in the six-paragraph sequence, paragraphs nine through fourteen.

In the ninth paragraph, as in his opening, Johnson uses an authority at a key transition point. Cicero's advice in the first sentence is restated simply in the second sentence, amplified in the third, then narrowed to the specific in the last sentence:

Cicero remarks, that not to know what has been transacted in former times is to continue always a child. If no use is made of the labours of past ages, the world must remain always in the infancy of knowledge. The discoveries of every man must terminate in his own advantage, and the studies of every age be employed on questions which the past generation had discussed and determined. We may with as little reproach borrow science as manufactures from our ancestors; and it is as rational to live in caves till our own hands have erected a palace, as to reject all knowledge of architecture, which our understanding will not supply.

Paragraphs ten and eleven suggest that Johnson is now moving to affirmation rather than attack. Reminding his audience in paragraph ten that "it is far easier to learn than to invent," he gains sufficient comprehensiveness in paragraph eleven both to admit the happy consequences of natural insight and to reiterate the need for study. "Sometimes," he says, "unexpected flashes of instruction were struck out by the fortuitous collision of happy incidents, or an involuntary concurrence of ideas. . . ." But, as the modifier-noun combinations in this passage suggest, these insights are beyond men's power: "The happiness of these casual illuminations no man can promise to himself. . . ." Consequently, Johnson says in paragraph twelve, we are obliged to study: "The man whose genius qualifies him for great undertakings, must at least be content to learn from books the present state of human knowledge; that he may not ascribe to himself the invention of arts generally known; weary his attention with experiments of which the event has been long registered; and waste, in attempts which have already succeeded or miscarried, that time which might have been spent with usefulness and honour upon new undertakings."

But now the *ebus* has become greater than it was in the beginning. Natural endowment and a man's own toil, mentioned in paragraph eight and recognized in paragraphs ten and eleven, are now fully accepted in paragraphs thirteen and fourteen as a part of Johnson's argument: "But though the study of books is necessary, it is not sufficient to constitute literary eminence." A man must add, Johnson says, "by his own toil to the acquisitions of his ancestors," for "No man ever yet became great by imitation."

This brings Johnson to the affirmation of the final paragraph. Unlike the attacking proposition of paragraph three, it is an affirmation that rests on demonstrated capacities of the arguer, his openness and comprehensiveness, on his capacity to acknowledge good in his adversary without slacking his own thrust. Where in the early paragraphs (all before paragraph eight, but especially two and three) Johnson insists on study first, then exercise of man's natural endowments, he now reverses the order of the terms, placing endowment first, following it with reinforcing study: "Fame cannot spread wide or endure long that is not rooted in nature, and manured by art."
The ethical argument in Rambler No. 154 begins with an attacking proposition that is sustained by the confutatio attacking vanity. Breaking his argument at paragraph eight with the recognition of natural (unlearned) capacities, Johnson moves into an expanding confirmatio attacking pride even as he acknowledges good in contrary positions. When he comes at last to the restated proposition in the last paragraph, it is a proposition enlarged and enriched by the convergence of views expressed by a transformed voice that seeks identification without sacrificing conviction. "Identification is compensatory to division," Kenneth Burke tells us in A Rhetoric of Motives. "If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence."

Amos offers another opportunity to get at the kind of ethos I am trying to describe. In a strange land a man sings the Lord's song; in a smooth season a man preaches hard words — and continues to be heard. Why has he been heard, even if not always by multitudes? What is there specifically in his words that has commanded audiences? What makes his words worth listening to?

The book of Amos is an ethical argument. What the speaker is emerges in what he says and in the way he says it, and what we hear arouses a response in us (not always articulated) for certain observable qualities.

Before I try to identify some of these qualities, I should try to explain why Amos is an ethical argument. To put the matter simply, it is an ethical argument because neither logical argument nor emotional argument is functional in such an instance. It would be, at the very best, difficult to get an audience to respond emotionally in any very fruitful way to the news of its own doom. Logical argument, on the other hand, seems to function best — perhaps solely — when speaker and hearer abide in the same universe. There is an important sense, I believe, in which Amos and his hearers do not occupy the same referential sphere, cannot share or mutually accept premises, therefore cannot share the arguments tracking from these premises. Rather, an ethos functions here, because, I think, the ethos may be seen to acquire strength and wisdom in the act of speaking.

If a man respects his own thoughts, he may feel a responsibility to share them. If he sets out to share them with others, he takes on certain obligations — obligations, I hasten to add again, that cannot be once and for all prescribed for our easy instruction, but must rather be seen at work in this, that, or the other specific instance as each ethos becomes itself. We learn if we listen to Amos that he discovers, defines, and fulfills particular obligations in the course of his argument. He is, first, specific, thorough, painstaking, and appropriate in his linguistic grasp of the experiences he gathers into discourse. Second, he owns and guarantees what he is talking about. Third, he extends certain necessary ministries to us.

He is specific, thorough, painstaking, and appropriate in his linguistic embrace of the situation, exerting his freedom through the precision of his words. We prize our freedom of speech, and abuse it mightily. "You're not free to move unless you've learned to walk," Northrop Frye remarks in The Educated Imagination, "and not free to play the piano unless you practice. Nobody is capable of free speech unless he knows how to use the language. . . ." But Amos qualifies. He is specific, not general, in his charges. Before he mentions Israel, he has charged seven specific peoples with specific crimes against specific peoples: brutal conquest, enslavement, selling men into slavery, violation of familial and filial bonds, murder, desecration of tombs, violation of commandments. His mode of address is particular and specific. Approximately 75% of the nouns in the book are either proper nouns or common nouns with a high level of specificity. A count in 2:6-11 shows 78% of the nouns to be proper names and therefore clearly delimiting and specific or common nouns given specificity by the context. In the same passage (2:6-11) a sequence of specific, active verbs not only specifies particular actions but also in their sequence chronicles in a downward, then upward cycle the diminution of the Israelites — sin and the ascending level of the Lord's punishment — sold, pant, turn aside, lay down, drink — actions attributed to the Israelites — destroyed, brought, led, raised, in the consequent response of the Lord.

Such precision — scarcely hinted at here — is a function of his thorough, painstaking care, which manifests itself in two ways. First, he is thorough in the sense that he is unrelenting. The catalogue of the nations and their sins is not abstract, but quite specific, and the greatest detail comes in his indictment of Israel, which, once begun, he never ceases. Israel is indicted in 2:6-16, and her sins are explored again in 4:1-13; again in 5:10-13 he counts her transgressions, and yet again in 8:4-14. Persistently, again and again, he lays her sins before Israel, forcing them upon the consciousness. Yet this relentless catalogue is not solely for the sake of a dramatic, hammering repetition, for Amos is thorough in another sense. He does not, as is our common practice today, simply shout his primary assertion at his audience, expecting that the vigor of his shouting will demonstrate the truth of his assertion. Instead, he sets out, painstakingly, to make himself clear, to make himself known. He brings his history to his argument; he has been in the past, and has explored it — he knows and can name the specific sins of the peoples — and he takes his audience with him from his observations to his conclusions. He speaks with great care to be understood.

His care is apparent, too, in the appropriateness of the language he uses. It is not only specific, as I have already suggested, but also peculiarly fitting to his argument. I will linger here to cite only one example, but it is a particularly striking example. In the fifth chapter, after he has again warned Israel about the nature and effect of her transgressions, Amos speaks of the Lord's judgment:

21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.
22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.
23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

The naturalness of his language, particularly in the 24th verse, is uniquely felicitous to his argument. He has been attacking, among other things, vain piety and false ritual. Here ("let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream") he uses similes that show us the nature of his argument. Justice and righteousness, rightly understood,
are integral parts of a rich creation, natural and fit as the running waters, not to be artificially realized. It is the best conceivable repudiation of the hollow, insincere, artificial worship, pitting natural fidelity and plenitude against artificial piety and ritual. We learn of Amos, I would say again, that he is specific, thorough, painstaking, and appropriate in his linguistic grasp of experience.

A little earlier I attributed a second major quality to Amos: that he owns and guarantees what he is talking about. We know from the start, I think, that there is an audacity in Amos. So far as I am able to know as a layman, there was little, if anything, to presage what was to happen. So far as I know, there was no prophetic development that led naturally to Amos, no record of written prophecy before Amos. He was not, by his own words, the product of any school. Yet there he is, in Bethel, at the temple, speaking. And we know from the start that he is willing: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" He has received and accepted the call, and he goes. But audacity and willingness are not enough; these qualities do not inevitably inform a voice and strengthen an argument. Were they sufficient, one supposes, any man who found himself simultaneously sincere and energetic could move multitudes. But to his audacity and willingness, Amos brings this new quality: he owns and guarantees what he says. To own and guarantee one's words, I take it, means to be fastidiously and meticulously aware of their background, keenly thoughtful of their consequence and future; it entails giving one's words the backing of such a history of search and thinking as will stand scrutiny. What guarantees the words of Amos is the moving, commanding capacity to catch the moment and get outside the moment; he is caught and compelled by the moment, to be sure, but he sees elsewhere as clearly as he sees here, and he can see as far ahead as he can see behind.

Amos has his authority given, we know: "the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" But the point I wish to make is that his discourse creates its own authority; his words are self-authenticating. Here, particularly, I wish to suggest that he gains his authority and his audience by a space-full and time-full argument. A space-full argument, it looks there as well as here. He has seen and recorded the sins of others, and he sees the sins of Israel. When he concludes his first catalogue of the peoples with Israel, the effect is not just to include Israel, not just to save Israel for last, not just to admit sins close to home in a gesture of false humility. He has looked abroad, rather, and seen men's folly. Israel is not free of sin, nor is she uniquely guilty. All are subject to the same judgments, for the Lord is no tribal god; neither is righteousness a national principle.

Space is gathered in the argument of Amos, and the words are full of time. He has seen the past, but he also has a keen and compelling sense of futurity. The acts he condemns are in the past, but they do not stay in the past: they have consequence; nothing is lost. When he knows that, as he plainly does, Amos knows that the sins of Israel and the sins of all the people will have their consequence, too. All the sins he condemns are acts of dehumanization. The dehumanizer must eventually be dehumanized. He is doomed. His own acts wreck their consequences upon him: "Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel."

The book of Amos ends with a series of visions. It might be argued that they are evidence of his granted authority: the Lord has spoken to him, and he has, therefore, the unspeakable weight of ultimate authority. I think, however, that this is not the actual effect of the visions. They are visions of acts that lead to judgment and to consequence. Nothing is lost; the past does move into the present and into the future. The visions are, I believe, the last clear evidence of Amos' sense of futurity. He has seen abroad to the far borders; he has seen back to beginnings; and he has seen forward to endings.

I understand that there is some evidence to indicate that the last verses of the book do not belong to Amos. I am limited to the written, English version and to the kind of knowledge of the book as scripture that a layman can have, and so, in my limited frame of reference, the last verses also belong. In point of fact, they do make an appropriate ending, the fruition of his sense of judgment and futurity. Over against the past and the present, for which man must be condemned, there is a future. Over against the artificiality and the dehumanizing exploitation in the sins of men, there is a fulfillment. The last verses picture a natural reciprocity working out the fullness of creation, one thing answering to the other, one thing fulfilling the other, one thing creating the other:

13 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

Acts do have consequence, and we are condemned. But while we are caught in the grief and tragedy and vexation of the moment, Amos sees a richly space-filled and time-filled creation, still full of promise.

What is it that we learn from the ethical presence that is Amos? Amos is specific, thorough, painstaking, and appropriate — and so may we. Amos owns and guarantees his words — and so may we. But I also mentioned a third quality in Amos: he extends certain ministries to us, such ministries as Bonhoeffer described in Life Together. We know from the specific nature of his charges and his care in chronicling them that he has, first of all, listened, thereby extending what Bonhoeffer calls the first great ministry one owes to another. He is patient, patient to learn, and patient to speak, knowing that he will sometimes be misunderstood, or not heard, yet patient to keep talking. He has learned to think little of himself: "And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." He is willing to go and to be alone, to speak when he must, to insist, to proclaim: "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" And so we learn finally from Amos that if, when we speak, our words issue from a spirit of forebearing, care, and patience, then even if our words appear only to pronounce doom on our brothers, they can yet, as in the paradigm of Amos, be healing and liberating words.
Ethos is singular, and can only be described as it appears in a discourse. Even so, particular forms of ethos seem to hold sufficient qualities in common to justify some groupings. Of the groups I have suggested, the last, or "generative ethos," most deserves attention.

Good discourse is always moving toward completeness. What complicates and intensifies the process is that discourse is a closure, a stoppage, hence in itself an incompleteness. We do not speak these words unless we have already chosen or unless we have already been directed not to speak them. The act of speaking eliminates possibilities for speaking; when something is named, it is not named otherwise. There is always more to be said than can be said. The language of the generative ethos moves toward completeness, beyond closure, reaching somehow beyond its syncopated nature.

One way this begins to become apparent in the discourses cited in the preceding section is in their demonstrable extension in space and time. The ethos in each in one way or another opens the borders of the discourse to hold extraordinary space and time. The speaker in the Gettysburg Address makes space enough for all to come into the future he is summoning them to create. The speaker in "The Deserted Village" distances himself from the village, largely ridding himself of self-interest, and as he does so begins to see the village so well that he can also see its future — so accurately, I might add, that two hundred years later we are still trying to correct problems he identified. The speaker in "An Essay on Criticism" creates extensive dimensions for himself by the riskiness of his endeavor: freeing himself of systems, he opens his discourse toward wholeness. The speaker in Rambler No. 154 grows as he speaks. As Walker Percy puts it, "a sentence entails a world for both utterer and receiver," and the Rambler speaker creates a world spacious enough to house his antagonists, modifying his own world and future in the process. The speaker in Amos makes a world full of time and space, getting far beyond tribal boundaries and seeing what consequence looks like as it works itself out in the future. Each of them is a steward, not an owner, of space and time.

This incipient understanding of "generative ethos" creates some dissatisfaction with the still common conception of communication as the clear acceptance by a receiver of a message effectively transmitted by a sender. This radio model of communication has, to be sure, figured centrally in many provocative studies of language; the sender-message-receiver (encoder-message-decoder) model gives an enabling language that has made it possible for students to explore communication in successful ways, as readers of Kinneavy's A Theory of Discourse, for example, will know. But the model has severe limitations. It does not provide a useful means of understanding ethical appeal. It is, though useful, an inaccurate description of the language process. Implicit in the model is the notion that the message is separate from the speaker, that it leaves the speaker and reaches a hearer. But Walter Ong argues that "all words projected from a speaker remain, as has been seen, somehow interior to him, being an invitation to another person, another interior, to share the speaker's interior, an invitation to enter in, not to regard from the outside." Our words never leave us; the message is not separate from the speaker. When I speak, I must use words that are in the public domain. The jingly meaning accumulations of others reverberate in the words, though I may fail to hear them, and if I hear them I may fail to use them or choose not to use them, and if I hear them and use them my audience may fail to hear them or choose not to hear them. A speaker manifests his universe in his words; his words are his universe, and its shape is in the words whether or not he understands and controls, whether or not we listen and see. "To say that we speak in order to communicate," Paul van Buren writes, "is to abstract a tiny section of the use of words and call that the whole." With language, he continues, we "fashion (or accept from others) the world about us. The only world we have is the one we can speak of. The world is ours, therefore, as we speak of it." To consider communication, then, not as a radio system but as an invitation gives us what may be a better conception and, not coincidentally, a better accounting of what "generative ethos" does: communication seen as invitation brings a heater (guest) into a world that he or she can live in, that has living space and time.

What frequently stands in the way of communication is some violation of space or time or both. We believe that the flood of language around us often blocks human correspondence; if that is so, it is not just because language at floodtide is all too often careless and sometimes corrupt, but also because the volume crowds our living space and our time, sometimes generating frenetic speed, sometimes a paralysis. We understand, too, that communication is often blocked because, as Geoffrey Wagner has mentioned, "we are, in short, our own enchained listeners." We may hear ourselves, not another; the other's words may act only as a trigger to release our own, unlocking not the other's meaning, but one we already possessed. When this happens, we are bound in space, caught tightly in our own province. Specialized languages — slang, cult tongues, professional jargons, and the like — stand in the way of communication because they bind space, the specialized language of the speaker prohibiting entry by a hearer into the speaker's discursive universe. Forms of utterance that I might call Pavlov language — clichés, some cultural commonplace, conversational forms that we use instead of thinking — are the speaker's violation of his or her own space and time, evidence of failure to explore and to know his or her own world. The languages of television and other mass media crowd our time and hurry our responses, or stop our responses entirely. The languages of confrontation set space against space, universe against universe, and cannot wait for meditation time. Many episodes of failed communication and many instances of communication never attempted are consequences of some violation of space or time or both.

Ethos is generative and fruitful when the time and space stewarded by the speaker give free room for another to live in. (What I earlier called "gratifying ethos," for example, while it may at a particular moment be compelling and satisfying, is at last restrictive and binding.) "Generative ethos" is commodious. The self-authenticating language of such an ethos issues an invitation into a commodious universe. What makes that possible is its extension in space and time. Argument is partial; when a speaker argues a proposition or develops a theme or makes an assertion, he or she has knowingly or not chosen one proposition, one theme, one assertion from all available. When we speak, we stand somewhere, and our standing place makes both known and
silent claims upon us. We make truth, if at all, out of what is incomplete, or partial. "An individual utterance," Bonhoeffer said, "is always part of a total reality which seeks expression in this utterance." Yet language is a closure, for we cannot speak two words simultaneously. Generative language seeks to shove back the restraints of closure, to make in language a commodious universe, to stretch words out beyond our private universes. Extension in time and space seems to be one effort that makes this possible. A last example may further clarify what I am trying to say.

The fourteenth chapter of Corinthians I discusses two forms of behavior, speaking in tongues, quite outside the range of normal behavior, and prophesying, two spiritual gifts here set in contrast with each other. Speaking in tongues, we are told, was common in at least some early churches, as no doubt it is common in some churches today; the gift manifests itself in an ecstasy that realizes itself in a torrent of sound typically untranslatable by a hearer. The gift appears to have been highly coveted as evidence of immediate communion with God, though it was recognized as dangerous since the possessor might prove susceptible to spiritual pride. Prophesying, on the other hand, far from being the act of foretelling the future, may be better understood as a kind of preaching, or teaching, or a speaking out of the message of God. While Paul concedes that the speaker of tongues indeed speaks to God and acknowledges the vitality of the gift in the fifth verse ("I would that ye all spake with tongues . . . "), he nevertheless focuses on the error of speaking in tongues:

1 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

The speaker in tongues, Paul says, profits no audience, for no audience can distinguish meaning in the sounds (14:6-7). If men come together speaking tongues, they must remain aliens:

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. 11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

The gift is powerful, Paul continues, but edifies no one unless interpretation follows:

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

And finally, Paul concludes, should a congregation come together speaking in tongues, the unlearned, the ungifted, and the unbelieving must conclude that all are mad.

Better for the church, Paul argues, is prophesying, the speech that "speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (14:3):

4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

And so, while he is himself gratified by the gift, he exhorts men to edification:

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: 19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

In the distinction between speaking in tongues and prophesying is a last guide to talking about "generative ethos." The speaker in tongues inhabits a bound universe; his time and space are small, and can accommodate no other. The other must stay outside; he cannot enter. The speaker in tongues does not predicate; he does not speak forth to embrace and be embraced; his world has his own dimensions. He lives in a bound universe. And this is no alien experience; we are all speakers in tongues. He who prophesies, however, speaks to edify. He predicates; he speaks forth to another. Space and time come thereby into his speaking, and his universe begins to slip its bonds. "Generative ethos" exists in a universe in the process of unbinding itself; it is always speaking itself into existence in commodious time and space.

What has all this to do with freshman composition? Must I now, having come this far in this direction, break off, stop, and whiz off in another direction to find some way of connecting myself with composition? I don't think so, though I do remember and prize Graham Martin's remark: "The only thing that is totally certain is that one may be mistaken. The only valid ideology is an anti-ideology." 38

Everything is connected with freshman composition. The course is not a service course to other disciplines in the university. All other disciplines in the university provide service courses to freshman composition. All other courses are inventive resources, structural arrangements, or stylistic displays of varying uses in the central human activity, language-making.

But there are more specific connections, I think, between the study of ethos and the teaching of composition. Some are important for localized and practical purposes. Others, I believe, have a continuing importance. And I hope there are values in the study of ethos for the teaching of composition that I have not had wit enough to see.

a. The study of ethos and the forms of ethical appeal are valuable in any course of study because it requires close attention to the text of a discourse.

b. The study of ethos provides a mode of criticism that students may practice, a potential means of distinguishing among the voices they hear, and a possible defense against the seductive voices of the seller, the image-maker, and the tyrant.
c. The study of *ethos* suggests, quite simply, some interesting and useful writing for students to do — the creation of dramatic *ethos*, for example, and the imitation of the language of an *ethos* not their own. One form this latter exercise might take, for instance, is for students to write what some actual or fictional personage would say in some new context. What would Johnny Carson say if he were interviewing inhabitants of a shelter for battered wives? What would J. Alfred Prufrock say if he were visiting a sick friend in the hospital? How would Howard Cosell talk about pornography? To do this kind of exercise students would have to pay close attention to the voice they were to imitate, and that would never, I think, be a loss. It would also direct attention to the way character and language create and reveal each other, and that would be an extraordinary gain in any composition class.

d. The study of *ethos*, and particularly of the notion of "generative *ethos*," provides a way of explaining why flaws in writing are flaws. We can reclain against the euphemism and the cliché and red-pencil their occurrence until a month from Tuesday, and the effect we have will be less than if we explain why a cliché, for example, works against the writer. When we accept someone's cliché into our writing, we are binding ourselves with another's language and another's thought, substituting another's language and thought for our own. If students can learn that — and we can teach them — then we will no longer have to red-pencil their clichés, for they will have a reason to edit them out on their own.

e. In *Speaking*, Georges Gusdorf remarks that "Each sentence orients us in a world which, moreover, is not given as such, once and for all, but appears to be constructed word by word." A little later, he continues, "Living speech acknowledges the requirement of the spiritual life in a world — not at all a closed system achieved once and for all — but an effort of constant regeneration." If we remember that, and if we can learn from the study of *ethos* that the creation of a "generative *ethos*" can never be wholly done, then we may remember to approach our students' papers as editors, and not as policemen.

f. The study of *ethos*, and particularly of the forms of *ethos* I have mentioned, may help us find a way to cope with which language a student can or should use, which language the student has a right to. We may be able to learn that students can with honor and honesty use different languages, and that they must be free to make their own character however they will. For functional or gratifying purposes, students may adopt languages of the market place or languages of the dominant class, but the study of "generative *ethos*" may help them to know that they must speak their own way, embracing us if it is possible, but going it alone if they must.

g. The study of the forms of *ethos* I have mentioned might one day remind us to look at ourselves as teachers of composition and to examine the kind of *ethos* we present to our students. Sometimes we create a dramatic *ethos*. Sometimes we present a gratifying *ethos*, and promise, for example, that success follows literacy and the well-placed comma. Often, I think, we present forms of efficient *ethos* and emerge to our students as capable, knowledgeable, but forever separate from them. 

h. Perhaps the conception of "generative *ethos*" will in some way remind us to bring to our students all that is at stake in composition. Style, Winston Weathers has said, is "the proof of a human being's individuality"; it is a "revelation of himself" and "a gesture of personal freedom against inflexible states of mind." Everything is at stake. "Once again let us make clear that words witness to being," Gusdorf says, "for what we are being played out in the world of speech is the very destiny of human souls."

i. And finally, perhaps the notion of "generative *ethos*" may help us to remember that we can both speak ourselves into existence and be with another in language:

True communication is the realization of a unity, i.e. a piece of common labor. It is the unity of each with the other, but at the same time the unifying of each with himself, the rearrangement of personal life in the encounter with others. I cannot communicate as long as I do not try to bring to the other the profound sense of my being. The communion of love, which represents one of the most complete modes of understanding between two persons, can't be achieved without a recall of personality, each discovering himself in the contact with the other.

Last spring I went to a concert at our daughter's high school. From where we sat, we could just see our daughter with her violin. Fathers being what they are, she being lovely and the music sweet, I found myself welling over. Among other things, I thought, "How can any other outside the family know her and love her so, not being joint members as we are of her whole history?" I wanted to answer, "No one can." But then I remembered that there is such a thing as love between a young woman and a young man who did not participate in her whole history. And that let me think that it is possible for any of us — if the stars are right and we work to make ourselves human — to enfold another whose history we have not shared. In this act of enfolding, the speaker becomes through speech; the speaker's identity is always to be saved, to emerge as an *ethos* to the other, whose identity is also to be cherished. Then they may speak, each holding the other wholly in mind.

Notes

1Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1556A.
7"Romantic Reality in the Spy Stories of Len Deighton," *Armchair Detective*, 10 (April, 1977), Fred Erisman's descrip-
tion of the circumstances of the modern fictional spy might be taken as an account of the ultimate isolation of the modern speaker. The spy’s world, Eiseman says, is fragmented and evanescent. “Nothing is permanent,” he goes on, “and little is trustworthy.” In such a world, the spy must erect for himself “a precisely limited and controlled life that contrasts dramatically with the raggedness of the world about him.” So it is, Halloran suggests, with speakers in the modern world—they make themselves by the terms of their own speech, or else they don’t exist.

R. R. McGUIRE, in “Speech Acts, Communicative Competence, and the Paradox of Authority,” Philosophy and Rhetoric, 10 (Winter, 1977), 30-45, makes an interesting distinction between communication, which occurs “against a background of mutually assumed validity claims,” and discourse, which occurs when one or more of the claims is challenged.


Richard E. Vatz, Letter to the Editor, Philosophy and Rhetoric, 8 (Winter, 1975), 68.

Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, I, i.

Cicero, De Oratore, II, xiii, 182.


Ibid., p. 43.


Ibid., p. 381.

Perelman, pp. 117-118.

Mader, p. 376.

Walter, p. 43. Having made this claim, Walter saw that we need defenses against certain forms of ethos: “If ethos arises in seemingly hopeless situations where needs are desperate, then one defense must be to reduce the needs that pave the road down which the man on horseback rides. One strong defense against ethos is to reduce starvation, hopelessness, and degradation. In a word, we must prevent the uniform frustration of a whole people. When needs are too strong, people may abandon democratic problem-solving and turn to the father-figure. The process can be stymied by seeing that no single need provides enough fertilizer to nourish the malignant growth of the single savior... Then when needs are relatively well satisfied we have a defense against the social pathology of ethos. Secondly, we may help a society develop immunity to pathological ethos by the educational process of developing sophistication about which needs are worthy and which are superficial or neurotic. To whatever extent the human being can refine his own needs, criticize them, suppress some and develop others, to this extent he can existentially create himself and help determine the kinds of people he will admire. One great objective of education should be to create people who will not be subject to neurotic needs. A second defense against the pathology of ethos lies in creating people with a conscious and sophisticated sense of value. A third defense is that societies must produce many men who can meet the needs of people. Ethos does not become strong unless the agent possessing it seems to have some sort of exclusive power to gratify needs... This third defense, that of produc-