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The Rhetoric and Philosophy of Early American Discourse 1767-1801: Toward a Theory  
of Common Sense

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## Abstract

What are the rhetorical and philosophical implications of common sense in colonial America during the time immediately preceding, during, and following the American Revolution? A study of seminal texts from the Classical era, the Enlightenment, and the American Revolution will reveal the uses of common sense as rhetorical invention in each historical period. This study will also identify the various philosophies of common sense at play in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to better understand their influence upon the construction of early American rhetoric. While segments of postmodern rhetorical theories challenge or reject the presuppositions of common sense philosophy, this study will investigate ways in which rhetoric divorced from the resources of common sense places the prospect for rhetorical invention at risk. By investigating various philosophies of common sense articulated and acted upon by Americans during the Revolutionary era, I will explore the viability of common sense approaches to contemporary notions of rhetorical invention. These principles, from the Classical and Enlightenment common sense traditions, are cultivated from a common sense philosophy that is grounded in Aristotelian and Enlightenment scholarship. Such scholarship assumes specific first principles of common sense that create a forum for multiple and interrelated common senses.

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Common Sense

Introduction: *Common sense as rhetorical invention: Terms, dynamics, questions, problems, conversations, and approach.*

What are the rhetorical and philosophical implications of common sense in colonial America during the time immediately preceding, during, and following the American Revolution? A study of seminal texts from the Classical era, the Enlightenment, and the American Revolution will reveal the uses of common sense as rhetorical invention in each historical period. This study will also identify the various philosophies of common sense at play in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to better understand their influence upon the construction of early American rhetoric. While segments of postmodern rhetorical theories challenge or reject the presuppositions of common sense philosophy, this study will investigate ways in which rhetoric divorced from the resources of common sense places the prospect for rhetorical invention at risk. By investigating various philosophies of common sense articulated and acted upon by Americans during the Revolutionary era, I will explore the viability of common sense approaches to contemporary notions of rhetorical invention. These principles, from the Classical and Enlightenment common sense traditions, are cultivated from a common sense philosophy that is grounded in Aristotelian and Enlightenment scholarship. Such scholarship assumes specific first principles of common sense that create a forum for multiple

and interrelated common senses.

### **Rhetoric and Common Sense: An Historical Perspective**

Defining “common sense” would seem an appropriate way to begin a discussion of the relationship between such an idea and rhetoric. However, as Wayne N. Thompson concludes in “Aristotle as a Predecessor to Reid’s ‘Common Sense,’” common sense transcends basic categorization, which leads to problems in definition. Thompson explains that “[d]efining the term by the process of categorizing and adding differentia, thus, encounters trouble at the very beginning” (210). Due to the ironic complexities of common sense, we must not seek an exhaustive definition in order to understand the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense; rather, we will investigate ways in which common sense precedes and functions as rhetorical invention. Therefore, within the scope of rhetoric, common sense will be viewed in two overlapping areas: 1) the historical relationship between rhetoric and common sense, and 2) common sense as rhetorical invention. Investigating these overlapping areas will lead to various treatments and definitions of common sense.

For instance, the historical relationship between rhetoric and common sense leads directly to Aristotle and Vico. The former utilizes common places and common sensibles in his theory of rhetoric. Both the common places of argumentation and common sensibles assume that a human’s innate common sense follows lines of reasoning, example, and enthymeme to arrive at a reasoned decision. However, Vico’s *On the Study Methods of Our Time* does not require inference to establish the relationship between rhetoric and common sense.

Vico clearly announces the relationship between rhetoric and common sense when he claims, “I may add that common sense, besides being the criterion of practical judgment, *is also*

*the guiding standard of eloquence*” (emphasis added, 13). For Vico, rhetoric and common sense become intertwined and seem synonymous: “It is a positive fact that, just as knowledge originates in truth and error in falsity, *so common sense originates from perceptions based on verisimilitude*” (Emphasis added, 13). This notion presupposes that common sense precedes rhetorical invention, and is not merely constructed through the act of rhetorical invention. Since Cicero defines invention in *De Inventione* as “the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one’s cause plausible,” the rhetor’s first task is to “*discover* [. . .] valid or seemingly valid arguments,” not to fabricate arguments (Emphasis added, 19). Therefore, a natural starting point for the act of invention is common sense. For common sense simultaneously functions as an originator to rhetorical invention as well as a contributor to the process of invention.

Common sense, as a source of rhetorical invention, is a powerful and necessary resource for the rhetorician and audience alike to discover new possibilities for reflecting upon, altering, conducting and maintaining their affairs. The term common sense, which emerges from Aristotelian, Viconic, and Scottish rhetorical theory and philosophy, contains specific coordinates that American patriots adapted to the cause of colonial independence in the American Revolution. Unique in its orientation, the rhetoric of the American Revolution is distinguished from less successful revolutions in history because it is informed by common sense philosophy derived from Classical and Enlightenment sources. Thus, this study will argue that the architects of American Revolutionary rhetoric both consciously and instinctively appropriated and applied principles of Common Sense Philosophy derived from Greco-Roman and Scottish Enlightenment sources to the invention of their discourses.

### **Dynamics (Common Sense in the Revolution: Adams & Paine)**

John Adams, regarded as “the Atlas of Independence” by his contemporaries due to his powerful rhetoric and countless hours of deliberation on the floor of the first two Continental Congresses, had more than passion on his side (qtd. in *Founding Brothers* 165). As a lawyer-turned-statesman, Adams was heralded by his fellow Founding Fathers as one of the premier orators of his time (*Founding* 165). Prompted by his radical cousin, Samuel Adams, John Adams applied his Harvard education and experience as a lawyer to what he considered to be the noblest cause: freedom from tyranny.<sup>i</sup> To this end, John Adams drew upon oratorical resources derived from his Classical education and perfected in the court of law. As a student of Aristotle and Cicero, Adams was grounded in rhetorical theory that privileged audience-centered discourse.

Audience-centered discourse seeks to invoke common sense through rational appeals and shared experiences. Although Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes railed against the rhetorical resources of the ancients, Adams held firmly to the ancients’ common sense approach to rhetorical invention. Yet Adams’s public rhetoric was limited: his speeches were delivered to affect the representatives of the people who themselves held dissenting views on the cause of Independence and the call for Revolution.<sup>ii</sup> It was not until January of 1776 that common sense employed as rhetorical invention hit the streets with a broader public appeal.

Ironically it was a recent British immigrant who brought the fight for Revolution to the public. Thomas Paine’s best-selling pamphlet, *Common Sense*, sold over 500,000 copies in its time.<sup>iii</sup> While Adams loathed Paine’s governmental plan, he supported the message: the time for Revolution is *now*.<sup>iv</sup> Adams’s rhetoric—steeped in common sense, but ostensibly confined to private chambers—had a public counterpart in Paine’s *Common Sense*; for although their

residual messages depart in substance, the rhetorical discourse of both Adams and Paine converge through common sense as rhetorical invention. What was once an inherent feature of the rhetoric of Adams's spatially confined deliberative discourse becomes an exterior feature of a public appeal in Paine's *Common Sense*—a theoretical thread that stitched together the cause of Independence.<sup>v</sup>

### **Research Questions**

To trace this thread through the fabric of the American Revolution we must ask the question, what were the functional rhetorical theories—implicit and explicit—of common sense that drove the cause of Independence, a rhetorical and historical moment in which diverse political interests were effectively unified for the sake of a common good? Therefore, the study first will investigate a philosophy and rhetoric of common sense that develops from the Classical era to the Enlightenment.

### **Problems (Contemporary Context)**

Due to the postmodern impulse to renounce Classical rhetorical theories and practices in favor of the theories set forth by thinkers like Marx, Derrida, and Foucault, rhetoricians concerned with incorporating historically marginalized voices into rhetorical theory and practice have “significantly challenged the historical biases represented in the canon of great works [. . .] The addition of such voices has also challenged the methods employed in the study and enactment of rhetoric” (Lucaites, Condit, and Caudill 535). Critical rhetoric displays an overall ideological turn in rhetorical studies that deals specifically with issues of gender, race, and class and seeks, in part, to destabilize the assumption that common sense remains a valid source of rhetorical invention. Therefore, if a study of common sense in the rhetoric of the American



Revolution is to yield contemporary implications, then we must also consider the question, what is at risk if rhetoric is divorced from common sense, as some contemporary rhetorical theories have recommended?

Rhetorical discourses that explore issues of gender, race, and class are paramount to critical rhetoric. Critical rhetoric places such discourses, envisioned as articulations of marginalized voices, in contrast to the Western biases of Classical rhetorical treatises and uses such discourses to criticize the study and practices included within Classical rhetorical theory. For instance, James Arnt Aune's *Cultures of Discourse: Marxism and Rhetorical Theory* critiques the marginalizing tendencies of traditional rhetorical theory. Aune "propos[es] a rereading of the history of rhetorical theory in Marxist terms," because he identifies traditional rhetorical theory as being grounded in repressive strategies intended to maintain the power of the "propertied elite" (159). The author further suggests that the mechanisms of control maintained by the elite are rooted in common sense orientations of society. These orientations are depicted ideologically in the rhetorical situation as essentialist beliefs: traditional beliefs or practices intended to maintain the status quo and validate values that oppress those who do not fit into rigid social structures.

Critical rhetoricians such as Aune generally oppose the culturally and socially-embedded power relations that are created and enacted in contemporary rhetorical practices. However, the notion that Classical concepts of common sense participate in cultural and ideological hegemony can be contrasted to how common sense works as rhetorical invention in all rhetorical situations because, as Gerard Hauser indicates in *Vernacular Voices*, people organize around the issues that matter most to them. Rather than dismissing Classical theories of common sense, Hauser's

rhetorical theory invigorates Classical rhetorical theory through the channels of multiple publics, which he collectively refers to as a “reticulate public sphere” (64). He explains that “we belong to a community insofar as we are able to participate in its conversations. We must acquire its vernacular language in order to share rhetorically salient meanings” (74). Within the framework of Hauser’s rhetorical theory, common sense as rhetorical invention remains intact and promotes forms of critique based upon the unique needs of a particular community.

With such a community in mind, we can better understand Hauser’s argument that “vernacular exchanges both lack and transcend the force of official authority” (67). Such vernacular exchanges enable multiple voices from diverse perspectives to contribute to the marketplace of ideas. Therefore, common sense would emerge from a rhetorical community within a particular place, a particular time, and in response to a specific need. Common sense, from Hauser’s Classically-derived perspective, does not enforce rigid consent from all members of a community on a given topic. Hauser’s reliance upon Aristotelian rhetorical theory reinforces the resourcefulness of common sense as a starting point for rhetorical action in a diverse community.

### **Conversations and Rationale**

Common sense needs to be reconsidered in the postmodern moment to better serve communities. While rhetoric can be charged by the critical rhetoricians with serving the elite, it can also be vindicated by its historical relationship to consciousness-raising movements, e.g. civil rights and women’s suffrage, and political activism in movements for the abolition of slavery, gender equality, and pro- and anti-abortion activism. Each of these rhetorical movements employs a traditional rhetorical reliance upon common sense. Subsequently, each of

these rhetorical movements has received scholarly attention in varying degrees. However, for a case study in the accessibility and resourcefulness of common sense as rhetorical invention one must first turn to the American Revolution. “The intellectual and social environment” of the American Revolution gave rise to various approaches to common sense appeals and created a unique rhetorical situation in which issues of power relations and Classical rhetoric combined to ignite Revolutionary fervor and political action in the name of common sense (“On Systems”140). The connection between common sense as rhetorical invention and the struggle for American Independence has been suggested but not systematically explored in contemporary rhetorical scholarship. Much research points in the direction of the first central question in this study of the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense, yet research that examines common sense as rhetorical invention during the cause of American Independence is scarce. Even so, some existing scholarship does invite further research into the relationship between common sense and rhetoric.

For example, “Republican Charisma and the American Revolution: The Textual Persona of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*,” epitomizes current rhetorical analyses of common sense. “Republican Charisma” uncovers the charismatic nature of Paine’s rhetoric, chronicles the pamphlet’s reception and situates it within the Republican tradition. However, it does not unpack the rhetorical and philosophical underpinnings of the term. This reliance upon Paine’s *Common Sense* in treating the broader senses of the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense is a trend in literary, rhetorical, historical and philosophical scholarship.

In *The Commonalities of Common Sense*, Robert A. Ferguson tracks down the symbols of identification within Paine’s pamphlet. *Commonalities* develops a theory for contemporary rhetoric to respond to the felt needs of the community by arguing from a sense of commonality.

Ferguson argues, consistent with the present argument, that common sense is tacit knowledge that is accessible to the masses. His case study, Paine's *Common Sense*, suggests the relationship between common sense and natural rights which derives from the Scottish Enlightenment.

True to his literary background, Ferguson focuses on analyses of formal qualities without privileging argumentation, thus bypassing the Aristotelian, Ciceronian, and Viconic common sense philosophy that permeates the text. To advance a rhetorical theory of common sense, it is necessary to survey these proponents of common sense in addition to considering Classical, Enlightenment, and contemporary critiques of common sense. Therefore, a large part of this project requires identifying the history, rhetoric and philosophy of common sense to advance the rhetorical and philosophical implications of common sense in the rhetoric of the American Revolution.

For a coherent understanding of the proposed problem from a philosophical orientation one must turn to *The Claims of Common Sense: Moore, Wittgenstein, Keynes and the Social Sciences*. In *Claims* John Coates draws from Moore, Wittgenstein, and Keynes to create a viable theory of common sense. As he develops theories of common sense, Coates traces the philosophical roots of common sense to Aristotle: "Aristotle's careful attention to, and the respect for, common forms of speech makes him the first of the common sense philosophers" (14). However, as much as Coates constructs common sense from prevailing philosophies in *Claims*, he also takes it to task by contrasting it to claims in the social sciences.

The clash Coates presents between social scientific research and common sense places the question at the crossroads of philosophy and rhetoric. The author's research points to the fact that even within the social sciences, an area indebted to social scientific methodology, common

sense is necessary to the discovery and promulgation of inquiry. However, to understand the interchange between philosophical and rhetorical theories and ideas that emerge from the issue of common sense from a rhetorical perspective, it is necessary to turn to the following texts: Barbara Warnick, *The Sixth Canon*, Vincent M. Bevilacqua, “Campbell, Priestley, and The Controversy Concerning Common Sense,” and Dennis R. Bormann, “Some ‘Common Sense’ about Campbell, Hume, and Reid: The Extrinsic Evidence.”<sup>vi</sup>

*The Sixth Canon* places the works of Reid, Hume, and Gerard in conversation. The result is a philosophical explanation of the philosopher’s divergent rhetorical theories. For instance, Warnick dedicates a lengthy section of the fourth chapter to “A Commonsense Philosophy of Taste: Reid’s Reply to Hume and Gerard.” Here Warnick differentiates Reid’s philosophy of common sense from Hume’s and Gerard’s by explaining that “[f]or Reid, the fundamental dimension of thought was belief, not sensation,” which emerges from the Scottish School’s of Common Sense reaction to associationist psychology (102).<sup>vii</sup> These oppositional ideas between common sense and associationist psychology uncover the relationship between philosophies of how the mind works and the necessary extension of these philosophies to perspectives on human nature. However, while Warnick proposes these internal and external relationships between thought and extension, or thought and action, Bevilacqua exposes the intrinsic and extrinsic components of the relationship.

In “Campbell, Priestley, and The Controversy Concerning Common Sense,” Bevilacqua, drawing from a footnote by George Campbell, explains the “fundamental differences between eighteenth-century common sense and associationist psychology, and further suggests philosophical differences in rhetorical views of Campbell and Priestley” (80). Bevilacqua’s aim

is to “explain the principal point in dispute between Priestley and the common sense school, indicating its *basis in conflicting views of human nature* and its effect on the rhetorical theories presented by Campbell and Priestley” (Emphasis added, 80). This article provides case studies in the utility of common sense argumentation while simultaneously indicating Priestley’s denial of a “common sense ground of assent to self-evident truths” (80). Therefore, Bevilacqua contributes a historical, philosophical, and rhetorical framework to the Enlightenment struggle between associationist psychology and common sense. However, it is not Bevilacqua’s intention to argue for the privileged status of one standpoint over the other, but to focus upon the centrality of the philosophical differences which underlie proponents of either side of the debate.

Similar to Bevilacqua’s contribution to the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense, Bormann does not propose to defend the utility of common sense reasoning. Instead, Bormann focuses on relationships between thinkers and the teasing out of the implications of these relationships to their respective standpoints on the nature of philosophy and rhetoric. The author explains, “My purpose in this essay is to clear up some of the confusion that exists about Campbell’s ‘philosophy’ in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* [. . .] [C]ontrary to Lloyd F. Bitzer’s interpretation, [Campbell] was viewed as a member of the Common Sense School of Philosophy; in short, he was an opponent of Hume’s skeptical system” (396). Therefore Bormann’s essay clarifies some of the conflicting views on Campbell’s work and situates Campbell’s work within a common sense philosophy. As Bormann establishes this connection he deepens the gap between associationist psychology and common sense. However, identical to Bevilacqua’s aims, Bormann’s focus is not a defense of the common sense tradition, but rather an attempt to align like-minded thinkers in an effort to better understand Campbell’s *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. In

so doing, Bormann identifies a lack in rhetorical scholarship.

For instance, Bormann claims that “[a] detailed explanation of the importance of the Common Sense philosophy to the development of the American rhetorical tradition has not been written,” and his statement remains fact (396). However, to adapt Bormann’s claim to the focus of the present study, a “detailed explanation of the importance of Common Sense philosophy to the development” of the discourses contributing to the American Revolution “has not been written.” Within this revised claim, various philosophies of common sense, not merely the Scottish School of Common Sense, will be connected to the development of Revolutionary rhetoric. And in order to develop a framework for the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense, it is necessary to analyze primary sources that generate cohesive epistemologies for the term.

### **Approach to Close Reading**

The critical apparatus guiding this dissertation is textual interpretation.<sup>viii</sup> The method of interpretation is close textual analysis, also known as close reading, and hermeneutics, due to the phenomenological focus of attention to the construction of meaning in the designated text. Each titular designation of the critical apparatus discloses the academic bent of the critic: close textual analysis emerges from literary studies; close reading is generally attributed to rhetorical studies; and hermeneutics as a mode of textual interpretation emerges from theologians’ concern with understanding the internal complexities of the Bible. Nor do these loose guidelines exhaust the variances in approach within a particular area of study.

For example, when framing the contemporary approaches to close reading, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar claims in “Close Readings of the Third Kind: Reply to My Critics,” that there are “two dominant reading strategies [. . .] associated with the rhetorical turn” (330). Both reading

strategies maintain the relationship between rhetoric and persuasion. However, Gaonkar points out that the seminal difference between the reading strategies is lodged within the relationship between rhetoric and theory.

Gaonkar explains that the first approach to close reading “seeks to make the object of analysis intelligible in terms of its rhetoricity” (330). Viewed from this perspective, the role of the interpreter is to employ the resources of rhetoric as a “master trope” to understand the text through its persuasive qualities (330).<sup>ix</sup> To provide the interpreter with a balanced account of close reading that foregrounds “rhetoricity” Gaonkar identifies the potential drawbacks of a close reading that privileges persuasion. The author explains that interpreters adhering to the first approach to close reading may treat the text as “predictable,” or make far-reaching or “global” claims about either the nature of the text, or their personal interpretation of the text (330). These issues may arise when the interpreter neglects or does not fully account for all of the rhetorical elements contributing to the construction of text, or when the interpreter anachronistically takes a text out of context to reflect upon past, present, or future events. Therefore, Gaonkar concludes that “[t]he priority of the rhetorical dimension [ . . . ] requires further accounting, if this reading strategy is to succeed” (330). An alternative to this potential error in interpretation may be found in the second dominant reading strategy.

The second close reading strategy Gaonkar outlines maintains the relationship between rhetoric and persuasion, but limits the role of “rhetoricity” in the process of interpretation by “recourse to more precisely articulated theoretical constructs” (330). This attention to theory enables the interpreter to step away from rhetoric as the dominant mode of understanding in favor of a theoretical framework that suggests alternative, yet related, tools to uncovering the meaning of



discourse. Here rhetoric's architectonic quality generally recedes to the background and literary, psychological, and rhetorical theories take the foreground position in the interpretation of text. In his outline of this second dominant approach to close reading, Gaonkar warns of the dangers of a theoretical approach to interpretation.

Gaonkar concludes that the second dominant reading strategy “[. . .] while not unimportant, cannot constitute the core of a scholarly project that aspires to represent rhetoric as an interpretive discipline” (331). Since the crux of a theoretical interpretation is organized around consciousness raising theories, the resources of rhetoric are subjugated to issues of gender, socio-economics, psychology, and other concerns that emerge from the critical turn (330). The drawback of this second reading strategy is the limitation placed upon the consideration of rhetoric as a revealing art. When an interpretation is driven by theory, the basic rhetorical components of a text may remain unnoticed or unaccounted for. Therefore, to fully utilize the resources of rhetoric within a close reading strategy which seeks to “represent rhetoric as an interpretive discipline,” the interpreter is called to look for and beyond “predictable” claims about the meaning and construction of a text. Subsequently, predictable and universal claims about a text can often be avoided by a dedication to the close rhetorical reading of the text itself and a textured analysis of the historical moment from whence the text emerged.

The expansion of the focus of rhetorical interpretation from the “predictable” resources of a text, such as the sources of argument, to the latent elements of persuasion such as considerations of the historical moment, has advanced the resources of “rhetoric as an interpretive discipline” (*RH* 331). Additionally, by situating text within its historical moment, the interpreter's impulse to make “universal” claims is thwarted. Gaonkar's theoretical analyses of two dominant modes of close

reading are especially effective when placed in the context of the present project and previous projects that sought to “represent rhetoric as an interpretive discipline.” This representation of rhetoric develops as studies establish the relationship between rhetoric and the historical moment to account for rhetorical phenomena such as theory, practice, and praxis. Yet, until it is observed in action, this theoretical outline of a rhetorical approach to close reading lacks clarity. An example of the praxis of a rhetorical approach to close reading will enliven the previous claims.

A model for the effectiveness of a close reading strategy that focuses upon “rhetoricity” and the historical moment of a text is “Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Text.”<sup>x</sup> In “Lincoln at Cooper Union,” Michael C. Leff and Gerald P. Mohrmann find the existing treatment of Lincoln’s speech on February 27, 1860 lacking in “critical response” (346). The authors recognize the importance of the existing scholarly works on Lincoln’s speech at Cooper Union for their ability to “[. . .] deepen our appreciation of the event [. . .]” (346). However, Leff and Mohrmann further recognize the lack of rhetorical responses to the speech. They explain that previous treatments of Lincoln’s speech “do not illuminate the speech as a speech” (346). Therefore, to supplement the mostly “background” work offered by literary scholars, as well as the “little light” that has been “shed by those who do comment on the speech text,” the authors propose a rhetorical analysis of Lincoln’s speech at Cooper’s Union (346).

The rhetorical analysis proposed by Leff and Mohrmann corroborates the utility of Gaonkar’s first sketch of a close reading, which “seeks to make the object of analysis intelligible in terms of its rhetoricity” (*RH* 330). Leff and Mohrmann maintain that “[. . .] no satisfying account of the [Lincoln’s] speech is to be found,” and therefore “a systematic rhetorical analysis can help rectify the situation” (346-7). The authors’ method of rhetorical analysis is close reading, which

does not read theory into the text but, instead, “center[s] on the text of the speech” and accounts for the historical moment of the speech by making “some preliminary remarks about the rhetorical context” (347).

By first announcing the relationship between the speech act and the rhetorical context, the authors invite readers into the historical moment of the speech act and therefore reduce the risk of reading the text solely in terms of contemporary ideology and/or theory. Rather than relying completely on the standpoint of the interpreter, close reading attempts a critical posture of neutrality by making efforts to avoid using presuppositions, or preconceived notions, about the speech, speaker, audience, or historical moment, as the myopic means of interpreting a text.

While no reading of a text is entirely “neutral,” the interpreter seeks neutrality by foregrounding such rhetorical elements as persuasion, genre, space, time, and audience, and by avoiding hasty claims of authorial intent.<sup>x1</sup> This approach to close reading attempts to build ideas from the text, rather than concentrating on the biography of the author and flaws or inconsistencies within a text. The utility of this close reading strategy allows the interpreter greater access to the relationship between rhetoric and the historical moment, which moves interpretation from potentially narrow perspectives of the meaning and construction of the text to a broader understanding of how rhetoric emerges to respond to the needs of a community.

In view of the present effort to understand how the rhetoric of Early America emerged as a response to Britain’s rule of the American colonies, it is imperative to account for the seminal events of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the philosophical and rhetorical theories that informed the historical moment and shaped the thinking of both the colonists and the British. By exploring the philosophical and rhetorical theories that informed early American discourse, common sense will

emerge as both a source of rhetorical invention as well as a basic assumption regarding the nature of rhetoric. To responsibly adhere to a rhetorical close reading, the history of common sense must be developed to account for the variances in meaning of and approach to the philosophy and rhetoric of common sense.

**Basic Layout of the Dissertation: Philosophical/Theoretical Components, Historical Context,  
Textual Interpretation**

Close reading of seminal texts from the Classical era, the Enlightenment era, and the American Revolution from 1772-1801 will provide a philosophical and historical background of common sense. The inquiry proceeds from philosophical/theoretical aspects of common sense to situate them within the context of the American Revolution. The major work of textual interpretation will follow. The interpretive project presents a rhetorical reading of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, and the first inaugural addresses of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson within their shared philosophical and historical context. The discussions below preview the subsequent chapters.

**Intersections: Rhetoric, Philosophy, History, and Common Sense**

To frame the discussion and provide a background in which to situate the claims of common sense, it is necessary to first provide a rhetorical analysis of the competing visions of common sense beginning with a philosophical/theoretical review of the issue. The relationship between rhetoric and philosophy is not tacit when placed within the context of common sense. The interchange of ideas between rhetoric and philosophy is especially prominent when examined within the historical moment surrounding the Enlightenment: "The convictions and orientations that have traditionally marked the separation of rhetoric and philosophy—the concern for truth and the focus of persuasion—have begun to converge on a new space that can be defined through the central term

*discourse*” (Angus and Langsdorf, emphasis theirs, 1-2). Here Ian Angus’s and Lenore Langsdorf’s assessment of the symbiotic relationship between philosophy and rhetoric in the postmodern moment maintains its validity much earlier during the Enlightenment, when the primary decision makers in the American colonies and, later, the new American nation (Samuel Adams, Hancock, Franklin, John Adams, Jefferson, and, to a lesser extent, Madison, Hamilton, and Burr) were ensconced in common sense philosophy that shaped their rhetorical discourse. Thus the mixing and blending of the traditional boundaries of philosophy and rhetoric described by Angus and Langsdorf as “[. . .] the concern for truth and the focus of persuasion,” in regard to the postmodern moment connect to invent the discourse of the American Revolution.

The invention of the discourse of the American Revolution engenders the philosophical-rhetorical marriage outlined by Angus and Langsdorf through theory-informed action, or praxis:

Their politics were practical; they wanted results, and got them. Where a Montesquieu, a Bolingbroke, a Hume, a Rousseau, a Filangieri, a Kant formulated political philosophies for some ideal society or some remote contingency, the Americans dashed off their state papers to meet an urgent crisis or solve a clamorous problem: Dickinson’s *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, John Adam’s *Thoughts on Government*, Jefferson’s *Summary View*, Paine’s *Common Sense*, the *Federalist Papers*. (Commager 131)

Indeed philosophy was their guide, but rhetoric was their action. In their public action, the Founders emulate the purportedly postmodern convergence of philosophy and rhetoric “[. . .] on a new space that can be defined through the central term *discourse*” (Angus and Langsdorf, emphasis theirs, 1-2). Thus the practical application of philosophy and rhetoric emerge as “the central term [of]

*discourse* [...]” in the cause of Independence (Ibid), nearly two centuries prior to postmodernity.

During the cause of Independence philosophy and rhetoric invented a discourse that met the unique demands of a democratic public by adapting to America’s singular needs. For, “[. . .] in [early] America nothing went by default, nothing was conceded to rank or dignity; there you had to submit your case to the people; and win on merit [. . .]” (Commager 131). Contained within these democratic conditions was the exigency of a public for which an insular philosophy or an empty rhetoric could not sustain. A unique circumstance of the New World was the issue of proximity: “[the Founders] did not live apart from the people at some luxurious Court, or some bustling capital, *but lived where they worked and worked where they lived*” (emphasis added, Ibid). A truly democratic rhetoric demanded the cooperative resource of philosophy to promote a discourse worthy of the moment. To this end a common sense discourse that blended philosophy and rhetoric arose from the founders’ Classical education.

The common sense philosophy that shaped the rhetoric of early America was derived from our founding fathers’ Classical education and the subsequent Classical influence upon Enlightenment philosophy. Therefore the philosophical/theoretical section intersects the historical context of the American Revolution. For instance, the apex of the intersection between a Classical education and our forefathers’ historical moment occurs in The Declaration of Independence, which privileges a culmination of Classical and prominent Enlightenment ideas:

[. . .] John Adams, no less than Jefferson, were, as they all appreciated, drawing on long familiarity with the seminal works of the English and Scottish writers John Locke, David Hume, Francis Hutcheson [. . .] Or, for that matter, Cicero. (“The people’s good is the highest law”). (qtd in McCullough 121)

With Classical perspectives of common sense guiding their judgment of such issues as democracy, justice, and equality, our founders' rhetoric was guided by particular philosophies and theories that this study aims to uncover.

As practicing lawyers, both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were well versed in the works of Cicero. In fact, prior to law school, during their early education, the founding fathers were exposed to Cicero's response to Cataline: "[...] for Cataline was the treacherous and degenerate character whose licentious ways inspired, by their very profligacy, Cicero's eloquent oration on virtue, *which was subsequently memorized by generations of American school boys*" (Emphasis added, Ellis 42). However, for practical wisdom there is evidence that at least Adams turned to Aristotle for advice: "What would Aristotle and Plato have said, if anyone had talked to them, of a federative republic of thirteen states, inhabiting a country of five hundred leagues in extent?" Adams asks in a 1788 letter to Arthur Lee (qtd. in McCullough 397). The enormous land mass versus the comparatively sparse population of America was a constant obstacle for the founding fathers to overcome when attempting to unite the colonial peoples in the cause of Independence. To approach this difficulty, Adams consulted those ancients who shaped his thinking from childhood to old age. After all, as Adams explains it, "the Republic of Athens," was "the schoolmistress of the whole civilized world for more than three thousand years, in arts, eloquence, and philosophy [. . .] for a short period of her duration, the most democratical commonwealth of Greece" (*Defence*). It remains no small wonder then that Adams often sought the ancients to inform his common sense, especially when there was no clear-cut, pre-existing political theory to guide his decisions—and why not?

Chapter I: *The Ancient School of Common Sense Rhetoric [Narratio I]*.

*De Anima, Posterior Analytics* and the physiology of common sense

*De Memoria Et Reminiscentia (On Memory and Reminiscence)*

*Posterior Analytics*: Common Sense and First Principles

The Common Sense of Enthymemes

*Rhetorica* and the function of common sense in decision-making

Cicero's Common Sense Theory of Rhetoric

### **The Common Sense Philosophy and Rhetoric of Aristotle**

In *The Norms of Rhetorical Culture*, Thomas Farrell identifies the functional nature of Aristotle's theory of rhetoric:

Whether regarded as a work of philosophy, an adjunct to the theory of action, or a craft of language arts, there can be no doubt that the classical Aristotelian heritage constitutes an unusually coherent and systematic conception of rhetoric as a human practice. (142)

To begin an investigation into Aristotle's treatment of common sense, *De Anima* reveals the most apparent Aristotelian passages. Yet the theories of common sense in *De Anima* extend to his other works where the systematic philosopher sheds additional light on the subject. Subsequently, an investigation of *Posterior Analytics*, *De Anima*, *De Memoria Et Reminiscentia* and *Rhetorica* is necessary to consider Aristotle's systematic treatment of common sense.

As the father of common sense philosophy, Aristotle contributes two notable theories pertaining to common sense: 1) in *Posterior Analytics*, *De Anima*, and *De Memoria Et Reminiscentia* the philosopher pontificates about the physiological aspects of common sense or *sensus communis*, and 2) in *Rhetorica* he contributes a practical philosophical/rhetorical doctrine of common sense.<sup>xiii</sup> In the former treatises Aristotle directs his thoughts to the epistemological



question, how do we know what we are sensing? His response draws the reader's attention to humanity's innate capacities for multiple sense perceptions, which work both together and individually through our common sense.

For it is through the common people's joint perception of sensations that one discovers what is common to the senses. Common sense, therefore, as a purely internal, physiological phenomenon, works by uniting each of the five senses intuitively: "But in the case of the common sensibles there is already *in us* a general sensibility which enables us to perceive them directly; therefore there is no special sense required for their perception" (Emphasis added, *De Anima* 425b 25-30). Once united, the five senses work together to provide a coherent picture of the external world: as Aristotle explains, "the fact that the common sensibles are given in the objects of more than one sense reveals their distinction from each and all of the special sensibles" (*De Anima* 425b 5-10). Unlike the special sensibles, common sense is common to most of humanity. The common sensibles exist in us independently and surface through the immediate arousal of the five senses. Moreover, the common sensibles possess a secondary function when they work as the sources of sense perceptions that supply the imagination, memory, and the reminiscence with images notwithstanding the absence of the immediate experience of the five senses.

#### **Aristotle's System of Common Sense in *De Anima* and *Posterior Analytics***

The closest Aristotle comes to a definition of imagination in *De Anima* is when the philosopher claims that "imagination is held to be a movement and to be impossible without sensation" (428b, 10). Here the association between imagination and sensation suggests the components and function of common sense. This association, however, is identified earlier in *De Anima*, as if to give a clue of the innate relationship between the five senses, imagination, and

common sense: Aristotle claims that “[. . .] the sense-organ is capable of receiving the sensible object without its matter” (425b, 20-25). This phenomenon of rendering a sense without an object is a product of the imagination: “That is why even when the sensible objects are gone *the sensings and imaginings continue to exist in the sense-organs*” (425b, 25). However, the source of the imagination flows from the five senses, which work collectively to formulate our common sense. Therefore, it follows that the imagination and common sense share a physiological source.<sup>xiii</sup>

Hett corroborates this reading of the source of imagination in his introduction to Aristotle’s *On the Soul (De Anima)*:

*Sensus Communis*. The solution given is that there is a common sense-faculty (located in or near the heart [...]) which receives and co-ordinates the stimuli passed on to it from the various sense-organs. This same faculty also directly perceives the ‘common sensibles’ (i.e., those attributes, such as shape, size, number, etc., which are perceptible by more than one sense), among which Aristotle includes movement and time [...] *It also accounts for our consciousness of sensation, and it is responsible for the process of imagination.* (emphasis added, qtd. in Hett 5)

Hett’s summary of Aristotle’s theory of common sense explains the relationship between imagination and common sense. Aristotle locates the imagination in *De Anima* as “remain[ing] in the organs of sense,” thusly deepening the connection between the senses, common sense, and the imagination. By this passage we also learn of the necessity, as well as the utility, of the imagination:

And because imaginations remain in the organs of the sense and resemble

sensations, *animals in their actions are guided by them, some (i.e. brutes) because of the temporary eclipse in them of mind, others (i.e. men) because of the temporary eclipse in them of mind by feeling or disease or sleep.* (emphasis added, line 429a5).

To draw from this passage, Aristotle suggests that when the mind is not properly functioning, due perhaps to anger, madness, or lust, or due to physical disability, sickness, or fatigue, men or women can still function—albeit not as well—through their imaginations: “For imagination is different from either perceiving or discursive thinking, though it is not found without sensation, or judgement without it” (427b15). Unfortunately, Aristotle is not as refined when describing the operations of imagination and memory.

#### **Aristotle’s *De Memoria Et Remiscentia (On Memory and Reminiscence)***

Imagination and memory emerge in *De Anima* and *De Memoria* without significant differentiation. In *De Memoria Et Remiscentia (De Memoria)* Aristotle discusses the processes of memory and reminiscence. In so doing, imagination and memory seem to emerge as like sense perceptions, while memory and reminiscence emerge more clearly as comparable yet mutually exclusive components of the soul: “For the persons who possess a retentive memory are not identical with those who excel in power of recollection; indeed, as a rule, slow people have a good memory, whereas those who are quick-witted and clever are better at recollecting” (449b5). Thus three seminal terms emerge in Aristotle’s rhetoric and philosophy of common sense that necessitate scholarly attention: imagination, memory, and reminiscence.

Due to his abandonment of the term imagination in *De Memoria* Aristotle leaves his readers with inference alone to formulate a connection between imagination and memory. However, these

inferences can be verified by the philosopher's use of language and definition. For example, the association between imagination and memory is validated by their similarities of function, relationship to past events and plausibility of falsification. In the first realm of unity, functionality, we discover in *De Anima* that imagination could, if necessary, guide us in our actions:

And because imaginations remain in the organs of the sense and resemble sensations, *animals in their actions are guided by them, some (i.e. brutes) because of the temporary eclipse in them of mind, others (i.e. men) because of the temporary eclipse in them of mind by feeling or disease or sleep.* (emphasis added, 429a5).

Clearly, Aristotle privileges the processes of all our faculties when acting upon the world. For the hypothetical eclipsing of the mind in both examples evidences this presupposition.

Notwithstanding, imagination seems to emerge as a temporary agency of post-sensory action, wherein the stored sense perceptions that “[. . .] remain in the organs of the sense [. . .]” allow us to function on autopilot, so-to-speak (Ibid). Therefore the function of the imagination is the storage of a past sensation that we are able to instantaneously bring to bear upon our present conditions with varying success: “For imagining lies within our power whenever we wish [. . .]” (*De Anima* 427b15). Recalling past senses absent sensory stimuli is also a function of memory and reminiscence.<sup>xiv</sup>

For Aristotle states succinctly in *De Memoria* that “[. . .] memory relates to the past” (449b15). Aristotle clearly positions the imagination “in the organs,” the location of which promotes a resembling to sensation (ibid). Moreover, he singularly locates memory as a sense perception in *De Memoria* when he writes that “[. . .] we may conclude that it belongs to the

faculty of intelligence only incidentally, *while directly and essentially it belongs to the primary faculty of sense perception* (emphasis added, 450a10). In this regard Aristotle is clear that imagination and memory are not primary sensations that require the immediate arousal of one or more of the five senses, but sense perceptions which involve the recovery of information. One example of the process of memory involves “[m]nemonic exercises,” that “aim at preserving one’s memory of something by repeatedly reminding him of it [. . .]” (451a10). Thus, memory is created by the “preserving” of a sense (Ibid). In this regard memory seems to be a comparatively innate function when compared to the imagination.

Aristotle elaborates the organic development of the memory as it instigates remembering and recollection when he writes that:

[. . .] remembering is the existence, potentially, in the mind of a movement capable of stimulating it to the desired movement, [. . .], in such a way that the person should be moved [prompted to recollection] from within himself [. . .] This explains why it is that persons are supposed to recollect by starting from mnemonic *loci*. The cause is that they pass swiftly in thought from one point to another, e.g. from milk to white, from white to mist, and thence to moist, from which one remembers Autumn [the ‘season of mists’], if this be the season he is trying to recollect (*On Memory* 452a 10-15).

Clearly within this tripartite of imagination, memory, and reminiscence, the latter emerges as the penultimate in bringing order to appearances. However, beyond minute and perplexing differentia exists a more important strand of similarity between imagination, memory, and reminiscence that transcends the need to discriminate their individual functions; for they are

bound by the classification of sense perception.

In *De Anima* Aristotle summarizes the differences between sense and sense perception.

Among these are:

(I) Sense is either a faculty or an activity, e.g. sight or seeing: imagination takes place in the absence of both, as e.g. in dreams. 2 [*sic*] Again, sense is always present imagination is not [. . .] Again sensations are always true, imaginations are

for the most part false [. . .] (428a5-15).

These conclusions are sustained in *On Memory* where Aristotle similarly critiques sense perception as it pertains to memory: “Hence both very young and very old persons are defective in memory; they are in a state of flux, the former because of their growth, the latter, owing to their decay” (450b5-10). Thus imagination, memory, and reminiscence through their secondary association with the senses are not as valid as common sense (*sensus communis*). For *sensus communis* involves the “[. . .] primary faculty of perception” which “[. . .] are always true” (*On Memory* 450a10, *De Anima* 428a15). Common sense cannot deceive us, whereas our imagination, memory, and reminiscence hold the potentiality of deceit through their mediated association with the five senses.

By articulating the innate harmony of common sense within human perception, Aristotle suggests that all humans are imbued with the intuitive ability to consciously and unconsciously make sense of their world.<sup>xv</sup> Clearly, the level of common sense one possesses is contingent upon many specialized factors, such as native intelligence, socio-economics, and education. However, according to Aristotle’s discussion in *De Anima*, at the basic level the average person possesses, at least, the

level of common sense to know that—for example—a stove top, when turned on, produces heat. Granted, one may, early on, touch the stove top and receive a burn, but thereafter through his/her common sense he/she will associate a particular kind of heat with a stove top.<sup>xvi</sup>

In the physiological event of being burned, the human's five senses—touch, smell, sight, hearing, and tasting—combine to formulate a common sense.<sup>xvii</sup> In the example of the hot stove, for instance, touch physically connects us to the heat and sends an immediate message to the brain. This painful message results in a burn. However, we cannot yet develop our common sense on the relationship between a burn and a stove top. For instance, does touching any stove result in a burn? The answer, of course, is no. What must accompany the touch and subsequent burn are other senses: perhaps hearing or sight. In the example of hearing, let us assume that a more experienced person calls out to us after the burn, “don't *ever* touch a stove top when it is turned on, or you'll get a burn,” we now possess a greater amount of associations. Still, this lesson has not taught us how to recognize whether a stove is turned on or off. Here, we can rely upon our sight. Perhaps we notice, after the burn, an illuminated red light on the stove top. We necessarily associate this illuminated light with a stove top that is turned on. Now we place even more of our senses in conversation, thus allowing us to assume the necessary common sense regarding stove tops and burns in the future. This basic example illustrates both how we develop first principles regarding a particular subject, and how Aristotle's physiological theory of common sense promotes a psychological theory of common sense.

As a man of the world Aristotle applied his systematic philosophy to all areas of human inquiry. He utilized the epistemological question regarding how we know to investigate everyday occurrences such as crop planting, and to develop an understanding of all areas of inquiry.

Thompson well summarizes Aristotle's systematic approach to inquiry when he explains that "[b]asic to Aristotle's analysis was the idea that knowledge is divisible into a series of sciences, each of which has its own *first principle*" (emphasis added, 211). Although Aristotle does not provide his readers with a concise definition of first principles, and instead demonstrates how they function, Thompson's simplification that first principles are the "original source[s] for a premise," will suffice. However, Thompson's expanded treatment of the doctrine of first principles, which he gains from *Posterior Analytics*, is worth mentioning because of its connection to common sense. Thompson explains that "[t]he first principle, which exists in nature, is by definition a premise that is beyond demonstrative proof and from which all of the lesser principles of that one science are derived" (213). Here we begin the connection between Aristotle's first principles and common sense by asking the question: How does one arrive at first principles, if not by demonstration?<sup>xviii</sup> Aristotle himself realizes this gap in philosophical inquiry and devotes Book II: Chapter 19 of *Posterior Analytics* to an answer. As Aristotle enumerates epistemological questions he begins to steer his readers toward an answer to one of the few remaining issues regarding human understanding: "whether the developed states of knowledge are not innate but come to be in us, or are innate but at first unnoticed" (*Posterior Analytics* BK II: CH. 19, 20-25). After some discussion Aristotle concludes that:

[. . .] it emerges that neither can we possess them from birth, nor can they come to be in us if we are without knowledge of them to the extent of having no such developed state at all. Therefore *we must possess a capacity of some sort*, but not such as to rank higher in accuracy than these developed states. And this is at least an obvious characteristic of all animals, *for they possess a congenital discriminative*



*capacity which is called sense-perception.* (emphasis added, BK II: CH. 19, lines 30-35).

Aristotle's identification of sense-perception creates a link between first principles and common sense, or common sensibles, because it is sense-perception, "an obvious characteristic of all animals," that acts as a common sense that enables humans to begin to make sense of their world through observation, memory, and categorization. In this final chapter of *Posterior Analytics* the reader makes an astonishing discovery: first principles are rooted in common sense. As Thompson corroborates, "[t]he source of first principles, or immediate premises, therefore, has to be the mind of man—his common sense" (212). The first impressions of the world that humans experience are made possible through common sense, and what flows from these observations are the necessary extensions of observations: decisions. Therefore, Aristotle's physiological basis of common sense lends itself to the realm of rational affairs when humans act in the world, through their decision-making based upon common sense. This practical theory of common sense is further discussed in *Rhetorica*.

*Rhetorica*, a treatise with which both Adams and Jefferson were well acquainted in their various studies, helps us to understand the practicality of the Aristotelian rhetoric and philosophy of common sense, and to understand the versatility of common sense that *Rhetorica* demonstrates. *Rhetorica* treats common sense as common knowledge, or ordinary common sense. As Farrell summarizes in "Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory," "[. . .] Aristotle was able to posit a body of *common knowledge* as a natural corollary to his idealizations of human nature, the potential of human reason, and the norms and procedures of public decision-making" (original emphasis, 2). Whereas *De Anima* and *Posterior Analytics* reveals a theory of common sense as it relates to sense

perception or *sensus communis*, *Rhetorica* exemplifies the conveyance of common sense from sense perception to decision-making through, in part, the common topics (*koinoi topoi*) and the enthymeme.

The enthymeme moves away from a sophisticated physiological explanation of common sense, and toward a comparatively colloquial understanding of the term. Although the physiological phenomenon of common sense, “[a]n ‘internal’ sense which was regarded as the common bond or centre of the five senses, in which the various impressions received were reduced to the unity of a common consciousness” still occurs, an enthymematic understanding of common sense reflects its usage in vernacular discourse (*OED*). The enthymeme exemplifies common sense in a secondary area which the *OED* defines as:

The endowment of natural intelligence possessed by rational beings; ordinary, normal or average understanding; the plain wisdom which is everyone's inheritance. (This is ‘common sense’ at its minimum, without which one is foolish or insane.) Formerly also in pl., in phr. *besides his common senses*: out of his senses or wits, ‘beside himself.’

These two treatments of common sense can be identified as the physiological theory of common sense in the first definition, and ordinary common sense in the second definition. While the enthymeme implies the physiological theory of common sense, due to the systematic nature of Aristotle’s episteme, the enthymeme thus discussed begins the treatment of common sense in the secondary instance, as ordinary common sense.

In Book II, Chapters 18-26, of *Rhetorica*, Aristotle extols his related theories of the common topics and the enthymeme. For both the common topics and the enthymeme to act persuasively within an argumentative appeal, they must be situated within a common sense framework. The

common topics work successfully as lines of argument in any speaking situation because they are rooted in common sense. Throughout his specific discussions of the commonplaces, “the Possible and Impossible,” “Questions of Past and Future Fact,” and “the Greatness and Smallness of Things,” Aristotle’s reasoning assumes a common sense philosophy of human nature: that the average citizen can understand clear and simple reasoning through the same common sense that allows him/her to explain natural observations. The philosopher demonstrates our innate capacity to take in, and act upon simple reasoning through his discussion of the enthymeme in *Rhetorica*. Therefore, it is not the common topics that demand our attention when considering the relationship between rhetoric and common sense. Instead we must examine what Aristotle refers to as “the substance of rhetorical persuasion” in the opening paragraphs of his *Rhetorica* (1355a 14-15).

Aristotle’s explicit treatment of the enthymeme in Chapter 22 of *Rhetorica* proves the term’s importance to his system of rhetoric while simultaneously illustrating its complexity. Although scholars disagree upon Aristotle’s treatment of the enthymeme, this study will employ the definition from contemporary usage: “[. . .]as an argument that has one or more premises, or possibly a conclusion, not explicitly stated in the text, but that needs to have these propositions explicitly stated to extract the complete argument from the text” (Walton 93).<sup>xix</sup> Walton’s paraphrased definition of the enthymeme is necessary, because, as Loyd F. Bitzer indicates, “[. . .] although there are many hints as to its nature, the reader of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* will find no unambiguous statement defining the enthymeme” (“Enthymeme” 399). Yet, in his pursuit of “the reason Aristotle calls enthymemes the ‘substance of rhetorical persuasion,’” Bitzer stimulates inquiry of how the enthymeme fits into the nature of rhetoric (399). As the nature of rhetoric is revealed, we begin to take note of Aristotle’s systematic approach to understanding the complexities of how we know and how we act upon what

we know. This realization connects the enthymeme to common sense.

Bitzer concludes that beyond the indeterminacy involved with defining the enthymeme, there is one characteristic that differentiates it from dialectical and scientific inquiry and instructs us of the enthymeme's function: "What is of great rhetorical importance, however, is that the premises of the enthymeme be supplied by the audience" ("Enthymeme" 407). This conclusion sheds light on the nature of rhetoric and exposes the symbiotic relationship between rhetoric and common sense. For the nature and function of rhetoric, unlike dialectic, which Aristotle describes as "a process of criticism," is persuasive (*Topics* 101b2-4). We know the nature of rhetoric because of the often-cited definition provided by Aristotle in *Rhetorica*, "[. . .] the faculty to observe in any given case the available means of persuasion" (1355b25). As an example of the "available means of persuasion," the enthymeme, which "intimately unite[s] speaker and audience and provide[s] the strongest possible proofs," does so because of the common sense of an audience (ibid). Bitzer explains the rhetorical phenomenon of the enthymeme: "The missing materials of rhetorical arguments are the premises which the audience brings with it and supplies at the proper moment provided the orator is skillful" ("Enthymeme" 407). Here Bitzer explains the responsibility of the orator, but, due to the nature of his inquiry, he does not treat the question of how the audience infers their responses to the enthymemes.

Bitzer explains that through the enthymeme "[t]he speaker draws the premises for his proofs from propositions which members of his audience would supply if he were to proceed by question and answer" ("Enthymeme" 408). Yet, how the audience can supply proofs, that is, how the audience initially acquires the source of the proofs remains untreated in Bitzer's article. Even so, Bitzer's explanation regarding the construction of the enthymeme points back to the common

sensibles discussed in *De Anima* and suggested in *Posterior Analytics*. “It’s [the enthymeme’s] successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience, and this is its essential character” (“Enthymeme” 408). Here, through the enthymeme, “the joint efforts of speaker and audience” work together toward understanding. What informs both the speaker and audience of past experiences is common sense. Common sense begins the process of knowing through first principles, and later works to inform our judgment of contingent affairs that we must act upon in the world. Common sense therefore permeates Aristotle’s epistemology.

Richard McKeon observes that “Aristotle was convinced that all knowledge is derived from sensation” (*Introduction to Aristotle* xv). Aristotle enumerates the five senses as “[. . .] sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch [. . .],” in *De Anima* (BK III 20). While the senses are vital to human awareness they do not individually lead to common sense. To demonstrate this point Aristotle discusses the process whereby the senses unite to become the common sensibles, or common sense in *De Anima*:

The senses perceive each other’s special objects incidentally; not because the percipient sense is this or that special sense, *but because all form a unity*:  
 this incidental perception takes place whenever sense is directed at one and the same moment to two disparate qualities in one and the same object, e.g. to the bitterness and the yellowness of bile; *the assertion of the identity of both cannot be the act of either the senses*; hence the illusion of sense, e.g. the belief that if a thing is yellow it is bile. (emphasis added, 425b).

Therefore without the common sensibles, the place where common sense is introduced, one would not be able to refute the claim that “if a thing is yellow it is bile” (425b). For it is here, in and

through common sense, that the five senses work together and vie for dominance in creating a picture of reality. Moreover, this picture of reality provides a mental “image” for the soul. Aristotle states that “[. . .] the soul never thinks without an image” (*De Anima* BK. III: CH. 7 line 15). It is common sense that provides images for the soul. As Aristotle explains in *De Anima*, “[t]he soul of animals is characterized by two faculties, (a) the faculty of discrimination which is the work of thought and sense [. . .]” (BK. III: CH. 8 l. 15). Through common sense humans develop images of their world, which they store in their memories, and then subsequently compare these stored images to what they encounter in the external world. This accounts for the reason we can agree upon the difference between a flower and a weed; however, if there exists a species of flower that resembles a weed, we would most likely misclassify it on the grounds of our common sense. Furthermore, an enthymeme functions by the same principle that we can distinguish a flower from a weed, with the same risk of error.<sup>xx</sup>

The enthymeme, through common sense, places an orator’s statement in direct correlation with past experiences, and the images of the exterior world that we have formulated. For an audience, the enthymeme calls into memory common sense on a given topic and elucidates responses based upon the equilibrium between the images in our memory, and the claims of the orator. For the orator, “[t]he enthymeme is a concept developed [. . .] in *invention* and has specific reference to the problem of reasoning in speaking and writing” (McBurney 50). Therefore, the enthymeme’s reliance upon common sense in which “the premises [. . .] be supplied by the audience,” reveals both the relationship between the enthymeme and common sense, and, more importantly for the present investigation, the relationship between common sense and invention (“Enthymeme” 407).

Not surprisingly, Aristotle's reasoning in *Rhetorica* draws from the common sensibles introduced in *De Anima*: "That a thing will happen if another thing which naturally happens before it has already happened; thus, *if it is clouding over, it is likely to rain*" (emphasis added, *Rhetorica* 1393a 5-10). Here one's internal judgment is made manifest in the external world through practical judgment, or common sense. Aristotle relies upon the same resources of common sense reasoning that influences a farmer to delay planting crops because "it is clouding over" to uphold its ingenuity in all matters of decision making, and all areas of human inquiry. And thus, Aristotle contributes the first viable theory of common sense that has influenced thinkers from the Classical era to the present. One such thinker is Marcus Tullius Cicero, who publicly acknowledges his indebtedness to Aristotle.

In his opening pages to Book II of *De Inventione* young Cicero surveys the contributors to the art of rhetoric. In his survey Cicero discloses his—as well as others'—indebtedness to Aristotle:

And he [Aristotle] so surpassed the original authorities in charm and brevity that no one becomes acquainted with their ideas from their own books, but everyone who wishes to know what their doctrines are, turns to Aristotle, believing him to give a much more convenient exposition. (BK. II 6-7).

In addition to respecting the quality of Aristotle's interpretive treatment of the prevailing philosophy and treatises on rhetoric, Cicero acknowledges the Stagirite's individual contributions to the art of rhetoric. Early in Book I of *De Inventione* Cicero explains that "Aristotle, on the other hand, *who did much to improve and adorn this art* [rhetoric], thought that the function of the orator was concerned with three classes of subject [. . .] (emphasis added, 7-8). From these combined passages Cicero publicly acknowledges his scholarly devotion to and personal adoration of Aristotle. That Cicero's

system of rhetoric draws from the Aristotelian tradition is widely documented.<sup>xxi</sup> And while the Greek and the Roman differ in particular matters, such as style, there exist theoretical strands that tie the two major thinkers together. One such strand is their common sense orientation toward rhetoric.

In Aristotle we receive the coordinates of a complete system of common sense—physiological, psychological, and practical. This is of course due to the nature of Aristotle’s scholarly focus of attention which concerned all systems of thought and inquiry, thus leading the man to philosophical and rhetorical inquiry. The expanse of Aristotle’s influence is therefore well noted. For instance, Richard McKeon writes, “The influence of Aristotle, in the first sense as initiating a tradition, has been continuous from his day to the present [ . . . ] (*Basic* xi). However, it is not the influence of Aristotle’s work that is important to the present inquiry, but the ideas that emerge when his perspectives on common sense are placed in conversation with Cicero’s perspectives on common sense.

Cicero, the great Roman orator, was also deeply interested in the realms of philosophy, but it is through his rhetorical practices and rhetorical theory that he is remembered. The Roman’s life and work was dedicated to the advancement of a democratic civilization through rhetoric. As a result, Christian Habicht observes that “no one else in antiquity is as well known as Marcus Tullius Cicero, with Julius Caesar and the emperor Julius far behind” (1). The legacy of Cicero, who invested the bulk of his time practicing and documenting the practical art of rhetoric, has been secured by his writings on rhetoric and by the power and persuasiveness of his speeches. One such writing, *De Oratore*, reveals Cicero’s common sense theory of rhetoric. An investigation of *De Oratore* will promote consideration of the second definition of common sense—ordinary common sense.

### **Cicero’s Common Sense Theory of Rhetoric**



In *De Oratore* Cicero discusses the traits of the perfectus orator, one of which is rigorous educational training. Regarding the education of the orator, Cicero explains that “eloquence [rhetoric] is dependent upon the trained skill of highly educated men” (BK. I, Ch.II 5). This training prepares the orator for public service through a liberal arts education that is devoted to the development of a “finished orator” (I. xxviii) which involves the study of a variety of subjects. Cicero announces his requirements for the orator: “In the orator we must demand the subtlety of a logician, the thoughts of the philosopher, a diction almost poetic, a lawyer’s memory, a tragedian’s voice, and the bearing of the most consummate actor” (I. xxviii). From such a rigorous education one may expect an intellectual to emerge who is trained to interact with the noblest and most sophisticated citizens. However, we are instructed by Cicero that this particular application of the orator’s talents is not what he intends. Contrariwise, the resources of the orator are intended to be devoted to the common people.

Through Cicero’s theory of *sensus communis*, or “the sense of the community,” rhetoric is *always* adapted to the needs of the community through the orator’s awareness and dedication to the common sense of the community. Far from abstract philosophical ramblings, bureaucratic slogans, or inaccessible scientific discourses, rhetoric, through the resources of the orator, connects the speech to the audience. Here Cicero’s orator lives among the people, and employs his liberal arts education to understanding the needs—as well as identifying the concerns and linguistic capabilities—of the common people. Cicero articulates the relationship between rhetoric, common sense, and rhetorical invention in Chapter I of *De Oratore* when he writes:

Whereas in all other arts that is most excellent which is farthest removed from the understanding and mental capacity of the untrained, *in oratory the very cardinal*

*sin is to depart from the language of everyday life, and the usage approved by the sense of the community.* (iii. 12)

Contained within this passage is a link between rhetoric, common sense and rhetorical invention (invention). Understanding this link requires a conversation between *De Oratore*, and Cicero's youthful treatise on rhetoric *De Inventione*.

### **Invention: Discovering the Common Good through Common Sense**

In *De Inventione* Cicero begins his premier book on rhetoric by announcing the contributions of rhetoric to human civilization throughout the ages:

[. . .] after cities had been established how could it have been brought to pass that men should learn to keep faith and observe justice and become accustomed to obey others voluntarily *and believe only that they must work for the common good* but even sacrifice life itself, *unless men had been able by eloquence to persuade their fellows of the truth of what they had discovered by reason?*. (emphasis added, ii. 3).

From this passage we learn crucial lessons about the resources of rhetoric: 1) rhetoric promotes "common good," 2) rhetoric establishes order, and 3) rhetoric is rooted in reason. And we learn from Cicero's mature work *De Oratore* that each of these attributes of rhetoric must come to fruition "*from the language of everyday life, and the usage approved by the sense of the community*" (iii.12). Therefore, because of rhetoric's connection to the *sensus communis* we must turn our attention to "the most important of all the divisions [of rhetoric], [...] [which] above all is used in every kind of pleading" (*De Inventione* vii. 9). This investigation of invention will connect common sense and invention within Cicero's rhetorical theory, and promote an awareness of the pervasive connection between rhetoric and common sense through the enthymeme in Aristotle's *Rhetorica*.

Farrell's "Practicing the Arts of Rhetoric: Tradition and Invention" lays out the function of the enthymeme, by the use of example:

Say I observe that it is disgraceful that American-owned companies don't take more responsibility for the damage of acid rain beyond their national borders. If you agree, it is probably because you think, as I do, that their neglect has much to do with the problem, *and* that responsibility does not end at one's national or provincial borders. I don't have to say those things; yet they work as shared background conditions for forming the argument. (83)

Farrell later concludes that "[t]he primary function of the enthymematic thinking is to bring a general value horizon together with an individuated audience understanding and a problem or object of internal direction (to a membership or group) and an external direction (to a larger interested constituency) at the time" ("Practicing" 87). This co-active nature of the enthymeme bridges the views of the orator with the language, concerns, and needs of the audience through the recognition and adaptation of common sense during the inventional process. Since, as Farrell notes, "[e]nthymemes are, in short, *inventional*," investigating their construction leads to a composite understanding of the innate relationship between rhetoric and common sense, in general, and common sense and invention, in particular (89).

Sources of common sense enter the orator's inventive process in various ways. One of the most accessible sources of invention, "[. . .] the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible," emerges from what Farrell refers to as cultural givens (*De Inventione* vii. 9):

There is a third cognitive path, a way of making ongoing sense of appearances by

expressing them as proposed themes and arguments, inviting decision, action, and judgment—in short, as rhetorical propositions. *Much of the world comes to us as already assembled culturally meaningful configurations of phenomena. In addition to presenting curiosities for analysis or anomalies for synthesis, these already ordered cultural ‘givens’ raise practical questions for choice or avoidance.* This third method engages the modalities of appearance insofar as they admit open-ended themes involving emotion, conviction, and judgment; and the method is rhetorical. (emphasis added, *Norms* 25)

Recognizing and adapting “cultural givens” to the speech act situates a rhetorical message within the common sense, that is— the ordinary common sense of an audience. This is not to conflate common sense and “cultural givens,” but to recognize that common sense, based upon first principles, and images of the world, emerge within a given context that provides the orator with a common ground from which to begin the construction of the speech act. Here we gain insight into the Ciceronian treatment of invention.

Ciceronian invention does not require the creation of arguments and proofs which are entirely new, unique, or ground-breaking. Contrariwise to the creation of something new, Cicero situates rhetorical invention within the act of “discovery” (vii. 9). By privileging the act of discovery in the inventional process the perfectus orator begins with an audience’s commonly held beliefs, or common sense, for instance, “cultural givens,” and proceeds to situate his/her claims therein (*Norms* 25). Therefore restating Farrell’s discussion of the rain forest in enthymematic form emphasizes the connections between invention and common sense, and provides an example to promote discussion.

The major premise of Farrell's statement, "Say I observe that it is disgraceful that American-owned companies don't take more responsibility for the damage of acid rain beyond their national borders," can be expressed as: "American-owned companies don't take responsibility for the damage of acid rain beyond their borders" ("Practicing" 83). For this major statement to operate enthymematically the conclusion must follow from the audience that: "American-owned companies must take responsibility for the damage of acid rain beyond their borders" (ibid). It is the audience's ability to infer that makes the enthymeme persuasive. The materials of inference are supplied by common sense, which provide the audience members with their images of the world that will be sometimes corroborated, sometimes contradicted, or both. Moreover, the necessary information can be supplied by both advocates and opponents of a claim for the enthymeme to operate, because according to Aristotle the function of rhetoric "is not simply to succeed in persuading, but rather to discover the means of coming as near such success as the circumstances of each particular case allow" (*Rhetorica* 1355b10). The significance of the enthymeme for the present investigation rests not in the level of persuasion achieved, but in the function of an audience's common sense to complete the enthymeme, and the Ciceronian prerequisite of a common sense approach to rhetorical invention, in particular, and a common sense approach to rhetorical engagement in general.

From the Ancient school of common sense our pedagogues, Aristotle and Cicero, promote a rhetorical theory for the people, by the people. Their rhetorical theory is enacted, in part, by the recognition of common sense as a natural physiological process whereby each of the senses join to create our basic images of the world, and also by the recognition that rhetoric is part of our ontology, psychology, and epistemology because it is rooted in common sense which is our initial guide to decision-making. Therefore, it follows that humans possess an innate capacity to engage in rhetoric,

for according to Aristotle in *Rhetorica*, “Ordinary people do this [engage in rhetorical practices] either at random or through practice and from acquired habit,” then the source of invention, that is, “the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments,” must begin with the recognition and application of the common sense of the “ordinary people” (1354a, 5; *De Inventione* vii. 9).

This chapter posits that the Ancient theory of common sense maintains the proposition that rhetoric is intended to respond to the needs and affairs of a community. Yet, despite the utility of the Ancient’s theory of common sense, as well as its connection to the assumption that ordinary people can make decisions based upon the clear, and distinct reasoning of rhetorical appeals reliant upon common sense, common sense has been scrutinized, abandoned, and reinterpreted across the ages. One such age, the Age of Enlightenment, gave rise to a public debate over the resources of common sense. Therefore, the second chapter investigates the oppositional arguments of David Hume and the members of The Scottish School of Common Sense. Their Enlightenment arguments concern the nature and function of common sense and contribute to a historical understanding of the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense.

To consider the application of the Aristotelian and Enlightenment rhetoric and philosophy of common sense the third chapter provides a brief biography of Jefferson, Paine and Adams and proceeds to a description of the historical context of the American Revolution as it was influenced by the Enlightenment, common sense, human nature, and natural rights. Further, the third chapter illustrates the praxis of founding a country with the support of a common sense rhetorical theory by examining Paine’s *Common Sense* as it proceeds from three Enlightenment first principles.

The fourth chapter exemplifies Adams’s adaptation of the common sense first principles of the Enlightenment to his first inaugural speech, recognizes the sources of his common sense,

considers the common sense of “A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law,” and identifies his complimentary common sense with Aristotle, Reid, and Campbell as it pertains to human nature and public decision-making. The following chapter continues the process of rhetorical investigation as it proceeds from common sense and first principles in the rhetoric of Thomas Jefferson. Specifically, chapter five describes Jefferson’s unique oratorical skill, the “Conspicuous Eloquence” of Common Sense as Rhetorical Invention in *Summary View*, the Common Sense of Natural Rights and Human Nature in Jefferson’s *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774), the Rhetoric of Whig Opposition, Jefferson’s Sources of Common Sense, the Common Sense of Commonplacing and his development of an American Common Sense in his First Inaugural.

Finally, chapter six provides an Aristotelian and Enlightenment defense of a common sense theory of rhetoric by identifying and responding to the ancient contemporary critiques. While the defense of a common sense theory of rhetoric is grounded in Aristotle’s common sense philosophy of rhetoric and the Scottish School of Common Sense, it gains insight from such contemporary rhetorical scholarship as Gerard Hauser’s *Vernacular Voices*. The ancient and contemporary defense of a common sense theory of rhetoric and rhetorical invention exhibits the utility of the common sense rhetoric of Adams, Paine, and Jefferson as a model for theory and practice.

## **Chapter II: The Scots [*Narratio II*]**

As the history of ideas included new voices of reason, Aristotle’s common sense philosophy was periodically accepted, rejected, and embellished. A notable challenge to and defense of Aristotle’s common sense philosophy aptly occurs during a revolutionary period of the mind—the

Enlightenment era. During this tumultuous period the human sciences, which bore down upon practical matters in daily life, soon began to invite radical thoughts about the very fabric of human existence. Truth, human nature, natural rights, equality, democracy, human communication, common sense, and the nature of progress were each scrutinized from the emerging ideologies and schools of thought.

Particularly central to theories of rhetoric are the varied Enlightenment appeals to and assaults upon reason that invite critical responses to psychology, a discipline deeply indebted to the rhetorical tradition. Soon the issues of how we know and how we think resurfaced in three dominant schools: skepticism, rationalism and common sense philosophy. While active within the Enlightenment, they do not reflect exclusively Enlightenment thinking. Nor are these schools completely original or mutually exclusive. At times they integrate ancient, medieval, and renaissance thought and at other times the schools overlap in their intrinsic and extrinsic philosophical and ideological foundations. However, a seminal text that draws the distinction between British Empiricism (empiricism), *a la* Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, Continental Rationalism (rationalism), *a la* Descartes, and Spinoza, and common sense philosophy, *a la* Reid, Campbell, and Stewart, while simultaneously teasing out the commonalities between the schools of thought is Barbara Warnick's *The Sixth Canon: Belletristic Rhetorical Theory and Its French Antecedents*.

Warnick's central argument reveals the French influence upon British and Scottish rhetorical theory. However, prior to moving to the subtleties of the topic, *The Sixth Canon* articulates the major philosophical and theoretical clashes of invention between traditional Classical and archetypal Enlightenment theories of rhetoric. Warnick reveals the Enlightenment schism between deductive and inductive reasoning: "Lamy's writings on invention revealed a conception of and dependence



upon argument that was formal, deductive, demonstrative, and indisputable. In this his views were Cartesian”(28). Following Descartes and the Port Royalists, Lamy maintained an anti-Classical philosophy regarding the Aristotelian and Ciceronian appeal to common sense and subsequent dependence upon the common places as vital to the development of effective discourse. These divisive views of rhetorical invention can be discussed as the Cartesian nature of truth and the Aristotelian nature of truth.

For the rhetorician who follows Aristotle, truth is contingent upon numerous circumstances, most notably time and space. Truth is not the end (*telos*) of rhetoric; instead, the Aristotelian system aligns probable truth with rhetoric, while truth as *telos* aligns with philosophical inquiry. Rhetoric cannot provide the single truth, but it can provide a provisional truth somewhat consistent with an educated opinion. Therefore, rhetoric provides decision makers access to many truths, which assists them in making informed choices regarding the affairs of the *polis*.<sup>xxii</sup> However, as the Enlightenment ushered in critiques of existing biological, philosophical, and psychological theories, the Classical tradition was criticized for its dependence upon inductive reasoning. Through rationalism, for instance, Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes sought to replace rhetorical probability with absolute predictability through the use of geometric principles and other rational modes of deduction. Whereas the Renaissance philosopher and orator Francis Bacon, whose works contributed to Enlightenment thought, assembled a system of inquiry that was less hostile toward the resources of rhetoric, but still concerned with the role of the sciences in developing human knowledge and understanding.

### **Baconian Invention and the Development of Common Sense**

Francis Bacon had a profound impact upon the thoughts of notable Revolutionaries who

were attorneys, such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>xxiii</sup> Although Bacon's life and work is located in the Renaissance, having lived from 1561-1626, his affect on Enlightenment philosophy demands attention when considering the present questions of common sense and rhetorical invention, as well as, the relationship between common sense and rhetoric. For Bacon "[. . .] was celebrated by his contemporaries for his forensic skill, his memory of cases and procedure, and his capacity to grasp all the complexities of the issue at stake" (Vickers xvii). The celebration of Bacon's philosophical and rhetorical abilities did not cease upon his death, but rather it expanded through the inspiration of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Bacon's development of a "science of man" in such works as the *Advancement of Learning (Advancement)* prefigures John Locke's landmark Enlightenment consideration of human nature in *An Essay Concerning Human Nature* (ibid). Therefore, as a chronicler of human nature it is evident why John Adams would study Bacon's essay that considers "[. . .] those impressions of nature, which are imposed upon the mind by the sex, by the age, by the region, by health and sickness, by beauty and deformity, and the like, which are inherent and not extern [. . .]" (*Advancement, Book Two* 258).<sup>xxiv</sup> Moreover, as a surveyor of human nature it is equally evident why Bacon's inquiries would necessarily lead to common sense and sense perception. However, a major philosophical divergence between Bacon and Adams is the former's negative critiques of Aristotle in particular and the Scholastics in general.

Evidence of Bacon's anti-Scholastic posture is abundant in his *corpus*. For instance, in his elaborate analyses of invention in book two of *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon takes Aristotle's enthymeme to task in the former's critique of induction:

Secondly, the induction which the logicians speak of [. . .] whereby the Principles of sciences may be pretended to be invented, and so the middle propositions by derivation from the principles,-- their form of induction, I say, is utterly vicious and incompetent [. . .] For to conclude upon an enumeration of particulars without instance contradictory is no conclusion, but a conjecture; for who can assure (in many subjects) upon those particulars which appear of a side that there are not other on the contrary side which appear not? (*Book Two* 221)

Yet the implications of Bacon's harangue upon the enthymeme and its reliance upon syllogistic induction do not render an abandonment of common sense, as is the case with Descartes and Hume, but ironically suggest his stipulation of a more cultivated relationship between the intellect and the senses. The need for an enhanced relationship between the intellect and the senses arises from the natural problematic of rhetoric's dependence upon the imperfect resources of language.

Bacon explains that

[. . .] Arguments consist of Propositions, and Propositions of Words; and Words are but the current tokens or marks of Popular Notions of things; which notions, if they be grossly and variably collected out of particulars, it is not the laborious examination either of consequences of arguments or of the truth of propositions, that can ever correct that error [. . .]. (ibid).

Since language is rooted in the "Popular Notion of things," or common sense, Bacon identifies its insularity (ibid). Thus rhetorical inquiry, which formulates arguments and propositions, is automatically restricted by its necessary adherence to and reliance upon "Popular" language.<sup>xxv</sup>

As language is *the* means of communication, Bacon calls for the emergence of tools and resources that structure a new language that assists the frailty of a “Popular” language through the resources of empiricism. Bacon’s scientific discourse attempts to correct the faulty assessment of the ancients, namely Cicero, who held that error in thought and reasoning was the consequence of sense:

[. . .] Here was their chief error [Sceptics and Academics]; they charged the deceit upon the Senses; *which in my judgment [. . .] are very sufficient to certify and report truth*, though not always immediately, yet by comparison, by help of instruments, *and by producing and urging such things as are too subtle for the sense to some effect comprehensible by the sense, and other like assistance.* (ibid)

Bacon’s treatment of the senses regards both their natural ability and inability. Here he does not abandon the senses as a viable resource for understanding appearances, but recognizing the limits of the senses. To this end Bacon calls for scientific instruments and thus a corollary scientific discourse that can break free from the insularity of “Popular” language and overcome some of the natural limitations of the senses.<sup>xxvi</sup> Hence, rhetorical invention is never usurped by empiricism, but merely aided by its resources when the natural ability of the senses are exhausted.<sup>xxvii</sup> Ultimately, both “Popular” and scientific language must be subjugated to the intellect, never the other way around.

Bacon assesses the conclusion of those ancients who blame deceit upon their senses as erroneous. He stipulates that “[. . .] they ought to have charged the deceit upon the weaknesses of the intellectual powers, and upon the manner of collecting and concluding upon the reports of the senses” (ibid). He does not seek to envelop the senses with scientific discourse and inquiry, but

rather he places empiricism in the service of the senses to ensure the most effective arousal of the intellect of the mind. This posture is exemplified when he explains:

This I speak *not to disable the mind of man, but to stir it up to seek help: for no man, be he never so cunning or practiced, can make a straight line or perfect circle by steadiness of hand, which may be easily done by help of a ruler or compass.* (ibid)

For Bacon the “ruler” or the “compass” is a mere tool whose measurements require additional methods of inquiry to understand and to situate within the needs of a society (Ibid). Unlike Descartes’ unyielding rationalism, which ostensibly subjugates all knowledge to science and mathematics, Bacon’s philosophy encompasses two Aristotelian and Ciceronian assumptions: 1) that discourse must be adapted to the audience; and 2) that persuasion is a necessary function of a civil society. Thus, Bacon opens a larger space for the resources of rhetoric than does Descartes.

Although Bacon likely upholds Descartes’ presupposition that rhetoric does not produce knowledge, the former views the resources of the rhetorician, or in his parlance, “the persuader,” favorably (*Of the Colours* 97). Bacon understands the “persuader’s labour” as “mak[ing] things appear good or evil” (ibid). Although the “[. . .] [persuader’s] power to alter the nature of the subject in appearance, [may] lead to error, *they are of no less use to quicken and strengthen the opinions and persuasions which are true* [ . . .]” (emphasis added, ibid). This observation of the resources of rhetoric is absent from Descartes’ scientific and mathematical rationalism, which assumes the utility of such discourse in all situations. However, Bacon views rhetoric as a discourse that employs a common sense that emerges from particular situations to adapt to

specific needs.

Rhetoric, or persuasion, to Bacon:

[. . .] may be performed by true and solid reasons, so it may be represented also by colours, popularities and circumstances, which are of such force, *as they sway the ordinary judgment either of a weak man, or of a wise man not fully and considerately attending and pondering the matter.* (Emphasis added, *ibid*)

According to Bacon's philosophical essay rhetoric serves a distinctive function that is not ascribed to any other art or science. More precisely, Bacon describes "[t]he duty and office of Rhetoric" as the "appl[ication]" of "Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will" (*The Advancement, Book Two* 238). In his assessment of the function of rhetoric Bacon sets aside his generally anti-Scholastic position by placing the realm of rhetoric firmly within the domain of common sense.<sup>xxviii</sup> To this end, he adapts an Aristotelian philosophy of an audience centered discourse, which moves him further away from the Cartesian necessity of mathematical and scientific certainty as the foremost criterion of knowledge and understanding.

Bacon, drawing from Aristotle, explains that "[. . .] Logic handleth reason exact and in truth, and Rhetoric handleth it as it is planted in popular opinions and manners" (Emphasis added, *The Advancement, Book Two* 239). Thus the realm of rhetoric is not certainty, but encased in a common sense, which he refers to as "popular opinions and manners" (*Ibid*). Moreover, neither mathematical axioms, nor scientific discourse can rise to meet the exigency of rhetoric because "[. . .] the proofs and persuasions of Rhetoric ought to differ according to the auditors" (*Ibid*). Inside the Baconian system of philosophy, rhetoric, through its reliance upon audience-centered discourse, can never fully abandon common sense as rhetorical invention

considering “[. . .] that if a man should speak of the same thing to several persons, he should speak to them all respectively and several ways [. . .]” (Ibid).

Indeed, common sense fails to be common when the rhetor addresses an audience of experts thus complicating the relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention. However, this scenario is moot in light of Bacon’s stipulation of persuasion as affecting “the ordinary judgment<sup>xxix</sup> either of a weak man, or of a wise man not fully and considerably attending and pondering the matter” (*Of the Colours* 96). Although Bacon does not place as much faith in the senses as The Scottish School of Common Sense, his *corpus* clearly maintains the relationship between common sense and rhetoric, and common sense and rhetorical invention that is absent from Cartesian rationalism.

### **Descartes’ Rationalism**

Descartes’ account of human cognition relies upon rationalism. In opposition with Aristotle’s account of the establishment of first principles as emerging from the common sensibles, which shaped the Greek’s philosophy of human nature, Descartes “renders human nature in its quintessential form: *it is something housed in a body* subject to the self-evidence of a descriptive science” (emphasis added, Gross 309). Therefore, according to a Cartesian philosophy of human nature, we innately possess general information about the world, and move rationally from these innate ideas to particular conclusions. This detours from the Aristotelian account of human cognition in which we draw pictures of the world from our common sensibles, and make sense of the world through past experiences. Indeed both Descartes and Aristotle identify an innate biological sense that functions to guide us in our affairs. Nor does Descartes disregard sense perception. Thomas Reid recognizes Descartes’ acceptance of sense perception in *An Inquiry Into the Human*

*Mind on the Principles of Common Sense (Inquiry)*, when the Scot writes “Des Cartes [*sic*] took it for granted, that he thought, and had sensations and ideas [. . .]” (71). However, the role of the senses in the Cartesian method is usurped by an innate rationalism.<sup>xxx</sup> This differentiation between the Aristotelian and Cartesian philosophy of human cognition is advanced by Daniel M. Gross.

In “Early Modern Emotion and the Economy of Scarcity,” Gross uses the divergent accounts of the passions by Aristotle and Descartes to understand the “rhetoric of human nature in early-modern Europe [. . .]” (309). Gross examines the philosophers’ treatment of the passions, which reveals their respective standpoints on the cause of human cognition. Descartes, we learn from Gross’s excerpt from the Frenchman’s 1649 treatise, identifies the source of the passions in a physical gland: “The ultimate and most proximate cause of the passions of the soul is none other than the agitation with which the spirits *move the little gland which is in the middle of the brain,*’ that is, the pineal gland” (qtd. in Gross 309). As a means of comparison Gross draws our attention to Aristotle’s treatment of anger in *Rhetorica*—as an example of a passion—to consider the implications of Descartes’ theory of the passions.

Gross highlights 1387a 31-33 in the *Rhetorica* to exemplify the differences in Aristotle’s and Descartes’ theory of the passions. Aristotle describes anger, perhaps the most dangerous passion, as the “[. . .] desire, accompanied by distress, for conspicuous retaliation because of a conspicuous slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one” (qtd. in Gross 309). Here Aristotle indicates the symbiotic relationship between experience, generated by the senses—hearing, seeing, tasting, and feeling, and the emergence of the passions. The juxtaposition between Aristotle’s and Descartes’ theory of the passions reveals the Cartesian necessity to pinpoint the exact source of a passion to legitimize his entire system of rational deductions. As part of our



being, that is *literally* part of our being, the passions, such as anger, located by Descartes in the pineal gland, are observable phenomenon not because of our internal conversation brought about through the common sensibles, but because of the stirring of a biological gland. In his physical assignment of the passions Descartes' discloses the pervasiveness of rational principles within his entire philosophical system, in this case, metaphysics.

Descartes' dependence upon the indisputable proof of mathematics requires a concrete placement of the passions for the philosopher to quantify their operations. On the other hand, Aristotle's philosophical system corroborates the internal activities of the body in producing the passions, but, as Gross concludes of Aristotle's philosophy of the passions, "[. . .] its [anger's] approximate cause is anything but that little gland in the middle of the head" (309). Therefore, Aristotle's theory of the passions invokes the senses since, "[a]nger is a deeply social passion provoked by *perceived* slights unjustified, and it presupposes a public stage where social status is always subject to performative infelicities" (Gross 309). Aristotle's system of philosophy emerges from natural observations of the operations and conditions of humanity, which maintains a flexibility that is not present in Descartes' mathematically deduced system of philosophy. This flexibility can be attributed to Aristotle's systematic reliance upon the common sensibles and their necessary extension to common sense.

Where Aristotle assigns the original source of knowledge to common sense, which emerges through the experience of the senses when acting in and upon the world, Descartes' system privileges the introspection of the innate source of human qualities, such as knowledge, and the passions, but ultimately relies upon deduction to account for the external world. In his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, the rationalist simultaneously evidences his reliance upon and departure from

Aristotle's philosophical system of inquiry when he explains that "[. . .] the first principles are given by intuition alone, while, *on the contrary, the remote conclusions are furnished only by deduction*" (Emphasis added, 43). Therefore, Descartes' need for certainty leaves him no alternative but to locate the specific sight of the passions. Subsequently, his insistence upon mathematical principles as irreducible truths when taken from the realm of philosophical inquiry and placed in the context of rhetorical affairs complicates the contingent character of rhetorical invention. For rhetorical invention involves the "[. . .] the discovery of valid or *seemingly* valid arguments to render one's cause plausible" (*De Inventione* vii. 9). Thus the lack of certainty innate in the inventional system of the Ancients is not conducive to the Cartesian method, and therefore places rhetorical invention in particular, and rhetoric in general at risk of serving a function it was not designed to fulfill. Descartes' rejection of an epistemology composed of sense perception and experience as the guiding source of knowledge—that is, common sense—systematically opposes Aristotle's common sense theory of knowledge. This divergence in thought complicates Aristotle's entire system of rhetoric, and serves as a case-study to begin the process of understanding why common sense must remain intact in any system or theory of rhetoric, and why common sense must also inform rhetorical invention.

Contrary to Aristotle's privileged status of the enthymeme, common places, and common sense, Descartes abandoned and de-valued Classical rhetorical resources by adhering to the deductive resources of formal logic. The Cartesian nature of truth presupposed the existence and accessibility of absolute truth in the temporal world. For instance, Warnick explains that

[c]lassical writers did not suppose there were irrefutable 'truths' on which public argument could be based, but for Lamy, the truth was decided upon

prior to speaking; the orator's task was to make the truth clear; and his means was to argue syllogistically from an incontestable proposition to an indubitable conclusion. (28)

This quintessential movement from the Classical reliance upon probable truth to the Cartesian insistence upon indisputable truth based upon rationalism created a dialectical tension between Enlightenment thinkers regarding the nature and purpose of rhetoric. Naturally, the following question emerged from defenders of the Classical rhetorical tradition: Would the Classical connection to audience-centered discourse through common sense appeals be usurped by a Cartesian rhetorical theory? Not if the Scottish School of Common Sense could help it.

### **The Scottish Enlightenment: Hume vs. Reid**

Early in his *Inquiry* Reid explains the method and rationale for his response to skepticism.<sup>xxxii</sup>

For my own satisfaction, I entered into a serious examination of the principles upon which this sceptical system is built; and was not a little surprised to find, that it leans with its whole weight upon a hypothesis, which is ancient indeed, and hath been very generally received by philosophers, but of which I can find no solid proof. The hypothesis that I mean is, That nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it: That we do not really perceive things that are external, but only certain images and pictures of them imprinted upon the mind, which are called *impressions* and *ideas*. (Original emphasis, "Dedication" 25-30)

As the quotation indicates, The Scottish School of Common Sense began as an epistemological divergence between the "school's" founder, Thomas Reid, and skeptic David Hume.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Subsequently Reid's insistence upon common sense as the obvious source of knowledge also led him to a critique of Descartes and Berkeley in his systematic treatment of the prevailing metaphysical philosophies in *Inquiry*. However, as a Scot, Reid honed his critical attention to the philosopher who had the greatest effect on the philosophical realm in which he dwelt. Therefore, it was fellow Scot, David Hume, who Reid took to task. Reid's response to Hume is warranted by Barbara Warnick who explains that "Hume's skepticism had sought to hold in doubt certain fundamental beliefs that form the groundwork of human knowledge (e.g., the principle of universal causation, the uniformity of nature, and belief in the testimony of others)" (107). Hume's defiance of these basic assumptions upset the prevailing systems of belief whose disruption held deeper repercussions than mere philosophical debate.

In Hume's answer to the prevailing question of knowledge, "how do we know the exterior world?" often translated as "*can* we know the exterior world?" he rejects the privileged status of common sense to the development of knowledge. The assumptions guiding Hume's philosophy of human nature, resulting from his epistemology, clash with the common sense philosophy of human nature developed by Thomas Reid and maintained by an inner circle of scholars, such as James Beattie, John Gregory, and George Campbell, who also had the support of famed scholar Lord Kames.

Those who maintained the Common Sense School of Philosophy were indebted to the biological and intuitive function of common sense. Common sense is so pervasive a function in Reid's perception of the associated realms of human nature and epistemology that the realm of common sense, not philosophy, guides his entire system of inquiry. With common sense as his guide Reid uncovers the consequence of succumbing to Hume's radical skepticism. The consequence of

ignoring common sense as a guiding source of truth is revealed in Reid's case-study of smell.

### **Smelling Common Sense**

Reid asks the reader what would occur if the "sensible day-labourer" were to ask a modern philosopher "what smell in plants is" to prove the problematic consequences of the skeptic's presuppositions of truth, common sense, and knowledge of the exterior world. "The philosopher tells him [the sensible day-labourer]," continues Reid, "that there is no smell in plants, *nor in anything, but in a mind*; and that all this hath been demonstrated by modern philosophy" (Emphasis added, Chapt. 2, Sect. VIII, 5-10). Reid summarizes Hume's tenets of radical skepticism that the mind invents its orientation of the outside world through the senses. Yet, according to Hume, the senses are unreliable because they only send rough images to the mind that do not, that is cannot, represent the exterior world. The consequences of such a conclusion so baffles the "sensible day-labourer" that he is "apt to think him [the skeptical philosopher] merry: but if he finds that he is serious, his [the sensible day-labourer's] next conclusion will be, that the philosopher is mad [. . .]" (Sect. VIII, 10-15). The obvious inference is that a philosophical system that ignores the functions of the senses in conjunction with common sense is not useful to humanity, and remains so out of step with the daily activities and concerns of the ordinary person that it cannot be reconciled with sanity.

The other conclusion to which the "sensible day-labourer" may arrive is that "philosophy, like magic, puts men into a new world, and gives them different faculties from common men" (ibid). Since the "sensible day-labourer" cannot deny his sense of smell, from foul to pleasant, as an indication of the nature and substance of the exterior world, he or she can only surmise that philosophers who deny common sense must possess exceptional sense perceptions. Therefore the result of the skeptic's rejection of the function of the senses is that "philosophy and common sense

are set at variance” (ibid). Reid identifies the preposterous divorce of common sense from philosophy with some joviality, but concerns himself with the dangerous result of skepticism to the realm of human affairs.

Reid concludes that the moral philosopher who maintains a radical skepticism of the senses is either “mad,” or irresponsible:

But who is to blame for it? In my opinion the philosopher is to blame.

For if he means by smell, what the rest of mankind most commonly mean, *he is certainly mad*. But if he puts a different meaning upon the word, without observing it himself, or giving warning to others; *he abuses language, and disgraces philosophy*, without doing any service to truth: as if a man should change the words *daughter* and *cow*, and then endeavour to prove to his plain neighbour that his cow is his daughter, and his daughter his cow. (VIII, 15-20)

From this passage we learn three fundamental aspects of Reid’s inquiry: 1) that philosophy should be in the service of truth; 2) that truth is discoverable; and 3) that to avoid the resources of common sense is to sustain an ignoble philosophy. To these ends it is not common sense that is in the service of philosophy, but vice versa, philosophy that is unavoidably in the service of common sense.

Since metaphysicians such as Hume cannot offer evidence of the practicality of their skepticism, Reid proposes that one must leave the philosophy behind and look to the sensible realm of common sense to guide their affairs:

It is metaphysic say they: Who minds it? Let scholastic sophisters intangle themselves in their own cobwebs; I am resolved to take my own existence, and the existence of other things, upon trust; *and to believe that snow is cold, and*

*honey sweet, whatever they may say to the contrary. He must either be a fool, or want to make a fool of me, that would reason me out of my reason and senses.* (Emphasis added, Ch. 1, Sect. VIII, 15-20)

Hume's skepticism, according to the evidence presented in this excerpt, does not provide coordinates for a functional philosophy. Reid infers the question "if we cannot trust our sense, what can we trust?," and Hume's response, "We can trust nothing!," does not satisfy Reid's search for answers regarding how we know the exterior world.

So utterly disgusted with the skeptical realm of metaphysics is Reid that he suggests

[i]f [. . .] a man [is] [. . .] intangled in these metaphysical toils, and can find no other way to escape, let him bravely cut the knot which he cannot loose, *curse metaphysics*, and dissuade every man from meddling with it. [. . .] If

Philosophy contradicts herself, befools her votaries, and deprives them of every object to be pursued or enjoyed, *let her be sent back to the infernal regions from which she must have had her original.* (ibid)

A philosophy that moves us away from reason and toward confusion does not fulfill the aims of the tradition to which Reid subscribes. Reid's joint project of metaphysics and moral philosophy intends to reunite the exterior world and the world in our minds.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The validation of Reid's common sense approach rests in the simple fact that the same skeptics who seek to refute the function of the senses are themselves ruled by that which they dispute.

If Hume is to sustain the claim that "there is neither human nature nor science in the world," then Reid suggests that the skeptic should not expect to be taken seriously (Chapt. 1, Sect. V, 15). Therefore, if Hume is indeed "an author, who neither believes his own existence, nor that of his

reader,” Reid ponders why Hume does not maintain anonymity when publishing his *Treatise of Human Nature* (Chapt. 1, Sect. V, 20).<sup>xxxiv</sup> However, as Reid observes, “He (Hume) believed against his principles, that he should be read, and that he should retain his personal identity, till he reaped the honour and reputation justly due to his metaphysical *acumen* (Original emphasis, Ibid). Once authorship of *Treatise of Human Nature* is assigned to David Hume, existence is established. For authorship evidently presupposes the existence of an author, the existence of readers, the ability of the author to promote thought, and the ability of the reader to interact with the author’s thought. This interaction between author and reader defies Hume’s skeptical standpoint, and begs a question regarding the legitimacy of any philosophy that seeks to refute common sense, yet requires common sense to promulgate ideas. For philosophy to exist, evolve, and serve humankind it must be derived from common sense. Otherwise the means and ends of philosophy are suspect.

Reid concludes his response to Hume’s skepticism with a charge of sophistry:

It is a bold philosophy that rejects, without ceremony, principles which irresistibly govern the belief and the conduct of all mankind in the common concerns of life; and to which the philosopher himself must yield, after he imagines he has confuted them. Such principles are older, and of more authority, than Philosophy: *she rests upon them as her basis, not they upon her*. Zeno endeavored to demonstrate the impossibility of motion;

Hobbes that there was no difference between right and wrong; and this author [Hume], *that no credit is to be given to our senses, to our memory, or even to demonstration. Such philosophy is justly ridiculous* [. . .] *It can have no other tendency, than to shew the acuteness of the sophist, at the expence of*



*disgracing reason and human nature, and making mankind Yahoos.* (emphasis added, Ch. 1, Sect. V 10-25)

These charges against Hume support Reid's resolve that common sense must be the guiding source of philosophy, and that radical skepticism ends in sophistry. The charge of sophistry cannot be discounted as mere hyperbole, for it carries with it essential philosophical and theological implications.

Those who maintained the tenets of The Scottish School of Common Sense held in common specific philosophical presuppositions, for instance, "that man has original knowledge of self, the external world, causation, the course of nature, and the future; that *feeling is the foundation of truth*; that denial of common sense truths implies *not contradiction but insanity*; and that the propensity to believe human testimony is original in man" (Emphasis added, Bevilacqua 85). These presuppositions were viewed by the Scottish School of Common Sense as humanity's God-given rights. Therefore it is not surprising that most members of the "Wise Club" were religious; some were theologians, but all were regular churchgoers.

In contrast to the religious commitments that were an imperative standpoint for the Wise Club and the Common Sense School of Philosophy itself, the tenets of Hume's philosophy, as Bormann explains, systematically rejected the existence and providence of God:

Even more damaging for the cause of religion was Hume's notion that man could never perceive causes, but only events or sequences. Such a theory destroyed the most important argument for the existence of God—the argument for design. That argument is: since the world exhibits order and design (effect), it must have had a designer (cause). Hume's claim, that we

could not rationally explain the notion of cause, directly refuted this reasoning.

(408-9)

Thus, it was Hume's rejection of God as creator that offended the members of the Wise Club and contributed to the rise to the Common Sense School of Philosophy. These theological and philosophical points of departure between followers of Hume and followers of Reid implicate the realm of rhetorical affairs through the problem of knowledge.

### **Philosophical Divergences with Rhetorical Implications: Hume and Reid**

In "A Re-Evaluation of Campbell's Doctrine of Evidence," Lloyd Bitzer explains that "[t]he problem of knowledge may be stated as a question: Precisely how does the practitioner of rhetoric *know* that the sentences he writes and utters are true?" (Original emphasis, 135). This question assumes primacy when placed in context of the Hume-Reid debate concerning the source of knowledge. Reid's response to the problem of knowledge retains "the theory of ideas or, using Reid's terminology the 'ideal system'. The mind was, on this account, taken to obtain information about the world by means of images that were conveyed to it by the sense" (Brookes xiv). However, Hume's account of the means by which the mind acquires knowledge refutes Reid's insistence upon the senses as the original source of ideas:

[o]n the ideal system, any so-called truth about the world, was not, Hume argued, within the reach of our faculties. Our knowledge of the external world must either be direct or indirect. For it to be direct, external things must be immediately present to the mind. On the ideal system the only things with which the mind could be in immediate contact were sensations or, in Hume's terminology, 'impressions'. It followed that no external object could be

immediately present to the mind; consequently, our knowledge of the world could not be direct. (Brookes xiv-xv).

Hume's radical skepticism of human knowledge and the ability of the senses to provide an accurate impression of the exterior world exacerbates the gap between rhetoric and truth begun by Descartes. However, Hume's rejection is not based upon the irrefutable truths of geometric principles, but contrariwise the refutable truths of all evidence. It evidently follows that a rejection of evidence is simultaneously a rejection of the Classical theories of rhetoric.

Bitzer explicates Hume's anti-rhetorical philosophical conclusion:

The rhetor has no certain evidence for his propositions; his own beliefs and those of his audience are *products of feeling rather than of evidence and reason*; he cannot ever know that the belief or action he urges is truly good or bad. (Re-Evaluation 136)

Interestingly, Hume indicates the function of the senses in supplying the mind with images; a fundamental theory of Reid and his followers. However, within Hume's metaphysics the quality of these images as reliable evidence of the outside world, and as they pertain to informing us in the realm of decision-making is always suspect, if not entirely invalid.

Hume's radical skepticism of all human knowledge on the basis of the absence of evidence devalues both rhetoric and philosophy. Here the skeptic reviews his conclusions in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, "I have already shewn, that the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles, *entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common sense*" (emphasis added, BK I, Pt. IV, Sec. 7).

This passage reveals the pervasive skepticism that drives Hume's metaphysics. As Bitzer explains,

“[. . .] nearly every sceptic [skeptic] would grant that given true premises and validity, necessarily true conclusions will follow. [However] [. . .] *scepticism* [skepticism] *claimed that the premises are unknowable*” (Emphasis added, Re-Evaluation 139). In this regard Bitzer’s summary of the guiding premise of skepticism, that we cannot know the truth, reveals the problematics of Hume’s metaphysics when placed in the context of rhetorical affairs. The skeptical standpoint systematically rejects the Classical school of common sense rhetoric through its disruption of the rhetorical theories of Aristotle and Cicero. For if humans move through the world without truth, without evidence, and without the ability to construct logical appeals then the realm of rhetorical affairs is but a sham. If all knowledge is unreliable then ethos, pathos, and logos cannot lead to a probable truth. Nor is the rhetor able to arrive at valid conclusions through rhetorical invention, and cannot subsequently function as anything other than a sophist. Thus within Humean metaphysics rhetoric is nothing more or less than sophistry. This skeptical worldview did not sit well with those scholars who believed in the resources of rhetoric to maintain our human affairs. As a result of Hume’s assault on human’s ability to know the truth and the implications of this standpoint on rhetoric, George Campbell drew from Thomas Reid’s philosophy of common sense and applied his conclusions to a defense of a rhetoric of common sense.

### **Campbell’s Defense of Rhetoric on the Basis of Reid’s Common Sense**

Contrary to the opinion of some respondents to Campbell’s work the author of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* was not a Humean disciple.<sup>xxxv</sup> This anti-Humean thesis is maintained by Dennis R. Bormann who argues that “[. . .] Campbell’s writings, in general, were attempts to refute Hume’s skeptical position,” and if this statement is open to interpretation his following sentence certainly is not: “[. . .] Campbell was not a pupil or disciple of Hume but, on the most important

epistemological points of Hume's philosophy, *he was an adversary* (397). This is a significant claim because it establishes Campbell's distinction from Hume, and supports the more demonstrable conclusion that the former was an advocate for and contributor to the Common Sense School of Philosophy.

Campbell's work in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* is essential to increasing the awareness of the connection between rhetoric and common sense, as well as the relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention because it provides a rhetorical theory that is developed from the Common Sense School of Philosophy. However, scholars are at a disadvantage when attempting to advance a complete theory of common sense and rhetoric as it emerges from this school. Since Reid's work on rhetoric was never published: "He [Reid] used his retirement to prepare his lectures on philosophy for publication. Unfortunately, he did not publish his lectures on eloquence and they appeared to have been lost," we must seek out the existing discourse which draws its theses on rhetoric from common sense ("Manuscript" 259). Indeed, Eric Skopec's discovery of "Reid's original manuscripts on rhetoric," is extremely beneficial to an inquiry into the relationship between rhetoric and common sense, and the corollary relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention ("Manuscript" 259). However, while the authenticity of Reid's lecture notes cannot be denied, for "all are in Reid's hand," we cannot infer a system of rhetoric from this fragmented discovery (Ibid). Therefore, as a result of Campbell's "[r]ecognized 'landmark' in the rhetorical tradition," his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* serves as a more dependable bridge between common sense philosophy and its adaptation to an entire system of common sense rhetoric (Bormann 396). Taking into consideration the vitality of evidence to the related realms of rhetoric and philosophy, Hume's rejection of evidence demands a reaction from Campbell. Since, according to Bitzer, Campbell is

“[u]nwilling to accept Hume’s conclusions, [. . .] [he] adopted elements of the common-sense philosophy of Thomas Reid” (“Re-Evaluation” 136). Moreover Campbell’s theology, which depends upon evidence, such as testimony, is at stake if radical skepticism is accepted. Campbell publicly acknowledges his profound trepidation for Hume’s radical skepticism as it affects religion, and philosophy in the preface to *Dissertation on Miracles (Dissertation)*; a work that he was writing while finishing *The Philosophy of Rhetoric. Dissertation* is a defense of the legitimacy of philosophy and religion, and an indictment of Hume’s *Essay on Miracles*:

The *Essay on Miracles* deserves to be considered, [. . .] one of the most dangerous attacks that have been made on religion. [. . .] What a pity is it, that this [Hume’s] reputation should have been sullied by attempts to undermine the foundation both of natural religion, and of revealed. My primary intention [. . .] hath invariably been to contribute all in my power to the defense of a religion, which I esteem the greatest blessing conferred by heaven on the sons of men. *It is at the same time a secondary motive of considerable weight, to vindicate philosophy, at least the most important branch of it which ascertains the rules of reasoning, from those absurd consequences which this author’s [Hume’s] theory naturally leads us to. [. . .] With such an adversary, I should on very unequal terms enter the lists, had I not the advantage of being on the side of truth. (I,viii).*

Campbell’s charges against Hume in *Dissertation* also indicate his motivations for writing a defense of rhetoric in *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. *Philosophy of Rhetoric* appeals to common sense as a defense of evidence, and perpetuates a system of evidence in spite of Hume’s denunciation of the existence

of evidence and the nonexistence of true propositions.

As Aristotle rejected Plato's charges against rhetoric by defining the art of rhetoric in *Rhetorica*, Campbell refutes Hume's rejection of truth, positing a definition of logical truth in Chapter 5 of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Campbell explains that "[l]ogical truth consisteth in the conformity of our conceptions to their archetypes in the nature of things" (35). As Campbell enumerates the types of evidence in Chapter 5 we observe a common sense theory of rhetoric that unifies the function of sense perception and the evidence provided by common sense with the logic of rhetoric. Therefore Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* can be identified as the first organized and widely disseminated common sense theory of rhetoric offered by the Enlightenment. Bitzer announces the movement from a theory of common sense philosophy to a theory of common sense rhetoric when he explains that "[i]n Reid's view, common-sense knowledge is the foundation of sound philosophical speculation. In Campbell's view [. . .] common-sense knowledge occupies in rhetoric an equally important place" ("Re-Evaluation" 136). The space that "common-sense knowledge occupies in [Campbell's] rhetoric," is palpable when considering the types of evidence included in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (ibid).

Campbell divides evidence into two major categories, "intuitive" and "deductive" ("Re-Evaluation" 136). Within these major categories he provides subdivisions; in the former he assigns "mathematical axioms," "consciousness," and "common sense," and in the latter he includes both "scientific and moral reasoning" (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 35-49). Hence, for an investigation of the relationship between rhetoric and common sense and common sense as rhetorical invention it is appropriate to concentrate upon the first category, intuitive evidence, with limited comments regarding "mathematical axioms," and "consciousness", and a close analysis of "common sense" as

evidence (35). What follows is a summary of “intellection,” with a focus on common sense (ibid).

In Chapter 5 of *Philosophy of Rhetoric* “Mathematical axioms” are presented as a source of intuitive evidence “which result purely from intellection” (35). Among intellections are such elementary statements as “Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another—The whole is greater than the part;’ and, in brief, all axioms in arithmetic and geometry” (36). “Intellection” relies upon mathematical axioms yet maintains a common sense orientation through the dependence upon the senses to confirm such basic statements as “[o]ne and four make five [. . .]” (35-36). Bitzer demonstrates the resourcefulness of “intellection” to rhetorical reasoning by explaining that “[o]nce we pay attention to the meaning of the terms in these and similar statements, we assent to their truth” (“Re-Evaluation” 136). Intuitive evidence which derives from “pure intellection” guides our decision-making in choices of quantity, as well as in the process of invigorating “discover[ies]” (ibid). At the rudimentary level, however, intuitive evidence assists us in managing quantity by providing a stable system from whence to draw reasonable conclusions. The dualistic managing and decision-making function of mathematical axioms also exists in “consciousness” as evidence, excepting the fact that in this latter case quality is the substance of investigation.

The second class of intuition which Campbell deems “consciousness,” comprises Part II of Chapter 5 in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and regards the quality of impressions (37-9). “Consciousness” guides our judgment by assigning qualities to the impressions we receive from the external world through our senses and provides an internal forum for comparison, and discovery. Campbell identifies the dual function of mind and body during the process of “consciousness” when he explains: “Nor does this kind of intuition [consciousness] regard only the truth of the original feelings or impressions, but also many of the judgments that are formed by the mind, on comparing



these one with another” (37). Here, consistent with Aristotle, and later Reid, Campbell relies upon the resources of the senses to provide reliable pictures of the world which begin as mere impressions in our minds but emerge as guiding sources of judgment.

Bitzer explains that “[e]vidence from consciousness verifies statements such as ‘I now see a blue patch on a red field’ and ‘I feel a rough surface.’ All such statements we know are true simply because consciousness contains the data these statements refer to” (“Re-Evaluating” 136). Additional support of the truth of these statements rests in consensus. If two or more people agree that “the lemonade is sour,” it follows that this information can generally guide us in our decision to accept or refuse a glass of lemonade. Of course, if we are curious we may taste the lemonade ourselves and use our senses to guide our decision regarding the sourness of the lemonade. The decision to taste the lemonade would qualify as common sense which Campbell describes as “[. . .] an original source of knowledge common to all mankind” (*Philosophy* 39). Common sense is a form of evidence that exists within us to discover the external world. Without common sense, we cannot prove existence, nor reason from mathematical axioms to specific conclusions.

As evidence that exists within us to discover the external world, common sense “verifies many of the same principles Hume had said were incapable of proof” (“Re-Evaluating” 137). Yet Campbell himself recognizes the indeterminacy of common sense when he explains “that in different persons it [common sense] prevails in different degrees of strength; but no human creature hath been found originally and totally destitute of it, who is not accounted a monster [. . .]” (*Philosophy* 40). For without common sense, we proceed through the world without memory. It is the joint function of common sense and memory that guides us through our daily processes and informs our decision-making based upon past images. Therefore, without common sense we are

monsters or madmen.

For if we are indeed mad, we cannot rely upon common sense to send reliable images to our memory. Campbell enumerates common sense statements that prove our sanity, among these are direct responses to Hume's radical skepticism. For instance, Campbell declares that "there is such thing as a body, [. . .], there are material substances independent of the mind's conceptions," and that "[. . .] the clear representations of my memory, in regard to past events, are indubitably true" (*Philosophy* 40). These statements reveal Campbell's epistemological account of human cognition. His epistemological account of human cognition relies primarily on the function of the senses. Campbell explains that "[t]o believe the report of our senses doth indeed commonly imply to believe the existence of certain external and corporeal objects, which give rise to our particular sensations" (40). Within Campbell's epistemological account, touch alone proves the existence of a material world. Therefore to confirm the suggestion that a surface is rough, I need only to touch a rough surface.

Yet we need not rely upon touch to re-confirm the fact that a surface is rough. For instance when we think of sandpaper, we need not have the immediate sensation of sight or touch to recall its rough texture. To account for this phenomenon, Campbell explains that "[. . .] there is a reference in the ideas of memory to former sensible impressions, to which there is nothing analogous in sensation" (*Philosophy* 41). Memory, supplied by impressions from the senses, allows us access to the exterior world through the recollection of the initial activity of the senses. These two components of common sense—sense perception, and memory, sometimes require a third component, experience, to validate the function of memory.

Campbell explains that "[. . .] experience is of use in assisting us to judge concerning the

more languid and confused suggestions of memory; or, to speak more properly, concerning the reality of those things, of which we ourselves are doubtful whether we remember them or not” (*Philosophy* 41). As it is invigorated by the senses, experience invites deeper reflection than memory alone. Experience can verify or deny the reliability of a memory as we act in particular situations. However, the epistemological function of experience is merely suggested in Campbell’s discussion of common sense as evidence. The author details a more comprehensive treatment of experience in his discussion of moral reasoning, which occurs in Section II.-*Of deductive evidence*.

Campbell divides deductive reasoning into two branches, scientific, and moral. However, since “[t]he proper province of rhetoric is the second, or moral evidence; for to the second belong all decisions concerning fact, and things without us,” moral evidence demands closer attention than does scientific evidence (*Philosophy* 43). As Bitzer concludes in “Campbell’s Doctrine of Evidence” there is symmetry between intuitive evidence and deductive evidence in Campbell’s philosophy of rhetoric: “Demonstration consists of an uninterrupted series of truths secured intuitively by consciousness and common sense. It is of three kinds: experience, analogy, and testimony” (137). Identifying the differences between the two branches of deductive reasoning exemplifies the province of rhetoric, the relationship between common sense and rhetoric, and the utility of common sense as rhetorical invention.

Generally speaking demonstrative evidence is more predictable, while moral evidence dwells in contingency, and variability. Campbell explains that “[a]ll rational or deductive evidence is derived from one or other of these two sources: *from the invariable properties or relations of general ideas; or from the actual, though perhaps variable connexions subsisting among things*. The former we call demonstrative, the latter moral” (emphasis added, *Philosophy* 43).<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Demonstrative evidence contains facts that establish particulars, “[s]uch are duration, velocity, and weight” (ibid). Demonstrative evidence provides the rhetor with consistent facts that inform rhetorical invention by providing hard facts, statistics, and other numerical breakdowns that will assist the audience in making their decision. However, since most decisions dependent upon the resources of rhetoric dwell not in hard fact, but in imprecise matters whose qualities include “pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, beauty and deformity [. . .]” demonstration is ill-equipped to deal with such matters (ibid).

Moreover since these moral qualities have “[. . .] no standard or common measure, by which their differences and proportions can be ascertained and expressed in numbers, *they can never become the subject of demonstrative evidence*” (*Philosophy* 43). Indeed, demonstration could convince the British-American colonists that given past evidence in similar confrontations they should not revolt. Yet what evidence can the rhetorician present in the unique cause of the American Revolution—of which there exists no parallel? Of course, a rhetorician may invent a demonstrative argument based upon observable fact. For instance, the British navy is the strongest in the world, the colonists do not have a navy, nor do they have a trained standing army that can stand up to British forces. This information will include statistical information pertaining to the number of British soldiers compared to the number of colonial soldiers to convince the colonists that the end does not justify the means. Yet, demonstrative evidence does not represent the incalculable argument. The incalculable argument exists in the hearts of men, women, and children, and involves questions of morality, natural rights, and justice. For morality, natural rights, and justice cannot be measured—the pain of the colonists could not be measured, nor could their resolve—therefore with common sense as its guide moral evidence responds to that which demonstration cannot.

Campbell explains that “[m]oral evidence is founded on the principles we have from consciousness and common sense, improved by experience [ . . . ] it decides, in regard to particulars, concerning the future from the past, *and concerning things unknown from things familiar to us*” (emphasis added, *Philosophy* 43). Therefore in regard to developing rhetoric to oppose or support the cause of the American Revolution demonstration cannot access the information required for rhetorical invention because the issues pertaining to the Revolution are not demonstrable. Campbell explains that “the subject of the one [demonstration] is [ . . . ] abstract independent truth, or the unchangeable and necessary relations of ideas” those human situations which arise without a clear and distinct relationship to unchanging ideas are not suitable to the resources of demonstration (Ibid). Human situations more aptly fall into “[. . . ] the real but often changeable and contingent connexions that subsist among things actually existing” (ibid). Here moral evidence draws from the resources of common sense and consciousness to respond to the immediate, real, changing, and contingent needs of a community. Since human situations and the needs that emerge from them are not static, but dynamic Campbell suggests a second difference between demonstration and moral evidence.

“The second difference I shall remark,” explains Campbell, “is that moral evidence admits degrees, demonstration doth not” (*Philosophy* 44). The stability of demonstration rests upon predictability. If a demonstration produces an inconsistent outcome its evidence is immediately invalidated. Campbell explains that “[w]hatever is exhibited as demonstration is either mere illusion, or absolutely perfect. There is no medium” (ibid). The rigid nature of demonstrative evidence does not invite contrary view points. As a matter of fact, once a contrary viewpoint is proven, the evidence of demonstration is refutable, and therefore rendered worthless. However, as Campbell

suggests in his second difference between demonstrative and moral evidence “in moral reasoning we ascend from possibility, by an insensible gradation, to probability, and thence, in the same manner, to the summit of moral certainty” (ibid). This step-by-step process of moral reasoning invites multiple viewpoints and assumes, at the beginning of the decision-making process, that there exist many valuable considerations. The valuable considerations disregarded by demonstration are assembled by factors such as educated opinions, credibility, emotional appeals, and the organization of logical appeals. These notably artistic proofs are necessarily absent from demonstrative evidence, and accordingly lead Campbell to his third conclusion regarding the difference between demonstration and moral evidence. The third difference, however, “that in the one [demonstration] there never can be any contrariety of proofs; in the other, there may not only may be, but almost always is,” is summarized in the previous discussion, and therefore does not warrant further inspection. What does require further inspection is how Campbell’s theory of rhetoric embraces common sense as it pertains to rhetorical invention.

### **On Campbell’s Common Sense Theory of Rhetoric**

What are the features of Campbell’s theory of rhetoric? The answer to this question draws us again to the public discourses of the Common Sense School of Philosophy. In this regard turning to fellow Wise Club member Thomas Reid, with whom Campbell often discoursed on the topics of rhetoric and philosophy, leads us to commonalities between their perspectives on the function of rhetoric. The commonalities between what exists of Reid’s theory of rhetoric and Campbell’s theory of rhetoric in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* emphasize the mutual influence the philosophers had upon one another, and also suggests a comparatively weakened theory of rhetorical invention than that of the Ancients. However, we will discover that while rhetorical invention may *seem* to be a less pervasive

function within the Scot's respective theories of rhetoric when compared with the Ancients, rhetorical invention still remains intact, and relies heavily on the resources of common sense. Therefore the first step of understanding the relationship between common and sense and rhetorical invention within the Scottish School of Common Sense involves a comparison of Reid's and Campbell's definitions of rhetoric.

In both of their definitions of rhetoric, Reid and Campbell treat rhetoric as a utilitarian art in which they collectively focus upon outcome. For Reid, eloquence is defined as "the art of speaking so as to answer the intention of the speaker" (qtd. in Skopec 261). Skopec further explains that for Reid, "eloquence is a means to an end [. . .]" (261). We hear this utilitarian treatment of rhetoric echoed in Campbell's definition of rhetoric, which he calls "[t]hat art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end" (1). Within the Campbellian system of rhetoric the end to which "the discourse is adapted" is the audience (ibid). As a result writers such as Douglas Ehninger recognize Campbell's movement away from the speech as an end in of itself toward a focus on the hearer as a deviation from the Classical sources of rhetorical invention.

In "George Campbell and the Revolution in Inventional Theory," Ehninger claims that Campbell's theory of rhetoric is "a revolution which swept away the last remnants of *inventio* that had constituted the supreme achievement of ancient rhetorical thought" (270). Douglas McDermott identifies the implications of Campbell's revolution of invention as suggested by Ehninger. In this regard McDermott explains that, "[t]he revolution in *inventio* for which he [Ehninger] thought Campbell responsible was Campbell's placing the hearer, rather than the speech itself, at the center of the rhetorical situation" (403). Yet Ehninger's analysis of the function of invention, and the Canon in general, demonstrates only one tradition of Ancient rhetorical discourse. McDermott

identifies two distinct traditions of rhetorical discourse; “the pedagogical tradition,” and “the philosophical tradition,” of which Ehninger draws his conclusions from the former (404). According to McDermott, “[. . .] the pedagogical tradition [. . .] attempted to make the citizen a better speaker, and of which the *Ad Herenium* is typical; and there was the philosophical tradition, which attempted to explain the foundation of rhetoric in human behavior, of which *De Oratore* is typical” (Ibid). McDermott places Ehninger’s treatment of the Canon within the pedagogical tradition and Campbell’s system of rhetoric in the latter. The consequences of McDermott’s classifications establishes two key notions: 1) Ehninger overlooks an entire tradition of rhetoric in his privileged status of the Canon, and 2) because of his generalized comments Ehninger misrepresents the function of the Canon as it pertains to specific systems of rhetoric. These misrepresentations and over generalized approaches to Campbell’s work on rhetoric stem from a faulty thesis.

The general thesis from which Ehninger and other scholars who seek to prove Campbell’s exclusion from the Classical tradition of rhetoric is that “[. . .] in some way Campbell rejected the categories of classical rhetoric and thus rejected its essential focus for a radically new one of his own” (McDermott 404). The proposition of this thesis rests upon inattentiveness to the philosophical tradition of rhetoric. In merely treating the pedagogical tradition of rhetoric Ehninger classifies Classical rhetoric as a “purely methodological study,” which employs the Canon “as cause rather than effect” (McDermott 404-406). This overemphasis upon the methodological function of the Canon ignores evidence “to the contrary” (ibid). The Ancients were precise in describing the position of methodology within their systems of rhetoric. Their perspectives on methodology prove the Canon’s importance to rhetoric, but limit the role of methodology as a means to an end, not the



substance of rhetoric.

McDermott explains that “[. . .] both Cicero and Quintilian use the terminology of the canon, [but] it always remains a method for using their thought, not the substance of the thought itself” (405). Campbell’s conflation of the Canons “for a two part terminology of analysis and synthesis” achieves the same ends as the Canon through an adherence to Classical modes of proof (McDermott 407). Nor does Campbell deviate from the Ancients regarding the function of the audience versus the role of the speech: “Rather than something different, the classification according to function is the classical equivalent of Campbell’s classification according to reaction. The difference is one of social context, not rhetorical concept” (407). Here McDermott points to the unity of the Ancient’s system of rhetoric with Campbell’s alleged “revolution” that overturned the Canon (403).

Since, [. . .] “Campbell was primarily a theologian and a minister of the Kirk. [...] he felt a [. . .] need: to teach young students (particularly of theology) how to defend the faith in religious controversy in the face of the attacks of the skeptics” (McDermott 410). Campbell’s dedication to his students and congregation moves him toward an audience-centered discourse. Drawing his conclusions from Classical rhetorical theory Farrell explains the relationship between the rhetor and the audience in *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*: “[t]he rhetorical audience can, through its very presence, confront us with issues and choices that are morally compelling” (99). Therefore, Campbell’s “two part terminology of analysis and synthesis” was probably better suited to his method of defense against the skeptics than the Canon, and may not serve as a substitute for the Canon but a different expression of the same ends (McDermott 407). Campbell acknowledges his respect for the “[. . .] progress [. . .] made by the ancient Greeks and Romans, in devising the proper rules of composition, not only the two sorts of poesy [. . .], but also in the three sorts of orations [. . .]

.]” (*Philosophy* li). He also observes that “as far as I have been able to discover, there has been little or no improvement” (ibid). Consequently Campbell would likely treat only those Ancient theories of rhetoric which intersect with his project of understanding the relationship between rhetoric and the human mind and require more attention than that given by the Ancients:

[. . .] this study, properly conducted, leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart. In this view it is perhaps the surest and the shortest, as well as the pleasantest way of arriving at *the science of the human mind*. (*Philosophy* Introduction, 1)

Campbell’s association between rhetoric and the human mind is consistent with the Ancients, since as McDermott suggests, “[. . .] the heart of classical rhetoric was an understanding of man’s mind as he operated in society” (408). The study of rhetoric, therefore, is not merely an adherence to rigid methodology, but a study of the function of the human mind.

In this regard, McDermott concludes that “the distinction between classification based on audience function and classification based on audience reaction is purely semantic” (407). This “purely semantic” divergence between Campbell and the Ancients extends beyond the relationship of the audience to the rhetorical situation and also accounts for the former’s treatment of the Canon. Since Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is clearly situated within “the philosophical tradition, which attempted to explain the foundation of rhetoric in human behavior,” the Canon does not warrant his consideration (McDermott 404). Moreover because “the methodology expressed in the five-part canon was not central to the thought of classical rhetoric,” we must abandon it as a critical apparatus of revealing the scope and function of Campbell’s theory of rhetoric (408). Therefore it is

beneficial to observe specific areas of agreement between Campbell and the Ancients to understand his theory of rhetoric. We discover this unity of thought in Campbell's treatment of the artistic proofs.

Campbell's system of rhetoric upholds Aristotle's function of the artistic proofs in rhetorical invention. The artistic proofs evidence the Classical reliance upon audience-centered discourse as the telos of rhetoric, not the placement of "the speech itself, at the center of the rhetorical situation" (McDermott 403). As ontological proofs the artistic proofs are the most accessible proof for rhetors to employ, and audiences to recognize. Artistic proofs are intrinsic to humankind; they do not demand the empirical data and factuality of the non artistic proofs, because they persuade by their very presence. Therefore, Campbell's adherence to the artistic proofs demonstrates the relationship between common sense and rhetoric, as well as the relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention. Examining Aristotle's artistic proofs and their adaptation in Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* indicates the relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention. However, since Campbell's adherence to logos is discussed in the previous chapter in the arguments regarding evidence in Chapter 5 of *Philosophy of Rhetoric* we can dispense with a discussion of this mode of proof excepting a few general remarks.

### **The Common Sense of Artistic Proofs**

#### **Logos**

As noted earlier Campbell explains that "[l]ogical truth consisteth in the conformity of our conceptions to their archetypes in the nature of things" (*Philosophy* 35). However, how Campbell arrives at these "conceptions" strays from Aristotle's enthymeme driven logos (Ibid). Campbell, according to McDermott, "disapproves of the syllogism as a means of proof, [but] [. . .]"

acknowledges the usefulness of the example [. . .]” (408). In this regard Campbell substitutes the audience participation instigated by the enthymeme with an appeal to the passions. However, the aim of logos is constant in both philosophers’ theories of persuasion in which, “[Campbell] [. . .] stresses the fact that the audience must understand the connection between the desired object and the speaker’s proposed plan of action before they will accept it” (ibid). Logos remains intact as a mode of proof in Campbell’s system of rhetoric, however, “Aristotle believes logical proof to be the most effective [proof], while Campbell believes that pathetic proof is the most effective; but both regard effectiveness as a matter of influencing the audience” (ibid). Campbell’s preference for pathos is a landmark perspective on rhetoric, yet his connection to audience-centered discourse places him more inside the Aristotelian tradition than outside. Furthermore, Campbell’s application of the remaining proofs proves his indebtedness to Aristotle’s common sense theory of rhetoric.

### **Ethos**

In his discussion of ethos in *Rhetorica*, Aristotle explains that “[p]ersuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible” (*Rhetorica* 1356a). Campbell upholds Aristotle’s tripartite union between personal character, audience, and persuasion when he describes ethos as, “[. . .] that which is obtained reflexively from the opinion entertained of him by the hearers, or the character which he bears with them” (*Philosophy* 96). Ethos is not a mere artifice, but a genuine presentation of the character of the speaker. Kathleen Hall Jamieson responds to the implausibility of a contrived ethos when she states that “[c]reating the illusion that a speaker possessed practical wisdom, good will, and worthy moral character was difficult in a city-state in which the audience and the speaker were neighbors” (240). The issue of proximity likewise contributes to Campbell’s historical moment, as his audiences were

students, colleagues, and his congregation. As Anand Chitnis explains in *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History*, “[i]t [the Scottish Enlightenment] was an urban movement and its intimacy was prompted, and its progress facilitated, by the forms of social and intellectual expression that towns and urban living encouraged” (5). Hence, as it affects the construction of ethos, the issue of proximity in Athens and the Lowlands of Scotland reduced the likelihood of a contrived ethos.

Aristotle is strict in his coordinates for the development of ethos, when he writes that “[t]his kind of persuasion [ethos], like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak” (*Rhetorica* 1356a). The development of ethos during the speech-act evidences the Classical notion of audience-centered discourse and the extension of audience-centered discourse in the Scottish Enlightenment. Aristotle identifies the ontological status of ethos when he writes that “[i]t is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his *may also be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses*” (emphasis added, *Rhetorica* 1356a, line 10). “Personal goodness,” as ethos is a natural “possession” and therefore remains an inseparable part of our existence (ibid). Campbell simultaneously maintains both Aristotle’s development of ethos during the speech-act, and the ontological characteristic of ethos when he writes that “[n]othing exposes the mind more to all their baneful influences than ignorance and rudeness; the rabble chiefly consider who speaks, *men of sense and education what is spoken*” (emphasis added, *Philosophy* 97). From an Aristotelian, and Campbellian standpoint ethos is an intrinsic mode of proof that cannot be separated from human existence. As an ontological and inseparable component of our existence ethos is a common sense

that can be employed as rhetorical invention.

Ethos is a resplendent source of rhetorical invention because it draws its power to persuade from the very fabric of human existence—the mind. As Campbell concludes Chapter IX: *Of the Consideration which the Speaker ought to have of Himself* in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* he affirms the innate relationship between ethos and existence by placing the study of ethos within the realm of the mind: “It is enough here to have observed those principles in the mind on which the rules are founded” (98). Common sense works as rhetorical invention through ethos because ethos is a perceptible trait which is tied to our “actual existence,” thus it is a common sense (*Philosophy* 40). As Campbell explains, “[a]ll the axioms in mathematics are but enunciations of certain properties in our abstract notions, distinctly perceived by the mind, *but have no relation to any thing without themselves*, and can never be made the foundation of any conclusion concerning actual existence [. . .] (ibid).<sup>xxxvii</sup> Although Campbell tends to treat common sense as “self-evident truths,” there is also a physiological component of common sense inherent in his philosophy (39). Campbell substantiates the physiological component of common sense by explaining: “I am certain that I see, and feel, and feel and think, what I actually see, and feel, and think” (41). These certainties are presented to him through his senses, thus there is a dualistic nature of Campbell’s theory of common sense which includes both common sense as “self-evident truths,” as well as, common sense as a physiological process that relies upon the human senses to arrive at conclusions about the exterior world (39).<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Thus a rhetor relies upon his common sense to discover and personify those characteristics which are most amenable to his audience’s disposition. Additionally, the rhetor relies upon the common sense of his/her audience to recognize his/her ethos as it is developed through the speech-

act. Since ethos is not a logical phenomenon that can be demonstrated, or quantified it is analogous to the “intuitive evidence” of common sense (*Philosophy* 38-42). The quality of ethos is judged by sense perception alone. This conclusion displays the interwoven components of Campbell’s theory of common sense—as purely physiological phenomena through the five senses, and as “self-evident truths”— as they pertain to the audience’s judgment of a speaker’s ethos. In this regard Campbell explains that:

[t]o believe the report of our senses doth indeed commonly imply to believe the existence of certain external and corporeal objects, which give rise to our particular sensations. This, I acknowledge, is a principle which doth not spring from consciousness, (for consciousness cannot extend beyond sensation,) but from common sense [. . .].” (40-41)

Our senses, which “spring [. . .] from common sense” guide us in our judgment of the character and credibility of a speaker (ibid). However, ethos alone cannot effectively persuade an audience, the rhetor must also consciously approach the remaining artistic proofs when considering the ontological resources accessible to rhetorical invention. Ethos is supported by the two remaining artistic proofs, pathos, and logos, which sustain the relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention. Moreover, the symmetry between Aristotle’s artistic proofs and Campbell’s common sense theory of rhetoric continues in the analysis of pathos.

### **Pathos**

An investigation of pathos within the Aristotelian and Campbellian theories of rhetoric concurrently accentuates their divergence and harmony. McDermott intimates this paradoxical phenomenon when he writes that:

[t]he primary difference between Aristotle and Campbell in this matter of proof is a difference in emphasis. Aristotle believes logical proof to be the most effective, while Campbell believes that pathetic proof to be the most effective; but both regard effectiveness as a matter of influencing the audience. (408)

Campbell's inclusion of the artistic proofs in the development of his philosophy of rhetoric confirms his indebtedness to Aristotle's system of rhetoric. However, the Scot's expansion of pathos is indicative of his project in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*:

[b]esides, this study, [*Philosophy of Rhetoric*] properly conducted, leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart. In this view it is perhaps the surest and the shortest, as well as the pleasantest way of arriving at the science of the human mind. It is as an humble attempt to lead the mind of the studious inquirer into this tract, that the following sheets are now submitted to the examination of the public. (*Philosophy* 1)

Here pathos described by Campbell as “[. . .] the lurking springs of action in the heart” may bring us closer to understanding “the science of the human mind” (ibid). Campbell links pathos to “the science of the human mind,” and his discussions in this regard suggest his most provocative contributions to the study of rhetoric. A study of the passions as they emerge from Aristotle's *Rhetorica* and Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* identifies the expansion of the latter's treatment of pathos.

Campbell follows Aristotle's coordinates for pathetic proofs in which the arousal of the emotions are deemed a necessary component of rhetorical invention. Aristotle observes that “[o]ur



judgments when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile” (*Rhetorica* 1356a15). This psychological component of rhetoric is advanced in Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* when he concludes that “[. . .] passion is the mover to action, reason is the guide” (78). Whereas Cicero unites wisdom and eloquence, Campbell unites passion and reason (*De Inventione* I.1.). Although Campbell announces the centrality of the passions to his rhetorical theory, as Arthur E. Walzer acknowledges in “Campbell on the Passions: A Rereading of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*,” “[. . .] no one has systematically inquired into what Campbell means by the ‘passions;’ yet there are good reasons for doing so, for the coherence of Campbell’s theory of persuasion emerges when the passions become the center of critical attention” (72). Devoting critical attention to Campbell’s advancements of pathos additionally suggests the relationship between common sense and rhetoric, and common sense and rhetorical invention.

As an artistic or ontological proof, pathos is an innate rhetorical resource and as such it does not require rhetorical invention to bring it into the persuasive fray. Pathos intrinsically exists in the rhetorical situation, because the emotions cannot be divorced from our ontology. As Campbell explains, “[t]he coolest reasoner always in persuading addresseth himself to the passions some way or another” (*Philosophy* 77). In this regard, pathos is a common sense. For pathos is an extension of our being. A rhetor may have a negative pathos, or may be oblivious to his or her pathetic appeals, but neglect of the passions does not nullify their effects on the audience. Thus, pathos implicates rhetorical invention on the basis of selection, and institution. To respond effectively to the rhetorical situation the rhetor must select which of the audience’s passions to stimulate, or diminish in accordance with the intent of the speech act. Subsequently, the rhetor must consider the appropriate places in the speech act to institute the pathetic appeals. Campbell explains that we must engage the

proper passion with the proper rhetorical end when he writes that “[i]t is not, however, every kind of pathos, which will give the orator so great an ascendancy over the minds of his hearers. All passions are not alike capable of producing this effect” (*Philosophy* 5). To guide the rhetor in his or her selection and institution of pathos during the speech act Campbell defines and describes the relationship between pathetic appeals and persuasion.

Campbell defines pathos

[. . .] as that kind, the most complex of all, which is calculated to influence the will, and persuade to a certain conduct, is in reality an artful mixture of that which interests the passions, its distinguished excellency results from these two, argumentative and the pathetic incorporated together. (*Philosophy* 4)

Furthermore, he describes the effects of pathos as a “magical spell, [which] hurries them [the audience], ere they are unaware, into love, pity, grief, terror, desire, aversion, fury or hatred” (ibid). Yet, the precise “magical spell” to cast in particular rhetorical situations strays from the paranormal and moves toward the psychic. To this end, Walzer explains that in his theory of the passions Campbell makes “distinctions based on the nature of the stimuli (whether intellectual, emotional or moral) [. . .] [and] also distinctions based on the nature of the mind’s response to the stimuli (whether deliberate or immediate, voluntary or involuntary” (75). Campbell’s account of the passions develops Aristotle’s principal treatment of pathos in *Rhetorica* and subsequently expands the comparably limited function of pathetic appeals as they influence the rhetorical situation within Classical rhetorical theories.

Walzer recognizes the development of pathos in Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* as a central component of the Scot’s rhetorical theory when he writes that “[I]t is the challenge of

managing all types [of stimuli] in a single rhetorical performance that makes passionate evocation the ultimate rhetorical achievement, and it is Campbell's recognition of this challenge that makes his account of persuasion complex and coherent" (75). Regrettably, as a result of Campbell's pathetic vision of persuasion in which rhetoric serves a "managing" function of stimuli, contemporary scholars have categorized his treatment of rhetoric as a movement away from Classical rhetoric (ibid).

Warnick describes Campbell's contribution to rhetorical theory as a "managerial view," when she writes that "[d]uring the Enlightenment, French and Scottish rhetorics turned to a managerial view of rhetoric that distinguished the discovery of knowledge through reasoning from communication of content to others" (129). The implications of Warnick's analysis of Campbell's theory of rhetoric suggest that he avoids the Classical function of invention as a practice of "discovery of knowledge," in favor of a system of rhetoric that limits the practice of rhetoric to "managing" knowledge" (ibid). However, the assessment of Campbell's as a "managerial view of rhetoric" disregards his statements to the contrary, and misrepresents a sophisticated theory of rhetoric that contributes to the Classical notion of rhetoric as both an art of discovery, and a vehicle of communication (ibid). Moreover, misrepresenting Campbell's theory of rhetoric as "managerial" flouts the relationship between common sense and rhetoric, and common sense as rhetorical invention.

### **Campbell's Unification of Passion and Reason**

In his unification of passion and reason Campbell recognizes the Classical treatment of invention as the "discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible (*De Inventione* I.vi.). However, Campbell expands the rhetor's understanding of rhetorical invention

by promoting the unification of passion and reason during the process of rhetorical invention. In his doctrine of the passions Campbell identifies pathos as a rational process. As Walzer explains, “[. . .] the point to be stressed is that moving a passion need not be an irrational process. On the contrary, appeals to reason can contribute to the moving of a passion and under the ideal of passionate eviction they do” (81). Campbell, seemingly concerned of a misreading of his rhetorical theory as patently irrational and devoid of logical reasoning, asks the question: “But if so much depend on passion, where is the scope for argument?” (77). In his reply to this question we can infer a system of rhetoric that is not “managerial” in scope, but a pathetic development of the doctrines on rhetorical invention which hinge upon the act of discovery.

The developmental nature of his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is evidenced by “[. . .] his important Introduction to *POR*, [in which] Campbell identifies himself as a rhetorician of the ‘fourth step’ (lxxv)” (qtd. in Walzer 73). After listing the contributions of previous generations of rhetoricians, the first through third steps, Campbell explains his contribution to the “fourth step” of rhetoric, in which “we arrive at that knowledge of human nature which, besides its other advantages, adds both weight and evidence to all precedent discoveries and rules” (emphasis added, 1i). Therefore, Campbell’s project in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is not intended to supplant the rhetorical theories of “Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian,” but to develop the works of such noted predecessors with “the knowledge of human nature” that emerged in the Enlightenment. To this end, Campbell develops rhetorical invention by adding the common sense of pathetic appeals to the realm of discovery.

In his “[. . .] analysis of persuasion,” Campbell elucidates the relationship between passion and reason. “The former [pathos] is effected by communicating lively and glowing ideas of the object; the latter [the argumentative] [. . .], by presenting the best and most forcible arguments which

the nature of the subject admits. In the one lies the pathetic, in the other argumentative” (*Philosophy* 78). Passion and reason unite in Campbell’s rhetorical theory to provide a coherent and convincing argument. The unity of passion and reason is a complex process because as Campbell explains “[. . .] there is an attraction or association among the passions, as well as among the ideas of the mind,” and these complex associations are exacerbated by the fact that “[r]arely any passion comes alone” (*Philosophy* 129). Yet the “passion[s]” Campbell explains, following Abbe du Bos, “relieve the mind from [. . .] languor [. . .]” (ibid). The passions exercise the mind, but they also promote an acute self-awareness that if unchecked by reason may lead to apprehension.

While the sheer magnitude of some passions may “give the mind some uneasiness or dissatisfaction with its present state,” the passions produce sensations which cannot emerge by reason alone (ibid). Walzer summarizes Campbell’s philosophical stance on reason when he explains that, “[. . .] reason or the understanding cannot justify values [. . .] Reason can establish whether our belligerent neighbor has or probably has the means to do us harm; but we cannot establish definitively by argument whether justice require us to sue for peace or prepare a pre-emptive strike” (75). The passions present the mind and body with dichotomous sensations, such as “*desire* and *aversion*” and “*hope* or *fear*” and can be “pleasant or painful” depending upon the circumstances (original emphasis, ibid). These dichotomous sensations emerge naturally from the human condition as common sense and aid reason in the decision making process. According to Walzer, “The passions fill the [. . .] voids left by [. . .] [the] attenuated sense if reason; that is, the passions are the source of energy that enables action and the source of values that enable choice” (75). The rhetorical implication of Campbell’s unification of passion and reason is insightful yet counterintuitive.

Whereas passion is commonly thought to cloud judgment, Campbell reverses this perspective and promotes the passions as a source of critical dichotomies that emerge through common sense to aid our reasoning where it is fundamentally lacking. In this regard Walzer arrives at two valuable conclusions: 1) “For Campbell the passions (as emotions) do not obscure judgment but enable action,” and; 2) “The mind is oppressed not by the passions but in their absence” (76). These conclusions regarding the stimulating influence of pathetic proofs on the mind ironically follow Hume’s treatment of the passions in his *Treatise of Human Nature* in which the skeptic explains that “[. . .] when a passion has once become a settled principle of action, and is the predominant inclination of the soul, it commonly produces no longer any insensible agitation [. . .]” (II.iii.4. 466). Yet the resemblance of Hume’s and Campbell’s theory of the passions ceases when applied to the practical realm of human affairs; rhetoric.

For Hume the operations of the passions are indicative of his philosophy that the senses are unreliable in testing anything other than that we have experienced in the past. According to Hume in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, “when we analyze our thoughts or ideas, however compounded or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as were copied from a precedent feeling or sentiment” (19). Within the Humean philosophy humans cannot access the exterior world because we are prisoners of our own minds. Bitzer well summarizes the consequence of Hume’s philosophical conclusions when the former writes that “[. . .] Hume argues that we have no evidence for believing in anything other than our own private states of mind. We have no evidence for the existence of God or the soul, and no evidence that events are causally related” (“Re-Evaluation” 136). Hence Hume’s skeptical philosophy views the operations of the mind as patently emotional and devoid of reason. Without evidence the hope of rhetoric’s assent to

truth is impossible, and this standpoint could not be reconciled with those Scot's who maintained the authority of rhetoric and the philosophy of common sense. However, the negative reaction to Hume's skepticism was not exclusively contained in Scotland.

### **Assenting Voices on Common Sense**

In fact, the Scottish reactions against Hume, and to a lesser extent Descartes, were so similar to Father Claude Buffier's earlier sentiments in his *First Truths, and the Origins of Our Opinions, Explained*, that the 1780<sup>xxxix</sup> translation included, as a preface, the statement "A Detection of the Plagiarism, Concealment, and Ingratitude of the Doctors Reid, Beattie, and Oswald (Bormann 403; Bevilacqua 88-9). However, the most sensible response to the similarities between Buffier's and the Scottish School of Common Sense's reaction to the prevailing Enlightenment philosophies harken back to Ehniger's theory of rhetoric: "Systems of rhetoric arise out of a felt need and are shaped in part by the intellectual and social environment in which the need exists." The pronounced similarity between the felt beliefs of the common sense theorists in France and Scotland explains well their nearly identical reactions to the epistemological skepticism occurring within their historical moment.<sup>xl</sup> The philosophical similarities between two isolated countries provide a lesson in rhetorical theory: that the need to turn to the resources of common sense as rhetorical invention naturally arises from the historical conditions. For across the Atlantic in the British-controlled New World, similar common sense arguments arose to develop thoughts on the nature of government, human nature, natural rights, and equality. Yet the stakes of the common sense pleas in the New World were much higher than they were in Scotland. These pleas moved beyond the universities, churches, and pubs and overflowed to the streets, into the marketplace, and arrived at the dinner tables. Here common sense pleas did not only argue against atheism and radical doctrines of

skepticism, but also against the mental *and* physical effects of tyranny, poverty, hunger, abuse of power, and heresy.

Still, as this chapter has discussed, the Scottish Enlightenment fueled by the Hume-Reid debate over the rule of humans versus the rule of God has everything to do with the clash of powers known as the American Revolution. When examined from the dual inquiry of understanding the relationship between rhetoric and common sense and tracing common sense as rhetorical invention, the American Revolution becomes a vital lesson in rhetorical theory that could serve to explain and enliven the contemporary landscape of political rhetoric.

*Chapter III: Adams, Jefferson & Paine: Common Sense Invents the American Revolution*  
[*Confirmatio*]

### **Founding a Country and a Common Sense Rhetorical Theory**

The rhetoric of the Founding Fathers demonstrates how the exercise of common sense as rhetorical invention can motivate and organize human action. An analysis of the discourses of three notable American revolutionaries—Thomas Paine, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson—reveals a common sense theory of rhetoric. Central to this theory is the link between first principles and common sense, for despite these Founders' dissimilarities in personality, philosophy, politics, and theology, there are sustained common senses that flow through their rhetoric. These common senses function to invent and invigorate their rhetorical processes through an affiliation to a burgeoning republican consciousness in early American philosophy and rhetoric that stemmed from three complimentary first principles. As Brian Grant's "The Virtues of Common Sense" posits, first principles are the foundation of common sense.

**First Principles and "The Virtues of Common Sense:" The Foundation of Common Sense in**



### Early American Rhetoric

Corroborating the accessible and intuitive features of common sense, Grant addresses the indisputable necessity of first principles when thinking, speaking, or doing. He writes that

[o]ne has to start somewhere. One has to occupy some space, to say or write something or have a relatively complete thought. Anything less could not itself be a premise. Premises, moreover, are not typically supported in the arguments in which they appear. Otherwise we would never get anywhere. So there is a datum in every context. (193)

These presuppositions lead to the seminal question, “[a]re these data fixed in the sense that some propositions are epistemologically more fundamental than others?” (ibid). To this Grant responds with an unequivocal “Yes” (ibid). One such privileged epistemological proposition is that “[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa [. . .]” (193-4). To support this claim Grant capriciously chooses as his first principles, “‘Here is a pen’ and ‘There is a book,’” with the expectation that “with a few exceptions, the great majority of us, if suitably placed, will accept them [the first principles]” (196). He thus supports his previous statement that “[e]very premise, with its reliance upon examples, makes some commitment to what the first principles are” (195-6). In this regard, we use as our practical guides to identifying first principles both examples from the past and social consensus to concede to their validity. The assumption that holds this theory together “[. . .] is that there are a number of interconnected nonindubitable [*sic*] first principles” (196). To this end, identifying these “interconnected nonindubitable [*sic*] first principles” from which common sense emerged during the cause of Independence provides a practical framework from whence to

proceed.

One such first principle that functioned as the foundation for common sense as rhetorical invention in the American Revolution has previously been noted by Grant, that “[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa [. . .]” (193-4). The second seminal first principle that both guides and confronts the common sense of Early American Rhetoric is eloquently embodied in Jefferson’s *First Inaugural Address* when the newly elected president writes “[. . .] that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression” (493). The third first principle that operates as rhetorical invention in the rhetoric of the three Founding Fathers, Adams, Jefferson, and Paine, transpires through the circumstances and intellectual commitments of their historical moment. As men of the Enlightenment, these Founders held fast to the belief that “‘Order’ [. . .] ‘is Nature’s first law,’ and they made it their own, for they were in harmony Nature” (qtd. in Commager 2). Thus, it was not a clockwork universe that they sought to wind, nor were they merely in search of pieces of a proverbial puzzle. These Enlightened men were certain that order existed in Nature and this order could be mapped onto all realms of the human condition, including politics, philosophy, rhetoric, and theology. Therefore, that which brought injustice into the world was that which had to be balanced by justice, even if re-establishing this Natural order meant revolution. These first principles construct a common sense that ran through the rhetoric of the Founding Fathers in cause and spirit.

### **Justifying the Attention to Adams and Jefferson**

Although a tumultuous period followed their close friendship during “the party wars of the 1790’s,” even amid extraordinary examples of famous collaborators such as Samuel Adams and John Hancock, Washington and Hamilton, Hamilton and Madison, and finally Madison and Jefferson, the Adams-Jefferson shared contribution to the Revolution and the founding of the country “stood out as the greatest collaboration of them all,” writes historian Joseph J. Ellis in *Founding Brothers* (163-4). Therefore choosing between Jefferson and Adams for the 1796 presidency must have “seemed like choosing between the head and the heart of the American Revolution” (*Founding* 164). However, as Ellis points out, “if Revolutionary credentials were the major criteria, Adams was virtually unbeatable. His career, indeed his entire life, was made by the American Revolution; and he, in turn, had made American Independence his life’s project” (*ibid*). Yet, as Adams himself predicted, his personal contributions to the cause of Revolution, the fight for Independence and the founding of America have been overshadowed by Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson. What has been written of John Adams to date ignores or glosses over the most distinguishable contribution he gave to America—his rhetoric.

In fact the rhetoric of the Founding Fathers received scarce treatment by “an early twentieth-century generation of scholars,” because “the speeches and pamphlets spawned by the Revolutionary crisis represented a form of propaganda that masked underlying socio-economic interests” (*Spirit* 44). According to C. Bradley Thompson, this trend in scholarly disregard for the rhetoric of the Revolutionary crisis has not improved in recent time: “[T]o a later generation such arguments were the result of an ideological syndrome and a paranoid mentality” (44). Thompson summarizes the void in recent scholarship on Adams as “an a priori disjunction between rhetoric and reality” (44-5). While Thompson’s claims are intended to represent the *historical* treatment of the rhetoric of early

America, they also hold true in rhetorical studies.

Thompson's statement that "it is uncommon today for historians to engage in *extended* and scholarly analyses of the major Revolutionary pamphlets and speeches" also reflects the record of rhetorical scholarship (emphasis added, 45). However, the author's most poignant claim that reverberates across rhetorical studies can be legitimized by both the strikingly scarce rhetorical inquiries of the speeches and pamphlets which constructed the rhetoric of early America in general, as well as by the absolute lack of systematic rhetorical inquiries into the rhetoric of John Adams in particular.<sup>xli</sup> His 1998 observation holds true to the present, that "[r]emarkably, there have been no systematic studies of his [Adams's] pre-Revolutionary writings, even though Adams was a prolific writer, and his pre-Revolutionary essays are considered among the very best and most influential of all the American patriot writings" (45).

Nor is Bradley's observation limited to Adams's pre-Revolutionary writings, for his speeches and writings during the entire cause of American Independence have not received the scholarly attention they demand, in spite of the fact that "[. . .] most general studies of the Revolution rely on Adams more than any other patriot to explain the causes and meaning of the American Revolution [. . .]" (ibid). "[H]e wrote," notes Bradley, "both reasoned political discourses and passionate rhetorical broadsides" (ibid). To respond to this lack of rhetorical scholarship on the rhetoric of John Adams is to recapture the arguments and considerations that constructed America. Yet studying Adams's arguments and considerations in regard to the plight and cause of America alone would yield biased results. For the "head [. . .] of the American Revolution," was balanced by "the heart of the American Revolution" (*Founding* 164). To accurately and responsibly portray the complexities of the cause of Independence, and how the complexities both emphasize the

relationship between rhetoric and common sense, as well as evidence the utility of common sense as rhetorical invention, we must also turn our attention to the rhetoric of Thomas Jefferson.

In spite of the fact that “[g]iven a choice, Thomas Jefferson would have joined John Adams in letting someone else draft a statement [declaration] of independence,” it was because the Virginian felt “[. . .] that building a proper foundation for his colony far outweighed drawing up another list of indictments against the king [George III]” that the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence has become an undisputed anthem in American discourse (Langguth 352). Ironically, the powerful arguments and beautiful prose of the *Declaration* poured forth from a man who shrank from public argument. And although Jefferson had to sit quietly, seething in anger, as members of Congress slashed and rephrased his prose, the single fact that one line remained unscathed by the highly opinionated delegates proves the worth of studying Jefferson’s rhetoric: “And for support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”<sup>xlii</sup>

Once approved by Congress the rhetoric of Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence was immediately elevated to the status it deserved. As Samuel Adams describes it, “[t]he people seem to recognize this resolution, as though it were a decree promulgated from heaven” (qtd. in Langguth 363). Due to the political importance of the Declaration of Independence the text has received an abundance of scholarly attention.<sup>xliii</sup> But in the present historical moment one must ask, has this attention to Jefferson’s *Declaration* been at the expense of his other work? To this question, Stephen Howard Browne would respond with a resounding yes.

In “‘The Circle of Our Felicities’: Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address and The Rhetoric of Nationhood,” Browne provides a historical sketch of the celebration of Jefferson’s

first inaugural address:

Its “language, its perspicuity, its arrangement, its felicity of thought and expression,” wrote one observer [. . .] was “a model of eloquence, [. . .] by one of the best writers which our country had produced.” The principles Jefferson enshrined that day, reported the *Independent Chronicle*, were “compressed within such precise limits, as to enforce them on the memory, and expressed with such Classical elegance, as to charm the scholar with their rhetorical brilliancy.” (qtd. in Browne 410)

Jefferson’s first inaugural address has also captivated politicians and scholars throughout the ages:<sup>xliv</sup>

To the populist Tom Watson, Jefferson’s speech ‘will always be to good government what the Sermon on the Mount is to religion,’ and Woodrow Wilson noted that nothing ‘could exceed the fine tact and gentleness with which Mr. Jefferson gave tone of order and patriotic purpose in his inaugural address to the new way of government his followers expected of him. (ibid)

Contrary to the public praise of Jefferson’s inaugural address, Browne observes in 2002 “how curious, then, that it has yet to receive sustained and systematic analysis. Therefore, in support of Browne’s research, this present project “seeks to initiate that process” (ibid).

To effectively begin the “process” of “sustained and systematic analysis” of the rhetoric of Adams and Jefferson, analysis which seeks to display and consider their respective philosophies of common sense as well as to investigate the ways common sense was employed as rhetorical invention through their discourse, it is useful to move just beyond the Revolution and just beyond the founding of the country to the inaugural addresses of both men (ibid). In their roles as the second and third presidents of the United States of America, Adams (1797-1801) and Jefferson (1801-1809)

reached the pinnacle of their careers. Within the historical moment of their presidencies, the Founding Fathers contributed the greater part of their lives to the cause of Independence, and, through their presidencies, enacted the principles and philosophies they fought arduously to attain. Therefore, examining their inaugural addresses yields two important areas of insight to the present inquiry: 1) a revelation of their commitments and visions of the new nation, 2) a connection to past discourses.

As Vanessa Beasley explains in “The Rhetoric of Ideological Consensus in the United States: American Principles and American Prose in Presidential Inaugurals,”

Presidents obviously do more than just affirm cultural beliefs through their inaugural addresses, [. . .]They may also try to shape and even change them. Even though inaugural addresses are typically not as policy-driven as other types of presidential discourse, U.S. presidents must presumably still speak about American ideals in strategic ways in such moments. The speech situation itself demands it; party divisions must be healed, some level of nonpartisanship must be affirmed, and international audiences and exigencies must be addressed as well. (175)

Therefore to examine the inaugural address of John Adams and the first inaugural address of Thomas Jefferson is to reveal “American ideals” in their infancy, and this alone warrants an investigation (ibid). However, for the purposes of this essay the two inaugural addresses invite thought about the relationship between rhetoric and common sense, and about common sense as rhetorical invention. Lastly, a juxtaposition between their inaugural addresses and previous discourses informs the response to the question, what were the functional rhetorical theories—implicit and explicit—of common sense that drove the cause of Independence, a rhetorical and historical moment in which diverse political interests were effectively unified for the sake of a common good?

### **Brief Biographical and Historical Information Pertaining to Jefferson and Adams**

The political strife between Jefferson and Adams cannot be shrugged off as mere growing pains of a nascent country. These clashes of philosophy and political ideology mark the inception of partisan politics. To foreground the relationship between these men within the historical context of the American Revolution is to glimpse competing philosophies of common sense and how common sense affects political decision-making and the welfare of a nation. This scholarly focus of attention, although clearly moving from a theoretical to a historical analysis of the American Revolution, serves as a merging point for the philosophical, theoretical, historical and intellectual aspects of the relationship between common sense and rhetorical invention.

To move from the philosophical/theoretical coordinates of common sense to the historical context of the American Revolution demands that we 1) frame the historical context of the American Revolution in brief; 2) situate John Adams and Thomas Jefferson within the American Revolution; 3) locate Adams's and Jefferson's philosophies of common sense through their education, commitments, and public and private correspondences; and 4) suggest the political implications of their competing standpoints. However, before segueing to these areas of inquiry it is important to gain a biographical glimpse of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson to appreciate how they fit into the overall scheme of the historical moment of the Revolution.

The political views of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were as irreconcilable as their physical stature and personal backgrounds. When their paths crossed, Adams, the eight-years-old New England statesman, was short, plump, and balding, with a rounded face and a pointed nose. His life as the consummate New England farmer profited from a Protestant work ethic inherited from his father Deacon John Adams and served the younger Adams well on his rugged horseback journeys during his days as a statesman and delegate. The long hours of physical labor on the farm strengthened the younger Adams, whose ability to succeed in the daily challenges of performing his chores and applying himself to his studies promoted a sense of self-reliance that aroused his



independent spirit. This independent spirit would both bless and curse him throughout his life.<sup>xlv</sup>

The junior Adams's self-determining spirit was inherited from his bloodline of "virtuous, independent New England farmers," as he wrote in his diary (qtd. in McCullough 30). The spirit of independence drove him to reject charity and personal loans. Even further, as a pervasive force in both his public and private dealings, this spirit set him apart from the majority of his fellow revolutionaries who either came from wealth or who acted as spendthrifts in order to live in a manner consistent with their ranks and titles. Yet, contrariwise to the prevailing social trends, material items were of little concern to Adams. Adams never took a personal loan, nor lived outside of his means. This self-reliance he learned from Deacon Adams.

The junior John Adams held fast and true to the lessons he learned from his father when advising Abigail how to run their household during the time he was away from Braintree, traveling as an American diplomat. Diplomat Adams implored his wife to follow the common sense he was raised upon when he wrote Abigail a letter, encouraging her to "let frugality and industry be our virtues" (qtd. in McCullough 33). These simple concepts informed the mission statement for the Adams's household. Even at the height of Adams's accomplishments as President, the first family was deeply concerned about their financial standing. The question of how they could make ends meet and entertain with the frequency and lavishness expected of the first family plagued John and Abigail Adams throughout his presidency.

The President's commitment to hard work and long hours could not be reconciled with the superfluity of late-eighteenth-century spending habits. In Adams's view, the contradictory notions of hard work and excessive spending defied his common sense. Adams was a man who enjoyed a simple life. He required little more than a modest home, land to farm, books, a place to write, three square meals a day, and a sturdy horse to take him on long peaceful rides on his property during the warmer months. As a result, eighteenth-century aristocratic living did not rest well with his hierarchy of needs. Large manors, hired help, and slaves to do chores that he and his family could

perform all seemed strange to Adams. What was paramount to him was to hold steadfast to his commitments, succeed in doing so, and be viewed fairly by the American public.

Throughout his life Adams was dedicated to God, family, and country, and he served each with passion and bravado. If nothing else, these brief comments about the life of John Adams indicate that his intentions were focused upon making the correct decision for God, family, and country (McCullough 84, 114). Yet, like many brilliant men, his was a life of physical and spiritual toil marked by great accomplishments and somewhat debilitating personal defeats. He was a spirited man led by morality and critical insights learned by tough lessons and endless hours of reading, yet Adams was plagued by feelings of inadequacy (ibid 48). His was a character of contradictions: modest and arrogant, flexible and stubborn, and careful and reckless. Still, Adams's saving graces were his unyielding conscience and uncompromising dedication (ibid 398). His conscience led him to reflect upon his less desirable traits in his personal diary and his dedication drove him to work harder at defeating these traits in all areas of human existence (ibid 53).

Here, with only a brief sketch of John Adams, the man and his commitments, we can efficiently surmise his character as strong-willed, honest, determined, and practical in his public and private affairs. Fascinatingly, it is the first character trait, a strong-willed nature, which best represents the common ground of Adams and Jefferson, and the last character trait, practicality, that most marked differences in their private and public affairs. Jefferson, the slender, tall, stately Virginian and landed aristocrat lived and died in debt. While Adams accounted for every cent and made his meager earnings stretch, Jefferson, true to his aristocratic roots, often privileged personal comfort over financial necessity.

After refurbishing and redesigning his temporary Parisian mansion with borrowed money, Jefferson told his financial manager in America, "Nor would I willingly sell the slaves as long as there remains any prospect of paying my debts with their labors" (qtd. in McCullough 346). Here Jefferson's economic commitments reveal some of his less desirable character traits instilled in his

life as a second generation Virginia plantation owner. Moreover, Jefferson's character traits also reveal his most startling departure from Adams's commitments and common sensibilities:

[...] Adams, the farmer's son, would have no argument with Jefferson's faith in land as the only true wealth. But that Jefferson could so matter-of-factly consider selling off his slaves—not freeing them—and so readily transfer the burdens of his own extravagances to the backs of those he held in bondage, would have struck Adams as unconscionable [...] (McCullough 347).

Ironically, however, it was not the issue of slavery that began the lifelong rift between former friends. Nor was it Jefferson's self-centered and careless spending. In the end it was reciprocal political back-biting that began to spoil their friendship and the potentiality of collaborative efforts. Moreover, it was their personal characteristics, views on human nature, natural rights, and, most importantly for this study, common sense that intensified the feud between the Virginia aristocrat and New England farmer. These points of departure can be recognized both through their commitments displayed in their discourses, and also by the vehicle of their discursive practices.

While Adams was publicly immersed in the political affairs of his adored Braintree, Massachusetts, Jefferson, after the untimely death of his beloved wife Martha due to complications during pregnancy, lived a life of isolation as a philosopher king in his self-made kingdom called Monticello.<sup>xlvi</sup> Here he conducted his duties as a representative of the Virginia General Assembly with a special attention to “revising laws, [and] writing legislation to eliminate injustices and set[ting] the foundation for a ‘well-ordered’ republican government” (McCullough 313). Unlike the outspoken Adams, Jefferson's political battles were fought behind the scenes in underground campaigns or presented in the form of written treatises critiquing the prevailing political philosophies from his retreat, Monticello.

Jefferson was a man who shrank from public debate and who preferred a tranquil life apart from the bustling marketplace.<sup>xlvii</sup> Upon arriving at the Continental Congress on May 14, 1776 in

Philadelphia, Jefferson spared no expense on his personal comforts and taste. As McCullough explains, “He moved to spacious quarters in a new brick house [...] in what was nearly open country. They were larger more expensive accommodations than most delegates had [...] and unlike most delegates he would reside alone, separate from the rest” (McCullough 110). And it was “separate from the rest” that Jefferson served the Continental Congress.<sup>xlviii</sup> For unlike his fellow boisterous and argumentative delegates, most notably John Adams, Jefferson often sat silently in the large meeting room, seemingly in his own world, apart from the struggle for Revolution and Independence. Jefferson once told his grandson, “When I hear another express an opinion which is not mine, I say to myself, he has a right to his opinion, as I to mine” (ibid 113) However, his isolationism had its boundaries. In fact, one of the few times he rose to speak in Congress was not in defense or attack of a fundamental idea about Independence or Revolution, but against “a proposal for a fast day, and in so doing he cast aspersions on Christianity, to which Adams reacted sharply” (113). However, beyond Jefferson’s isolated opposition to Congress, Adams remembers that “during the whole time with him in Congress, I never heard him utter three sentences together” (qtd. in McCullough 113). Yet, in spite of his late entrance into the fight for Revolution, and lack of oral debate toward the procurement of Independence, Jefferson is remembered for his writing of The Declaration of Independence.

The task of writing The Declaration of Independence was one that Adams himself chose for Jefferson. Yet, Adams, who wrote and spoke more than any of his fellow Founding Fathers on behalf of the cause of Independence, and often in the face of recurring health issues and long periods away from his home, is but an afterthought in the memory of many Americans. In the end it is Jefferson, along with Franklin and Washington, who is forever remembered in the public mind as a great American. This narrow interpretation of the cause for Independence promotes an incomplete vision of our history and the rhetoric that secured our freedom from tyranny. This trend in promoting a hyperbolic image of Jefferson’s contributions to the cause of Independence is also evident in

rhetorical inquiry.

In his article, “‘The Circle of Our Felicities’: Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address and The Rhetoric of Nationhood,” Stephen Howard Browne describes the rhetorical tradition in which Jefferson is situated: “History reveals to us time and again how interlocked are the fortunes of democracy and the arts of persuasion. From antiquity to the present, the health of one remains in no small measure a function of the other: as the polity goes, so goes rhetoric” (411). Browne argues for the significance of Jefferson’s First Inaugural to rhetorical theory by claiming that “the first inaugural address is understood best as a conspicuous display of its author’s style and thought; it is in this sense a statement about what oratory ought to look and sound like to a nation of republicans” (410-11). Here Browne presents Jefferson’s First Inaugural as a model for republican political discourse. The author’s claims regarding the importance of Jefferson’s first inaugural speech to rhetorical theory are substantiated throughout the article. However, Browne’s claims do not extend effectively to other aspects of Jefferson’s discursive practices.

Browne recognizes the symbiotic relationship between rhetoric and political action during the early years of the Republic when he explains, “[t]his context is appropriately the oratorical milieu of late eighteenth-century America, the robust and energetic environment of public speech, debate, sermonizing, and pamphleteering that helped define the political life of the early republic” (411). However, applying Browne’s description of the “oratorical milieu of late eighteenth century” to Jefferson beyond his remarkable work on *The Declaration of Independence* raises questions about what regular oratorical contributions Jefferson made to the tumultuous period surrounding the American Revolution. How did he use oratory to fight for independence? What public speeches did he make? What public debates did he situate himself within? Did he sermonize? Did he pamphleteer? The answers to these questions accentuate the differences in public personas between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, and mark the contrast between the enlightened philosopher and the Classical rhetorician. The dialectical

tension between the public and private personas of Jefferson and Adams unfolds within their competing philosophies of common sense, human nature, human rights and the role of the politician within a democracy.

**The Historical Context of the American Revolution: On Enlightenment, Common Sense,  
Human Nature, and Natural Rights**

As Henry Steele Commager explains in *The Empire of Reason*:

Faith in Reason, in Progress, in a common humanity—these were the principles that bound together such disparate figures as Voltaire and Diderot, Franklin and Jefferson [. . .] and scores like them. These are the men of the Enlightenment, the men who will chart the new universe that is opening up before their enraptured gaze; they are the first fully to emancipate themselves from religious superstition and to understand the nature of man in the light of science and reason. (41)

Arguably, the period prior to and during the American Revolution marshaled the Enlightenment into the social and political arenas of the New World. In this regard Commager enumerates some of the major questions that emerged from this period: “What is the nature of the universe and of the celestial mechanics that God imposed upon it? How does Man fit into the cosmic system? Is religion necessary, is Christianity the only true religion? [. . .] Are wars ever justified, are colonies worth the cost?” (42). Thus, we do well to understand the mission of the Enlightenment, defined by Emmanuel Kant, as “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage” (qtd. in Kramnick 7). Kant’s succinct definition of the project of the Enlightenment reveals the freedom and openness of thought that demarcates the Age of the Enlightenment from the authoritative reasoning that dominates the philosophy and rhetoric of the Middle Ages. Indeed this loose generalization of “authoritative reasoning” does not encapsulate the range of rhetorical reasoning during the Middle Ages, a period when authoritative sources such as the Bible, Aristotle, and Plato were privileged publicly, yet scrutinized privately for their credibility, resourcefulness, and rationality (ibid).

Therefore, if we view the Enlightenment as an evolutionary movement from the Middle Ages' private scrutiny of authoritative sources to the public scrutiny of authoritative sources of argumentation and reason, we develop a framework to begin to understand the complexities of living in the New World.

Ironically, the New World citizenry was nominally held to the Enlightened doctrines set forth by the British *Magna Carta*, which “reaffirmed due process of law, outlawed cruel and unusual punishments, [and] excessive fines and bail [. . .],” but were in reality damned by monarchical Britain’s misapplication of power in the form of forced taxation—at least so said the Founding Fathers and their supporters as they made the case for separation from Great Britain (Commager 220). Regrettably, although the Revolutionary Americans were bound by cause and spirit, they were separated by the critical sources of perspective: philosophy, theology, and ideology. These divisions threatened the stability of the cause of Revolution before and after the bloodshed. From these often-irreconcilable differences of beliefs and ideas we can deduce that the American Revolution was as much an internal revolution of ideas as it was an external revolt against the oppressive forces of British monarchy. Nevertheless, one promising commonality existed in the presuppositions of the Enlightenment mind, that “[. . .] Nature would provide the answers that priests and philosophers had been unable to find in the familiar scriptures [. . .] [f]or if human nature was the same everywhere, and the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, then the primitive and the pastoral might reveal it in all its nakedness” (Commager 72). Accordingly, whether this “answer” granting entity was called God, Nature, or ‘Nature and Nature’s God,’ as Jefferson referred to it, these Enlightened people believed in some sort of initializing force that set the world in motion and gave it order (ibid). Therefore, the unjust British taxation of the American colonies upset this balance of God, Nature, or both, thus warranting a response from those enlightened thinkers of the New World.

Adams and Jefferson personify the struggle between competing beliefs in the midst of the project of American freedom. Therefore, an examination of Adams’s and Jefferson’s unwavering

commitment to common first principles derived from personal writings, speeches, and treatises reveals their common sense frameworks and their sources. Within their discourse and deeds we can arrive at their respective positions on common sense and disclose how common sense influenced their rhetorical invention. Yet to fully appreciate the resourcefulness of common sense as rhetorical invention, we must first turn our attention to a pamphlet that solidified the need for separation through revolution more successfully than any previous discourse, oral or written: Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*.

### **Why study Paine's *Common Sense*?**

Paine's *Common Sense* is a watershed moment in the history and tradition of rhetoric. While the pamphlet argues against tyranny, it simultaneously provides the reader with a summation of the events and issues surrounding this unstable moment in American history. Paine's treatment of political and economic issues enacts rhetoric of action that draws its strength from the audience-centered discourses of the classics. In his rhetorical construction of common sense, Paine organized the logic and motivation of the Revolutionary colonists around this elusive metaphor and gave it a life of its own. Far from a mere slogan or mantra, Paine's notion of common sense became both the lynch-pin holding together the cause of Independence and the fire fueling the Revolution.

Paine's lucid writing and highly accessible arguments transfixed the general public and Revolutionary leaders alike. Amongst the ardent supporters of *Common Sense* were George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Benjamin Rush:

George Washington called *Common Sense* "unanswerable" and found it to be "working a wonderful change [. . .] in the minds of men." Benjamin Franklin thought its effect "prodigious." Benjamin Rush wrote that "it burst from the press with an effect which has rarely been produced by types and papers in any age or Country." (qtd. in Ferguson 466)

While Washington, Franklin, and Rush found *Common Sense* necessary and invigorating, not all



agreed. The Revolutionary pamphlet and pamphleteer met serious opposition.

Most notably, John Adams, who initially approved of the pamphlet, later held disdain for Paine's argumentative methods. Adams criticized the pamphleteer's pessimistic tendencies and held that Paine possessed a "better hand at pulling down than building" (qtd. in Greene 78). Ironically, however, Adams deprecating remark may be viewed as Paine's central argument in *Common Sense*. Paine's common sense appeals, informed by his personal experiences in England and recent observations in the New World, advised him when penning *Common Sense* that all that had been built was not worth maintaining.

Paine's view of natural rights emerged from his common sense critique of existing institutions, and it organized the concerns of the colonies. Paine, in all his endeavors, consistently upheld natural rights for humans to be free from oppression on any front: "he forged a reputation as the world's chief public defender of republican democracy—a living symbol of the modern fight for the rights of citizens against warring states and arbitrary governments, social injustice and bigotry" (Keane x). Although Paine's propensity to critique authority would eventually lead him to challenge the suppositions of organized religion in *The Rights of Man*, he was able to restrict his "hand at pulling down" religion's pervasive force in the New World and instead recognized religion as a resplendent source of common sense (qtd. in Greene 78).

In his application of common sense as rhetorical invention, Paine appealed to the pre-existing sources of religious thought that served to inform the early Americans' revolutionary fervor.<sup>xlix</sup> Chief amongst Paine's rhetorical appeals is the use of biblical doctrine to enliven his common sense arguments. Paine's use of an authoritative source to critique authoritative institutions bridges the approach and forms of rhetorical reasoning between the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment. Moreover, his introduction to *Common Sense* lays bare the subjugation England enforced upon the citizenry of the New World. Specific instances of oppression, such as the Stamp Act, are not required, but claim the tenor of the historical moment and the charges brought upon

England to understand the call for Independence.

### **Paine Introduces *Common Sense* to the New World**

In his introduction to the pamphlet, Paine presents *Common Sense* as a universal appeal to humankind when he claims that “The Cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all Mankind” (Paine A). This moral plea resonated with the concerns of the predominantly religious population of the early Americans, who understood such natural rights as God-given. To this end, Paine explains that *Common Sense* has universal cause because it concerns “the natural Rights of all human kind” (Paine B). Thus, Paine’s readers infer that the liberation of the colonies from England’s rule is the “cause” of all humankind (ibid). For English rule jeopardizes natural rights and therefore “the Principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their affections are interested” (Paine A). The vital struggle for American Independence in 1776 is informed by Paine’s common sense that balancing the natural rights of humans necessarily flows from the first principle that “‘Order’ [. . .] ‘is Nature’s first law,’ and they made it their own, for they were in harmony Nature” (qtd. in Commager 2). A natural right thus considered privileged individual freedom. Yet Paine’s common sense initially conflicted with the prevailing common sense of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

W. Paul Adams well summarizes attitudes toward monarchy in the late 18th century in his article “Republicanism in Political Rhetoric Before 1776,” a century when he explains that “[t]here was, in short, a general feeling among friends of liberty in Europe as well as in America that limited monarchy as developed in Britain was the least of all existing governmental evils” (400). To propose an alternate form of government to replace monarchy would probably be dismissed as droll, but to propose a republican government was certain madness. For history herself has proven that a republic can only sustain “small states” (401). Adams explicates attitudes toward *ars republica* when he writes that:

[o]nly in 1776 did *republic*, *republican*, and *republicanism* change from defamatory

clichés used to stigmatize critics of the existing order to terms with affirmative connotations, stimulating a feeling of identification with the existing political system. The reversal of the rhetorical value of these terms set in on January 9, 1776 with the publication of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*. Before this date, they had almost exclusively been used as smear words by loyalist writers and only cautiously and defensively by pamphleteers for the colonist’s cause. (“Republicanism” 397-8)

Just prior to 1776 republican government was considered “[. . .] but a relic of Europe’s Greek and Roman past” (400). Nevertheless, Paine flouts these vestiges of the common sense of his historical moment by slashing at the head and the heart of monarchy. The sharp edge of first principles are his chosen mode of attack and defense.

In this regard, we do well to remember that, as Commager explains,

[i]n his devotion to principles rather than to men or places, his fascination with Nature and with mechanics, his abiding faith in Reason and in Progress, and his selfless dedication to the public interest—or to the interest of mankind—Tom Paine belongs indubitably to the era of the Enlightenment. (34)

His approach to affecting the common sense of the people is to enact a rhetoric and rhetorical invention which draws from the confidence that some “[. . .] propositions are epistemologically more fundamental than others” (Grant 193). Such first principles, through their connection to practically doubtless *a priori* suppositions proceed from the common sense that 1) “[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa [. . .]”; 2) “[. . .] that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression”; and 3) that “balance” and “order is Nature’s first law [. . .]” (Grant 193-4; 493; qtd. in Commager 2).

Therefore, as Paine’s *Common Sense* moves from the introduction to the body of his

arguments, the writer's attacks upon hereditary succession, unjust taxation, the evils of colonization, and England's complete commercial dominance of the American colonies proceed from the common sense that is brought about by the identification and application of these first principles. His pamphlet addresses all of the lived experiences of the early Americans, and reveals the hypocrisies underlying British rule. In particular, Paine's firm commitment to the first principle that "balance" and "[o]rder' [. . .] 'is Nature's first law [. . .]," puts him in league with proponents of the growing common sense that freedom and natural rights are necessarily united (Grant 193). Analyzing *Common Sense* reveals the resourcefulness of common sense as rhetorical invention by bringing together the cause of the Revolution in a pamphlet for all to read or hear.

### **The Common Sense of First Principles and Religion**

Government, for Paine, and those who dare to appeal to common sense, is "but, a necessary evil [. . .]" (*Pamphlet B*). This evil is necessary because of the fall of humankind and the effects of original sin, as presented in the Bible; a text which was accessible to all of Paine's reading and listening public. Paine brings the fall of humankind into his historical moment when he claims that "[i]t [government] is a necessary evil, a badge of man's fall or corruption" (Dorfman 372). Thus Paine asserts that government is the consequence of original sin. Had Adam and Eve refrained from partaking in the fruit, we would not require governments to rule. Through this act of disobedience proceeds the first principle that "balance" and "[o]rder' [. . .] 'is Nature's first law [. . .]" (Grant 193). Partaking in the fruit upset the precious balance of Nature. Once Paine invokes the Judeo-Christian perspective of original sin and so makes a connection to his audience, the appeal to common sense has commenced. For American colonists, common sense about good, evil, creation, and moral human conduct was profoundly, if not at times entirely, attained through knowledge of the Bible. For most early Americans, an understanding of the law of God informed their common sense regarding natural law, morality, and inalienable rights.

Paine understood that the story of the fall was written in the hearts of his audience. He also understood that its teachings held a promise of order and balance that was consistent with the Nature God intended. With this in mind, he enacts rhetorical invention by identifying the first principle that “[o]rder’ [. . .] ‘is Nature’s first law [. . .]’” and adheres to its supposition by identifying biblical references that establish a common sense with his readers (Grant 193). Paine’s “[. . .] simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense” are firmly situated within the early American experience through their identification with the Bible” (Paine 29). Thus, to question Paine’s common sense arguments as they are built from a first principle that is supported by biblical references implies a questioning of the very fabric of God’s word (Grant 193; Paine 29). If one accepts that the balance of the natural rights of humankind is in jeopardy, and cannot be released through civil discourse, then it follows that revolution is the only remaining course. Paine’s rhetorical invention developed from common sense communicates the message to his readers that faith in monarchy and hereditary succession defies God’s intention of natural rights.

In the section of *Common Sense* entitled *Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession*, Paine critiques Divine Right. Here Paine recognized the exigency that to move his audience toward Revolution he needed to challenge the age-old assumption that through Divine Right, monarchy connects absolutely with God’s will. To this end Paine keenly applies common sense to rhetorical invention and pulls down the latent assumptions of monarchical power and hereditary succession, laying them bare in the sight of natural rights. *Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession* undermines the first principle of the essentiality of a balanced and ordered Nature by pronouncing the imbalanced relationship between king and subject, when Paine explains that “[. . .] there is another and greater distinction, for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is, the distinction of Men into KINGS and SUBJECTS” (original emphasis, Paine 13). In Paine’s view, that we can be separated by the distinction of gender is a natural

phenomenon that requires nothing more than common sense to authenticate (ibid). However, the distinction of men into the roles of king and subject is counterintuitive and cannot be authenticated by common sense alone. For the presuppositions behind the king and subject distinction disturbs humans' natural rights to act and govern themselves freely. Unfortunately, as Joseph Dorfman surmises of Paine's *Common Sense* in "The Economic Philosophy of Thomas Paine,"[p]eople remain blind to this [hereditary succession] interference with natural right and pecuniary interest through the force of fear, superstition, prejudice and prepossession" (373). Paine recognizes this "fear, superstition, prejudice and prepossession" and seeks to counteract its coercive spell through the common sense reasoning that emerges from a first principle (ibid). To this end, he invents his arguments with the common sense that emerges from the first principle that "[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa [. . .]" (Grant 193-4). Thus, the lessons from biblical history become a common sense from which we may proceed to conceptualize the role of government as it has exemplified a balanced and ordered Nature (ibid).

There is nothing intrinsic, Paine argues, to the physical or intellectual constitution of monarchs that classifies them as more kingly or queenly than their subjects aside from an unsupportable myth of birthright. Through the application of biblical histories that inform his common sense approach to natural rights, Paine argues that the Divine Right of monarchs and its result of hereditary succession, although historically associated with the will of God, is unsupportable by the word of God. Paine explains:

In the early ages of the world, according to the scripture chronology, there were no kings; the consequence of which was, there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throw mankind into confusion. Holland without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchical governments in Europe. (13)

It follows through Paine's common sense appeal to biblical history that Divine Right is the antithesis of the natural law taught by the Bible. Therefore, according to Paine, Britain's disruption of natural law violated the colonists' natural rights. Through Paine's use of common sense as rhetorical invention in *Common Sense*, his audience could determine that God opposes governmental processes that oppress a nation's citizenry. Paine advances the common sense appeal of his biblical history of Divine Right when he discusses the "Heathen"-ish tradition of monarchy (ibid).

In his biblical history of monarchical rule Paine uncovers the fact that "[g]overnment by kings was first introduced by Heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom" (13-14). Moreover, by attributing monarchical rule and the exercise of hereditary succession not just to the "Heathens" but also to Satan, the most notorious of evildoers, Paine advances his application of common sense as rhetorical invention by securing the point that the attributes of monarchy are ungodly. Paine explains that "[i]t [monarchical rule] was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry. The Heathens paid divine honours to their deceased kings, and the Christian world hath improved on the plan, by doing the same to their living ones" (14).<sup>1</sup> Thus the common sense of Paine's appeal resounds: If Christians continue to support monarchical rule they are living in perpetual sin. Natural law is not the law of kings, but the law of God. The law of kings corrupts natural law and disrupts the colonists' natural rights. Kings do not deserve "divine honors" from Christians, whose redemption dwells in the word of God alone. By supporting monarchical rule in the New World, redemption itself is hindered; and so Christians must seek God's redemption through Revolution.

Armed with the common sense that Paine evokes through rhetorical invention that appeals to religious belief, the early American colonists recognize that revolution would place sovereignty in the hearts and hands of the people through their faith in and dedication to a balanced and ordered Nature. In this objective, Paine's common sense is consistent with Jefferson's democratically derived first principle "[. . .] that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will

to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression” (493). Moreover, Paine’s common sense construction of rhetorical invention functions in numerous stages by shifting from a religious context to an economic context. Paine’s employment of common sense as rhetorical invention cuts across social, religious, and ideological barriers; and it consistently moves from the early Americans’ hearts to their wallets, while simultaneously maintaining a connection to his audience’s minds.

### **The Common Sense of First Principles, Politics and Economics**

In *Common Sense* Paine recognizes that revolution is a political act with economic consequences. To move the masses to revolution, it was necessary for Paine to confront Britain’s impedance of natural rights with arguments from biblical history. At the same time, Paine’s rhetorical invention had to address the exigency of cost; for the issue of monetary cost of Revolution was germane to both the Christian and non-Christian populations alike. The utilitarian issue of economics, as Paine so skillfully demonstrates, also emerges from the common sense arguments that expose Britain’s hindrance of the early American natural rights. This hindrance further defies the Jeffersonian principle that “[t]he minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate [them] would be oppression” (493). The question that emerges from Britain’s violation of this first principle in Paine’s *Common Sense* is, how long could the minority afford to maintain the power of the majority without freedom of choice?

That the question of financing the Revolution was imminent in the minds of the Americans in 1776 is evidenced by Paine’s articulation of a provisional economic plan in the *Common Sense* pamphlet. While Paine’s residual message in *Common Sense* is evidently the need for Revolution, the circumstances of his epoch necessarily lead to the construction of a tacit framework for an economic strategy. Had Paine neglected economic issues, his common sense appeals and sensibilities would have been inadequate, and the pamphlet could have easily been dismissed from the public memory as idealistic and unreflective of the contingent matters. However, the genius of



Paine's use of common sense as rhetorical invention and subsequent common sense arguments that expose the banality of monarchy as an unnatural right dovetail into the formation of economic arguments.

Paine subtly modifies the imminent question, "how can the colonies afford to finance a Revolution?" to "how can the colonies afford to continuously finance the British monarchy?" In so doing, he merges the political Revolution with an economic Revolution. While Paine's statement that "[t]he Heathens paid divine honours to their deceased kings, and the Christian world hath improved on the plan, by doing the same to their living ones," certainly resonated with his Christian audience, it was an equally effective appeal to each of the overtaxed colonists, Christian or not (ibid). Paine's use of common sense as rhetorical invention suggests a radical alteration to the pre-Revolutionary American political system by placing freedom at the heart of natural rights. Therefore as *Common Sense* moves through *Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs*, the dream of reconciliation becomes an economic and political nightmare for the colonists (Paine 31).

In *Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs* Paine combines the rhetorical resources of logos and pathos in a common sense appeal to his audience through his thoughts on the future state of American affairs. Paine employs the powerful pathos of parents' love for their children to instigate his readers to envision the future of the colonies if they stay under British rule: "As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that NO GOVERNMENT is not sufficiently lasting to ensure any thing which we may bequeath to posterity" (Original emphasis, 39). In this argument, Paine's common sense construction of rhetorical invention depends upon the logic of sheer observation and the pathos of experience to function enthymematically. This is another clear connection to the first principle that "[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa [. . .]" (Grant 193-4). The audience's concerns resonated with Paine's common sense observations and so the credibility of *Common Sense* was simultaneously sustained by an ethos of care. Paine's ability to pull together several

issues in a single phrase can be attributed to his ability as a thinker and as a writer, but it ultimately rests upon his skill at common sense as an inventional strategy.

*Common Sense* concurrently illustrates concern for the political, economic, and moral welfare of the colonists. In each of these areas of colonial concern Paine purposely constructs common sense arguments as they emerge from his orientation with first principles: “*And by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully*” (Emphasis added, 39). Here Paine’s message is manifest: if you do not wish to revolt for yourselves, revolt for your children. Paine argues that if the colonists remain under British rule “the next generation” will live in destitution (ibid). Therefore, the time to act is now. Revolution promises the dream of a prosperous future. Reconciliation with England, then, was a cowardly, immoral and incompetent espousal:

[T]o expend millions for the sake of getting a few vile acts repealed, and routing the present ministry only, is unworthy the charge, and is using posterity with the utmost cruelty; because it is leaving them the great work to do, and a debt upon their backs, from which they derive no advantage. Such a thought is unworthy of a man of honor, and is the true characteristic of a narrow heart and a peddling politician. (Paine 63)

In this most startling evidence of the first principle that “[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa [. . .]” the pamphleteer presents the common sense that under Britain’s rule, the present and future condition of American economic affairs has a somber outlook (Grant 193-4). Yet there is hope in Revolution which brings with it the plausibility of a balanced, ordered, and thus natural economic plan (Commager 2).

Paine’s provisional economic plan, like his political plan, features the pervasive freedom component of natural rights:

Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because; it is the interest of all Europe to have America a FREE PORT. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders. (Original emphasis, 37)

After the Revolution, Paine conjectures that America as a free port would be able to simultaneously foster the freedoms of her citizens and solicit the financial support of Europe.

However, Britain's commercial dominance of the American colonies had promoted an unnatural imbalance of power: "As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it [England]" (Paine 38). Through Revolution, Paine argues, the Americans would no longer have to pay high taxes to the monarchy, which would place the profit from trade into American circulation. Devoid of the cost of maintaining Britain's economy the liberated colonies could secure their economic freedom through land ownership: "By eliminating commercial restraints and the expenses of maintaining useless royalty and aristocracy, Paine argued, independence would promote the security and increase property" (Dorfman 373). From this perspective Paine's interim economic plan treats trade as a means to an end: "Freedom of trade is the principle source of wealth for a trading nation" (ibid). Trade could bring America riches, but the common sense of the past informs us that ownership of land promises the essence of Paine's natural rights, freedom.

The inherent connection between natural rights and freedom emerges from *Common Sense* by way of the pamphlet's commitment to the common political and economic concerns of the people as they spring from Paine's first principles. Through his common sense appeals to morality, economics and politics, Paine attempts to prove his nature-derived maxim, "[t]hat the more simple anything is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered" (6). When read or spoken *Common Sense* communes with the heart and the mind of its audience. The pamphlet inspires readers to embrace the common sense relationship between freedom and natural

rights. As this pursuit of freedom and natural rights is sought the ironic complexity of common sense is revealed.

The dynamic process of common sense changes in direct correspondence with the needs, conditions, and ambitions of a community. As Paine discovered, once one set of issues are addressed through common sense as rhetorical invention, such as American independence, an entirely new set of concerns arise in their wake. In Paine's case the new set of problems that emerged were the coordinates for a sturdy economic system, and thus the author of *Common Sense* reconfigures common sense in light of the emerging needs of the colonists. However, for each exigency, the writer is motivated by first principles that organize and enable his common sense as rhetorical invention.

#### **A Fortuitous Ignition of Common Sense in the Colonies: The Stamp Act of 1765**

To clarify the conditions and first principles of Paine's historical moment and historical space, we must ask, what were the socio-political factors affecting the colonists, and in what ways did these factors influence Paine's *Common Sense* and common sense? To Britain's dismay, the "New World" was more than a straightforward moniker to designate the American colonies. Of course, on the surface, the New World inhabitants shared many of the customs of their British motherland. As John Ferling describes in *A Leap in the Dark*, "[t]he diet and dress of a large portion of the population resembled that of the English at home, the colonists celebrated the same national holidays and enjoyed similar pastimes, and on Sunday mornings perhaps a majority in the provinces worshipped in the same churches—be it Anglican, Methodist, or Quaker" (26). Yet what ran deeper than the colonist's similarities to British customs was the emergence of a New World man.<sup>li</sup> The New World man was raised in a climate of cultural diversity with greater opportunities to raise his position in society than if he lived in monarchical Britain where noble birth was a contract for success. To this end Ferling explains that "[o]pportunities were better in America [than in Britain] for young men from humble

backgrounds who were ambitious and industrious” (26). The opportunities presented to the New World man empowered him by the promise that he could be part of the “‘middling sort’ of society [. . .],” and perhaps “[. . .] [he] might someday hold public office or serve as an officer in a militia company” (ibid). This glimmer of hope for the recent “German, Dutch, Swiss, French, [and] Scotch-Irish [. . .] immigrants” encouraged the emergence of a New World man who gained a heightened awareness of those institutions that could help or hinder him. As the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763 gave birth to the Stamp Act of 1765, the New World man began to question the providential relationship between God and monarchy through his common sense conclusions arising from observation of the present and past, and the ensuing common sense of the masses. Despite sharp ideological and political divides, Paine’s keen perception of the development of the New World man puts him in league with John Adams.

As Ferling points out, the change in the colonists during this epoch was palpable: “The people of all social classes, he [John Adams] ruminated, had become ‘more attentive to their liberties, more inquisitive about them, and more determined to defend them’” (qtd. in Ferling 40). Like Paine’s, Adams’s faith in the colonists’ heightened awareness of natural rights inspired his common sense approach to rhetorical invention. Although the latter’s approach was less colloquial because it was facilitated by his lifelong study of human nature, the ancients, and his command of forensic theory and rhetoric, in his rhetoric, we once more observe three fundamental first principles in the rhetoric and philosophy of early American rhetoric. These principles flourish in the practical realm of human activity through their performance as common sense in rhetorical invention. Together, Adams and Paine build a framework for the New World to achieve independence.

As this chapter reveals, the resources for the framework were already present in the colonies; they simply required someone with a vision of common sense to build a strong enough scaffold to support America. For Paine, this scaffold was held together not by a complicated philosophical

support, but by a rhetoric and rhetorical invention of common sense: “For if Paine had genius, it was for popularization without vulgarization” (Commager 35). Consequently from this close reading of *Common Sense* we can maintain that the genesis of common sense comes not from the rhetor, but dwells in the voice of the people. As Commager recognizes of Paine’s dedications, “[h]is love of America was deep and abiding. From the beginning he saw America as the hope of the human race, the American a potential Adam, the country itself a potential paradise” (34). To support the “hope of the human race,” Paine “reflect[s] so faithfully the varied intellectual currents of his day, and [. . .] reinstate[s] them in a rhetoric and style that everyone could remember and understand” (35). For his unyielding commitment to the first principles of his historical moment and historical space, as they furnished his rhetoric with a common sense, reply to the questions facing early America. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* is a historical benchmark in the rhetorical tradition that exemplifies the profound public impact of a common sense approach to rhetorical invention. Where Paine builds a rough framework, Adams reinforces it with sturdier materials, namely a profound understanding of human nature, Classical philosophy and rhetoric, and political philosophy.

*Chapter IV: A Common Sense Analysis of John Adams’s “Inaugural Speech to Both Houses of Congress,” March 4, 1797*

The rhetoric of John Adams contains an arrant commitment to three first principles that co-exist in the discourses of Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine. Briefly these principles are 1) that the past presents lessons, evidence, and examples for the contingent decisions facing our present and future, but not vice versa; 2) although majority rule is at the heart of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority; and 3) an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence though its *telos*

of balance and harmony (Grant 193-4; Jefferson 493; Commager 2). The implication of these first principles when applied to rhetoric is a common sense approach to rhetorical invention that may fluctuate from author to author, but not to the extent that the authors violate these seminal first principles.

In his “Inaugural Speech to Both Houses of Congress,” the president-elect builds his rhetorical framework upon a historical foundation. In so doing, he confirms his commitment to the first principle that “the past presents lessons, evidence, and examples for the contingent decisions facing our present and future, but not vice versa” (Grant 193-4). Thus Adams takes his audience on a rhetorical journey, chronicling

[. . .] the revolutionary war, supplying the place of government [. . .], and [. . .] melancholy consequences; universal languor, jealousies, rivalries of States; decline of navigation and commerce; [. . .] contempt of public and private faith; [. . .] and, at length, in discontents, animosities, combinations, partial conventions, and insurrection; threatening some great national calamity. (“Inaugural” 636)

Yet during this tumultuous history of the early American crisis there was a bastion of defense that could not be overcome, which Adams identifies when he observes that “[i]n this dangerous crisis the people of America were not abandoned by their usual good sense, presence of mind, resolution, or integrity” (ibid). Thus, it was the undying fortitude of the American people that overcame Britain’s rule, “[. . .] rivalries of state,” and the remainder of obstacles included in Adams’s list (ibid). The intrinsic message here is to maintain our American resolve when facing future obstacles (ibid). To this end, Adams supplements his exercise of common sense as rhetorical invention with a common experience handbook, so to speak, that will assist us.

Although the president does not refuse an appeal to ethos when he explains that he first saw the Constitution while “[e]mployed in the service of my country abroad [. . .],” this credibility builder is not the source of rhetorical invention. The crux of Adams’s argument hinges upon the common sense of the people on the subject of the Constitution: “*Claiming a right of suffrage in common with my fellow-citizens*, in the adoption or rejection of a constitution, which was to rule me and my posterity as well as them and theirs, I did not hesitate to express my approbation of it on all occasions, in public and in private” (emphasis added, 636). In this passage we witness Adams the fellow-American, not Adams the Founding Father, connected to his audience by the corporate reminiscence of the birth of the Constitution. With this common experience arrives a common sense of American admiration for the Constitution and the form of government that its discourse represents, which leads Adams to pose the common sense question: “What other form of government, indeed, can so well deserve our esteem and love?” (637). His answer is invigorated by his sense of natural rights, or natural law, and democracy that emerged in his historical moment and was supported by his lifelong dedication to the history of ideas.

Adams secures his audience by posing another common sense question: “Can authority be more amiable or respectable, when it descends from accidents or institutions established in remote antiquity, than when it springs fresh from the hearts and judgments of an honest and enlightened people?” (ibid). This line of reasoning sustaining Paine’s popular argument against hereditary succession in *Common Sense* reinforces the foundation of a republic that “[. . .] springs fresh from the hearts and judgments of an honest and enlightened people” (ibid). Thus Adams, through common sense as rhetorical invention, situates democracy in the hearts and minds of the “enlightened people” who themselves select their “amiable,” and “respectable”



authority (ibid). As a source of Adams's rhetorical invention, democracy is a common sense which is understood by the shared-experiences of the people, as well as a common sense that originates in the people.

Democracy, which originates in the people, manifests itself in their government. According to Adams, “[. . .] it is the people only that are represented; it is their power and majesty that is reflected, and only for their good, in every legitimate government, under whatever form it may appear” (637). Here Adams perpetuates the democratic function of the citizens who compose a republic. Thus in Adams's rhetorical pattern there exists a symbiotic relationship between the citizens and the government. The president perpetuates the common sense that a democratic-republic is built by the people and for the people. He extends this use of common sense as rhetorical invention by placing the political success of America firmly in the hands of the people. In this regard Adams claims that “[t]he existence of such a government as ours, for any length of time, is a full proof of a general dissemination of knowledge and virtue throughout the whole body of the people” (637). For it is the “knowledge and virtue” of the American body-politic through its commitment to the balanced and ordered Nature of the Constitution that promises

an equal and impartial regard to the rights, interests, honor, and happiness of all the States in the Union, without preference or regard to a northern or southern, eastern or western position, their various political positions on essential points, or their personal attachments. (639)

In this pronouncement of the democratic mission of equality the president is in accord with Jefferson and Paine, who hold true to the first principle that although majority rule is at the heart

of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority (Jefferson 493). This passage also secured Adams's vision of democracy as congruent with the first principle that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence though its *telos* of balance and harmony (Commager 2). This natural law was coming of age during his historical moment, one in which the president placed the responsibility of government in accord with the needs of the citizens.<sup>lii</sup> Thus it is beneficial to trace the sources of Adams's perspectives on politics and natural law to consider the implications of these sources of thought upon his common sense as rhetorical invention.

### **Sources of Adams's Common Sense**

One decisive source of John Adams's thoughts on government, philosophy, and natural law was his lifelong study of human nature. This study was intended to bring him some sort of balance and order in his public and private life. In his diary Adams records his personal philosophy of human nature: on February 9, 1772, he writes that "[h]uman nature, depraved as it is, has interwoven in its very frame a love of truth, sincerity, and integrity, which must be overcome by art, education, and habit, before the man can be entirely ductile to the will of a dishonest master" (*Political* 631). A related foundation of Adams's philosophy and rhetoric is his recognition of the constant stimulus of the passions throughout history.

The statesman from Braintree explains this common phenomenon in *A Defence of the Constitutions* when he writes that "[h]uman nature is as incapable now of going through revolutions with temper and sobriety, with patience and prudence, or without fury and madness, as it was among the Greeks so long ago" (112). Perhaps he makes the universal claim of the passions more apparent later in *Defence* when he claims that "[a]ll nations, from the beginning,

have been agitated by the same passions” (301). In both passages, he is not expressing mere pessimism but experiential fact begotten from human observation and careful study of moral philosophy.

As John R. Howe Jr. explains in *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams*,

During the course of his life, he read nearly every moralist of the day. Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Shaftesbury, Condorcet, Rousseau, Mandeville, Butler: these he mastered as well. With all of them he agreed on one thing: that the effort to understand society, to speculate about constitutions and systems of government must begin from a clear understanding of human nature. (15)

To this end, Adams throughout his life developed a theory of human nature that is based upon his observations, learning, and faith. In a diary entry dating February 9, 1772, Adams pontificates upon the association between passion and human nature and concludes that “[. . .] men find ways to persuade themselves to believe any absurdity, to submit to any prostitution, rather than forego their wishes and desires. Their reason becomes at last an eloquent advocate on the side of their passions, and they bring themselves to believe that black is white, that vice is virtue, that folly is wisdom, and eternity a moment” (*Political* 631). This is his criticism of the passions when they overrule reason. However, there is a parallel dimension of the passions at work in Adams’s theory of human nature, a dimension that provides constructive attributes to the passions.

Despite the disapproving tenor of his description of the passions, Adams understood them as a fundamental part of human existence. In fact, in an earlier diary entry dating June 10, 1760, young Adams explains the functional role of the passions: “I find that the Mind must be agitated

with some Passion, either Love, fear, Hope [*sic*] [. . .] before she will do her best” (*Political* 133). Although Adams’s overall assessment of the passions as they unfurl in human nature is decidedly wary, because as he understood them “[e]ach passion was ‘a usurping, cruel, domineering tyrant,’ seeking to extend its sway as far as it could,” the passions are crucial in invigorating his restless mind (qtd. in Howe 19). Adams explains the constructive function of the passions when he writes in a diary entry dating July 1766 that “[t]here must be action, passion, sentiment, and moral [. . .] to gain my attention very much” (*Diary* 318). These “attention”-gaining elements were present in the rhetoric of James Otis, who supplemented Adams’s personal thoughts and private readings with a public enactment of rhetoric driven by passion and reason. In Otis, Adams’s found an oratorical model which suited his restless mind and spirit.

As David Bezayiff points out in “Legal Oratory of John Adams: An Early Instrument of Protest,” “[t]he course of direction for the colonies was established when James Otis delivered the ‘Writs of Assistance’ speech in 1761” (63). In his speech Otis, with recognition that “[t]he colonists by this time were becoming increasingly aware of two avenues of thought [philosophical argument and legal argument] [. . .],” rallied for natural law as superior to Parliament (64). Thus in this pre-Revolutionary epoch Otis invented his arguments by employing common sense as rhetorical invention as it preceded from the balance and order inherent in the first principle of natural law. In *A Treasury of the World’s Great Speeches*, Houston Peterson explains that “Otis’ [*sic*] argument, which evoked natural law as superior to acts of Parliament, was an incendiary force in the revolutionary era that was dawning” (70-78). Otis’s “incendiary force” conveyed a common sense to the people that inspired the essence of the American Revolution and profoundly influenced the thought and expression of the Founding

Fathers (ibid).

John Adams, commenting on Otis's "The Writs of Assistance," exclaims that with this speech "the child Independence was born" (qtd. in Lee 23). This was a sentiment that Adams maintained throughout his life. For example, in his letter "To Timothy Pickering," dated August 6, 1822 the aging Founding Father describes the "essence" of "The Declaration of Independence" as "[. . .] contained in a pamphlet, voted and printed by the town of Boston, before the first Congress met, [which was] composed by James Otis [. . .]" (*Political* 314).<sup>liii</sup> It is no small wonder then, that Adams's rhetorical invention is principally inspired by his commitment to the first principle of an ordered and balanced Nature as it emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial-American common sense of natural rights. Thus Otis's "Writs of Assistance," which argued that "[. . .] writs [were] null and void because they violated the natural rights of Englishmen" inspired Adams's philosophy and rhetoric (McCullough 62). After Otis's speech, Adams recorded in his diary that Otis was a "[. . .] flame [. . .] [w]ith the promptitude of classical illusions, a depth of research [. . .] and a torrent of impetuous eloquence [. . .]" (qtd. in McCullough 62). In Adams's visceral reaction to Otis's speech the framework of the Founding Father's rhetorical theory takes shape. His is an audience-centered discourse is steeped in a ceaseless faith in the promise of rhetoric to shape community through a common sense that emerges from the implications of his unwavering commitment to first principles.

However, the most telling clue in unlocking the secrets of John Adams's rhetorical theory presents itself in a seemingly innocuous letter Adams wrote to William Wirt on January 23, 1818. Wirt, author of *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* suggests that Henry deserves equal status with such notable orator-statesmen as "[. . .] Cicero and Demosthenes [. . .]

.]” a position in public memory which John Adams labored for himself (qtd. in “Ciceronian” 525). As James M. Farrell observes, Adams was perpetually concerned with how history would remember him, and his comments on Patrick Henry in the letter to Wirt were meant to “[correct]” the notion of “great oratory” that Wirt provides (qtd. in “Ciceronian” 525). Adams praises Henry’s character with appraisals such as “[. . .] keen sagacity, clear foresight, daring enterprise, inflexible intrepidity, and untainted integrity” (ibid).

Yet glaringly absent from his praise are declarations which concern Henry’s oratorical ability (Ibid). Instead, Adams describes what might be called empty rhetoric in modern times when he writes, “[. . .] as it [oratory] consists in expressions of the countenance, graces of attitude and intonation of voice, although it is altogether superficial and ornamental, [it] will always command admiration; yet it deserves little veneration” (ibid). These are strange sentiments indeed from a man with a lifetime attachment to the works of Marcus Tullius Cicero, unless we understand—as Farrell points out—that Adams further “explained that true eloquence consisted of ‘Strict truth, rapid reason, and pure integrity’ (presumably qualities possessed by Adams but not by Henry)” (ibid). Adams’s description of “true eloquence” with its qualities of “[s]trict truth, rapid reason, and pure integrity” call to mind his passionate reaction to Otis’s “Writs of Assistance” speech when he described the speaker as possessing “[. . .] a depth of research [. . .] a torrent of impetuous eloquence” (ibid; qtd. in McCullough 62). Thus Adams’s rhetorical theory can be epitomized by the statement “passion can fly if reason is the wind.” Yet neither passion nor reason can soar if one ignores common sense, or as Adams puts it himself in his *Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, “[. . .] [the] spirit, however, without knowledge, would be little better than a brutal rage” (*Political* 18). Thus, Adams’s rhetoric is grounded in his

orientation of common sense as it emerges from his commitments to first principles.

Perhaps the clearest enunciation of Adams's faithfulness to the first principle that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence though its *telos* of balance and harmony, nature and natural rights, appears in his *Defence of the Constitutions* when he expounds upon the intricate relationship between human nature and natural rights. For human nature makes an aristocracy inevitably oppressive and natural rights inspire the democratic process. Adams in his *Defence* observes "[. . .] even hereditary aristocracies have never been able to prevent oligarchies rising up among them, but by the most rigorous, severe, and tyrannical regulations [. . .]" (*Political* 239). As Adams explains in a later passage, human nature habitually indulges the appetite of the passions: "The passions and desires of the majority of the representatives in an assembly being in their nature insatiable and unlimited by anything within their own breasts, and having nothing to control them without, will crave more and more indulgence, and, as they have the power, they will have the gratification [. . .]" (*Political* 243). This observation of the ensnarement of the passions contained within human nature presupposes a political system in which natural rights include freedom from oppression and tyranny. Therefore the colonies must acquire a political system that protects us from tyranny and instigates equality consistent with our natural rights.<sup>liv</sup>

In a passage reminiscent of Paine's critique of government in *Common Sense*, Adams explains that "[i]t would be as reasonable to say, that all government is altogether unnecessary, because it is the duty of all men to deny themselves, and obey the laws of nature and the laws of God" (ibid). However, since "[w]e know it [self-governance] will not be performed [. . .] *it is our duty to enter into associations, and compel one another to do some of it*" (emphasis added, ibid).

These associations are best fostered, infers Adams, by democratic governance which consistent with natural law establishes “[. . .] that the people are the best keepers of their own liberties [. . .]” (*Defence* 244). Yet this is an area where theory and action clash in light of human nature and natural rights. For while “it is agreed that ‘the end of all government is the good and ease of the people, in a secure enjoyment of their rights’ [. . .],” a sentiment in concert with the 18<sup>th</sup> century view of natural rights, in an earlier passage Adams references the design of history to reveal what has happened and will likely happen if America attempts pure self-governance. The Founding Father reflects upon human nature as it unfolds in “[. . .] the experience of all ages,” which has “proved, that they [the self-governing people] instantly give away their liberties into the hand of grandees, or kings, idols of their own creation” (*ibid.*)<sup>lv</sup> It can thus be concluded that the distressed association between human nature and natural law creates the need for democratic governance. For in the end, it is common sense that can rise above the unruly passions of human nature, and pave the way for the realization of natural rights. At least, so says Adams at age 30 in his “Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law.”

### **The Common Sense of “A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law”**

In the opening of his “Dissertation” young Adams criticizes and extols human nature in a single passage:

Man has certainly an exalted soul; and the same principle in human nature,— that aspiring, noble principle founded in benevolence, and cherished by knowledge; I mean the love of power, which has been so often the cause of slavery,— has, whenever freedom has existed, been the cause of freedom [. . .] [I]t is this principle that has always prompted the princes and nobles of the earth, by every



species of fraud and violence to shake off all the limitations of their power [. . .]  
*(Political 4)*.

However, Adams quickly notes that the innate lust for power in human nature is balanced by the spirit of independence contained in human nature. Thus he concludes that “[. . .] the same principle in human nature,” which drives “[. . .] the love of power” will “[. . .] always stimulate [. . .] the common people to aspire at independency, and to endeavor at confining the power of the great within the limits of equity and reason” (*ibid*). There is within his philosophy and rhetoric a dichotomous notion of human nature. This dichotomy of the good and the bad aspects of humanity are mollified by the common sense of natural rights which he employs as rhetorical invention.

If human nature is puzzling and chaotic in Adams’s philosophy and rhetoric, its disquieting effects are soothed by the common sense of natural rights which bind his audience in the cause of Independence. Adams explains that though “[. . .] the poor people [. . .]” may not possess “[. . .] the knowledge of their rights [. . .],” their natural rights transcend their ignorance. In this he exhibits the inexplicable first principle that there is within a *telos* of balance and harmony (*Commager 2*). He further commits himself to this first principle when he explains that natural rights “[. . .] cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws [. . .]” for these rights are “derived from the great Legislator of the Universe” (*Dissertation 4-5*). Thus Adams utilizes the reigning common sense in the colonies as rhetorical invention when he makes the later pronouncement that “[t]he United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature [. . .]” (*Defence 117*). This first principle constructs a common sense that all humankind is imbued with natural rights that exist within us

despite despotism, democracy, affluence or abject poverty.

The common sense Adams employs as rhetorical invention regarding human nature and natural law was planted and came to fruition in the short history of the American colonies. Adams describes the assumed character of government in the early colonies when he writes that “[t]hey [the Puritans] knew that government was a plain, simple intelligible thing, founded in nature and reason, and quite comprehensible by common sense” (*Dissertation 10*). Thus common sense is a guide to good government, and good rhetoric. For if “government” is “founded in nature and quite comprehensible by common sense,” then the rhetoric that supports democratic government must also represent the simplicity and balanced association between “government” and human nature (*ibid*). Common sense must prevail in democratic governance to reflect the natural rights and human nature of the colonists. If the governing class dispenses with common sense as a criterion for government and instead engages in “[. . .] ecclesiastical and civil tyranny,” the people will again “g[ro]w more and more sensible of the wrong that [is] done them by these systems,” which will result in a “formidable, violent, and bloody” aftermath (*Dissertation 7*). Government can no more ignore the common sense of the people than the people can ignore the government’s “tyranny” (*ibid*). For common sense is omnipresent in the human condition through human nature, and operates philosophically and rhetorically in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the people’s common sense of natural rights. Thus Adams contributes to the tradition of the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense by centralizing the role of human nature in his system of thought. With this observation, Adams contributes to the philosophy and rhetoric of common sense together with Aristotle, Reid, and Campbell.

**The Complimentary Common Sense of Aristotle, Reid, Campbell, and Adams: Human**

### **Nature, Common Sense, and Public Decision-Making**

Farrell summarizes the work of Aristotle in “Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory,” claiming that the philosopher-rhetorician “[. . .] was able to posit a body of *common knowledge* as a natural corollary to his idealizations of human nature, the potential of human reason, and the norms and procedures of public decision-making” (original emphasis, 2). This summary is likewise valid of Adams’s worldview, cultivated from his perspectives on human nature, from whence emerges common knowledge, or common sense of his surroundings and the people who occupy them. Thus Adams, through his analyses of human nature, arrives at a measure and understanding of “[t]he endowment of natural intelligence possessed by rational beings [. . .]” or [. . .] “the plain wisdom which is everyone’s inheritance” (OED). In this way, Adams develops an ordinary common sense of the people and events of his epoch that he utilizes as rhetorical invention. For example, as 18<sup>th</sup> century gentlemen learned in classical and enlightenment philosophy, it is not astonishing that Reid’s statement “*He must either be a fool, or want to make a fool of me, that would reason me out of my reason and senses,*” could easily be a line from one of Adams’s harangues of one of his contemporaries (Emphasis added, Ch. 1, Sect. VIII, 20). Common sense as rhetorical invention in this regard is an indispensable guide to inquiry that relies upon first principles observations of the nature and practices of the people.

However, both Adams’s 18<sup>th</sup> century sensibility encouraged by classical readings, and the Age of Enlightenment’s attention to human nature prompt a secondary conception of common sense, “[a]n ‘internal’ sense which was regarded as the common bond or centre of the five senses, in which the various impressions received were reduced to the unity of a common consciousness” (OED). This secondary conception of common sense, a physiological theory of

common sense, is emblematic of the elevated 18<sup>th</sup> century interest in the passion of human nature. Consequently, although Adams, having never studied the works of the Common Sense School of Philosophy in Scotland—or vice versa, the Common Sense School of Philosophy having never studied the works of Adams—on both sides of the Atlantic a physiological theory of common sense transpired.

Though the passions do not embrace the whole of human nature, their function exemplifies a physiological common sense, or a “common consciousness,” which when aroused properly can yield extraordinary results for the rhetorician or philosopher (OED). The stipulation, of course, is that passion must be subjugated to reason.<sup>lvi</sup> This knowledge of the passions comes not from philosophy or science, but from observations which emerge from the common senses. Observing human nature leads to common sense about our existence and ontology, which can be applied to daily affairs. Therefore, we do well to think of Adams’s contributions to rhetoric and rhetorical theory as synonymous with Campbell’s consideration of his own contribution to the “fourth step” of rhetoric, in which “we arrive at that knowledge of human nature which, besides its other advantages, adds both weight and evidence *to all precedent discoveries and rules*” (emphasis added, *Philosophy* 1i).

As this chapter illustrates, contained in the rhetoric of John Adams is an acute application of the common sense he acquired from his dedication to three first principles that shape a segment of early American discourse: 1) that the past presents lessons, evidence, and examples for the contingent decisions facing our present and future, but not vice versa, 2) although majority rule is at the heart of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority, 3) that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human

existence through its *telos* of balance and harmony, (Grant 193-4, Jefferson 493, Commager 2). In this, his rhetoric emerges from his common sense of the conditions of his epoch, and succeeds by his application of common sense as rhetorical invention through such resources as his appeals to contemporary and ancient theories of human nature and natural rights. These appeals bolster Paine's common sense rhetorical framework with Adams's more reflective approach to common sense as rhetorical invention as it emerges from his studies of human nature, natural rights, rhetoric, philosophy, and political science. Nonetheless, in his orientation of first principles as they furnish a rhetor with common sense, which functions as rhetorical invention, he is consistent with both Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson.

*Chapter V: Thomas Jefferson, Painting an Anomaly*

An historical portrait of Thomas Jefferson is not painted with the concision of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, with splendor that can be appreciated even from afar. Nor is his image fashioned in the style of Monet's impressionism, with quick brushwork that embodies the essence of the moment above detail. Historical biographer Fawn M. Brodie explains that "Jefferson, for all his prodigious industry in writing, collecting, indexing, and preserving his personal record [. . .] has always defied definitive portraiture" (23). However, we can be certain of one fact, that on a list of who's who in early American oratorical brilliance, Jefferson's name would be glaringly absent.

Jefferson was not a formidable orator. This is not a hasty generalization drawn by comparison of the oratorical giants of his epoch, such as James Otis, Patrick Henry, and John Adams, but an unimpeachable fact. Brodie, drawing her conclusions from a personal letter Jefferson wrote to Skelton Jones on July 28, 1809, suggests a psychic flaw in the orator-

statesman: “For some reason, perhaps having to do with a fear and tension that began in childhood, when he began to speak in public his voice ‘sank into his throat’ and became ‘guttural and inarticulate’” (36). Despite this oratorical limitation, his extant rhetorical abilities were duly acknowledged and employed by his radical contemporaries. In Adams’s famous re-enactment of his conversation with Jefferson regarding who would author The Declaration of Independence, among the former’s chief arguments was an observation of Jefferson’s superior rhetorical ability in the sphere of written discourse: “Reason 3d. You can write ten times better than I can” (qtd. in Brodie 512). As lawyers, document writing was an integral component of the duty to defend, protect, and invent arguments. Thus Jefferson’s weak oratorical delivery does not hinder analysis of his rhetoric. The force of his rhetoric is displayed in his public debut and grand finale as a political pamphleteer in *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*.

In his rhetorical debut as a pamphlet-writer, young Jefferson’s manifest commitment to the three first principles that guide his common sense approach to rhetorical invention are paramount, as they can be traced throughout his rhetoric. This philosophical and rhetorical commitment to three seminal first principles, that 1) the past presents lessons, evidence, and examples for the contingent decisions facing our present and future, but not vice versa; 2) although majority rule is at the heart of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority; and 3) that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence through its *telos* of balance and harmony, also guides the common sense approach to invention that animates the rhetoric of his fellow Founders—Adams and Paine (Grant 193-4; Jefferson 493; Commager 2).

### **A Summary View of Jefferson’s Rhetorical Prowess**

Jefferson's *Summary View* contributes two prolific resources to the related efforts of investigating his personal rhetorical theory and understanding the distinguished role of rhetoric in Revolutionary America. Jefferson's grasp of natural rights pervades his rhetorical invention, while he exemplifies the expected rhetorical competence of thinkers and writers of Revolutionary America. Without his commitment to natural rights, Jefferson would have been banished from participation in the revolution, and history would praise another author of the Declaration of Independence. For the rhetoric of *Summary View* was Jefferson's key to unlocking the prestigious chamber of the orator-statesman. Though his speaking delivery was weak, the pamphlet allowed his voice to be heard across the thirteen colonies.

In *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* Joseph J. Ellis carves out the rhetorical history of the events of the cause of independence. Although he corroborates Brodie's assessment of Jefferson's native oratorical ability, that "[h]is most glaring deficiency was the talent most valued in Philadelphia: He could not speak in public," Ellis contributes an expanded version of the status of rhetoric in early America (*Sphinx* 42). *American Sphinx* elucidates the role of persuasion in oral and written discourse and positions rhetorical engagement as the premier weapon and defense of the Revolutionary.

Ellis's metaphor for the pursuit of Revolutionary grandeur through rhetoric is "[. . .] a game of conspicuous eloquence" (*Sphinx* 42). In this "game of *conspicuous* eloquence" Jefferson cannot be deemed a loser, because he never played (emphasis added, *ibid*). Ellis surveys Jefferson's experience in congress and concludes that "[a]s far as we know, he never rose to deliver a single speech in the Continental Congress," and suggests a "shy and withdrawn" personality as the catalyst for the Virginian's "[. . .] useless[ness] in situations that demanded the

projection of a public presence” (*Sphinx* 44-5). Yet a simultaneous “game [in] conspicuous eloquence” was underway among the Revolutionaries, a game that Jefferson played and won (*Ibid*). It is true that oratorical brilliance brought immediate fame. Ellis explains that “[t]he undisputed oratorical champion of Virginia [. . .] was Patrick Henry, whose presence in the Virginia delegation generated more public attention than anyone else except George Washington” (*Sphinx* 43). Yet such brilliance was fleeting and localized, thus requiring command performances to maintain celebrity, whereas written discourse was a protracted game that called upon more sizable and, arguably, more adept audiences. In this game of rhetorical prowess Jefferson was matchless, and emerged as the undisputed victor. Ensclosed in Jefferson’s rhetoric was the development of a Republican common sense, as well as the use of common sense as rhetorical invention as it proceeds from his dedication to first principles.

### **The “Conspicuous Eloquence” of Common Sense as Rhetorical Invention in**

#### ***Summary View***

In Jefferson’s *Summary View* the prose captivates and the arguments cut. His was the complimentary rhetoric in written form to the oratorical giants of his day. In this regard Ellis explains that “[b]y disposition and habit, Jefferson’s most comfortable arena was the study and his most natural podium was the writing desk” (*Sphinx* 45). From his “natural podium” Jefferson’s ardent radicalism was delivered with a literary and rhetorical prowess that united him in cause with Patrick Henry, John Adams and Richard Henry Lee (*ibid*). Although, as Brodie points out, “[n]o one asked him to write it [*Summary View*]; [and] the composition was itself an act of arrogance common in young men in revolutionary times, especially if they are gifted,” the pamphlet was well received by the revolutionaries and functioned as Jefferson’s entrée to the



high stakes game of “conspicuous eloquence” (Brodie 99; *Sphinx* 42). In this discourse Jefferson’s “conspicuous eloquence” operates rhetorically by means of common sense as rhetorical invention, and foreshadows Paine’s arguments in *Common Sense*.

Jefferson’s common sense emerges in part from the Socratic Method. The rhetorical agility of his questions operates implicitly through the rhetorical invention of inquiries that require nothing more than common sense to answer. Thus, Jefferson’s rhetoric benefits from an enthymematic structure hinging upon questions that entice an implicit response from audience members who transcend the boundaries between the rigid genteel and common classes. In his public accessibility and use of provocative yet ordinary reasoning, “[. . .] Jefferson phrased the basic problem which Thomas Paine the following year would crystallize in the question, ‘Should an island govern a continent?’” (qtd. in Brodie 99). In this question he is consistent with the Enlightenment first principle that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence through its *telos* of balance and harmony. This principle also guides the common sense approach to invention that animates the rhetoric of his fellow Founders—Adams and Paine (Commager 2). Similarly, his grievances against the crown display his lifelong commitment to the first principle that although majority rule is at the heart of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority (Jefferson 413). In the rhetorical interpretation of these first principles Jefferson’s rhetorical invention is guided by common sense.

Brodie enumerates a list of seven grievances, selecting them for “[. . .] their more primitive elements” (100). Each grievance is prefaced by a summary. For instance, the author summarizes Jefferson’s statement that “[o]f all our petitions ‘to none of which was ever even an

answer condescended” with the succinct caption: “*You do not listen to us*” (original emphasis, 100). Her additional captions include: “*You gave us nothing,*” “*You are cheating us,*” “*You are unfair,*” “*You take back what you have given us,*” “*You punish the innocent,*” and “*You play favorites*” (original emphasis, 100-1). She concludes her analysis of Jefferson’s grievances in *Summary View* with an invaluable contribution to identifying and understanding common sense as rhetorical invention during the cause of Independence.

Brodie identifies a pattern of parental metaphors in Jefferson’s grievances in *Summary View*. The author concedes the metaphor from such Jeffersonian grievances as “Justice is not the same thing in America as in Britain,” and “You sacrifice ‘the rights of one part of the empire to the inordinate desires of another’” (qtd in Brodie 101). Clearly these particular grievances emerge from Jefferson’s commitment to the first principle that although majority rule is at the heart of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority (Jefferson 413). In her estimation of Jefferson’s perspective on England’s “parental” role in colonial governance, Brodie claims that “It is obvious that these [Jefferson’s grievances] are common complaints of young people [. . .].” Although her argument is patently inferential, she supports it with the fact that “[t]he *Summary View* struck a chord in countless young men in the colonies, many of whom felt great guilt at taking up arms against the mother country” (101).<sup>lvii</sup> Using the parental metaphor as well as the approach to majority rule suggested in the first principle, we may see that Jefferson’s grievances establish notions of reciprocal power relations that censure Mother England for her injustice to the colonies. These grievances suggested to his readers the probable conclusion that if they accepted the parental metaphor of Britain and scrutinized the existing relationship, it follows that by participating in the revolution the

colonists were not committing matricide, but rather defending themselves against infanticide. For common sense tells us that when attacked, by anyone, personal defense is warranted by human nature. Thus an additional first principle regarding the balance and order of Nature comes to fruition in Jefferson's common sense as rhetorical invention. Since Britain first launched an economic attack on her doting children in the colonies with the Stamp Acts, and then embarked upon murderous attacks of her own children by way of "The Boston Massacre," the mother country's familial ties to the American colonies, with the King as father, can only be understood as nominal. For, according to Jefferson's grievances in *Summary View*, natural rights and common sense must correct the unenlightened system of monarchical Britain to reestablish harmony and promote equality.

**The Common Sense of Natural Rights and Human Nature in Jefferson's *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774)**

Jefferson constructs a principal source of common sense as rhetorical invention in *Summary View* through his complimentary development of common sense, natural rights and human nature. Through these common places of human thought and experience the philosopher-statesman argues against Britain's rule over the colonies. In *Summary View* Jefferson reflects upon the Stamp Act and the British "[a]ct [of] suspending the legislature of New York" (111). His assessment of Britain's intervention in colonial governance enunciates the Crown's assault upon the natural rights of the colonies, human nature, and common sense:

One free and independent legislature hereby takes upon itself to suspend the powers of another, free independent as itself; *thus exhibiting a phenomenon* [sic] *unknown in nature*, the creator and creature of its own power. *Not only*

*the principles of common sense, but the common feelings of human nature, must be surrendered up before his majesty's subjects here can be persuaded to believe that they hold their political existence at the will of a British parliament.* (emphasis added, 111)

Thus Jefferson's rhetorical framework appeals to his audience on the basis of natural rights and human nature as developed by a common sense approach to rhetorical invention. This approach to invention necessarily transpires from the first principle that stimulates the pursuit of an ordered world, a world that mimics the realm of Nature and serves as a model for human existence through its *telos* of balance and harmony (Commager 2).

With common sense as his balanced and ordered guide to justice, Jefferson charges the Crown with a flagrant abuse of the natural rights of the colonies. In this regard, his rhetorical framework assumes the tenor of an enlightened manifesto through the Virginian's announcement that the colonists would have to abandon "[n]ot only" their "common sense, but the common feelings of human nature" to accept political subjugation to British parliament (*Summary* 111). To his audiences Jefferson's use of common sense as rhetorical invention functions on several levels in this seminal passage of *Summary View*.

We can identify Jefferson's primary audiences as members of the Constitutional Congress, the King and Parliament, and secondary audience membership in the colonial and British newspaper readership. Although Jefferson's audiences were varied in political philosophy, socio-cultural environment, and socio-economic background, his common sense as rhetorical invention allows a crucial starting point for appealing to diverse audiences. To deny his appeals is to ignore the physiological presence of common sense, an "'internal' sense which

was regarded as the common bond or centre of the five senses, in which the various impressions received were reduced to the unity of a common consciousness” (OED). Moreover, Jefferson’s *Summary Rights* also operates from the comparatively colloquial understanding of common sense as “[t]he endowment of natural intelligence possessed by rational beings; ordinary, normal or average understanding; the plain wisdom which is everyone’s inheritance” (*Summary* 111). On the one hand, for advocates of the radical viewpoint of colonial separation from Britain, Jefferson’s use of common sense as rhetorical invention painted the exigencies of separation in greater relief. On the other hand, to his opponents, Jefferson’s appeals to common sense were challenges to their “natural intelligence” (ibid). Yet *Summary View* clearly operates on another level of common sense that firmly situates Jefferson in the Whig tradition.

### **The Rhetoric of Whig Opposition**

In *American Sphinx* Ellis points out the dominant Whig ideology in America in direct reference to Jefferson’s later work, *Causes and Necessities*. He explains that *Causes and Necessities* was “[. . .] a preview of coming attractions in the Declaration and in part because its message was conveyed in coded language familiar to Jefferson and his contemporaries but strange to our modern ears and sensibilities” (49). This is a language of Whig “extremes” that dates back to “[. . .] the Puritan dissenters during the English Civil War in the 1640’s” (Ibid). However, since *Causes and Necessities* exhibits Jefferson’s dedication to audience-centered discourse in which, according to Ellis, Jefferson “[. . .] bend[s] over backward to avoid alienating the undecided [the moderates],” the young Virginian’s more rigidly radical *Summary View* also demonstrates the tradition of Whiggery. The Whig tradition of radical dichotomies between such forces as good and evil depend upon a common sense, or in Ellis’s words an “implicit

presumption” that “[. . .] sinister forces were conspiring in London’s faraway corridors of power to deprive unsuspecting colonists of their liberties” (*Sphinx* 49). Therefore, Jefferson’s explicit radicalism relied upon a rhetorical theory deriving from the “[. . .] venerable Whig tradition of opposition” that sought a balanced and ordered Nature (ibid). Jefferson’s rhetoric of Whig opposition promotes several immediate rhetorical advantages.

One advantage of Jefferson’s involvement in the Whig tradition is his access to a tradition of argumentation that privileges a common sense of “style” (ibid). Ellis describes the “Whig tradition of opposition [. . .],” as “[. . .] an acceptable and familiar style of political argumentation that proved extremely useful in the previous decade of protest against British taxation” (ibid). Another rhetorical advantage of the rhetoric of Whig opposition also relies upon a common sense of style. As Ellis explains, “[. . .] the Whig tradition of opposition [. . .] had enormous polemic potential in simplifying the bewildering constitutional complexities facing both the colonists and the British ministry” (ibid). Thus Jefferson’s allegiance to the rhetoric of Whig opposition situated him in a style of discourse that relies upon an oppositional tradition of politics that is constructed from decidedly accessible arguments that proceed from his orientation with first principles. Likewise, the rhetoric of Whig opposition momentarily clears the murky waters of politics with a common sense.

### **Jefferson’s Sources of Common Sense**

Since Jefferson’s ascendance to the hallowed chamber of the Founding Fathers, scholars have attempted to locate the sources of his thought in the educational and philosophical milieu of his historical moment. The research and conclusion scholars have generated is often conflicting and always speculative. Historians commonly identify a classical influence upon the Virginian’s

mind in the works of “Plutarch, Livy, and above all Cicero, Sallust, and Tacitus” (Bailyn 25).<sup>lviii</sup> However, the degree of classical influence upon Jefferson’s thought had a self-imposed limitation, for he, along with his Fellow Founding Fathers, gained “[. . .] their detailed knowledge,” and merely “[. . .] engaged interest [. . .] with only one era and one small group of writers,” in which “the political history of Rome” was decisive (ibid). Another common source of Jeffersonian inspiration is attributed to John Locke.<sup>lix</sup> Still, the intellectual effect of Locke’s philosophy is obscured by the fact that Jefferson, along with his fellow Revolutionaries, used the philosopher’s ideas “[. . .] with precision on points of political theory, but at other times he [Locke] is referred to in the most offhand way, as if he could be relied on to support anything the writers happened to be arguing” (Bailyn 28).<sup>lx</sup> Nonetheless, these ambiguities in the philosophical portrait of Jefferson extend to our historical moment when the point of contention is a new source of dispute, common sense.

Ellis explains that:

[t]he second and more interpretive tradition [the first uses Locke to interpret Jefferson’s work] locates the source of Jefferson’s thinking in the Scottish Enlightenment, especially the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson. The key insight here is that Jefferson’s belief in the natural equality of man derived primarily from Hutcheson’s ‘moral sense,’ a faculty inherent in all human beings that no mere government could violate. (*Sphinx* 67)

While this contemporary debate over the influences of the Scottish Enlightenment on Jefferson’s philosophy and rhetoric offers a provocative alternative to John Locke, it adds no more clarity to the issue. For Langguth corroborates the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment on Jefferson’s

philosophy and rhetoric, but offers Thomas Reid as the primary source of inspiration, not Hutcheson.

Langguth explains that five years prior to writing the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson

[ . . . ] had given a friend his list of essential books. Along with Locke, Jefferson [ . . . ] included *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, by Thomas Reid, who argued that moral truths were divided into those that were reached through reason and those that were self-evident to every man of understanding and morality. (355)

However, whether he draws specifically from Hutcheson or Reid, it is evident that Jefferson's first principles were to some extent inspired by the Scottish School of Common Sense. Ellis suggests this conclusion when he explains that

Jefferson believed that the distinguishing feature that made human beings fully human, and in that sense equal, was the moral sense. *Whether he developed that belief by reading Hutcheson or any of the other members of the Scottish school or from his own personal observation is ultimately unknowable and not terribly important.* (emphasis added, *Sphinx* 68)

What is “ultimately” knowable is the fact that Jefferson identified the colonists as possessing a more cultivated common sense by comparison to those citizens ruled by a European monarch. Perhaps this elevated common sense was encouraged by the practical endowment of the three first principles of Adams, Jefferson, and Paine as they flourished in the political environment of the late eighteenth-century America.

When Jefferson writes from Paris on August 13, 1786 to George Wythe in a letter called



“A Crusade Against Ignorance,” he displays his confidence in the common constituents of America. Here the statesman explains that “[i]f all the sovereigns of Europe were to set themselves to work to emancipate the minds of their subjects from their present ignorance & prejudices [. . .], a thousand years would not place them on that high ground on which our common people are now setting out” (*Writings* 859). However, Jefferson is not declaring that the colonists are intellectually superior to these European subjects. Instead, he identifies the colonists’ situational advantage that leads to the enlargement of common sense. To this end Jefferson explains that “[o]urs [emancipation] could not have been so fairly put into the hands of their own common sense had they not been separated from their parent stock & kept from contamination, either from them, or the other people of the old world, by the intervention of so wide an ocean” (*ibid*). Nonetheless, while Jefferson’s letter to Wythe isolates an assumption from which his mind works, it remains a futile task to identify the exact wellsprings of the Virginian’s ideas. Instead it is resourceful to explore patterns and themes in his thinking and writing. Since ultimate discovery of the exact sources of Jefferson’s philosophy and rhetoric remain unattainable the practical course of action is to augment this research and move beyond scholarly questions concerning what sources Jefferson studied to questions of how he studied.

### **The Common Sense of Commonplacing**

A clue to Jefferson’s philosophical leanings as well as his approach to rhetoric, both written and oral, surfaces in his study methods. As Ellis explains,

[e]ver since his college days at William and Mary, continuing through his study and eventual practice of the law, Jefferson spent an inordinate amount of his time alone, reading and taking extensive notes on what he read. He called this practice

“commonplacing,” referring to the copying over of passages from Coke or Pufendorf on the law, Milton or Shakespeare on the human condition, Kames or Hutcheson on man’s moral sense. (*Sphinx* 45)

Jefferson’s “commonplacing” corroborates the philosophical sources of his rhetorical inspiration. However, we learn from more than the sheer substance of his *Commonplace Book*. For his style and approach to “commonplacing” is utterly Jeffersonian.

His commonplace approach to study methods reveals a devotion to scholarly inquiry as it connects with his personal beliefs and intellectual predilections. As Ellis points out, “[. . .] Jefferson made copying a creative act, often revising a passage to suit his own taste or, more often, *blending his own thoughts on the subject into his notes*” (emphasis added, *Sphinx* 45). It is no mystery then that the basis of his rhetorical invention is guided by, among other things, his acknowledgement of a basic moral sense that operates physiologically as a common sense in humanity. His invention is further enacted by a literary, rhetorical and philosophical approach that encompasses his amalgamated vision of such Enlightenment concerns as human nature, natural rights and democracy.

Jefferson’s exercise of common sense as rhetorical invention benefits from an internal conversation between scholars and the people of his age, with Jefferson performing as the intermediary. Consequently Jefferson’s rhetoric is not monotonic, but polyphonic, due to the multifarious voices in his head as he sits to think and write. While the voices of philosophers and statesman come to him as a whisper of thoughts on human nature, natural rights and democracy, the loudest cry comes from his inner voice, which articulates the Republican needs of the moment. Undoubtedly, the most conspicuous display of his rhetorical theory appears in

his First Inaugural Address, given on March 4, 1801. In this speech the president renews his common sense orientation to rhetoric and philosophy as they are guided by his first principles.

### **The American Common Sense of Jefferson's First Inaugural<sup>lxvi</sup>**

In his essay “‘The Circle of Our Felicities’: Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address and the Rhetoric of Nationhood,” Stephen Howard Browne analyzes this significant speech in America history using “[. . .] three conventions of public discourse—religious, civic, and political [. . .]” (413). While these rhetorical conventions are certainly not exhaustive, their accessibility and generality provide a fitting apparatus for understanding the multifarious layers of early American public discourse. To this end, the religious, civic, and political aspects of Jefferson’s First Inaugural will be adapted to the task of supporting the first principles that guide the rhetorical theories—implicit and explicit—of common sense that drove the cause of Independence, a rhetorical and historical moment in which diverse political interests were effectively unified for the sake of a common good.<sup>lxvii</sup> For the source that unifies the religious, civic, and political diversity in Jefferson’s First Inaugural is a ceaseless dedication to common sense in his rhetorical invention as it proceeds from the first principles with which the American people were equally familiar in the rhetoric of Adams and Paine.

### **Jefferson’s First Inaugural and the Religious Context of Early America: 1776-1801**

Due to the persistence of immigration the religious context of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century America is utterly impossible to summarize. However, we can be somewhat assured that the irreligious remained the minority throughout the brief span from the American Revolution to Jefferson’s first presidency. While discussing religion in 1776 in *Daily Life in Revolutionary America*, James Schouler explains that “[o]ver the irreligious minority of their own inhabitants

the native press [in New England] held constantly the rod. ‘They who drive their carriages on the Lord’s day,’ it was laid down, ‘must at least walk gently their horses when they pass a meeting-house; otherwise we shall complain of them as a nuisance’” (qtd in Schouler 240). By the 1790’s colonial religion had been influenced by “French rationalism” (Smelser 32). Through the American interpretation of French rationalism the colonists could now add “Unitarianism and Universalism” to its religious milieu, which previously included “Puritans, the Congregational Church, Presbyterians, Baptists,” and “a small enclave of Roman Catholics” (ibid; Schouler 238-45). With such diversity, how is it then that Jefferson, himself a deist, could surmount the religious and ideological barriers of early America in his First Inaugural?<sup>lxiii</sup> To this question, Browne suggests that the sources of rhetorical inspiration in Jefferson’s First Inaugural were inexorably tied to “[. . .] what he previously sought when composing the Declaration of Independence [. . .]” (414).

If we follow Browne’s connection between the rhetoric of the Declaration and the rhetoric of his First Inaugural it leads to Jefferson’s use of common sense as a source of rhetorical invention. To identify a connection Browne quotes a letter from Jefferson to Henry Lee dating May 8, 1825 on the “object of the Declaration of Independence” (*Writings* 1500-01). From Monticello Jefferson writes to Henry Lee that

[t]his was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the *common sense* of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent [. . .] Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular

and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. (*Writings* 1501)

Thus, given the exigencies of his Presidency, there is no logical reason to doubt that Jefferson invented his arguments in his First Inaugural from the same approach of “plac[ing] before mankind the common sense of the American mind” as they proceeded from three prevalent first principles likewise represented to the American people in the rhetoric of Adams and Paine (*ibid*). As Browne points out in regard to the invention of his First Inaugural, “[w]hen it came to the religious dimensions of ‘the American mind’ Jefferson had before him a set of perfectly familiar and still powerful thematics from which to draw” (414). These “thematics” Jefferson employed as rhetorical invention to embrace a country recently scourged by ruthless party wars, yet still hopeful of the American dream of progress (*ibid*).

The “thematics” Browne identifies “[. . .] are three propositions embraced by nearly all citizens: that Americans were a chosen people; that by virtue of that fact the nation was set on a path toward even greater progress; and that to keep us on this path Americans must undertake rituals of rededication and renewal” (414). When situating Jefferson’s First Inaugural within Harry Stout’s summary of the Revolution in “Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,” it is evident that the President’s use of the religious common sense was a partial recovery of the original Spirit of ’76.<sup>lxiv</sup> Stout explains that when “[c]onsidered as an intellectual movement, the Revolution represented a spiritual purge administered to a corrupt established order in the interests of restoring a pure order that would both free the colonists from a decadent oppressor and cleanse their own society” (523). Thus

Jefferson's rhetoric was a symbolic purification of the immoral party wars of post-Revolutionary America and a redirection to the "path toward even greater progress" (Browne 414).<sup>lxv</sup> In this sense Jefferson was poignantly presiding over a public and private "ritual [. . .] of rededication and renewal" (ibid).

Jefferson evokes the related common sense "[. . .] that Americans were a chosen people; [and] by virtue of that fact the nation was set on a path toward even greater progress [. . .]" within the second line of his inaugural (Browne 414). His wordplay is subtle but affecting as he tells the story of our young nation: "A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye [. . .]" ("Inaugural" 492). Since this is a "ritual of rededication and renewal," it is not the President's task to dwell on past hardships, but to hint at the lessons it has taught us (Browne 414). In this regard, it is evident that Britain is chief among the "nations who feel power and forget right" (ibid). Although he does not name this country specifically, the president reminds his audience of the dark forces America has overcome to "advanc[e] rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye [. . .]" ("Inaugural" 492). In this latter clause, "advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye [. . .]" Jefferson's religious implication is delicate, yet detectable.

For the irreligious literalist, America's "destinies" are clearly "beyond the reach of [the] mortal eye" ("Inaugural" 492). However, to the diverse religious population, America is "advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye [. . .]" precisely because "[. . .] Americans were a chosen people; [and] that by virtue of that fact the nation was set on a path

toward even greater progress [. . .]” (ibid; Browne 414). For the irreligious the President is merely stating a recognizable fact that we are indeed “[. . .] advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye [. . .],” yet for the religious America is “[. . .] advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye [. . .],” because only God knows our destiny.

Jefferson’s appeal to a religious common sense is restrained enough not to offend the irreligious minority, and dexterous enough to reach his distinct religious audiences. As Browne explains “[t]he inaugural address was in fact [. . .] a work designated to shore up confidence, assuage anxieties, [and to] keep his audience on that path pointing so auspiciously to the future” (415). Thus, in its public absolution of past sins and devotion to a divine path of progress, Jefferson’s First Inaugural functions as a “ritual [. . .] of rededication and renewal” for the American public (414). Browne discusses Jefferson’s rhetoric on March 4, 1801 as “[. . .] a ritualized performance crafted specifically to strengthen collective resolve; it accordingly participated in a venerable tradition of religious discourse focused on just this challenge” (415). In addition to its ability to “strengthen collective resolve,” Jefferson’s First Inaugural purified past sins with an awe-inspiring rhetoric of hope (ibid). Nor are these rhetorical functions of “collective resolve” and purification through hope mutually exclusive. For example, we experience both functions in Jefferson’s discussion of the “[. . .] contest of opinion through which we have passed” (492).<sup>lxvi</sup>

The tie between Burr and Jefferson exacerbated the rift between Federalists and Republicans. Yet Jefferson deftly identified the struggle for the presidency as a function of democracy, and through his rhetoric he steered America toward reconciliation and away from division. In this he proves the common sense of the Enlightenment first principle that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence through

its *telos* of balance and harmony (Commager 2). Although there was a tumultuous storm that preceded his election, the turbulent weather was merely Nature clearing the way for a calm new day.

As Dumas Malone explains in *Jefferson the President*, “Putting the most polite and magnanimous interpretation on the fierce conflict in which his countrymen had recently been engaged, he characterized this as a ‘contest of *opinion*’ (18). While reframing the party wars as a “contest of opinion” was clearly a political approach to reconciliation, Jefferson’s rhetorical framework is versatile, and it extends beyond the political to the religious (“Inaugural” 492). Jefferson uses a religious terminology to explain America’s “sacred” political posture (*ibid*). Thus,

[t]he main purpose of this man who so disliked contention was to assure them [his defeated foes and the rest of his audience], and in seeking to do this he proclaimed a ‘sacred’ principle: ‘that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, *that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable*; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression’” (qtd in Malone, original emphasis, *Jefferson the President* 18-19).

Clearly a violation of this “sacred [first] principle” was the catalyst for British Puritans to migrate to the colonies initially, and Britain’s sustained violations led to the unification of the sovereign nation of America (*ibid*). Moreover, now that the “contest of opinion” had been decided, America is again purified by the “sacred principle” of equality through which America will “unite with one heart and one mind” (“Inaugural” 492-3). In this sense, Jefferson’s use of common sense as rhetorical invention as it proceeds from first principles has, as Browne



explains, “[. . .] alert[ed] us to the common and nearly universal function of rhetoric to rededicate common values and mutual commitment to each other’s fortunes” (415). This function of rededication and commitment explored here within a religious context is “[. . .] participating,” according to Browne “in [a] more general context of civic commemoration” (417).

### **Jefferson’s First Inaugural as a Civic Commemoration<sup>lxvii</sup>**

Browne locates Jefferson’s First Inaugural as part of “[. . .] ritualized rehearsals of nationhood,” portraying it “[. . .] as a rhetorical performance, [. . .] which relied for its intended effect on the habits and expectations of that [American] culture” (417). Some elements of Jefferson’s First Inaugural were also present in Washington’s First Inaugural address to the new America. Quoting James Farrell, Browne identifies a connection between Washington’s initial inaugural and Jefferson’s First Inaugural. Farrell explains that in the First Inaugural address delivered to America, Washington intended to

[. . .] express the praise and admiration of celebrants for the noble deeds of American revolutionaries, to craft a useful history and consign those narratives to the public memory, to suggest a dominant national identity proud of its past and confident of its future, and to hold up models of civic virtue and patriotism to be emulated by future political and military leaders. (qtd. in Browne 417)

In concert with Washington’s inaugural objectives Jefferson responded with a common sense of the story of America. The new president followed Washington’s oratorical practice by crafting his inaugural in the tradition of civic commemoration. To this end, Jefferson relied upon his dedication to the first principle that regarded the value of the past as it pertains to the future

(Commager 2).

Jefferson, addressing the well-known Federalist-Republic rift between strong federal government versus a strong state, transcends party politics in the tradition of civic commemoration that “[. . .] express[es] the praise and admiration of celebrants for the noble deeds of American revolutionaries [. . .]” to “[. . .] suggest a dominant national identity proud of its past and confident of its future” (ibid). To this end the President observes,

I know, indeed, that some honest men fear that a republican government can not be strong, that this Government is not strong enough; but would the honest patriot, in the full side of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm on the theoretic and visionary fear that this Government, the world’s best hope may by possibility want energy to preserve itself? I trust not. (“Inaugural” 493)

As an “honest patriot” himself, Jefferson’s ethos temporarily surmounts the damaging political wars of late, reminding his audience instead of the earlier story of America of which he was a main character. However, acting in a “republican government” confers upon all Americans the title of “honest patriot,” the highest compliment available (ibid).<sup>lxviii</sup>

His audience attains the noble title of “honest patriot” not by birthright, wealth, political affiliation, or religion, but through the same republican principles that guided the American Revolution, “where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern” (“Inaugural” 493).

Hence, Jefferson’s arguments employ a republican-American common sense that coats the bitter aftertaste of political back-biting with the sweetness only those who have drunk from the cup of

liberty can know. As a model of civic commemoration, Jefferson's First Inaugural was well received both then and now: "The speech made great noise out of doors, according to contemporary report [ . . .]" and [ . . .] it echoe[s] through subsequent generations" (*Jefferson the President* 17). A primary reason for the inaugural's continued significance is that the President adhered to a tradition of civic commemoration that utilizes the common sense of the American story to counter less noble stories of political abhorrence (ibid).

### **Political Debate**

The final question pertaining to Jefferson's use of common sense as rhetorical invention involves the political arena of his historical moment. Thus the question must be asked, how could Jefferson's First Inaugural heal, or at least soothe, old and new political wounds? We can begin to find a response to this question in a letter Jefferson wrote to Governor Monroe the day after his inaugural speech. In his personal letter to Governor Monroe, Jefferson is clear to exclude the most ardent Federalists from the political plan framed in his inaugural speech, to whom the President claims that he "will never turn an inch out of my way to reconcile them" (qtd in. Randall 634). However, Jefferson considers the overarching residual message of the speech "conciliation and adherence to sound principles" (ibid). In this he is ever cognizant of the Enlightenment first principle that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence through its *telos* of balance and harmony (Commager 2). One practical method Jefferson employs to move toward "conciliation and adherence to sound principles" is to avoid blame and identify commonality.

As Malone explains,

[r]ecent experience warranted his assertion that political intolerance could be as

despotic and wicked as [. . .] religious intolerance [. . .] which had been banished from these shores. But, wisely refraining from uttering a public rebuke to anyone, he attributed the loss of harmony and affection chiefly to the struggle in Europe and concern for national security. (*The President* 19)

Malone suggests that the President's Inaugural removes the blame of internal strife in America on mere party wars and instead points to a cause of greater national concern (ibid):

During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore; that this should be more felt and feared by some and less by others, and should divide opinions as to measures of safety.

("Inaugural" 493)

In this act of explanation he poignantly adheres to the first principle that the past presents lessons, evidence, and examples for the contingent decisions facing our present and future, but not vice versa (Commager 2). From this first principle Jefferson invents the common sense that Americans are united in cause, American safety, but divided in the proper course of action, political faction. Thus the President paves the way for his most memorable statement of commonality, which undoubtedly emerges from his steadfast dedication to the often overlapping first principles that regard the symmetry between the majority and the minority in democratic governance and the need for an ordered world that mimics the realm of Nature (Jefferson 493, Commager 2).

The President explains that "[. . .] every difference of opinion is not a difference of

principle” (“Inaugural” 493). Therefore we can be divided by belief, but united in cause. For although “[w]e have [been] called by different names,” we are “brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists” (ibid). “We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists,” because we are all Americans. As Malone explains, “He [Jefferson] believed that parties represented, or should represent, differences of opinion; and in his effort to restore the social harmony which he so greatly prized he now tended to minimize even these” (19). Jefferson overcomes political odium through the invention of an American commonality that is intrinsic in his first principles and extrinsic in his common sense as rhetorical invention that builds patriotism and American unity.

As Ellis points out, “We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists” was “[. . .] the passage that virtually all the reporters and interested observers fastened upon at the time because it seemed to represent Jefferson’s clear, indeed grand, statement of conciliation and moderation” (*Sphinx* 215). Although, due to a discrepancy between Jefferson’s handwritten copy and the printer’s copy, his contemporaries misinterpreted this conciliatory line in the inaugural, common sense as rhetorical invention remains intact. Even Alexander Hamilton, Jefferson’s greatest foe, called the speech “[. . .] a candid retraction of past misapprehensions, and a pledge to the community that the new President will not lend himself to dangerous innovations, but in essential points will tread in the steps of his predecessors” (qtd. in Ellis 216). However, Ellis describes the implications of the erroneous interpretation:

By capitalizing the operative terms [Republican and Democrat], the printed version had Jefferson making a gracious statement about the overlapping goals of the two political parties. But in the handwritten version of the speech that

Jefferson delivered, the key words were not capitalized. Jefferson was therefore referring not to the common ground shared by the two parties but to the common belief, shared by all American citizens, that a republican form of government and a federal bond among the states were most preferable. (*Sphinx* 216)

If we follow Ellis's study of Jefferson's letters written immediately after his inaugural, the common sense "[. . .] shared by all American citizens, that a republican form of government and a federal bond among the states were most preferable," emerges as a recovery of the Spirit of '76.

In his letter to John Dickinson on "The Revolution of 1800," the new President's path for America outlined in his inaugural just two days before reveals the essence of the Revolutionary spirit ("Writings" 1084). Moreover the common sense exhibited in the letter confirms the sincerity of conviction, articulated in Jefferson's inaugural address, that "a free government is of all others the most energetic; that the inquiry which has been excited among the mass of mankind by our revolution & it's consequences, will ameliorate the condition of man over a great portion of the globe" ("Writings" 1085). As a specimen of Jefferson's rhetorical theory this letter reveals that his common sense was embedded in a purification ritual that lacked pomp, arrogance, or assignment of guilt; instead he moved his audience with the eloquent language of abounding hope.

Jefferson enacted his common sense rhetoric on the same grounds as Adams and Paine in their shared recognition of the changing spirit of the New World citizens. Yet Jefferson added a language of extremes that emerged from the rhetoric of Whig opposition. With this approach to rhetorical engagement his audiences were affected by a common sense of seemingly universal

dichotomies that identified the good and the evil in absolute terms. Good terms were independence, freedom, and balance, while evil terms included tyranny, injustice, and political division. Thus through Jefferson's common sense rhetoric the Revolution could spread a message across the globe that people should be free and equal, but of course this is merely common sense. Or is it? Who is to say what common sense is, especially in a contemporary era marked by more diversity than the epoch of the Founding Fathers?

*Chapter VI: In Defense of a Common Sense Theory of Rhetoric:*

*Identifying and Responding to the Critiques*

Three Founding Fathers, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine intuitively and deliberately composed rhetorical discourses that drew from Common Sense Rhetoric and Philosophy. Although these Founders held to diverse and sometimes conflicting theological, philosophical, political, and ideological commitments, their common sense rhetorical practices applied Greco-Roman and Enlightenment philosophies to the emancipation of the American colonies from British tyranny. What effectively equalized their disparities to achieve a common good was a rigorous devotion to three first principles. From their interpretations of these principles the Founders individually developed what can be collectively recognized as a common sense theory and practice of rhetoric. While this approach to rhetorical practice was successful in the era of Revolutionary America, contemporary theorists now challenge the viability of common sense as it pertains to the invention of rhetoric. The question that emerges from these contemporary rhetorical theorists is whether common sense can escape hegemonic power. If it cannot, common sense is part of the problem, and as such, cannot function as an emancipator.

The critique of rhetoric as hegemonic challenges the viability of common sense as

rhetorical invention as well as the innate relationship between rhetoric and common sense. If the assessment of rhetoric's hegemonic affects in Maurice Charland's "Rehabilitating Rhetoric: Confrontational Blindspots in Discourse and Social Theory" are true, if "[r]hetoric proceeds within the 'mainstream,'" or even if one accepts Celeste Condit's comparatively sanguine appraisal of rhetorical engagement in "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy" as "[. . .] a negotiation among elite and nonelite [*sic*] groups" that "therefore always contains interests of nonelite groups, *though to a lesser degree*," any association between rhetoric and hegemony negatively impacts a common sense theory of rhetoric and rhetorical invention (469; emphasis added, 508). These accusations of hegemony, in a pragmatic sense, do not move beyond Plato's earliest charges against rhetoric in *Gorgias*. In this regard, many contemporary theorists are aligned with Plato in his critique of the ignoble ends of rhetoric.

Drawing from Plato's *Gorgias*, I.F. Stone's *The Trial of Socrates* reminds us that since its classical origin as the premier instrument of republican virtue in Sicily, Athens, and Rome, rhetoric has been assailed by two major indictments: 1) it is mere "flattery" or, in contemporary parlance, "empty rhetoric" and 2) it succumbs to the ignorant masses (*Gorgias* 39-46; Stone 92-3). If we add the third and most contemporary charge of rhetoric as hegemonic practice, a framework is established from which the interrelated areas of common sense, invention, and rhetoric can be appropriately assessed with regard to its extant critiques. In light of these critiques, what available means of persuasion can effectively replace common sense in the inventional process or supplant the relationship between rhetoric and common sense in general?

It follows that if rhetoric fulfills an ostensibly hegemonic *telos* by serving the elite, then Plato's charges against rhetoric, as they pertain to common sense, translate to the elite's



“flattery” of the masses with common sense appeals that exploit the latter’s ignorance and biases (*Gorgias* 45). In this regard we do well to recall Socrates’s conclusion of rhetoric when he surmises that “[. . .] the rhetorician need not know the truth about things; he has only to discover some way of persuading the ignorant that he has more knowledge than those who know” to which the fictitious Gorgias acquiesces—“Yes, Socrates [. . .]” (40). As understood from this Platonic and sometimes contemporary perspective, common sense as rhetorical invention assists rhetoric in maintaining the power of the elite classes by exploiting the ignorant masses. Nevertheless, there is a second parallel between the ancient and contemporary criticism of rhetoric in regard to common sense. If rhetoric is generally produced and maintained by the ruling classes, then common sense itself can be constructed by their discourses.

Or worse yet, the common sense of “the nonelite” may not enter the rhetorical fray whatsoever, thus resulting in a limited representation of the common sense of the people (Condit 508). Unfortunately, such critiques of the common sense aspect of rhetoric and rhetorical invention frequently consider the specific application of rhetoric at the expense of acknowledging the resplendent potential of rhetoric. Critical rhetorical theories cannot fully abandon the common sense of rhetoric. In this regard, James Aune’s “Cultures of Discourse: Marxism and Rhetorical Theory” identifies the enthymeme as an imperative source of common sense. Aune’s perspective is significant when considering the charges of elitism and hegemony that haunt notions of common sense rhetoric, notions that hinder a clear view of the ways common sense operates as rhetorical invention in Revolutionary America. For Adams, Jefferson, and Paine, the emancipation of the American colonies from tyrannical British governance was a concept that operated enthymematically to represent an overarching need for

just action in a situation of supreme injustice. Adams, Jefferson, and Paine all argue that the need for emancipation may be deduced from the greater cause of justice through common sense. In the history of rhetoric, this moment in Revolutionary America demonstrates that common sense as rhetorical invention may be used to counter oppressive measures, to encourage freedom, and not only to serve hegemonic purposes, though an unjust elite may—as Aune points out—use common sense rhetorically to do exactly that.

To build his theory of an amalgamation of Marxism and “the rhetorical tradition,” Aune uses as a particular example regarding President Ronald Reagan’s views about family structures (158):

Nor is it enough to say, for instance, that Ronald Reagan abuses the ideograph of ‘family’ in order to reinforce existing patterns of economic and sexual oppression. One would need to go on to understand the lived experience of American audiences that predisposes them, often in ways that have nothing at all to do with ‘false consciousness,’ to accept family based arguments. (165)

The suggestion here is that in Marxist terms, Reagan’s family ideograph “reinforce[s] existing patterns of economic and sexual oppression,” which demonstrates the new critic’s assessment of the essentialism he views as foundational to Reagan’s perspective of the family structure (ibid). Aune’s rejection of essentialism spurns common sense definitions of family relations. Thus the perspective that a family is comprised of a mother, father, and children is rejected in order to include alternative familial situations to keep the universe of discourse open for divorcées, homosexuals, or live-in partners. The essentialist implication is that notions of traditional family

values maintain the oppressive social mechanisms of capitalistic society and mirror the role of traditional rhetoric through the ages.

Aune, following Terry Eagleton, identifies traditional rhetoric as “the textual training of the ruling class in the techniques of political hegemony” (qtd. in Aune 164). In addition, Aune asserts that the Marxist concern for the effects of political hegemony are exacerbated within a capitalist nation due to the symbiotic relationship between advanced industrial society and mass communication, which the Frankfurt School Marxists view as “inherently manipulative” (163). Ironically, within Aune’s scope of reasoning a Marxist reinterpretation of traditional rhetorical theory does not fully abandon common sense, but asks the rhetor to “[s]tand apart from the common sense of the culture in which the speech is occurring, since common sense of a culture is ultimately a rationalization for that culture’s power relations” (169).

However, in a perplexing passage sketching his ideal of traditional rhetoric informed by Marxist theory, Aune maintains the centrality of common sense to rhetorical invention by pointing out that “[t]raditional rhetoric, in privileging common sense as a starting point for the construction of enthymemes, may provide a needed corrective to Marxism’s tendency to view the common sense of a culture as a rationalization of that culture’s relations of domination” (171). His analysis is indicative of the fact that the resources of traditional rhetorical theory, which are firmly grounded in the needs and affairs of the community through common sense, remain vital to the maintenance of society. Moreover, Douglas Ehninger indicates that the nature of “rhetorics” is such that they “arise out of a felt need and are shaped in part by the intellectual and social environment in which the need exists” (“On Systems” 140). Therefore the plausibility of “stand[ing] apart from the common sense of the culture in which the speech is occurring”

would complicate rhetorical invention and befuddle an audience (Aune 169). To this end, it is necessary to reconsider common sense resources of rhetoric that carry with them the potential for liberty and liberation from hegemony. For example, we can observe the promise of common sense as rhetorical invention and the interconnectedness of common sense and rhetoric by reassessing the enthymeme. The enthymeme has the potential to emancipate the relationship between common sense and rhetoric from the charges of hegemony.

### **A Common Sense Defense of the Enthymeme**

The enthymeme, through its reliance upon common sense as rhetorical invention, evinces the ability of rhetoric to transcend power relations, gender, socio-economics, and other ideological, philosophical, and theological boundaries. To this end, Thomas Farrell identifies the common sense resource of the enthymeme and its potentiality for invigorating thought and reasoning within the sphere of multiple publics in “Practicing the Arts of Rhetoric: Tradition and Invention.”

In his construction of “rhetorical cognition,” which is “figurative, informal, and directional reasoning that acquires force through the implied consensus of other,” Farrell relies upon the “inference” of the enthymeme to enact such cognition (“Practicing” 87). While Farrell observes the indeterminacy of enthymematic reasoning when he points out “[. . .] the uncertain *referentiality* of enthymematic premises themselves,” he does not recognize this uncertainty as a negative feature when he writes that

[w]hile most cultures will profess to a conception of what is good or just, honorable or honest, the individuated meanings of any such conception are entirely dependent upon the lifeworld or received traditions of the membership

groups themselves. (ibid)

Still, the question that emerges is, with such individuality of peoples and communities, how can rhetoric amount to anything more than superficial points of identification or, in Plato's terminology, mere "flattery"? To this question Farrell is pragmatic in his response: "Even in the world of antiquity, there could have been no such thing as an enthymeme that encompassed every aspect of a cultural setting" ("Practicing" 87). However, this practical assessment does not dismiss the value of the enthymeme to a common sense theory of rhetoric.

Farrell explains that

[t]he primary function of enthymematic thinking is to bring a general value horizon together with an individuated audience understanding and a problem or object of contention. Like the practice that gives them form, then, enthymemes express an internal direction (to a membership group) and an external direction (to a larger interested constituency) at the same time. (ibid)

The enthymeme, reflecting the object of rhetoric itself, simultaneously functions to educate both the "membership group" as well as "a larger interested constituency" (ibid). To support Farrell's assertion, it is important to recall that Aristotle clearly posits the primary resources of the enthymeme as creating a forum of comparison, providing clarity of reasoning, and engaging the audience. Almost certainly in response to Plato's disdain for the ignoble ends of rhetoric in *Gorgias*, Aristotle devises a practical theory of rhetoric that is bound to common sense and that leads to phronesis. Central to his common sense theory of rhetoric is the cooperative nature of the enthymeme as it unites audience and speaker.

Aristotle explains the resources of the enthymeme:

(a) the refutative Enthymeme has a greater reputation than the demonstrative, because within a small space it works out two opposing arguments, *and arguments put side by side are clearer to the audience*; (b) of all syllogisms [. . .] those are most applauded of which we foresee the conclusions from the beginning, so long as they are not obvious at first sight—for part of the pleasure we feel is at our own intelligent anticipation; or those which we follow well enough to see the point of them as soon as the last work has been uttered. (*Rhetorica* BK II, 23).

Perhaps it is due to these attributes of the enthymeme that Farrell explains, “[. . .] social knowledge premises creatively affect the lived reality of culture, including its extensiveness,” adding, “*Enthymemes are, in short, intentional*” (emphasis added, 87). The intentional aspect of enthymemes immediately creates an opening for common sense as rhetorical invention, while simultaneously sustaining the innate relationship between rhetoric and common sense generally. Since the enthymeme invites a response from multifarious groups, regardless of power or interest, without prejudice, its practice cannot be rightfully condemned as hegemonic in nature. Thus the function of Aristotle’s enthymeme suits Plato’s disposition toward deductive reasoning and works to annul his classification of rhetoric as mere “flattery” (*Gorgias* 45). For enthymemes challenge the audience’s intellect and promote the presentation of dialectical arguments (ibid; *Rhetorica*).

To stick with Farrell’s pragmatism, has rhetoric been employed to serve ignoble ends? Absolutely! Yet, what ethical resources of decision-making have not been exploited by the corrupt? Aristotle reminds us in *Rhetorica* that “[. . .] if it be objected that one who uses such

power of speech [rhetoric] unjustly might do great harm, *that* is a charge which may be made in common against all good things except virtue, and above all against all the things that are most useful, as strength, health, wealth, generalship” (1355b 1-5). In this regard rhetoric is vindicated on the grounds of its usefulness to the “elite” and “nonelite” alike (Condit 508). While functioning within “the rhetorical forum,” the enthymeme, for instance, “allows the plurality of appearances to be presented, witnessed and regarded, qualified and subverted by the perspectives of others” (“Practicing” 89).<sup>lxix</sup> The non-hegemonic practicality of a “rhetorical forum” emerges from its construction of a dialectical exchange between common sense and otherness (ibid).

This exchange, as Farrell explains, is

[. . .] critical to the power and constraint of the forum [. . .] [because] two very different sorts of loci may always intersect there: first, is the cumulative weight of customary practice: convention, commonplace and *communis sensus* associated with the forum’s own history; and second, the inevitability uncertain fact of otherness—not only that a sense of constituency has been made available. *In principle, this is possible within any real public encounter setting.* (ibid)

Hence, common sense is a necessary starting point for a “rhetorical forum” (ibid). Through its tacit relationship to accepted norms and ordinary practices common sense instigates, by its very presence, dialectical exchanges between those who adhere to *communis sensus*, and the “inevitably uncertain fact of otherness” (ibid). Within this exchange the voices of dissent are as important as the voices of approval. For the purpose of rhetoric is not to merely win assent, but to come closer and closer to the truth, learn along the way, and to create a democratic forum to

inspire critical thinking that leads to reasonable action. In its intrinsic ability to assist rhetoric in these pursuits, the enthymeme inspires a dialectical *telos* of rhetoric.

The enthymematically motivated dialectical *telos* of rhetoric may fill some of the “[. . .] great many holes [. . .]” Socrates detects in the “web” of the rhetorician (*Phaedrus* 81). Although rhetoric cannot rise, in Plato’s estimation, to the “[. . .] serious pursuit of the dialectician,” the dialectic exchange brought about by the enthymeme may “[find] a congenial soul, and [. . .] sow words which are to help themselves and him who planted them [,] [. . .] making the seed everlasting and the possessors happy to the utmost extent of human happiness” (*Phaedrus* 89). In this respect, it is evident why *Rhetorica* leads with the statement that “[r]hetoric is the counterpart of dialectic” (1354a). If rhetoric is indeed the “counterpart of dialectic” then the principles of Plato’s esteemed dialectic are also implicit in the art of rhetoric (*ibid*).

### **Reviewing Aristotle’s Common Sense Philosophy of Rhetoric**

Paramount to Aristotle’s philosophy of rhetoric are three axioms: 1) that rhetoric is part of our ontology; 2) that the resources of rhetoric are available to the ordinary masses; and, finally, that 3) in accordance with human nature, the good will eventually triumph over the evil. These axioms guide a dynamic rhetorical theory of common sense that seeks to invigorate both ethical persuasion and critical thinking. If we concede Aristotle’s statements in *Rhetorica* that “[. . .] for a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and maintain them, to defend themselves and attack others,” and that “[o]rdinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit,” adding finally the Stagirite’s often-cited definition of rhetoric, “[. . .] the faculty to observe in any given case the available means of persuasion,” we are in a



firm position to further contest claims of hegemony and flattery on the grounds of the Aristotelian *telos* of rhetoric (BK I 1354a 5-10; 1355b 25).

The Aristotelian *telos* of rhetoric, which is rooted in common sense through such devices as the enthymeme, the modes of proof and the common places, proceeds from the assumption that “[. . .] things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in” (1355b35). Moreover, rhetoric as an ontological component of our existence must serve us as an alternative to violence since “it is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being able to defend himself with speech and reason, *when the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of his limbs* (emphasis added, *ibid*). Thus, it follows that as a common sense innate only in humans, “rational speech” must be employed as the premier mode of defense (*ibid*). Moreover, as moral defense rhetoric’s *telos* is not merely rooted in persuasion.

As Aristotle explains, “[. . .] its [rhetoric’s] function is not simply to succeed in persuading, but rather to discover the means of coming as near such success as the circumstances of each particular case allow” (1355b10). Rhetoric emerges from a particular time and a particular space as a highly adaptive moral discourse. Aristotle asserts the viable nature of rhetoric when he writes that “[. . .] rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects” (1355b30). To this end Aristotle explains that “[i]n rhetoric [. . .] the term ‘rhetorician’ may describe either the speaker’s knowledge of the art, or his moral purpose” (1355b15). Consistent with rhetoric’s moral character and connection to human nature, Aristotle enumerates the common sense of

rhetoric in his modes of proof. The modes of proof connect human nature, rhetoric, common sense, and rhetorical invention, though the rejection of human nature and common sense as it pertains to rhetoric has been initiated and popularized in some intellectual circles. This divorce would have likely hindered the cause of the American Revolution and surely affronted the principles of the Scottish School of Common Sense. For the modes of proof hold with them a commitment to common sense rhetorical practices.

### **The Modes of Proof: On Aristotelian Invention, Rhetoric and Common Sense**

Although Karen Burke LeFevre's *Invention as a Social Act* discusses invention as it intersects with composition theory, her analyses apply to the present investigations on two counts: 1) her positioning of Aristotle's rhetorical theory as "[. . .] emphasiz[ing] social elements" draws from his common sense philosophy of rhetoric, and 2) emerging from this treatment of Aristotle's philosophy are dialectical approaches to rhetoric (45).<sup>lxx</sup> The author approaches both areas of inquiry with the modes of proof as the seminal focus of investigation.

Briefly, among the presuppositions of ethos, pathos, and logos as they pertain to the common sense of human nature are such Aristotelian certainties that

We believe good men more fully and more readily than others [ethos] [. . .]

Our judgments when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile [and ] persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved the truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question. (*Rhetorica* 1356a 5-20)

Aristotle's observations of human nature lead him to the conclusion that we possess at least three common senses that are intrinsic to the human condition: ethics, emotions, and logic. Separate or

united, the modes of proof enact a rhetorical invention that proceeds from common sense.

LeFevre views the use of the modes of proof in the act of rhetorical invention as “[. . .] social in its orientation and purpose” (45). With this observation, the related claims that common sense as rhetorical invention is necessary and useful, and that rhetoric and common sense are necessarily related, are strengthened by their relationship to building and maintaining a non-hegemonic perspective of rhetoric.

LeFevre points out that:

[p]erhaps most pertinent to a social perspective is Aristotle’s concept of ethos.

For Aristotle, ethos refers not to the idiosyncrasies of an individual, and not to a personal and private construct such is often meant by “personality”; rather, ethos arises from the relationship between the individual and the community. [. . .] in fact, the Greek meaning for “ethos” as a “habitual gathering place” calls forth an image of people coming together. (ibid)

With the starting point for ethos, that “[w]e believe good men more fully and more readily than others,” Aristotle’s common sense as rhetorical invention, when properly applied, precludes hegemony by its consideration and adaptation of the common sense of a community.

Continuing with ethos as our example, common sense thus considered functions on two planes: 1) as an assumption of human nature which guides the course of rhetorical invention, and 2) as a practical means of discovering the common sense of the rhetorical community to which the rhetor addresses him- or herself. Among the common senses of a rhetorical community are such things as commonly held virtues. Paraphrasing Aristotle, LeFevre reminds us that rhetoric is a virtue laden discourse because “[. . .] the highest kinds of it [virtue] must be those which are

most useful to others [. . .]” (*Rhetorica* 1366b, 46). Therefore, it follows that if the modes of proof, in this instance *ethos*, are not adapted to the common sense of the community, in the forms of virtues, social norms, and practices, then this defiance of the common sense of the community will result in dissent. Since rhetorical invention is rooted in common sense in that it “[. . .] presupposes the existence of others and is oriented to take into account their knowledge, attitudes, and values,” a hegemonic *telos* when considered from this perspective becomes problematic.

Ultimately, Aristotle’s philosophy of rhetoric assumes the common sense position that humans are logical, ethical, and emotional. In his promotion of a common sense rhetoric, Aristotle was informed by a common sense philosophy that conveys his systematic approach to ontology and epistemology. In his philosophical and scientific pursuit for balance and order he developed an ethical rhetoric that proceeded from first principles regarding human nature. These first principles belong to a common sense philosophy that fly in the face of Plato’s idealism as it provides practical coordinates for living among humans in this world.

Among Aristotle’s first principles in *Rhetorica* are: 1) rhetoric is an ontological feature of human existence (BK I, Ch. 1); 2) our senses can be trusted and therefore the common senses of ethics, emotion, and logic will assist us in rhetorical invention (BK II, Ch. I); 3) rhetoric is tied to virtue and therefore must emerge from “a knowledge of what is good” (BK I, Ch.5-7); and 4) the function of rhetoric is to aid “an audience of untrained thinkers” in decision-making (BK I, Ch.2). These first principles reemerge, in varying degrees, in the conclusions of the Scottish Common Sense School of Philosophy and invigorate the rhetoric of Adams, Paine, and Jefferson.

### **The Scottish School of Common Sense**

Like Aristotle, the Scottish School of Common Sense held fast to the relationship between common sense and reality. In Aristotle's *corpus* this faith in the senses emerges in the common sensibles, the modes of proof, the common places, and the enthymeme. While members of the Scottish School of Common Sense acquired distinctive philosophies that diverged on some points both from one another and from Aristotle, a central tenant held these philosophers together, namely that a philosophical system that blatantly opposes the functions of the senses as they assist us in our daily affairs is absurd and impractical.

Again, Aristotle demonstrates his commitment to common sense when he explains in *De Anima*: "That a thing will happen if another thing which naturally happens before it has already happened; thus, *if it is clouding over, it is likely to rain*" (emphasis added, *Rhetorica* 1393a 5-10). Based upon his/her senses alone, the farmer can apply the common sense to delay planting until the storm dissipates. This Aristotelian adherence to enthymematic reasoning connects common sense to deductive reasoning and provides first principles from which induction proceeds. The founder of The Scottish School of Common Sense, Thomas Reid, exhibits his support of this line of reasoning by displaying the effects of disrupting it.

As previously discussed, when Reid asks the reader what would occur if the "sensible day-labourer" were to ask a modern philosopher "what smell in plants is" he proves the problematic effects of skeptical philosophy when these philosophers refute the relationship between common sense, reality, and everyday decision-making (Emphasis added, *Inquiry* Chapt. 2, Sect. VIII, 5-10). When "the philosopher tells him [the sensible day-labourer]," explains Reid, "that there is no smell in plants, *nor in anything, but in a mind*; and that all this hath been demonstrated by modern philosophy," the "sensible day-labourer" is "apt to think him [the skeptical philosopher] merry [. . .]"

(Sect. VIII, 10-15). However, even more indicative of the absurdity of denying the senses is that “[. . .] if he [the day labourer] finds that he [the philosopher] is serious, his [the sensible day-labourer’s] next conclusion will be that the philosopher is mad [. . .]” (Sect. VIII, 10-15). Thus if one cannot trust his or her senses to arrive at even provisional truths about the outside world, how can it be that he or she can know the difference between broccoli and poison ivy?

If we see a green plant that corroborates our previous experience with the thick stem and large clusters of broccoli we can be fairly certain that is edible. Whereas, if we see a three-leafed plant with ridged edges and red spots, it is nothing less than common sense to avoid it. From these enthymematic deductions we can make sense of the world and move toward inductive reasoning. Once more, Reid’s fellow member of the Scottish School of Common Sense, George Campbell, substantiates the reliability of common sense by explaining, “I am certain that I see, and feel, and feel and think, what I actually see, and feel, and think” (*Philosophy* 41). From the meeting places of the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy of common sense and the Scottish School of Common Sense springs forth a common sense theory of rhetoric that positions the natural relationship between the senses and reasoning as imperative to human understanding. This intersection between the senses and reasoning invigorates a common sense approach to rhetorical invention that is not restricting, but emancipating, because of its reliance upon such common sense elements as the enthymeme, the modes of proof, and first principles. In this regard, the American Revolution as revealed in the discourse of Adams, Jefferson, and Paine exhibits the emancipating character of common sense rhetorical praxis. These Founders corroborate through their common sense approach to rhetoric the reliability of certain first principles.

### **Practical Realities of “The Virtues of Common Sense”**

What are the presuppositions of a common sense theory of rhetoric? Brian Grant's "The Virtues of Common Sense" offers the most succinct response to this question that is presently available. Grant's essay suggests that at the pragmatic level common sense remains the most accessible and intuitive resource available to us. For "The Virtues of Common Sense" subtly asks the question, if not common sense, then what? To answer this question the author reveals the presuppositions of a common sense theory of philosophy that functions equally as a common sense theory of rhetoric.

To begin philosophical inquiry, or any inquiry for that matter, Grant explains that "[o]ne has to start somewhere. One has to occupy some space, to say or write something or have a relatively complete thought" (193). With this acknowledgement the author suggests common sense as a starting point. Common sense, according to Grant, proceeds from "[. . .] propositions [that] are epistemologically more fundamental than others" (ibid). An example of a privileged epistemological proposition is that "[s]tatements about the present and past are routinely used as evidence for statements about the future but not vice-versa and statements about the external world are epistemologically prior—for those of us who are not telepaths anyway, at any rate—to statements about other minds" (193-4). Grant recognizes such epistemologically prior propositions as first principles.

As an example of the utility of common sense Grant suggests that we accept or reject the first principal "Here is a pen' and 'There is a book'" by drawing from our common sense of past experiences that utilize examples of confirmation or examples of negation.<sup>lxxi</sup> The assumption that holds this theory together "[. . .] *is that there are a number of interconnected nonindubitable [sic] first principles*" (196). With this presupposition of the "interconnected nonindubitable first

principles” the present investigation comes full circle back to scepticism.<sup>lxxii</sup> In this regard, Grant explains that “[t]he rejection of scepticism is one of the primary motives, perhaps the primary motive, behind a common sense view in philosophy,” and I might add this is true also of a common sense view of rhetoric (199). For how can we ethically engage in rhetorical practice if we accept the sceptic’s view that holds “[. . .] on the basis of argument [. . .] that we don’t and can’t know the most fundamental of things, the things we all, ordinarily and unthinkingly, say we know or behave as though we know, and in certain specified areas or quite generally”? (Grant 199). From this summary of skeptical philosophy two conclusions are apparent as they pertain to the present project: 1) there is no space for rhetoric within its purview, and 2) the former is true because common sense is invalid and corrupt; and common sense is invalid and corrupt because we cannot know even the most simple of truths. Of course there are additional implications that must be considered when viewing the skeptical philosophy.

The skeptic, according to Grant, calls into question that which binds humanity: “it is characteristic of the huge overwhelming, the great thumping, majority of normal adult human being [. . .] *We are talking [. . .] about a common sense view—of what’s in front of our eyes and right under our nose, whether literally or metaphorically. We are talking about what makes our lives possible*” (emphasis added, 200). In this passage, which Reid and his Scottish School of Common Sense would stand and applaud, Grant reminds us that common sense is fundamental to our ontology and serves as an indispensable resource to our existence. For how can we deny our common sense and proceed through the daily affairs of the human condition with an ardent scepticism? To this, Grant replies that

[n]one of us is a sceptic, a full-on no-holds barred sceptic— and this because we



all know that scepticism is wrong. Undergraduates, certainly, are easy to convince of scepticism and, once in a blue moon, some grown-up professional philosopher will lose it and claim to have been converted to the sceptical truth. But we all, almost all of us know that scepticism is wrong. (209)

To accept a sceptical worldview, that is, to deny our ability to draw at least provisional and/or probable conclusions from common sense, is to disregard our first, and sometimes best, intrinsic resource for making sense of the world. Subsequently, to lose hope in a non-hegemonic rhetoric is to lose hope in the common sense of the people, and to turn a deaf ear to those “vernacular voices” that constitute what Gerard Hauser deems the “reticulate public sphere” (*Vernacular Voices* 64).

### **The Common Sense of “Vernacular Voices” and the Construction of the “Reticulate Public Sphere”<sup>lxxiii</sup>**

Hauser’s “Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres” challenges the concept of rhetorical hegemony on the basis of his “rhetorical model of public spheres” that he expressly identifies as a “reticulate public sphere” (61; 64). A “reticulate public sphere,” according to the author, acts as “[. . .] the loci for discussion of the sort that seeks *common judgment* among an interdependent aggregate of strangers who share an interest in matters relevant, in principle, to civil society” (emphasis added, 64). Thus, his philosophy of communication, drawing from Burke and Habermas, centralizes the relationship between individuals and their communities when he writes that “[w]e belong to a community insofar as we are able to participate in its conversations. We must acquire its *vernacular language* in order to share rhetorically salient meanings” (67). In this regard, Hauser explains that “[v]ernacular

exchanges both lack and transcend the force of official authority,” because they are in fact “[. . .] common expressions of those who participate in their conversational space [. . .]” (ibid). Through its endorsement of “vernacular exchanges” as they engender a “reticulate public sphere,” *Vernacular Voices* bolsters the construction of a common sense philosophy of rhetoric that remains recalcitrant in the face of the charge of hegemony.

Hauser conveys his advocacy of a common sense theory of rhetoric through his acknowledgment of the necessity of “common meanings” as they refer to “[. . .] *a communally sustained consciousness*” through the construction of a public (original emphasis, 69). In this regard, he explains that “[a] public is possible only to the degree that a communally sustained consciousness is available to its members” (ibid). However, common sense as it translates to the realm of “common meanings” does not demand or enforce a rigid consent from the multiple members of a public. Of course, as Hauser points out, “[t]he telos of a public is to mold a world that is hospitable to its members’ shared interests,” but not at the expense of silencing dissenting “vernacular voices” (ibid, 67). Here, the author is quick to explain that “[a] public’s emergence is not dependent on consensus but on the sharing of a *common* world, even when understood and lived differently by different segments of society” (69). However, drawing from Hannah Arendt, Hauser identifies the fact that while a public will assuredly contain multiple and conflicting views, the principal quality of a public is not constructed by dissent, but by common sense.

He writes that “[. . .] the involved members of society” [. . .] merge as a public *only insofar as they are able to create the shared space between them for talk that leads to what Arendt (1958, 57) calls their common sense*” (emphasis added, 75). In this regard, common sense is indispensable when making decisions, fighting oppression, and persuading an audience to take

the proper course of action. Thus considered, common sense is *the* standard of rhetorical invention when applied as the foundation of rhetorical invention or, conversely, when applied as a challenge to common sense. In both instances, common sense maintains its function as rhetorical invention.

Therefore to assert common sense, whether ontologically, epistemologically, philosophically, or rhetorically as hegemonic is to discount and/or renounce that realm of the human condition that functions implicitly as a resource to bind us together without offering an alternative. For when accepting or rejecting common sense, what remains valid is Vico's assessment "[t]hat common sense, besides being the criterion of practical judgment, *is also the guiding standard of eloquence*" (emphasis added, *Study Methods* 13). Indeed, common sense can be appropriated to hegemonic ends. However, if the promotion and application of the common sense theory of rhetoric developed by Adams, Jefferson and Paine is compelling, as I have thus suggested, then the noble ends of rhetoric such as liberty and justice also depend on common sense. The difference of course is the starting point of the rhetoric and the development of such constructive elements of rhetoric as the enthymeme. If the "Spurious Enthymeme," for instance, is employed, then ignoble ends such as hegemony may spring from the relationship between common sense and rhetoric (*Rhetorica* BKII 1401aI).

Aristotle explains the misuse of the enthymeme when he states that "one variety of this [the Spurious Enthymeme] is when—as in dialectic, without having gone through any reasoning process, we make a final statement as if it were the conclusion of such a process" (*Rhetorica* BKII 1401aI). His warning to the rhetor and the audience is to avoid hasty generalizations that lead to blind acceptance of fallacious reasoning. The means to develop an ethical line of

reasoning is to adhere to such common sense resources of rhetoric as the modes of proof with a genuine commitment to the “happiness” of the audience (*Rhetorica* BK I CH. 5-7). The enthymeme is indicative of Aristotle’s overall common sense theory of rhetoric in that “[w]hether our argument concerns public affairs or some other subject, we must know some, if not all, of the facts about the subject on which we are speak and argue” (BK II 1396a5). To this end, the enthymeme draws from the common sense of an audience:

We must not, therefore, start from any and every accepted opinion, but only from those we have defined—those accepted by our judges [the audience] or by those whose authority we recognize: and there must, moreover, be no doubt in the minds of most, if at all, of our judges that the opinions put forward are really of this sort. (ibid, 30)

Since rhetoric is adapted to the happiness of an audience a “Spurious Enthymeme” is an ignoble application of common sense that exploits the audience (ibid). Nevertheless, because the enthymeme is the rhetor’s agency for identifying and connecting to the common sense of an audience, rhetoric simply cannot function without it. In accordance with such common sense resources of rhetoric as the enthymeme and the modes of proof, the Founding Fathers overcame potentially divisive beliefs and attitudes by dedicating themselves to three fundamental first principles. These first principles draw in part from Aristotle, the Scottish School of Common Sense, and the Enlightenment era in general to engender a theory of rhetoric that proves the liberating merit of common sense.

### **Three for the People: Sovereignty to the People via Common Sense**

In his letter “To H. Niles,” from Quincy on 13 February, 1816, Adams attributes the

“[. . .] annihilation of the British dominion in America [. . .],” and Britain’s subsequent “[. . .] plan for raising a national revenue from America, by parliamentary taxation [. . .]” as the catalyst of a socio-political transformation in the personality of the colonists (703). Adams explains “[t]hat this [parliamentary taxation] produced, in 1760-1761, an awakening and a revival of American principles of feelings, with an enthusiasm which went on increasing till, in 1775, it burst out in open violence, hostility, and fury” (704). The “[. . .] awakening and [. . .] revival of American principles of feelings [. . .]” is a common sense among the colonists that was recognized and enacted by John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine as a resplendent source of rhetorical invention (ibid). Whereas Paine uses his “[...] simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense” to embrace the “[. . .] awakening and [. . .] revival of American principles of feelings” within the masses, Jefferson and Adams employed common sense as rhetorical invention to awaken and revive “American principles of feelings” within the decision-makers (Paine 29, Ibid).

Jefferson embodies “[. . .] the awakening and a revival of American principles of feelings [. . .]” in his “Resolutions of freeholders of Albemarle County, Virginia” on July 26, 1774 (“Resolutions” 22). In Albemarle where “Jefferson Argues That Parliament Has No Authority,” the Virginian explains that “[. . .] their [the colonist’s] natural and legal rights have in frequent instances been invaded by the Parliament of Great Britain [. . .]” and cites the particular example of the British trade blockade enforced upon Boston” (ibid). In response to Britain’s blockade Jefferson explains that

[. . .] all such assumptions of unlawful power are dangerous to the right of the British empire in general, and should be considered as its common cause, [. . .] we

will ever be ready to join our fellow-subjects in every part of the same executing [of] all those rightful powers which God has given us, for the re-established and guaranteeing such their constitutional rights, when, where, and by whomsoever invaded. (“Resolutions” 22-3)

Thus, even from these brief excerpts of the rhetoric of the Founding Fathers, the functional rhetorical theories—implicit and explicit—of common sense that drove the cause of Independence materialize. Although in political practices and philosophies Adams, Jefferson, and Paine diverged greatly, their common sense theory is driven by the integration of their collective and individual abilities and interests, such as oratory, treatise writing and a dedication to such first principles as the need of a balanced and ordered universe in concert with Nature.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

### **Implications**

Yet, the pressing question as it emerges from the Postmodern moment pertains to relevancy. More precisely, is a common sense theory of rhetoric relevant in the Postmodern moment? Aristotle’s *corpus* points to a resounding yes. The Aristotelian tradition of common sense rhetoric and philosophy assumes an ontological and epistemological a priori that proceeds from the common sensibles. His identification of common sensibles as irreducible in the material world positions common sense as a first principle. Thus, with the five senses as our guide, humans innately possess a common sense that endlessly functions to assist us in our human condition. In this regard the Scottish School of Common Sense are in concert with Aristotle’s centrality of common sense as a unique and fundamental component of our ontology. The rhetorical implication, therefore, from an Aristotelian and Scottish Enlightenment perspective is that common sense is as durable and flexible as the world in which we live. In this regard,

common sense philosophy inspires dynamic rhetorical engagements that exist within multiple settings and influence a variety of common senses that proceed from the organic context of rhetorical praxis.

In application, a common sense theory of rhetoric remains plausible in the Postmodern moment because as contemporary theorists such as Hauser identify, common sense remains the practical criterion of judgment because it is essential to the maintenance and development of any community. Because common sense does not assume or necessitate rigid consent of interests, it remains a starting point for ethical, emotional, and logical rhetorical engagement. Clearly, this telos is problematized in an era that is marked by diversity and *differance*. However, developing further research that addresses the intersection between such Postmodern markers as diversity and *differance* with common sense could invigorate theories of rhetoric that positions the human condition at the center of rhetorical engagement.

### **Conclusion**

When these architects of American Revolutionary rhetoric both consciously and instinctively appropriated and applied principles of Common Sense Philosophy derived from Greco-Roman and Scottish Enlightenment sources to the invention of their discourses, they enacted a common sense philosophy of rhetoric that held with it the potentiality of identifying and adapting to the needs of multiple audiences without the obligation of rigid consent or the propaganda of mere “flattery.” The outcome was reasoned decision-making. This was accomplished through an unceasing dedication to the persuasive, dialectic, informative and audience-centered tradition of rhetoric that emerged from these Founders’ mutual commitment to three seminal first principles. These commitments are paramount to the Founders’ common sense

theory of rhetoric. For at any given time new publics would spring from old publics, each moving to the ebb and flow of the common sense of rhetoric as it smacked them defiantly in the faces or reached their heads and their hearts.

As each public arose, whether Tory or Whig, separatist or those seeking reconciliation, and later Federalist or Republican, through each torrent of public opinion what contributed to their common sense rhetorical theory was 1) the belief that rhetoric can alter America's path, and 2) that the common sense resources of rhetoric—the enthymeme, ethos, pathos, and logos—serve as the foundation of rhetorical invention. These wellsprings of rhetorical invention emerged from the Founders' uncompromising devotion to three seminal first principles. Thus a commitment to common sense, even in the face of difference, secures a resilient rhetorical theory and practice. This theory also holds the potential to counter the ignoble uses of common sense enacted by hegemonic rhetorical practices. In the case of the Founding Fathers, this devotion bequeathed the rhetoric of Adams, Jefferson and Paine with a rhetorical practice and theory that committed them to the common sense of the Revolutionary Americans and helped achieve and maintain their independence.



## Notes

<sup>i</sup> For an account of Adams's experience during the First Continental Congress, see especially Ferling's *A Leap in the Dark*: 112-22.

<sup>ii</sup> Adams also published treatises, but low literacy rates prevented the masses from accessing these discourses.

<sup>iii</sup> For an account of the Colonial reception of *Common Sense* see Ellis's *American Sphinx*: 58.

<sup>iv</sup> On Adams's response to Paine's economics see especially Ferling's *A Leap in the Dark*: 194-5. Ferling here explains that "*Thoughts on Government* was intended by John Adams to be a conservative alternative to Paine's rapturous illusions" (194).

<sup>v</sup> The *cause of Independence* encompasses the pre-Revolutionary, Revolutionary, and post Revolutionary periods from 1764-1788. The earlier date signifies the beginning of thoughts on Revolution due to the Sugar Act, while the latter date marks the ratification of the Constitution.

<sup>vi</sup> These authors and their works utilize a rhetorical approach to understand the history of ideas. That is, they use texts and the resources of rhetoric, argumentation, historicity, critical thinking, and persuasion to represent, understand and account for philosophy, ideology, and ideas in general. These investigations lead beyond rhetoric, because of the innate relationship between rhetoric, philosophy, poetics, and psychology.

<sup>vii</sup> Associationist psychology emerged in England in the 18th century as a precursor to behaviorist psychology.

<sup>viii</sup> Due to the nature of the project and the author's philosophy of communication, the popular terms "critic" and "criticism" are a misrepresentation of the approach to textual interpretation. The constructive terms "interpreter" and "interpret," unless working from within a theoretical standpoint that employs the previous grammar, best exemplify the aims of the project.

<sup>ix</sup> The resources of rhetoric include, but are not limited to, the three modes of proof, the canon of rhetoric, enthymeme, example, argument, audience-centered and adapted messages, and persuasion.

<sup>x</sup> See also: Black, Edwin. "Gettysburg and Silence." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 21-36, and Henry, David. "Forum: Text, Theory, and the Rhetorical Critic." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 219-222.

<sup>xi</sup> Authorial intent involves the interpretive act of considering an author's motives and meaning.

<sup>xii</sup> Although the chronology is erroneous, I begin with *De Anima* because it is Aristotle's most perfected treatment of the physiological aspect of common sense.

<sup>xiii</sup> As a systematic philosopher Aristotle is compelled to identify the precise location of common sense and imagination. While his identification is provocative, and undoubtedly erroneous, the real issue is the fact that he and other contributors to the rhetoric and philosophy of common sense assume an intrinsic relationship between common sense and human existence.

<sup>xiv</sup> Aristotle uses "memory and remembering" as synonymous terms; see *On Memory* 451a 15-20. The philosopher also tends to employ recollection and reminiscence synonymously; see *On Memory* 451a 20-25). However, he does note that "remembering does not necessarily imply recollecting, recollecting always implies remembering [. . .]" (451b5).

<sup>xv</sup> Needless to say this assumption presupposes no mental impairments that would affect one's common sense.

<sup>xvi</sup> This information can be recalled without direct sensory experience through the imagination, or memory.

<sup>xvii</sup> One may argue that it then requires each of the five senses to maintain a fully developed common sense. However, this is not so. If a person does not possess each of the five senses, the remaining sense or senses are heightened and therefore still meet and converse to imbue the agent with common sense.

<sup>xviii</sup> Thompson poses a related question, "[b]ut from where do axioms and first principles come?" (12).

<sup>xix</sup> See Walton's "Enthymemes, Common Knowledge, and Plausible Inference," for a detailed discussion of the controversy of the enthymeme.

<sup>xx</sup> This, margin of error, due to misinterpretation or simplification suggests a critique of common sense.

<sup>xxi</sup> See especially: Flemming, Edwin G. "A Comparison of Cicero and Aristotle on Style." *QJS* 4 (1918): 243-9, Clark, Donald Lemen. "Imitation: Theory in Practice in Roman Rhetoric." *QJS* 37 (1951): 11-23, and May, James M. *Trials of Character: The Eloquence of Ciceronian Ethos*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina P.

<sup>xxii</sup> This is not to infer that Aristotle's rhetorical theory, like that of the Sophists, is relativistic. However, Aristotle's theory is practical because it enumerates the problems between rhetoric and irrefutable truths. In response to this issue *Rhetorica* offers advice on how to overcome these problems. Therefore, Aristotle's standpoint is not relativistic in that there are many equal truths, but sophisticated in its orientation because it evidences the importance between shared beliefs and persuasion.

<sup>xxiii</sup> According to Brodie, "Once when Hamilton visited Jefferson's quarters and saw three portraits on the wall, he asked their identity. 'They are my trinity of the greatest men the world

has ever produced,' Jefferson replied, 'Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, and John Locke'" (*Thomas Jefferson* 267).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Although late in life Adams reveals to Jefferson in a letter from Quincy dating February 3, 1812 "Oh that I had devoted to Newton and his Fellows that time I fear has been wasted on Plato and Aristotle, Bacon [. . .] with twenty others upon Subjects which Mankind is determined never to Understand, and those who do Understand them are resolved never to practice, or countenance," based upon the context of the letter his meaning seems to be ironical versus literal.

<sup>xxv</sup> I use the term "Popular" language to establish the difference between language which emerges from the "Popular Notions of things," and language that emerges from empiricism, or in modern day parlance scientific discourse (*Advancement, Book Two* 222).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Bacon's problem with European language is clarified by his example of the Chinese language. He flaunts "the use of China and the Kingdoms of the high Levant to write in Characters Real, which express neither letters nor words in gross, but Things or Notions," as a more accurate portrayal of reality than the European languages.

<sup>xxvii</sup> It should be noted that although it has no practical implications upon the present study, Bacon's view of invention is unique. He claims that "[t]he invention of speech or argument is not properly an invention," but rather a "Remembrance or Suggestion, with an application" (222-3).

<sup>xxviii</sup> However, Bacon is quick to recover his critique of Aristotle's philosophy in *The Advancement of Learning, Book Two* when he writes: "I do not find the wisdom and diligence of Aristotle well pursued [. . .]" (240).

<sup>xxx</sup> While I am stressing the unique perspectives of the two philosophers, the philosophies of Aristotle and Descartes also coalesce on a great number of issues. See, for instance, Farrell, Thomas B. "Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory." *QJS* 62 (1976): 2-4, on the issue of knowledge.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Due to the historicity of the texts, skepticism is referred to as scepticism.

<sup>xxxii</sup> George Campbell, Thomas Reid, and John Gregory were members of a Scottish intellectual and social club officially known as the first Philosophical Society of Aberdeen. Members of the Philosophical Society, lightheartedly referred to as the "Wise Club," are collectively known as the Common Sense School of Philosophy.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Walter Lippmann used a similar phrase in *Public Opinion*. However, his "world outside and the pictures in our heads," is intended to promote the contemplation of the stereo-typing function of the media.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Of course the subtext of Hume's argument questions the act of writing a skeptical philosophy if it only serves to prove the inexistence of truth, or knowledge. For if there is no truth than why concern oneself with Hume's ideas?

<sup>xxxv</sup> Advocators of this position include James L. Golden, Goodwin F. Berquist, and William E. Coleman

in *The Rhetoric of Western Thought*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1983.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Demonstration is a mode of scientific evidence.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Hence, “mathematical axioms” do not qualify as common sense (Campbell 98).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Clearly the physiological component and “self-evident” aspect of common sense are not mutually exclusive within Campbell’s theory of common sense. The physiological component of common sense necessarily leads to the discovery of “self-evident truths” (39).

<sup>xxxix</sup> It should be noted that Bevilacqua and Bormann provide different figures for the publishing date of the translation. Bevilacqua claims *Traite des Premieres Verites* was translated into English in 1717. However, Bormann claims Buffier’s text was translated in 1780.

<sup>xl</sup> Bevilacqua corroborates this inclination when he explains that “Regarding the question of origin, the appropriate conclusion appears to be that the Scottish philosophy of common sense was a native development, which arose as a logical conclusion to Hutcheson’s philosophy and answer to Hume’s skepticism; that Buffier’s common sense was a parallel but independent philosophy inspired by Descartes, which happily corroborated the Scottish version, but had little direct effect on it” (410).

<sup>xli</sup> A notable exception is found in David Bezayiff’s *Legal Oratory of John Adams: An Early Instrument of Protest*, “ in the Winter 1976 edition of *QJS*. However, this article concentrates on Adams’ “arguments advanced in courtroom speeches,” and therefore does not make detailed inquiries of his writings or speeches outside of the courtroom.

<sup>xlii</sup> For Jefferson’s role during the Continental Congress, see especially *Founding Brothers*, p. 212.

To describe Jefferson’s response to Congress’ editing of the *Declaration*, Langguth writes that “Each cut in his prose was a mutilation to Jefferson” (361).

<sup>xliii</sup> Most notably, see Becker, Carl. *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas*. New York: Vintage Books, 1942.

<sup>xliv</sup> Historically presidential inaugurals have been known both as an address, as well as, a speech.

<sup>xliv</sup> For more on the life and character of John Adams see: Adams, John. *Diary and Autobiography*, L.H. Butterfield, ed. 4 vols. Cambridge, Mass., 1961.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Modern historians have attributed Jefferson’s isolation to chronic and depilating migraine headaches.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Modern historians have attributed Jefferson’s lack of public oratory to a weak, high-pitched voice.

<sup>xlvi</sup> In Jefferson’s defense, this was the period immediately preceding his wife’s death; she remained ill at home.

<sup>xlix</sup> It was Benjamin Rush who gave the pamphlet its title.

<sup>l</sup> We also witness here a connection to Jefferson’s first principle of a balanced body politic that may concede to the majority, but not without having heard the minority. This is endemic of a democratic consciousness.

<sup>li</sup> This is not to exclude the formation and emergence of a New World woman; however, since

the social system prohibited women from voting, or holding political office, it is more pertinent here to discuss the emergence of the New World man.

<sup>lii</sup> Natural law and natural rights are related but not synonymous. Natural rights emerge from natural law.

<sup>liii</sup> To this accusation Jefferson explains in his August 30, 1823 letter “I Turned to Neither Book Nor Pamphlet,” that “Otis’ pamphlet I never saw and whether I had gathered my ideas from reading or reflection I do not know.” (*The Spirit of Seventy-Six* 315.)

<sup>liv</sup> Clearly this serves also as an example of Adams’s commitment to the first principle that although majority rule is at the heart of democracy, it cannot be at the expense of silencing and oppressing the minority.

<sup>lv</sup> Again, this is evidence of his reliance upon the first principle that the past presents lessons, evidence, and examples for the contingent decisions facing our present and future, but not vice versa.

<sup>lvi</sup> Here again is a commitment to the first principle that an ordered world mimics the realm of Nature, and therefore serves as a model for human existence though its *telos* of balance and harmony (Grant 193-4, Jefferson 493, Commager 2). Thus, balance and order is the key to Nature.

<sup>lvii</sup> Brodie concludes her assessment of Jefferson’s grievances with an additional inference that does not contribute to a scholarly analysis of the philosopher-statesman’s rhetoric, that his grievances “may well suggest something of the nature of Jefferson’s deeply felt grievances against his mother, and perhaps even long buried and distorted resentments against his dead father” (101). To this precariously inferential claim no proof can be offered to substantiate or refute it, because Jefferson burned all of his personal letters to his parents.

<sup>lviii</sup> See also Browdie, Fawn M. (1974) 62-3.

<sup>lix</sup> See Browdie, Fawn M. (1974) 96-8, Bailyn, Bernard (1967) 27-30, Ellis, Joseph J. (1998) 65-9, Languth, A.J. (1988) 354-5.

<sup>lx</sup> To this end, Browdie remarks that “[b]y 1773 John Locke’s natural rights theories had become as commonplace for discussions as the Epistles of St. Paul [. . .]” (98).

<sup>lxi</sup> Jefferson gave an “advance copy of his address to the publisher of the *National Intelligencer*” before giving the speech, so “the new President’s auditors could quickly become readers if they wanted to” (Malone 17).

<sup>lxii</sup> While Jefferson’s term as president obviously takes place in post-Revolutionary America, his term marks the second American revolution deemed by Republicans as “the revolution of 1800” in which “hostility to any exercise of power by the federal government in domestic affairs” was employed as a Jeffersonian return to the “original intentions of the American Revolution” (Ellis 210).

<sup>lxiii</sup> On the point of Jefferson’s religious posture, Ellis points out in *American Sphinx* that since the president “admired the moral values embodied in the life of Jesus but preferred to separate ‘what is really his from the rubbish in which it was buried,’” the Virginian therefore would have described himself as a deist who admired the ethical teachings of Jesus as a man rather than as the Son of God. (In modern day parlance, he was a secular humanist)” 309-10.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Unfortunately Stout's view of Revolutionary rhetoric cannot be reconciled with the current project when the author writes, "[a]lthough the informed writings of the Founding Fathers provide the official revolutionary vocabulary, they do not render in realistic narrative form the ideological arousal of the common people, who, by the very rhetoric of those documents, were excluded from the message" (520).

<sup>lxv</sup> The party wars between the Federalists and Republicans were fueled by such occurrences as Jefferson's "private endorsement of [. . .] Paine's *Rights of Man*, and his implicit criticism of John Adams, accidentally [. . .] being printed in the American edition of that work [. . .]" (*TJ as Political Leader* 12). However, this war was fought on both sides and reached so deep into the political mindset of the late 1790's that, as Jefferson explained in a letter, "[m]en who have been intimate all their lives cross the streets to avoid meeting, and turn their heads another way, lest they should be obliged to touch their hats" (to Edward Rutledge, qtd. in *TJ as Political Leader* 25). See also "The Boisterous Sea of Liberty" where Jefferson portrays Washington and Adams as corrupt monarchs: "It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies [corrupt Monarchical activities], *men who were Samsons in the field* [undoubtedly Washington] & Solomons in the council [Adams], but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England" (original italics, Peterson 1037).

<sup>lxvi</sup> Here Jefferson references "[. . .] that because of a quirk in the electoral system that prevented electors from distinguishing between votes for the president and vice president, Jefferson and Burr had received the identical number of electoral votes. This threw the election into the House of Representatives, where the Federalists were able to block the majority necessary for Jefferson's selection for six days and thirty-six ballots" (*Sphinx* 207).

<sup>lxvii</sup> The subheadings "Religious Context," "Civic Commemoration," and "Political Debate" are appropriated from Browne.

<sup>lxviii</sup> In this we have an example of the common sense implicit in Aristotle's enthymeme.

<sup>lxix</sup> Here Farrell is drawing from the work of Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*.

<sup>lxx</sup> LeFevre argues that the dominant application of invention in "current composition theory" emerges from a Platonic orientation which treats invention as "[. . .] the act of an atomistic individual who recollects or uncovers ideas from within, all the while remaining apart from a material and social world" (8). In this assumption her work does not aid the current project, which considers invention purely from a rhetorical perspective that does not proceed from a Platonic orientation of invention. However, her work is important here because her dialectical consideration of invention has at its foundation a classically derived common sense approach. This present project is not concerned about the question of invention's capacity to reflect or create.

<sup>lxxi</sup> This represent Grant's inquiry as it pertains to when "the conclusion is expressed by saying that a precursor to a common sense view with no content is correct" (196). I disregard the context because he soon abandons it himself when he writes that "[. . .] the idea that we might

argue with any degree of plausibility for a common sense view whose content is left entirely in the air is surely ludicrous [. . .]” (198).

<sup>lxxii</sup> These common sense claims against scepticism could also be applied to the de-centered subjectivity of postmodernism, which will occur in a later project.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Ibid

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Be it God encompassing Nature, Nature encompassing God, human nature, and/or natural rights.

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