THE RHETORICAL TURN TO OTHERNESS: OTHERWISE THAN HUMANISM

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ABSTRACT: While offering a public welcome of communicative participation, a communicative dark side of the moderate Enlightenment project emerged. Moderate Enlightenment's corollary companion to wresting power from a limited few is the staggering sense of confidence in the universal ground of assurance that is "bad faith"1 —we fib to ourselves that we can stand above history and affect the future. Absolute conviction of universal access to truth propels through methodological confidence, undergirding the era of "the rational" pursuit of truth, transporting the individual into an ethereal delusion—that one can stand above the historical moment of engagement and cast judgment. This essay calls into question the common assumption that communication begins with the individual. We offer a critique of this assumption in accordance with radical enlightenment scholarship, calling forth a return to Otherness that renders the construct of individual secondary to that which is met.

KEYWORDS: Radical and Moderate Enlightenment; Individualism; Otherness; Rhetorical Turn

This essay underscores a familiar critique—the conventional understanding of the Enlightenment is a failed project with devastating everyday communicative consequences. This essay questions a conventional understanding of the Enlightenment represented in caricature form by what Alexis de Tocqueville called individual. In the language of those examining two competing understandings of the Enlightenment, moderate and radical, this essay presupposes that the problem rests within the moderate rendition of the Enlightenment. This philosophical and practical differentiation is central to numerous contemporary philosophical critics and proponents of the life-giving side of the Enlightenment who include Fernand Braudel and Margaret Jacob2. Henceforth, when this essay refers to the Enlightenment and its devastating influence on human communication, the hegemony of what is now called the "moderate" Enlightenment guides the essay.

It is no accident that the Scottish Enlightenment gave birth to Adam Smith's

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1. J.P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, Washington Square Press, 1956, p. 83.
2. A. Gare, Reviving the radical Enlightenment: Process philosophy and the struggle for democracy. *Keynote address, Sixth International Whitehead Conference,* Salzburg, 2006, p. 4-5.

treatise on capitalism and Adam Ferguson's dissertation on civil society. Confidence in individual and collective advancement was at the heart of both the moderate and radical Enlightenment. This change in philosophy embraced the individual and the inevitability of progress, spurring early and long-standing positive consequences, freeing persons from the imposed authority of the Church and the communicative dictates of an aristocratic few. Arran Gare[3] describes the radical enlightenment as having ideas of civic humanism that were promoted by radical thinkers in the 18th century who began to synthesize the ideas of nature enthusiasts. Gare argues that radical enlightenment thinkers continued with the liberating tradition of Renaissance thought and ultimately stood in opposition to atomistic and utilitarian ways of thinking by moderate Enlightenment advocates. Gare makes a distinction between the moderate and radical Enlightenment in that the moderate Enlightenment invited in a new social order that was a new oligarchy of wealth (p. 10). Moderate Enlightenment thinkers also defined freedom in terms of one's capacity to control life by increasing pleasure and reducing pain[4]. Gare argues that radical Enlightenment thinkers went underground until the end of the eighteenth century, therefore, its development was less coherent than what has become the idea of a solitary mainstream Enlightenment.

There is opposition between moderate and radical Enlightenment perspectives, yet public opposition is still not sharply defined. According to Gare, the most important proponent of Radical Enlightenment is Johann Gottfried Herder, who embraced the tradition of civic humanists and opposed a mechanistic view of nature[5]. Herder forged an "ethics of self-expression or self-realization, calling on nations and individuals to express the potentialities unique to them" [6]. Herder embodied radical Enlightenment as he did acknowledge diversity of cultures and multiplicity of voices. This multiplicity of voices and diversity of cultures is key to Herder's principle of radical difference. Herder's (2001/2) principle of radical difference was in response to the moderate Enlightenment thinkers who posited that humankind always remained the same across peoples, cultures, and historical moments. Through this principle of radical difference Herder recognized that people, cultures, and historical moments are always changing.[7] These differences between moderate and radical Enlightenment thinking could be subtle at times and jarring at times. This essay offers a critique of the Enlightenments and finds a larger deception in moderate Enlightenment thought, while finding connections between radical Enlightenment thought and Postmodern thought. In essence, the difference between the moderate Enlightenment and the radical Enlightenment pivots on a small number of differing metaphors: individualism and freedom; individual possession and common concern; mechanism and organicism; and, finally, scientism and multiplicity of competing story-laden traditions. In the words of Gadamer, the radical

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3. A. Gare, 2006.
4. A. Gare, 2006, p. 10.
5. A. Gare, 2006, p. 11.
6. A. Gare, 2006, p. 11.
7. J. G., von Herder, 2001/2, p. 246-256.

Enlightenment points to truth, and the modern Enlightenment points to control of the human environment based upon the word "method."

INTRODUCTION

This essay both celebrates the welcome of individual ideas and contends with the communicative consequence of a volatile mixture—the individual and a universal assurance of rationality, which breeds a phenomenological lie with devastating empirical consequences for human communication: individualism. A consequence of moderate Enlightenment was the universal assurance of a naturally given truth offered the platform from which the individual and individuality that appropriately contended with tradition morphed into a dismissive stance, rejecting the voices and ideas prior to one's own birth, permitting the illusion of standing above history and traditions. While an Enlightenment was a much needed corrective to a time period governed by hegemonic influences, the eventual lie that emerged grounded in universal assurance of moderate Enlightenment not only gave false hope but also insulated human beings from Otherness. This essay first offers a critique of individualism. Second, the essay unmasks the Enlightenment's dark side, undue methodological confidence, which has long-term destructive communicative consequences. Third, this essay calls for a rhetorical turn toward Otherness and leads to a conclusion that says farewell to modernity, welcoming a notion of postmodernity that makes a rhetorical turn unable to be dismissive of Otherness, whether another culture, tradition, or narrative structure.

The empowerment of the individual through rationality steeped in universal assurance initiated the beginning of a communicative crisis in the West. The communicative problem was not and is not now the individual, but a philosophical system of universal assurance through rationality that functions as the tool for individualism unresponsive to the multiplicity of traditions within which the human finds identity. The rhetorical turn suggested by this essay celebrates individuality while rejecting individualism as phenomenologically inaccurate.

INDIVIDUALISM

New ideas can transform into something contrary when taken to excess or deficiency. Such was the important insight of Aristotle[8] in defining the virtues with awareness that "this" ceases to be "this" and becomes "that" when the focus of attention shifts. For this moment, philosophically and pragmatically, the articulation of the dangers of excess and deficiency is helpful for understanding the communicative consequences of the individualistic dark side of the Enlightenment.

From a postmodern questioning of unfettered confidence in human agency, progress, and efficiency tied to universal access to truth, the moderate Enlightenment

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8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1998, p. 44.

was a moral *cul de sac*. The tyranny of the Church moved to the tyranny of a disengaged, self-absorbed communicator. The successes of the Enlightenment are apparent, but the price paid for such confidence in the individual was and is acute. Such concern about the excessive consequences of Enlightenment confidences began with the work of de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*; the second volume warned about the dangerous potential for a new form of tyranny—the tyranny of individualism. Arguably, the most important contribution of postmodernity was the critique of agency and authorial intent in its rejection of the illusion of control. We live in a world as dialogic companions with creation, not the controllers of life. The rejection of a moderate Enlightenment view of agency is a return to uncertainty tied to the ground of tradition, but in this case competing traditions. This essay suggests that this philosophical contribution was essential to move back to the question of a universal, but differently: back toward attentiveness to a phenomenological reality that rejects moderate Enlightenment certainty. We simply discovered the danger of misplaced confidence in progress and in an agency that seeks to further itself, intentionally inattentive to its surroundings.

The notion of individualism emerges when narrative awareness of traditions that shape consciousness is lost, leaving them forgotten or taken for granted. In volume two of *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville introduces this term that now dominates the landscape of the West.

Individualism is a recent expression arising from a new idea. Our fathers knew only selfishness.

Selfishness is a passionate and exaggerated love of self that brings man to relate everything to himself alone and to prefer himself to everything to himself alone and to prefer himself to everything.

Individualism is a reflective and peaceable sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself . . . individualism proceeds from an erroneous judgment rather than a depraved sentiment. It has its source in the defects of the mind as much as in the vices of the heart.[9]

Individualism is not the same as a selfishness that seeks to horde for one's own purposes. Instead, its error lies in its attempt to live in a world where one can stand above the fray. The impulse to critique and judge from outside or above defines the detachment of individualism. Individualism comes with philosophical sanction, but eventually results in selfishness and lack of concern for the Other.

Charles Taylor suggests that this view of the self defines an identity that is disengaged, located outside of nature and society rather than being defined in terms of things located outside the self, that treats things external to the self with rational instrumentality to serve the welfare of self and others, which has led to "an atomistic "construal of society" consisting of individual purposes.[10] In the communication field, the terms "self-

9. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York, Anchor, 1969, p. 482-483.
10. C. Taylor, *Philosophical arguments*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Univ. Press, 1995, p. 7.

actualization," "self-growth," "self-determination," and "self-expression" all point to the pragmatic and philosophical linkage between progress and the self. This disengaged self seeks accumulation of experience rather than awareness of the situatedness of communication with others.

Hannah Arendt connected individualism to tyranny dependent upon the "social"[11] that formed the unity of the self-appointed individual. Her story and de Tocqueville's guide Taylor's philosophical/pragmatic reading of the inner evolution of the story of the self within the West, directing attention to a tyranny that continues to gather momentum long after de Tocqueville's warning. Concern about individualism is not new; however, we must recognize that unreflective praise of the individual invites a communicative "banality of evil"[12] that provides a different mask for tyranny without changing its destructive power. Arendt and Taylor foreground a phenomenological challenge to individualism—not out of ethical consideration, but out of a phenomenological fact: individualism is a human deformity, an existential lie.

Years later it is Arendt, as one of the premier critics of the Enlightenment, who challenges this new hegemonic form. She makes two major conceptual moves with the term, differentiating it from the constructive need for individuality and uniting it with the foundation of totalitarianism.[13] This same concern propels the work of Charles Taylor, who articulates concern over fragmentation that he describes as people "less and less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out."[14] Fragmentation is a weakened connection to and a lack of concern for Otherness. As with most acts of misplaced confidence, unforeseen consequences emerge. Undue confidence in an independent agent offers a temporary sense of protection, until existence breaks in by "saying" that control is not solely within the power of the self, disrupting what we thought forever true, already "said." Confidence in the forever "said" of detached control confines us within a moral cul de sac and is the mirage unmasked by postmodern scholarship.

A MORAL CUL DE SAC

There is often truth in clichés. For instance, the road to hell paved by good intentions represents the path of individualism. Empowering the individual with universal assurance of rationality yielded an unforeseen communicative crisis as the communicative agent accepted the philosophical and pragmatic claim of universal assurance of the pursuit of truth through rationality. This "new, " "enlightened" commonplace assumption provided a foundation for three major communicative consequences: a universal mandate to stand above tradition, an increasing commitment to effectiveness and efficiency rebelling against the restraint of tradition, and the confidence of a communicative agent seeking autonomous implementation of the above with ongoing contempt for the power

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11. H. Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 38.

12. H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report of the banality of evil*, New York, Penguin, 1977, p. 252.

13. H. Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951.

14. C. Taylor, *Philosophical arguments*, Cambridge MA, Harvard Univ. Press, 1995, p. 282.

of tradition that appeared in modernity as inept as a "Fiddler on the Roof." The moral cul de sac was the assumption that the communicative agent could and should disavow the guiding insight of one's own or another's tradition.

Confidence in the universal availability of reason undermined the power of tradition. Yet, at first, communicative consequences were not catastrophic, but rather a dialectical invitation to creativity. Individuality fueled the creativity of the Renaissance, a time of contention among traditions. Traditions require engagement; such is the communicative difference between a live and a dead tradition, of which Gadamer so often spoke. The renaissance is better understood as a moment of dialogic contention with tradition, for the power of tradition was not yet cast asunder.

The turn to modernity moves dialogic contention to self-possessed dismissal of tradition. The movement to individualism defines modernity, wrenching power from tradition, attempting to remove traditions from the ground of human decision-making, privileging a new mantra of individual progress supported by the universal assurance of rationality over a "community of memory."[15] The move from dialogic contention with tradition to its dismissal is akin to William James's discussion of disconfirmation, being ignored or "absolutely unnoticed"[16] as the most fiendish way of being treated by another. Individualism embodied a fiendish disregard for a community of memory that initiated detachment of the individual self from tradition. A community of memory is a "saying"[17] not the "said" of a dead tradition. A community of memory lives with infinity of possibility, unlike the totality that assumes that one can possess, hold, and understand a given moment in time alone. Individualism lives within the realm of totality and control, not within the infinity of embeddedness and response.

The moral cul de sac of disdain toward tradition found kindred soil with the roots of individualism. The communicator was given false assurance that life begins only in the now, forgetting the co-present interplay of the before, the after, and the now as each continues to reshape the other. Speaking supplanted listening as the ground for conversation; no longer was one attentive to ongoing conversation prior to persons meeting in conversation. Listening is a direct requirement for a tradition to prosper.

Confidence in universal rationality wrested away the restraints of tradition. The pragmatic by-product of this confidence was a sense of assurance that justified imposition of one's own views. The communicative consequence of this confidence was justification through imposition, lessening restraint prior to speaking. Confidence in the universal was accepted as a given, equivalent to a truth-seeking sense of gravity—it just was/is. Confidence in the *a priori* propelled the communicative agent from engagement with the Otherness of tradition to advocacy of one's own ideas. The communicative consequence of ignoring engagement with a community of memory was the rejection of the phenomenological reality of Otherness, the embeddedness of human life. The

15. R. Bellah, et.al, *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*, Berkeley, CA, Univ. of California Press, 1996, p. 104.

16. W. James, *The principles of psychology*, Chicago, William Benton, 1952, p. 189.

17. E. Levinas, *Alterity and transcendence*, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1999, p. 93.

universal foundation of the moderate Enlightenment began the eclipse of Otherness beyond the empirical and the immediate, masking situatedness, embeddedness, and tradition as core phenomenological tenets of communicative life responsive to Otherness. This moral cul de sac gave rise to a communicator with undue confidence in a rationality unresponsive to the uniqueness of human traditions dependent upon ongoing communicative practices.

MISPLACED CONFIDENCE

Moderate and radical Enlightenments deconstructed power and authority resting with the few, unmasking the hegemony of privilege based upon fortune of birth rather than potential for contribution, opening the legitimacy of knowledge to many—these Enlightenment rhetorics of freedom sought to expand human possibilities, yet the moderate Enlightenment fell short of this potential. Rhetorical empowerment of the individual against the tyranny of collective and aristocratic proclamation was more than a "small step for mankind"; it unleashed a human technology arguably more important than the 20th century walk on the moon. This rhetorical transformation placed within the hands of the person was without precedent, bringing forth a rhetorical technology dependent upon human aspiration, not upon the dictates of the privileged.

Each philosophical/pragmatic paradigmatic breakthrough carries both hope and the seeds of its own destruction. Intemperate embracing of unending hope constructs ideological rigidity that leads, ironically, to its own destruction. The rhetorical success of the moderate Enlightenment carried within itself the seeds of its own corruption as it embraced the notion of universal truth. Moderate Enlightenment fostered ideological blindness, assuming the universal truth, value, and goodness of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. This trinity of moderate Enlightenment "goods" initially freed human potential, but when this set of three coordinates was adhered to without reservation, without question, and without a natural dialectical counter offered by tradition or embedded life, it fostered, instead, a new form of tyranny: individualism.

Phenomenologically, the moderate Enlightenment belief in the universal forged a communicator disembedded from the ground of tradition as the modern prototype of communicative competence. We uplifted the disembedded communicative agent—disembedded from the ground upon which human beings find "…the background of … belief…"[18] The disembedded communicator became the model of the competent communicator.

It is the modern view of communicative competency that philosophers such as Levinas rejected.[19] The detached, self-confident communicator imposing ideas upon another represents a rhetoric that Levinas abhorred. He rejected rhetoric unresponsive to the "saying" or "signs" that come before us and are all around us. He rejected the effort

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18. C. Taylor, *Philosophical arguments*, Cambridge MA, Harvard Univ. Press, 1995, p. 25.

19. R. C. Arnett, The responsive 'I': Levinas's derivative argument. *Argumentation & Advocacy* 40: 2003: 315-338.

to turn communication into the "said"; what I "said" and what you "said." The notion of "saying" speaks and listens simultaneously, but the notion of "said" imposes and tells. Levinas's work beckons forth a rhetorical turn to Otherness, away from a humanistic commitment to agency and control.

A form of rhetorical turn to Otherness has long-standing attention in scholarly circles. Perhaps the most popular rendition of this call is Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. The central theme of individualism as problematic finds agreement among numerous scholars, from MacInytre (philosophy), to Hauerwas (theology), to Bellah (sociology), to Barnett Pearce (communication/rhetoric), each calling forth a concern outlined at length by Arendt and Taylor—the radical Enlightenment project assumes narrative contention and multiplicity of constructed stories akin to what is now termed "postmodernity."

The contribution of postmodern scholars was the unmasking of the lie of individual autonomy and support the radical Enlightenment perspective. The "death of the subject" is not the death of the agent, but of an autonomous Enlightenment agent, one who imagines oneself to stand above history—or, put differently, to walk on water. The call for a rhetorical turn to Otherness welcomes individuality responsive to difference while eschewing individualism. This call for a rhetorical turn welcomes not individualism, but individuality willing to bear the burden of engaging Otherness fraught with fragility and error, a radical Enlightenment approach. This rhetorical move to Otherness assumes a natural burden of recognition of rhetorical interruptions, not control driven by self-occupied dreams of ever more progress; this rhetorical turn eclipses the hegemonic power of the Enlightenment that calls us to be "an army of one."

With the turn to individualism, confidence shifts from public exchange of multiple ideas to individualistic exhortation of a given position. With the universal in place, the fulcrum on which communicative meaning rests shifts from tradition to the notion of the self. This misplaced confidence in the ability of the human to stand above traditions and seek advancement dependent only upon one's own resources leads to the obvious misstep of individualism, but more subtly to a place of conformity that Arendt called the "social"[20] a place where individualism overtakes the public realm only to invite an irony—conformity of agreement on the importance of individualism that blurs public and private, leading both philosophically and pragmatically to an inevitable conformity in the West. Rhetorically, the key is to unmask the parts of the Enlightenment that ran amok with undue confidence in the university of rationality and its companion, individualism.

UNMASKING THE ENLIGHTENMENT DARK SIDE

Two scholars, Hannah Arendt and Charles Taylor, of differing historical moments, warn us of the dark side of the Enlightenment project resulting from universal support for rationality. Arendt's (1998) critique of the "social" and Taylor's (1995) discussion of the

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20. H. Arendt, *The human condition*, p. 38.

sources of the self display a form of *equifinality*[21] differing paths to a similar destination—conformity, agreement to embrace an individualistic illusion. Differently, but equally convincingly, Arendt and Taylor stress that narrative footholds or grounds upon which deliberation can and should occur counter the illusion of individualistic wisdom that masks the consensus of the "social," the byproduct of the moderate Enlightenment.

Arendt understands the "social" as a place that blurs public and private, making excellence in public accomplishment difficult and private intimacy impossible. The separation of public and private life permits both a common world (public) and intimacy (private) that "…prevents our falling over each other…"[22] Participation in both private and public life permits a natural dialectic of questioning while providing two different places from which one finds significance. Individualism sought to privilege the private over the public, diminishing both and leading to conformity around the mystique of the self.

From a sociological perspective, the "social," the collapsed space of public and private life, was the failed experiment of modernity. From a psychological perspective, the self as an independent agent is also a failed experiment of modernity. Taylor and Arendt point to two moral cul-de-sacs that move us inadvertently from the ground of tradition to the arrogance of our ability to stand above, aloof from, and untainted by situated experience. Both metaphors, the "social" and the self, represent the philosophical and pragmatic faux pas of the arrogance of modernity tied to the primary enlightenment metaphors of undue confidence in the independent agent, progress, and efficiency. The rhetoric of the moderate Enlightenment deconstructed the hegemony of a few, leaving us within the hegemony of the many, an island of social consensus. Individualism presupposes a rhetorical turning that misreads the phenomenological reality of Otherness and creates a mirage, omitting recognition of the manner in which identity of personhood emerges from the embedded nature of tradition, persons, and events.

The ironic communicative twist of the moderate Enlightenment was that the direct challenge of the hegemony of undisputed authority was supported by the authority of universal assurance. This assurance created a mirage designed to control perceptions of reality, inviting a communicative crisis. The first principle for remedying this communicative crisis is the naming of this mirage.

When individualism no longer seems to offer what it claimed was possible—happiness—it continues to live in what Gordon Allport referred to as a state of "proprium",[23] in which a given action no longer claims conviction, but continues in habitual action. One finds energy from unreflective doing, a habitual meeting of daily patterns. Correctness then equates with habituality, not with responsiveness to a unique question encountered in a given historical moment. Individualism is a form of proprium unresponsive to

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21. von Bertalanffy, General systems theory: Foundations, development, applications, New York, Braziller, 1967, p. 46; Klir, An approach to general systems theory, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1969.

22. H. Arendt, 1998, p. 52.

23. G. Allport, *Becoming: Basic considerations for a psychology of personality*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1955, p. 41.

the changing phenomenological reality that shapes life as a journey. Individualism is a guidebook of the detached self taken to all the "right" places and monuments, neither knowing nor caring about the stories of a people, a country, or a community that shaped a community of memory before one took a snapshot and named a place within a static frame. Individualism nourishes a detached self, creating a phenomenological fiction walking above a story of Otherness. This essay eschews individualism not as ethically wrong, but as blind to the phenomenological realities of communicative life—embedded in, situated within, and tainted by the ground upon which one walks.

In this historical moment, we use the idiom *postmodernity*. This term suggests that we live in a juncture, an unformed or incomplete space that lies between modernity and something not yet understood. In this space, the individualistic dark side of the Enlightenment is decentered, not destroyed. For instance, postmodernity does not lose the communicative agent, but challenges the communicator's dream state of "bad faith" of detached self-reliance, rejecting the universal ground for rationality. Postmodernity brings the human communicator back to natural soil, resituating the communicative agent within toil, burden, and the mud of everyday life, rejecting the pristine assumption of universal support for the rational pursuit of ideas. It requires us to disclose the connection of "rationality" to narratives of power and interest. This ironic moment embraces diverse philosophies that question the Enlightenment commitment to the undisputed autonomy of the communicative agent and universal assurance. Individualism that supports a self-detached reading of human events renders response akin to "social consensus." Martin Buber called this consensus *psychologism*,[24] thinking one knows the motives of another better than that person knows them. What is missed is the "thing itself," now lost within the subjective read of the communicative agent. In a postmodern age of diversity, such a reading becomes not only psychologism, but a form of "interpersonal colonization," missing attentiveness to diversity within a community.

DIVERSITY AND "TO THE THINGS THEMSELVES"

We live in an ironic moment in which those questioning Enlightenment presuppositions and those continuing to champion their viability join in similar communicative concern—concern for the consequences of the destruction of the public sphere. Individualism in our culture moved us from the demand for public evidence to the "right" of individual proclamation based upon personal preference, what MacIntyre christened as "emotivism",[25] more than upon evidence. Competing philosophies sit in joint lament over the emergence of what one colleague called "the death of public evidence." To reject the moderate Enlightenment does not suggest the rejection of public evidence, only the admission of a phenomenological fact—each communicator works from bias, interests, and narrative ground from which rhetorical construction of temporal truth

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24. M. Buber, 1971.

25. A. MacIntyre, *After virtue: A study in moral theory*, Notre Dame, IN, Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1984, p. 12.

and decision-making find life in human community. One must weigh any rhetorical act from within its biased frame, with full knowledge that one cannot escape the taint of one's own ground—in either assertions or evaluations of others. The irony is that diverse philosophical systems lead to the same conclusion—multiplicity needs a vibrant public arena and a public accounting for the "why" and direction of decisions.

Without a universal standard, the individual marshals emotivistic support for truth. This essay suggests not a return to the hegemony of undisputed authority, but a rhetorical turn back to tradition*s*: not to one metatradition, but to awareness of multiple, competing traditions. The irony is that diversity of positions understands that individualism does not generate more ideas; it legitimizes imposition that seeks to lessen rather than enhance difference. Imposition is the heartland of the "social."

The key to a re-engaged public arena is that conversation about ideas, activities, products, and goods must take center stage, deprivileging personal preference. Rhetorically, this move is a call back to content; phenomenologically, it is a move back "to the things themselves".[26] De Tocqueville's insight pointed to the contemporary need for a rhetorical turn that challenges modern assumptions of communicative competence, rejecting Enlightenment assumptions as anachronistic and unresponsive to the complexities of narratives in contention in a postmodern world. The rhetorical turn suggests that the Enlightenment project of the universal ideal should give way to a postmodern phenomenology attentive "to the things themselves," not to the wish of ideas spun from the self and then forced upon the world. Eventually, the natural world claims its right once again—reminiscent of Burke's notion of "recalcitrance"[27] of life as ground upon which we walk, not ground above which we walk—taking us to a rhetorical turn that reminds us that communicative willfulness is phenomenologically unresponsive to the world before us. The rhetorical turn to Otherness is a return to communicative backgrounds/traditions as a rhetorical mission that stresses assumptions counter to the universal. As the moderate Enlightenment dream was unmasked as a wishful mirage, the consequences for the study and application of human communication emerged as paradigmatically stunning, moving us away from focus upon the communicative agent, efficiency of method, and expectation of progress to a rhetorical turn toward the Other situated within tradition(s), toward learning that emerges from rhetorical interruptions and from error and the unexpected, and toward the frailty and limits of human progress.

The embedded nature of human existence is the emerging center of a petite number of ideas defining postmodern existence. Such is the reason that Benhabib[28] and Christians and Traber[29] revisit the notion of universal values, but differently, not connected to

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26. E. Husserl, *Logical investigations*. New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 101.

27. K. Burke, *Permanence and change: An anatomy of* purpose, Berkeley, CA, Univ. of California Press, 1984, p. 168.

28. S. Benhabib, *Situating the self: Gender, community and postmodernism in contemporary ethics*, New York, Routledge, 1992.

29. C. Christians and M. Traber, *Communication ethics and universal values*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, 1997.

the assumption of control and progress, but tied to lack of control and the ground within which we walk, stand, and decide, the muddy ground of phenomenological reality, not of wish fulfillment. Postmodernity rejects assumptions of a universal "standing above," but embraces minimal universal assumptions as outlined by Sissela Bok.[30] This essay, however, suggests that the notion of phenomenological reality of embeddedness may open the conversation more productively than recycling the term universal. This argument, not solvable here, is a central question for this century.

The rhetorical turn to Otherness welcomes not the dream of moderate Enlightenment individual possession, but embedded responsiveness to the traditions of the Other and the pragmatic necessity of welcoming fragility and error as interlocutors that address us in the human condition. As stated above, the culprit may not be the Enlightenment commitment to universals, but to the particular universals it embraced. The rhetorical turn of this essay is not to relativism, but to a universal understanding of a basic phenomenological set of realities. First, the world does not begin with me. Second, obsession with efficiency leads to paradigmatic blindness that misses serendipitous opportunities for creativity. Third, a bad faith commitment to progress misses the obvious—seasons and cycles, not linear growth, govern life. A non-humanistic phenomenological reading of communicative life begins with Otherness that is not centered on persons. The descriptor of "necessary but not sufficient" connects persons to an expansive and non-humanistic view of Otherness. Without such a phenomenological understanding of communication, we embrace a communicative competence based upon assumptions of autonomy of agent, efficiency, and progress that renders communicative competence as deformity, ignorant of the phenomenological reality before us. This essay suggests that moderate Enlightenment assumptions frame a type of communicative deformity, misunderstanding the embedded nature of communicative competence.

REJECTING DEFORMITY AS COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The communicative deformity offered by belief in universal assurance of rationality manifests itself in justified imposition, a form of communicative "manifest destiny." Imposing ideas upon another is the natural consequence of assuming that one walks with access to universal truth. Communicative acts of imposition would be characterized by Buber as education driven by telling, which he rejected as the antithesis of education and learning,[31] much as Paulo Freire dismissed the "banking concept"[32] of education, which lives on an assurance of conviction.

At its best, the universal ground of rationality calls for public learning and experimentation, not telling. Rationality that refuses to understand its situatedness and the necessity to engage difference offers assurance that propels acts of imposition in the form of imperialism or colonialism. Innumerable critiques outline the communicative

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30. S. Bok, *Common Values*, Columbia, Univ. of Missouri Press, 2002.

31. M. Buber, 1947.

32. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, Continuum, 1970, p. 57.

limits/dangers of these forms of imposition. They are deformed caricatures of constructive impulses to protect a clan and the nomadic pursuit of land to assist the clan. Gadamer offers insight into the manner that *logos* and e*rgon*, word and deed, co-inform and reshape one another until, in the Aristotelian sense, one empowers word or action to the excess or deficiency of the other.[33] The movement from protection of and gathering from the land for food production to imperialism and colonialism exemplifies the power of excess. The transformation from individuality to individualism follows a similar turn; individuality through the power of excess becomes individualism. The rhetorical turn toward Otherness takes us from the illusion of self-detached individualism to the communicative grounds of multiplicity situated within ideas, narratives, and traditions that blur vision and simultaneously augment and texture life with difference.

THE RHETORICAL TURN

The rhetorical turn toward Otherness runs counter to a humanistic approach that assumes that communication begins with persons alone. The modern conception of Otherness limited to the other person misses the Otherness of situated ground upon which we stand. Postmodernity reminds us that difference emerges from the Otherness that surrounds us phenomenologically, past and future. Calvin Schrag suggests that communicative praxis is "by, about, and for"[34] something. The rhetorical turn to Otherness assumes that before the communication begins between persons, there is a by, about, and for upon which a communicator stands and among which a communicator is embedded. We meet the Other as already a part of Otherness.

This essay advocates a phenomenological turn back to Otherness, acknowledging embeddedness within a multiplicity of ideas, narratives, and traditions. This call for a rhetorical turn to Otherness embraces the constructive side of the radical Enlightenment—multiplicity—while retrieving a phenomenological reality: the embedded nature of human communication. This rhetorical turn unmasks individualism as phenomenologically inaccurate, illuminating once again the importance of situatedness, embeddedness, and communicative life lived mired in the mud of standpoint. The moderate Enlightenment's unswerving confidence in universal assurance authorized the communicative agent to assume a detachment providing clarity of assurance, permitting and encouraging communicative imposition of one's own ideas upon another, a type of "bad faith."[35] Universal assurance underscoring confidence in ideas lays the groundwork for imperialism, colonialism, and their cousin, individualism.

Such confidence in one's own ideas gathers power from the banality of the taken-for-granted. In the guise of the "not so special and important" lurks what Arendt termed

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33. H.G. Gadamer, *Dialogue and dialectic: Eight hermeneutical studies on Plato*, New Haven, CT, Yale Univ. Press, 1980.

34. C. O. Schrag, *Communicative praxis and the space of subjectivity*. Bloomingdale, IN, Indiana Univ. Press, 1986, p. ix.

35. J. P. Sarte, 1956, p. 83.

the insidious "banality of evil."[36] This essay understands individualism, distinguished from individuality, as one of the modern coordinates of the banality of evil. The trek from individuality to individualism leads to a moral *cul de sac*[37] with serious implications for understanding communicative competence. This essay suggests that we live in a moment calling for a rhetorical turn from rationality supported by a universal assurance that gave rise to the modern conception of individualism to the phenomenological reality of Otherness that acknowledges the ontological reality of bias, allegiance, limits—an embedded communicative agent.

As embedded communicators we live within the Otherness of traditions, communities, environments, cultures, and narratives. To break the cycle of the dark side of the moderate Enlightenment project requires decentering the communicative subject, whether speaker or listener,[38] with the revisiting of phenomenological reality—the communication of which we are a part started before we stepped forth and continues after our exit. Rhetorically, this understanding defines the limits of authorial intent— meaning goes beyond the author.

Emmanuel Levinas, the premier ethics scholar of the twentieth century, rejected two major assumptions of the West. First, he was hostile to rhetoric; he considered it a "telling" discipline disrespectful of Otherness. Second, Levinas abandoned the philosophy of *humanism* as simply not human enough. Life begins for self and Other before we are here. What makes us human is what we meet and what we find ourselves situated within; we are responders to, not controllers of, life. Levinas rejected rhetoric and humanism as phenomenologically inaccurate portrayals of human life. Once, however, one makes the rhetorical turn to an Otherness disconnected from a Western humanism, Levinas's project joins the insight of this essay. The rhetorical turn becomes one of response from ground not of our own making, but that emerges as a by-product as an embedded communicative agent reshapes human life.

The ground upon which we stand— ideas, tradition, culture or narrative— begins persuasive discourse before we speak. Such a phenomenological reality takes the communicator to a rhetorical turn cognizant of self-implicative beginnings from ideas, tradition, culture, and narrative commitments and from response to temporal shifts in context and the historical moment that reshapes persuasive implications. This understanding of the rhetorical turn rests at the center of Calvin Schrag's rejection of the modern view of epistemology.[39] Instead, he connects rhetoric to hermeneutics, detailing how multiple texts inform a speaker/listener. An embedded communicative agent follows a similar course, linking the *a priori* with the now and with the yet to be discovered. For Schrag, the rhetorical turn revisits the persuasive nature of the ground(s) upon which one walks. Persuasion is not what we do—the embedded nature of life does it to us: "The rhetorical turn makes explicit this incarnation of the logos with discourse and

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36. H. Arendt, 1977, p. 252.
37. R. C. Arnett, 1998.
38. C. O. Schrag, 1986.
39. C. O. Schrag, 1986, p. 188.

action in a hermeneutic of everyday life."[40]

Consequences of the rhetorical turn are significant in that decentering becomes the postmodern "common sense." Vico detailed the importance of *sensus communis*.[41] He worked with an assumption that one could sort out common sense in a given moment, as did Thomas Paine. However, postmodernity suggests that common sense is no longer common, but tied to particular petite narratives.[42] What is common is what a community has in common in its practices and experiences. When experiences and practices differ, disparity in common sense follows.

The movement to individualism crushed the power of common sense's situating a life within a tradition, offering instead the illusion of decision-making by personal preference, MacIntyre's "emotivism."[43] Postmodernity invites tradition back to the table of decision-making, only this time as tradition(s), acknowledging multiplicity. Common sense in a postmodern age requires admission of the failure of the disembedded self and the necessity of a rhetorical turn to Otherness that revisits the interplay of multiple forms of situatedness. This turn opens the philosophical and pragmatic door to tradition and the mud of everyday lives and finds identity informed by postmodern insight that one must negotiate a multiplicity of traditions. A rhetorical turn to Otherness takes us from blind allegiance to tradition through blind allegiance to the self and finally to a temporal place of light—the decentered and dialogic world of interplay among traditions, historical moments, and communicative agents. The communicator works within a decentered understanding of humanness, one in which logos impacts us from multiple points of origin and temporality and in which the conversation does not begin with the self—a decentered world of persuasion.

This project offers a rhetorical turn that unites three converging loci. First, the Enlightenment, broadly conceived, offered a quantum change in human thought. The paradigmatic shift of ownership of ideas by the few to "idea addition" from many individuals unleashed human creativity that led to one major change after another, from the death of power by divine right to the Protestant Reformation to the industrial revolution. The rhetorical consequence of challenge to limited access to power was individual communicative freedom, a social good. Second, the next move began a journey down a long and slippery slope of undue confidence in the self. Confidence in universal assurance provided a new form of ground, not the location of where one walked, talked, and worked, but in the ethereal air of rational pursuit of truth open to all. The rhetorical consequence was the repositioning of meaning and the starting point of discourse from the ground upon which one stands to the self. Third, not unlike most changes, these new insights carried remnants from the past. The change was a form of first order change (Bateson 1979) in which we changed the actors, but not the plot. We moved from adher-

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40. C. O. Schrag, 1986, p. 193.

41. G. Vico, *The new science of Vico Giambattista*, Ithaca, Cornell Univ. Press, 1991.

42. J. F. Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984.

43. A. MacIntyre, 1984, p. 11.

ence to unquestioned authority to the rejuvenation of the old assumption of assurance hidden behind yet another mask—the mask of universal rationality. This idealized/constructed ground of unquestioned authority of the universal offered the human self a confidence previously unknown. The communicative agent with the claim of rational universal insight could impose power and influence to win the day. The communicative agent took universal rationality as the *raison d'être*, walking away from "primitive beliefs" situated in the ground/narrative upon which one's life is constituted, disembedding the self from the natural soil of human engagement. The rhetorical turn toward an embodied communicator, embedded within a background that shapes practices, virtues, and an understanding of the "good" returns to "old" questions, reviving the radical Enlightenment commitment to multiplicity of story construction in opposition to the mechanical and individualistic rendering of the Enlightenment under the term "moderate," which is better understood as extreme individualism. The radical Enlightenment aligns with a postmodern sensibility that the universal was a moral *cul de sac* requiring a return to the recognition of the "embeddedness" of human life and multiplicity of narrative commitments.

CONCLUSION: RHETORICAL TOUCHSTONES

This essay pays homage to postmodern insight that disrupted the moderate Enlightenment's hold upon us and, at the same time, suggests movement beyond a postmodern grasp. This essay engages postmodernity with an *adieu*—a good-bye accompanied by a sense of welcome. Good-bye and welcome emerge in the same breath.

Postmodernity was and is a vital rhetorical juncture that calls into question the indefensible assumptions resting in an arrogance centered upon primacy of the human self. The universal hope of rationality available to any person gives way to situated, blurred rationality positioned within petite narrative structures.[44] Rhetoric takes on persuasive import without universal assurance of the supremacy of the agent, the importance of efficiency, or the inevitability of progress. A postmodern communicative home rests within the metaphor of "touchstone"[45] rather than the metaphor of "universal." A touchstone provides a temporal marker of location, a general indicator of direction without the definitiveness of an absolute—a hint or intuition of meeting a horizon.

The rhetorical touchstone of this moment is neither the self nor individualism, but a phenomenological reality of Otherness. This Otherness requires re-engagement with traditions, content, and difference. It is not the familiar, but the strange, the different, and the unknown that open the door to our 21st century, all pointing to life outside the self, constituting the rhetorical turn to Otherness, to a phenomenological reality of embeddedness, to situated life with all its uncertainty, error, and fragility. The rhetorical turn to Otherness bypasses humanism, heeding the advice of Levinas: Humanism is not human enough; Otherness begins and continues before and long after our entrance.

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44. R. Rorty, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*, New York, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989.
45. M. Freidman, *Martin Buber: The life of dialogue*, New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 357.

Otherness tied to metaphors such as diversity of touchstones, ground, and narratives reminds us that Otherness is the alterity before us. The rhetorical turn to Otherness is a rhetorical turn to alterity—the assumption of this historical moment is not that we agree, but that our difference is what defines this moment, fuels learning, and casts ever anew the importance of rhetoric in this historical moment. Postmodernity is not an answer; it is a rhetorical interruption suggesting a call to learn once again. The Medieval commitment to the **trivium** of grammar, logic, and rhetoric was a schema often framed as classical education, yet its development was in the 12th and 13th centuries. In the 21st century, grammars are grounded in different narrative structures. The narratives bias logics, and rhetoric continues to sort out the differences. The rhetorical turn to otherness has roots in a medieval past that, in terms of historicity, has currency today. Rhetoric tied to otherness moves us from individualism to the historical moment in which we live, with a renewed call for a radical Enlightenment, a time of difference where learning must trump telling and alterity keeps the conversation going, a recognition of the rhetoric of human life.

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