

RHETORIC AND DEMOCRACY

Deliberative Opportunities in Current Electoral Processes

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Technology, Sydney 1997

CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Stephen Stockwell

Acknowledgments

Thanks to my principal supervisor, Helen Irving for her assistance in developing the arguments in this thesis and her meticulous work in ensuring it makes sense. Thanks also to my previous supervisor, Paul Gillen for his enthusiastic encouragement of this project. All errors remain mine alone.

Thanks to Wayne Swan and the members of the Queensland ALP who gave me the opportunity and encouragement to apply new and unfamiliar campaign techniques as I made my minor contribution to revitalising democracy in that state. Thanks to Marian Wilkinson and Paul Williams who employed me at ABC-TV's *Four Corners* and encouraged me to make programs that allowed me to clarify insights that came from my practical experience.

Thanks to my parents, Bill and Necia Stockwell for their moral support and unflagging interest. Their encouragement of political discussion at home and their active citizenship in the wider community inform this work.

Thanks, above all, to Ann Baillie - for everything.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, Alfred and Edna Stockwell and Leo and Rose Hennessy and to my son, Matthew Baillie Stockwell.

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Abstract

In moving beyond the dichotomy between representative and participatory models of democracy, contemporary democratic theory has drawn out the crucial role of deliberation in the effective operation of democratic institutions. However, while various theorists show that deliberation is applied to democratic effect in an assortment of arrangements (such as interpersonal relationships, new social movements and international negotiations), there appears to be a hesitation in theorising the means to improve the deliberative functioning of currently existing representative institutions.

This thesis argues that despite the many limitations of representative democracy, and of the mass media which act as its key deliberative forum, currently existing models of representative democracy still offer formal and practical opportunities for collective deliberation in rhetorical exchanges among citizens, particularly, but by no means exclusively, in the course of the election campaign. Consideration of recent democratic theory suggests that the quantity and quality of democratic deliberation in a range of particular situations may be assessed against a set of criteria: access, transparency, feedback and coordination.

For citizens to make use of the deliberative opportunities raised by the election campaign requires, it is argued, the creation of a contemporary rhetoric. This thesis addresses that process by reviewing the roots of rhetorical practice and theory in tribal and bardic methods used to produce social cohesion, in the activities of the Sophists in Greek, and particularly Athenian, direct democracy and in the practical reason of Aristotle's seminal text.

This thesis then proceeds to consider the rhetorical techniques, employed in two recent election campaigns, which overcame the preconceptions of academic and media commentators to produce "upset" results by successfully engaging, it is argued, the citizen-audience in a meta-narrative of rhetorical exchange.

From consideration of these three case studies, an account of a rhetoric emerges as a technical and instrumental discipline. While a contemporary version of political rhetoric may be derived from campaign practices in the electoral context, that rhetoric is also capable of utilising the mass media for much broader deliberative purposes and the

potential for marginal and critical political forces to apply these activities more widely is explored.

Central to the development of new, deliberative accounts of rhetoric is a return to Aristotle to appreciate the ethical import of rhetoric. A contemporary approach to rhetoric, arising from an emerging account of citizenship as participatory, deliberative, global and "media-active" is considered.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Postmodern mass politics... replaces the collective imaginary... with simulacra that remain specular and uninhabitable...

Lucaites and Charland¹

...democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Winston Churchill²

Outline

While democracy is undergoing a period of political reaffirmation, it nevertheless remains the subject both of popular ambivalence and extensive theoretical critique that challenge its relevance and efficacy. By opening the process of defining democracy (which will be continued in some detail in Chapters Two and Three), attention is drawn to key role of deliberation in producing democratic interaction among citizens and the potential role for rhetoric in assisting that interaction. Though rhetoric is commonly held to be no more than empty posturing, this chapter does some preliminary work in highlighting its persuasive, political and pedagogical facets to establish its role as a technical and ethical discipline (work which will be continued in context of ancient Greece in Chapter Four and in contemporary context in Chapters Five to Seven). The proposition of this thesis is then advanced: greater deliberative participation in existing representative institutions might be produced where citizens recreate political rhetoric by turning the mass media to demotic purposes. The arguments for this thesis are then outlined chapter by chapter.

Defining Democracy

In *The End of History and the Last Man* Francis Fukuyama argues that the 1980s saw the near-universal triumph of liberal democracy. He concludes from the dissolution of communist totalitarianism that the current practice of liberal democracy is "the end

¹ Lucaites, JL & Charland, M "The legacy of [Liberty]: rhetoric, ideology and aesthetics in the postmodern condition *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* vol 13 no 3 1989 p33

² Churchill, Winston "Speech to House of Commons 11 November 1947" in Churchill, Randolph (ed) *Europe Unite* Cassell London 1950 p200

point of mankind's ideological evolution [and] the final form of human government"³. Whether or not these conclusions are justified, there remain very few ideological opponents of democracy as such. As Paul Hirst points out: "Democracy is the dominant idiom... Everyone is a democrat"⁴, a view echoed by David Held: "nearly everyone today says they are democrats..."⁵

But what is the nature of the democracy that seems to have prevailed over other models? Some apparently simple definitions of democracy continue to inform popular discussion: the rule of the many⁶; the rule of the majority⁷ and; "government of the people, by the people, for the people"⁸ are three common formulations. The very simplicity of these definitions and the simple expectations they engender suggest that the practice of democracy in a complex world will always be problematic. The simplicity of these formulations, as Anthony Birch notes with reference to the final example above, "has rhetorical value rather than logical meaning".⁹ Alone they do not provide a firm basis for a thorough-going theoretical definition of democracy.

Further, simple accounts of democracy fail to reflect the dynamic and contradictory nature of its practice, including the fact that in the last two hundred years democratic institutions have both broadened (with the introduction of universal suffrage, the extension of government into economic and social affairs and greater protection of free speech) and at the same time narrowed (with the consolidation of the power of parties, the focus on finding compromise between competing special interests and fewer opportunities to exercise effective free speech). These simple accounts of democracy in addition do not address the impact of the present period of rapid transition from an industrial to an information economy and the consequent challenge to the power of nation states by global economic and cultural processes.

The gap between the simple promises of democracy and the complexity encountered in making it work may help explain why the near universal acceptance of democracy is

³ Fukuyama, Francis *The End of History and the Last Man* Avon New York 1992 pxi

⁴ Hirst, Paul "Representative democracy and its limits" *The Political Quarterly* vol 59 no 2 1988 p190

⁵ Held, David *Models of Democracy* Stanford University Press Stanford 1987 p1

⁶ Aristotle *Politics* Oxford University Press London 1946

⁷ Locke, John *The Second Treatise on Government* Basil Blackwell Oxford 1966 s99

⁸ Lincoln, Abraham "Gettysburg Address" quoted in Strunsky, Rose *Abraham Lincoln* Methuen London 1914 p209

⁹ Birch, Anthony *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* Routledge London 1993 p50

accompanied by an high level of ambivalence about the political process: while around eighty percent of adults in Australia and the USA express an interest in politics¹⁰ no more than half the adult population of the USA follow public affairs in the mass media¹¹ and where exercise of the franchise is voluntary (in parts of Australian local government for example) at most forty percent, and as few as five percent vote in elections¹². Even where participation in elections is compulsory it is not unusual for almost one in five on the electoral roll to fail to vote.¹³

The qualitative research of Hugh Mackay indicates that those he interviewed see current democratic practices with "a jaundiced eye" and think "that there should be more to politics than this".¹⁴ Quantitative research bears out Mackay's findings: forty-two percent of Australian voters think "people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves" while only twenty-nine percent trust them "to do the right thing most of the time" and a mere twenty-two percent of voters think that people in government "know what they are doing" compared with forty-five percent who take a contrary view.¹⁵ Other research shows that eighty percent of Australians think that politicians "lose touch with the people pretty quickly".¹⁶ Surveys of teenagers indicate that 82% of respondents disagree with the statement "politicians are honest with us" and only eight percent agree with that statement.¹⁷

Summarising the attitudes to democracy indicated by these responses, it is difficult to avoid Moira Rayner's suggestion that there is "a genuine crisis of faith in the processes of democracy" which she describes as "cynicism".¹⁸ While this cynicism may be explained by the gap between the experience of the citizen and the practices of professional politics which have developed to deal with the volume and detail of decision-making in mass society, it nevertheless threatens the future of democracy even

¹⁰ McAllister, Ian *Political Behaviour* Longman Melbourne 1992 p34

¹¹ Dahl, RA *Modern Political Analysis* 4th ed Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs 1984 p96

¹² Chapman, RJK & Wood, Michael *Australian Local Government - The Federal Dimension* George Allen & Unwin Sydney 1984 p57

¹³ see table 5.1 below: turnout for the compulsory 1988 Brisbane City Council election was only 83.2%

¹⁴ Mackay, Hugh *Reinventing Australia* Angus & Robertson Sydney 1993 p175

¹⁵ McAllister *Political Behaviour* p46

¹⁶ 1986 National Social Science Review quoted in Rayner, Moira *Rooting Democracy* Allen & Unwin Sydney 1997 p11

¹⁷ Jones, Alice "Cynical view of MPs' honesty" *Gold Coast Bulletin* 29 September 1997 p5

¹⁸ Rayner *Rooting Democracy* p12

more than totalitarianism because democratic institutions are premised upon an active democratic political culture.

The challenge is to find a definition of democracy that can confront this ambivalence and cynicism by returning the citizen to the centre of the democratic process while acknowledging the complex nature of that process. This complexity arises, it is suggested here, from both:

1) the historical fluidity of the democratic concept which encapsulates a variety of institutional arrangements including Athenian direct democracy, authoritarian states, experimental communes and the various contemporary models of representative and participatory democracy, and

2) the dynamic potential within democracy itself to create change, to adapt to new situations and, most significantly for this thesis, to remake its own practice continually.

Thus the search for a definition of democracy can never be concluded, and democratic theory requires constant renewal as new conditions, social formations, technologies and complexity arise. Chantal Mouffe argues in her preface to *Dimensions of Radical Democracy* that:

democracy can only consist in the recognition of the multiplicity of social logics and the necessity of their articulation... [with] no hope of final reconciliation. That is why radical democracy also means the radical impossibility of a fully achieved democracy.¹⁹

However the impossibility of completing the democracy project is no reason for its abandonment. The incompleteness of the concept may indeed be the source of its strength because it allows for the malleability that lets democracy be responsive to change. Thus the unresolved dichotomy between representative and participatory democratic models that is central to much contemporary democratic theory may reveal itself not as an intractable problem but rather as an opportunity to return again to the key theoretical accounts of representation and participation in order to identify recurring elements and so develop a definition of democracy that both reflects the breadth of the concept and explains the mechanics of democratic practice which allow for its constant renewal. This thesis argues that such a return produces an appreciation of both the election as the occasion citizens participate in their representation and, most particularly, the crucial role of democratic deliberation in producing effective democracy.

¹⁹ Mouffe, Chantal "Preface: Democratic Politics Today" in Mouffe, Chantal (ed) *Dimensions of Radical Democracy* Verso London 1992 p14

Demotic deliberation is discussed in greater detail in the following chapters but may be briefly defined as the political discussion and debate available to the broad mass of the citizenry. It is argued below that any redefinition of democracy aimed at improving its operations requires a reinvigorated account of rhetoric as the means for citizens to intervene in the deliberative processes currently available within mass society or with the potential to be constructed there.

Defining Rhetoric

The common use of the term "rhetoric" suggests that it is nothing more than "a means for verbally manipulating people through fallacious arguments and appeals to irrational impulses"²⁰ and is therefore a practice to be dismissed rather than studied. As will be seen in the analysis of rhetoric below, there is some substance to this popular account - rhetoric is a form of manipulation that relies substantially on appeals to the emotions and even countenances the use of fallacious arguments - but rhetoric is also much more. Aristotle, the pre-eminent classical systematiser of the rhetorical arts defined rhetoric as: "the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits."²¹

Aristotle's definition suggests that rhetoric plays a role in all forms of communication other than the strictly imperative, because all acts of communication other than direct orders would appear to be based in persuading the receiver to something: an act, an opinion, an aesthetic experience or a suspension of disbelief. Thus, it might be argued, that to study communication is to study rhetoric. Yet even if manipulation and mendacity were the sole contents of rhetoric, the concept would still warrant close study in order to understand its operation within the processes of democratic decision-making so that its negative effects might be countered. It is the argument of this thesis that rhetoric also has a positive role in democracy and while much of the ancient art has been obscured or dismissed as irrelevant, it still offers much to modern politics in both theoretical considerations of deliberative models of democracy and practical considerations of effective participation.

What then is "rhetoric"? In positing a preliminary definition, it is useful to clarify some limits as to how the term will be used in this thesis. An initial distinction worth making in the context of the popular view of rhetoric discussed in the previous paragraph is the

²⁰ Arnhart, Larry *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* Northern Illinois University Press De Kalb 1981 p3

²¹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* Penguin London 1991 1355b

difference between the persuasive manipulation of rhetoric and the coercive manipulation of propaganda. This distinction is explored at length in chapter three but it is useful to note at this point that "manipulation" is not a negative notion *per se* and may be defined as the skilful management of any process. The human use of tools is dependent on an ability to manipulate them and the question with rhetoric, as with other tools, is: to what end? While rhetoric is the study of the management of persuasive techniques it is also, as Larry Arnhart notes, quite distinct from the coercive practices of "compulsion" and "instruction".²²

This distinction is based on an appreciation of the rational aims of rhetoric: while rhetoric does not operate with "the standards of mathematical logic" and "lacks the rigour of scientific demonstration"²³, it nevertheless seeks to construct compelling arguments of practical reason rather than simply to make people believe certain things or require them to act in certain ways as propaganda seeks to do. Rhetoric, like propaganda, does seek to manipulate the audience, but unlike propaganda which comes from power with a view to reproducing the conditions of that power, rhetoric, it will be argued below, comes from citizens when they refuse to treat their audience of fellow citizens instrumentally by foreclosing discussion. Rather it offers arguments and leaves the final decision on any particular issue to the citizen-audience.

A further distinction lies between rhetoric as an element of political practice and rhetoric as a discrete epistemology which offers a general tool for the analysis of all forms of knowledge and belief shared by communication.²⁴ It is however not easy to make a clear division between the political and epistemological content of rhetoric, because on one hand political activity necessarily involves communication of knowledge and belief while, on the other, epistemological reflection finds it difficult to avoid political presupposition.

Aristotle's definition discussed above allowed for rhetoric to cover a very broad field and while he was mostly concerned with the role of rhetoric in political speech-making, he also considered the rhetoric of other forms of public address such as judicial pleading and ceremonial oratory. His schema of rhetorical method had application across all three forms. Aristotle's definition has been extended to the private sphere by, for example, Edward Corbett's account of rhetoric as: "the discipline that deals with the use of

²² Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p5-6

²³ *ibid* p4,8

²⁴ for an account of rhetoric as epistemology see Cherwitz, Richard A & Hikins, James W *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology* University of South Carolina Press Columbia 1986

discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or move an audience, whether that audience is made up of a single person or a group of persons."²⁵

In recent times, Aristotle's schema has been used to analyse not only speeches but also literary and audio-visual material so that Robert Root, for example, moves from Aristotle's account of rhetoric to explore the particular rhetorics of twentieth century forms of advocacy (such as direct mail and advertising) and then further, to engage with the rhetorics of creative and artistic endeavours such as film and television entertainment.²⁶ While, as will be seen in later chapters, the meta-narrative of the contemporary political campaign utilises many other forms of communication beyond the speech-making Aristotle analysed, this thesis does not seek to produce a general theory of rhetoric as communication but rather to concentrate, as Aristotle did, on the political uses of rhetoric and thus isolate its theoretical and ethical significance in the development of democratic institutions.

A third distinction that it is useful to make at this point is between rhetoric as the practice of convincing mass audiences, and rhetoric as the discipline that teaches that practice. As will be seen below, many of the Sophists of classical Athens who identified key rhetorical strategies as they developed the political power of language, and Aristotle himself who codified those strategies into a discipline, were not themselves Athenian citizens and therefore could not participate personally in the democratic Assembly. Nevertheless they offered general pedagogical instruction in the arts and sciences required for the pursuit of *arete*, the mix of moral virtue and worldly success won by strong and compelling rhetorical performances in the Assembly.²⁷ The rhetoric that they taught was more than the technical expertise of effective oratory; it was first and foremost a discipline that grounded oratory in its attendant and intertwining ethical responsibilities to the community and the self.²⁸ This thesis is concerned not only with the techniques of rhetoric as they are practised but also with the crucial role played by the pedagogical production and reproduction of rhetorical skills in creating the ethical basis for effective democratic deliberation.

With these distinctions in mind, it is possible to approach a preliminary definition of rhetoric that encapsulates Aristotle's broad view of rhetoric as the study of

²⁵ Corbett, EPJ quoted in Root, Robert L *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture* Greenwood New York p13

²⁶ Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture*

²⁷ Barrett, Harold *The Sophists* Chandler & Sharp Novato 1987 p5

²⁸ Minson, Jeffrey "Ascetics and the Demands Of Participation" in Moss, Jeremy (ed) *Foucault, Politics and Freedom* Sage London (forthcoming)

persuasiveness²⁹ and Arnhart's much narrower account of rhetoric as "some form of rational discourse about the intelligible reality of politics... the use of public speech to interpret, evaluate, and deliberate about political action".³⁰ It is also able to accommodate Thomas Farrell's notion of rhetoric as "a practical art for cultivating and enacting practical reason in audiences with the potential for moral action".³¹ In focusing on the persuasive, political and pedagogical facets of rhetoric, this thesis approaches the concept as a technical and ethical discipline that studies the contingent means, and attendant responsibilities, of persuading the citizen-audience towards any particular decision within a democratic, deliberative process.

Deliberative Opportunities

The proposition that this thesis puts forward is that to create greater deliberative participation in existing representative institutions and to recreate democracy itself, citizens must remake political rhetoric as both a technical and ethical discipline based in turning the mass media and, by extension, new communications technologies to demotic purposes. Jeffrey Minson has begun this work in his recent paper on "certain mundane ethical abilities of a *disciplinary* and *rhetorical* character which are required of a responsible participant".³² To continue this work in a comprehensive fashion requires firstly an extensive review of contemporary democratic theory to establish the potential to rethink the role of rhetoric, secondly a return to Aristotle's account of rhetoric in the Athenian context, thirdly an analysis of contemporary rhetorical practice to identify the means by which citizens might engage in deliberative democratic participation and finally an attempt to relocate political rhetoric in democratic theory and practice as both a technical and ethical discipline. The progress of this argument is detailed immediately below.

Chapter Two begins a review of democratic theory by identifying the arguments for both representative and participatory democratic models and the logical and practical problems to which each model gives rise. In proposing a resolution of the dichotomy between representative and participatory models in terms of redrawing the debate between them as a continuum along which a variety of models reside, two observations

²⁹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1355b

³⁰ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p3

³¹ Farrell, Thomas B "The tradition of rhetoric and the philosophy of communication" *Communication* vol 7 1983 p152

³² Minson "Ascetics and the Demands Of Participation" p2

emerge. One concerns the ubiquity of deliberation across all democratic models and this is discussed in greater detail in the Chapter Three. The other observation concerns the role of elections in democracy and suggests that while elections may be unsatisfactory means to determine the exact preferences of the collective citizenry at any particular moment, they nevertheless have a vital role in both theory and practice as the occasion when citizens participate in their own representation.

Chapter Three summarises the recurrence of deliberation at all points along the continuum between representative and participatory models of democracy. This recurrence suggests the key role informed discussion plays in democracy both as an expression of citizens' autonomy and as the means by which they agree to join together as a collective enterprise. While the mass media are seen as the pre-eminent deliberative forum in representative democracy, it is also argued that the mass media systematically limit free speech and demotic involvement in deliberative processes. However a number of recent theorists point to a variety of means to overcome these limitations, a process that is assisted by distinguishing between the coercion of propaganda and the persuasion of rhetoric. The discussion of democratic theory in Chapters Two and Three suggests a method of testing the quantity and quality of democratic deliberation in various situations with reference to a number of criteria: access, transparency, feedback and coordination.

Chapter Four returns to the roots of rhetorical practice in tribal and bardic linguistic practices, in the political work of the Sophists of ancient Greece and, most particularly, in Aristotle's summary of the art of rhetoric in order to explore the theoretical genesis of rhetoric in the expedience and invention at the juncture of practical reason and democratic deliberation. Particular attention is paid to Aristotle's categories of rhetorical argument (character, emotion and logic) which, when considered in the context of Athenian political practice, allows the generation of a general theory of rhetoric as both an instrumental technique and also as an ethical force which together sustain democratic institutions by empowering citizen participants. Rhetoric, it is then argued, is a necessary condition for the effective operation of democratic institutions.

Chapters Five and Six offer analyses of current electoral processes with particular reference to the 1991 Brisbane City Council election and the 1993 Australian federal elections in order to differentiate the instrumental and coercive operations of political parties from the rhetorical strategies they have developed and which are available to all citizens to realise the participatory potential in the meta-narrative of an election campaign.

Chapter Seven uses Aristotle's categories of rhetorical argument to systematise the technical elements of contemporary rhetorical practice into the related categories of image, desire and message. With reference to the final of these categories, there is an analysis of the logic of the contemporary political campaign revealed in practices of position, spin, targeting, tracking, media management and direct mail. The continuing relevance of Aristotle's analysis suggests the potential to return to the purpose of his rhetoric: the creation of deliberative processes to produce and reproduce ethical activity.

Chapter Eight concludes by positing a preliminary model of "media-active" participatory citizenship involving the expeditious but ethical use of rhetorical strategies to open and extend representative institutions, to give voice to alternative and marginalised interests and to construct a strategic shift to more participatory and deliberative forms of democracy utilising the developing global networks of new media applications.

Chapter 2

BETWEEN REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Democratic Theory I

Democracy does not exist in practice. At best we have what the ancients would have called elective oligarchies...

John Burnheim¹

Outline

A review of contemporary democratic theory suggests a dichotomy between the representative model to which most currently existing democratic institutions adhere and the participatory model advanced as an alternative. Both models are seen to be fraught with logical and practical limitations. However, by avoiding the construction of these models as a dichotomy and reviewing a number of alternatives on the continuum between them, a working definition of democracy may be arrived at, centred on its functions as an evolving, dynamic process for the resolution of various sorts of conflict. From this viewpoint two inter-related theoretical points emerge. The first is that the election - as the moment citizens participate in their own representation - offers both formal and practical opportunities for democratic intervention in the democratic process. The second point is prompted by the recurrence of deliberation along the democratic continuum and is explored more fully in the Chapter Three.

Representative Models

In tracing the history of the development of democracy from the seventeenth century, David Held distinguishes between three general models of representative democracy on the grounds of their different functions²:

¹ Burnheim, John *Is Democracy Possible?* Polity Press Cambridge 1985 p1

² Held, David *Models of Democracy* p70-102

1) *protective democracy* developed by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke which argued that representative government was designed to ensure the social contract where individuals gave up the full range of personal freedoms they had in the state of nature in return for protection from each other and, most particularly, from those who seek to rule over them;

2) *radical democracy* outlined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and informing the work of Thomas Paine and Karl Marx which contended that citizens must enjoy both political and economic equality so they can engage with equal freedom in the process of collective development and;

3) *liberal democracy* arising from the intersection of the Utilitarians and Mary Wollstonecraft and finding its most comprehensive expression in the work of John Stuart Mill who argued that representative democracy should not only protect individual interests but also develop an informed and committed citizenry able to utilise the process to best realise their capacities.

Amy Gutmann covers similar territory but with slightly divergent lines of divisions in breaking accounts of the representative model into three categories: populist democracy, social democracy and liberal democracy.³ Her distinctions between these variants rest on what each employs as the foundation for their definitions of democracy. Their ultimate political values are: popular rule, social equality and protection of basic liberties respectively. But both Gutmann and Held agree on the elements which each model of representative democracy have in common: a commitment to free speech, equal rights for all citizens to participate in the electoral process both as a voter and a candidate, and an adherence to the rule of law.

Among these historical accounts of democracy, John Stuart Mill's *Representative Government* gives a compelling rationale for the representative model as it presently exists:

... the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community... But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of perfect government must be representative... [where people] exercise through deputies periodically elected by themselves the ultimate controlling power.⁴

³ Gutmann, Amy "Democracy" in Goodin, RE & Pettit, P *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* Blackwell Oxford 1993 p412-417

⁴ Mill, John Stuart "Representative Government" in his *On Liberty and Other Essays* Oxford University Press Oxford 1991 p244ff

There are a number of key definitive points that may be discerned in Mill's work that are of significance to this thesis:

1) By vesting sovereignty in the aggregate of the community, Mill was laying the ground for universal suffrage with the extension of the franchise to men without property and women. While Mill also advocated a plural system of voting (albeit as a temporary expedient) to ensure that the uneducated working class could not outvote their better educated - and more propertied - fellow citizens⁵, the *inclusiveness* of his position was a major step toward the contemporary understanding of democracy as a system of government to which all adult citizens can and should contribute. A corollary of this inclusive involvement is the assumption that by their involvement citizens are providing a broad-ranging, if conditional, consent to be governed by the democracy.

2) By arguing that the main way that sovereignty is exercised in a mass society is through *elected representation*, Mill effectively limited the extension in formal participation discussed above to the exercise of the franchise, although he did express the hope that people would be "at least occasionally, called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general."⁶ Mill understood free elections as a key defining moment in democracy and he explored why that might be the case at some depth. For Mill, representative government is the "ideal" form of government precisely because it harnesses the autonomous, rational self-interest of individuals to elect a government that promotes the good management of the affairs of society, including improving "the existing faculties, moral, intellectual and active, of its various members".⁷ It thus produces more autonomous, rational "self-protecting" and "self-dependent"⁸ individuals who can defend their own rights to liberty and equality so that they can promote their own welfare and thus the welfare of the whole community, particularly by electing further good government. So, it might be concluded, the election is a kind of self-perpetuating "motor" for the development of social responsibility and civic virtue among the citizens.

3) While the representative system allows democracy to extend beyond the single city that characterised Athenian democracy, Mill appreciated that to function effectively, representative democracy needs to be complemented by processes, similar to the

⁵ *ibid* p300

⁶ *ibid* p244

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ *ibid* p245 emphasis in original

Assembly of citizens, that allow the dissemination of a broad range of views and the opportunity for *deliberation*. While Mill argued that the press filled this role, he had some unspecified dissatisfaction with the efficacy of the mass media. He referred to the newspaper press as "the real equivalent, though not in all respects an adequate one, of the Pnyx and the Forum."⁹ While Mill did not expound on his reservations about the role of the newspaper press, he did problematise its role in the deliberative process and this is an issue which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In his seminal work of 1942, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Joseph Schumpeter implicitly characterises Mills' model of representative democracy as "the classical doctrine of democracy[:] that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble to carry out its will."¹⁰ While this characterisation fails to encapsulate Mill's understanding of the role of democracy as a means to develop the practical skills and moral sensibilities of the citizenry¹¹, it nevertheless claims too much in Schumpeter's view. Instead he offers a minimalist, "empirical" account of representative democracy as:

...that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.¹²

By ceding no place in democracy to the citizens and their aspirations except for their marginal participation in an occasional electoral competition where their role is limited to casting a numerically insignificant vote to choose leadership, Schumpeter accepts that democracy generally entails government by elites. He further argues, with reference to the role of the irrational in crowd psychology, that this is a positive arrangement because "the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field... He becomes a primitive again. His thinking becomes associative and affective."¹³

Written against the rising tide of populist totalitarian regimes in the 1930s and early 1940s, Schumpeter sets out a prosaic and precise definition of democracy designed to

⁹ *ibid* p310

¹⁰ Schumpeter, Joseph *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* Allen & Unwin London 1954 p250

¹¹ on this point see Pateman, Carol *Participation and Democratic Theory* Cambridge University Press London 1970

¹² Schumpeter *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* p269

¹³ *ibid* p262

limit "'excessive' participation [that] might produce the mobilisation of the *demos* with highly dangerous consequences."¹⁴ This definition is so strict, Gutmann has argued, that it excludes ancient Athens (where citizens maintained the right to make political decisions directly) but includes South Africa under apartheid¹⁵. Robert Dahl, while generally sympathetic with Schumpeter's "empirical" approach, suggests that Schumpeter's definition may allow for forms of democracy that are "conceptually, morally and empirically indistinguishable from autocracy."¹⁶ Schumpeter further limits the definition of democracy when he marginalises its liberal, developmental content by making the distinction between the *idea* of democracy - as a method that can produce authoritative government from the multiplicity of interests in a society - and the *ideal* of democracy as a process that produces and ensures the citizen's rights to liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness, as long as their actions do not intrude upon the same rights of others.¹⁷

What then is Schumpeter's rationale for democracy? It is significant to note that, despite his adherence to what Peter Bachrach calls "democratic elitism"¹⁸, Schumpeter nevertheless identifies the competition for votes in the electoral process as the definitive characteristic of democracy because *inter alia* it allows "genuine group-wise volitions" to become "political factors". It provides for the eviction of unpopular governments and it ensures that "the reins of government should be handed to those who command more support than do any of the competing individuals or teams."¹⁹ In short, the free election allows individuals to express their residual autonomy as a collective, political voice that is the final, if incomplete, determinant of government. This, in Schumpeter's eyes, is what differentiates democracy from autocracy.

The accounts of representative democracy presented by Mill and Schumpeter may be discerned as the two poles between which the working model for currently existing democratic practice oscillates. Between these models, there is a general agreement on the efficacy of elections as the means for citizens to select government. The significance of this ubiquity of elections as an ostensible defining feature of representative democracy (and a common feature in many participatory models) will be discussed later in this chapter but first it is useful to explore the debates about the theoretical limits to democracy. By its very nature democracy accepts and encourages constant critique. It is

¹⁴ Held *Models of Democracy* p165

¹⁵ Gutmann "Democracy" p412

¹⁶ Dahl, RA *Democracy and its Critics* Yale Uni Press New Haven 1989 p122

¹⁷ Schumpeter *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* ch 21-23

¹⁸ Bachrach, Peter *The Theory of Democratic Elitism* Little, Brown Boston 1967

¹⁹ Schumpeter *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* p270-273

therefore hardly surprising that the idea of democracy itself has undergone extensive exploration and analysis. Criticism of the theoretical basis of representative democracy falls into two categories: one, contra Mill, emphasises the logical problems inherent in requiring representation to produce policies which reflect the aspirations of the electorate and the other, contra Schumpeter, problematises the propensity to elitism in political arrangements which ostensibly treat all citizens equally.

Logical limitations to representative democracy

Ancient critics of democracy such as Plato saw the demotic involvement of the mass of commoners in political decision-making as a prescription for the subordination of reason and dialectical debate to the whims and passions that might be produced in a crowd by a populist orator²⁰. Mill's account of representative democracy goes some way towards answering this criticism by basing the efficacy of the election process on the autonomous citizen capable of expressing a rational choice for a candidate whose policies best reflect that citizen's priorities. Schumpeter's democratic elitism is designed specifically to limit the role of populism and irrationality in decision-making processes. Since Schumpeter wrote, during World War Two, democratic theorists have extended his insights to identify several logical problems in the representative model.

Writing as the post-war consumer society developed, Anthony Downs theorised the minimal involvement of the citizen in the political process of elections as analogous to the choices offered to consumers by the economic process. This led him to point out the paradox of rational voting²¹: even the minimal outlay of time and energy required to go to the polling booth, let alone the greater exertion required to process the information needed to make an informed decision, cannot economically justify the very small return that nearly all voters gain in terms of the effect they have on an election's outcome.

Another fundamental theoretical concern first identified by Kenneth Arrow²² is whether the representative process can ever ensure that the citizenry's rational choices make their way through the complexity of the policy making process to reflect accurately overall public opinion. While James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, among others, have

²⁰ Plato *The Republic* Penguin Harmondsworth 1955 555b-564b

²¹ Downs, Anthony *An Economic Theory of Democracy* Harper New York 1957 p240-241

²² Arrow, Kenneth *Social Choice and Individual Values* Yale University Press New Haven 1963

applied economics and game theory to democratic decision-making in order to "analyze the calculus of the rational individual when he is faced with questions of constitutional choice"²³, the problem remains that there is, according to what Arrow calls the "impossibility" theorem, no conclusive procedure to aggregate individual preferences into a social decision that guarantees an accurate reconciliation of those preferences.²⁴

Further there are problems of arbitrariness in deciding which set of rules should be applied in democratic decision-making because even quite intricate systems to allocate policy preferences produce problematic results. Thus the "Condorcet" method of exhaustive binary choice favoured by strict majoritarians may not produce a winner or may produce a different winner from the "Borda" method of ranking options.²⁵ In addition there is the problem identified by Allan Gibbard and Mark Satterthwaite that "all determinate social choice procedures are manipulable"²⁶ because people can misrepresent their true preferences in order to maximise the chances of a favoured option by minimising the chances of the main competitor to that favoured option.

While John Burnheim questions the practical consequences of these concerns over the fine detail of electoral procedures²⁷, he gives a comprehensive account of the arguments against voting and electoral politics to show that "electoral systems are inimical to rule by the people for the people".²⁸ Voting communicates little about the voters' preferences "because it registers so little" and it can never be the product of rational decision because external complexities, internal complications and the extended time-scale involved in the decision-making process mean there is "no procedure, even in principle, by which all sets of expressed preferences can be aggregated into a social decision that guarantees an optimal solution to the task of reconciling them."²⁹ Furthermore, Burnheim continues, voting is not about producing policy but about producing governments and "when all the alternative governments are unacceptable there

²³ Buchanan, James & Tullock, Gordon *The Calculus of Consent* University of Michigan Press Ann Arbor 1987 pvi

²⁴ Arrow *Social Choice and Individual Values*. For a simple explanation of Arrow's theorem see McLean, Iain *Democracy and New Technology* Polity Cambridge 1989 p174-178

²⁵ Miller, David "Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice" in Held, David *Prospects for Democracy* Polity Cambridge 1993 p79-80; also McLean *Democracy and New Technology* p122-130

²⁶ *ibid* p179

²⁷ Burnheim *Is Democracy Possible?* p87

²⁸ *ibid* p82

²⁹ *ibid* p83-86

is little that votes can do to remedy the situation."³⁰ Turning to electoral politics *per se*, Burnheim finds that the very process of mass elections tends to mystify and agglomerate issues, professionalises politics, allows interest groups to exercise negative control over government and encourages political party power-broking which "breeds mediocrity and corruption".³¹ Electoral politics, he holds, also produces inappropriate decentralisation evidenced in "static and oppressive local chauvinism" and inappropriate centralisation that puts power in the hands of "unitary central authorities... irrespective of efficiency or flexibility".³²

Finally, Burnheim criticises all voting systems as leading to undemocratic outcomes. Majority, plurality and preferential systems he argues, tend to produce two large parties or coalitions that compete for the middle ground and offer alternative administrations which only differ in emphasis while proportional representation produces either similar arrangement of two large power blocs or a multiplicity of parties which "immobilize the government machine".³³

Burnheim's critique has more than theoretical consequences as may be seen in the failure of some elections to produce results reflecting the preferences expressed in the elections themselves. The results of the Queensland State election in July 1995 highlight the mundane problems of representative systems even in the absence of malapportionment or gerrymander: the Goss Labor government was returned despite achieving only 46.7% of the two party preferred vote³⁴.

Paul Hirst points to another inherent logical problem in the representative system: selecting a person is never quite the same as selecting policies or laws.³⁵ He develops the point made by Robert Michels that the elected representative will "regard himself as authorised arbiter of the situation, and really is such"³⁶, in order to argue that the actual practice of representative politics - the double delegation of authority from the people to the legislature and from the legislature to government - means that the original rational

³⁰ *ibid* p95-96

³¹ *ibid* p97-101

³² *ibid* p104

³³ *ibid* p105

³⁴ Green, Antony "Why the odds are against Labor" *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 September 1995 p13. The Queensland result was the worst example of the six recent Australian cases quoted by Green where victorious parties had not achieved a majority of the two-party preferred vote.

³⁵ Hirst "Representative democracy and its limits" p193-4

³⁶ Michels, Robert *Political Parties* Dover New York 1959 p39

choice of the citizen can quickly become subsumed by institutional concerns. Elsewhere Hirst concludes: "There can be no *real* representation."³⁷

This points to a deeper theoretical concern about the very nature of representation. How can a politician be said to make someone present who is not physically present? Some would argue simply that the process of election authorises the candidate with majority support to represent the interests of the whole electorate as the successful candidate best sees fit. Edmund Burke, for example argued that: "Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion."³⁸

The Burkean reading of the democratic mandate suggests a circular definition of representation: representation is merely what electors elect representatives to do. Burke elevates representatives to positions of power without requiring them actually to concern themselves with the opinions, attitudes or desires of their electors and so limits the democratic nature of representative democracy. The representative's seat may be so safe, or national issues so dominant, that he or she is re-elected regardless of how he or she represents the electors and so the opinions or rational choices of their constituents have very little sway over them. In this respect Hirst argues, representation may merely disguise the fact that "government is a continuing agency" that has fallen prey to political parties so that the dominance of party leadership undermines "democratic" discourse by failing to represent the full diversity of opinion and by accepting the domination of the concerns of a narrow group of institutions.³⁹ It is at this point that the limitations in the general logic of representation lead to the particular theoretical concern about elitism.

Elitism

Bernard Crick hints at the essence of the problem of elitism in representative democracy when he notes that political representation is "a device of government before ever it can be sensibly viewed as a 'right' of the governed."⁴⁰ Crick is warning that there may be nothing inherently democratic about representation, a point reinforced by the history of

³⁷ Hirst, Paul *Associative Democracy* Polity Cambridge 1994 p34

³⁸ Burke, Edmund Speech to the electors of Bristol 1774 quoted in McLean *Democracy and New Technology* p30

³⁹ Hirst "Representative democracy and its limits" p193-4

⁴⁰ Crick, Bernard *In Defence of Politics* Weidenfield & Nicholson London 1962 p26

representative institutions. In the classical period, J.A.O. Larsen points out, representative assemblies were typically "encouraged to function particularly as an aid to the central government in supervising local administration, but they had little real administering of their own to perform".⁴¹ While the relatively demotic Roman principle that all who had a stake in a judicial case had a right to be present at the determination of the case informed "the establishment of representative institutions within the Catholic Church"⁴², the potential for use of representation by elites was clear when late feudal aristocracy required of various Kings "that extraordinary taxes must have the consent of those taxed"⁴³ through informal councils of barons who were the tenants-in-chief of most productive land. This situation was formalised in England by the Magna Carta in 1215⁴⁴ and widened only marginally in 1327 to include representative knights, burghers and bishops to form the first English Parliament⁴⁵.

Even universal adult suffrage does not necessarily make representation democratic. Aristotle, as M.I. Finley shows, was the first to point out that elections were predominantly aristocratic rather than democratic: the criteria by which the choice of the "best" candidate is made will always be influenced by those who already have power and so elections facilitate the rule of the elite.⁴⁶ The practical and theoretical ramifications of Aristotle's point were implicitly drawn out of the representative democracies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the "classical elitists" Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca and particularly Robert Michels.

Michels developed a theory of organisations built around the principal of "the iron law of oligarchy".⁴⁷ Michels argues that despite the liberal fiction that sovereignty resides in the aggregate of the community, the formal constitution never matches the real power structure which is necessarily some form of rule by a political elite. He suggests that while what he identifies as the subservience of the masses and the obsessive psychology of leadership are contributory factors, it is the technical necessities of organisation that

⁴¹ Larsen, JAO *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* University of California Press Berkeley 1966 p145 see also Taylor, Lily Ross *Roman Voting Assemblies* University of Michigan Press Ann Arbor 1966

⁴² Birch, AH *Representation* Pall Mall London 1971 p22

⁴³ Pitkin, HF *The Concept of Representation* UCP Berkeley 1967 p85

⁴⁴ Birch *Representation* p26 also Watson, P & Barber B *The Struggle for Democracy* Allen & Co London 1990 p128

⁴⁵ Birch *Representation* p27

⁴⁶ Aristotle *Politics* 1300b; Finley, MI *Democracy Ancient and Modern* Rutgers University Press New Brunswick 1973 p19

⁴⁷ Michels *Political Parties* p377-392

creates the ground for elitism: "It is organisation which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors.... Who says organisation, says oligarchy."⁴⁸ Michels points out that government of a complex society requires planning and implementation processes which need to be administered by a permanent and professional structure which in turn needs to be coordinated. He argues that this higher level of coordination which sets policy goals and thematic directions for government as well as appointing people sympathetic to these goals and directions to key positions, is the function of the political party and while there may be some circulation of power between parties, the group with actual political power is necessarily quite small.

Michels did not blame the malfeasance of the oligarchs *per se* for the concentration of power but "the very nature of the mass as mass"⁴⁹. James Hyland argues that it is this very point that suggests "the logical limits" to representative democracy in mass society: when people cede power to their representatives in elections, they then cannot regain that power because of their "atomistic multiplicity and the inevitable gulf separating the detailed knowledge of the full-time professional from that of even the most informed amateur."⁵⁰

Another, related approach to representative democracy analyses indices of personal identity in the general community and compares these with the make-up of practitioners, to reveal that current political processes, in Australia for example, over-represent white, male, professional, university-educated and Anglo-Celtic interests at the expense of other sectors.⁵¹ Further, Paul Hirst argues, the emergence of disciplined party machines and their integration into general corporate structures have acted to constrain the operation of elections so that democracy now merely "serves to legitimate modern big government and to restrain it hardly at all"⁵².

To summarise the issues raised by this chapter so far: while representative democracy formally accords to its citizens, through free elections and free speech, the opportunity to participate in the production of a government with policies which reflect the citizens' preferences, there are concerns that 1) it is logically and practically impossible for any democratic system to reproduce accurately the wishes of its constituents and 2) the

⁴⁸ *ibid* 1959 p401

⁴⁹ *ibid* p404

⁵⁰ Hyland, JL *Democratic Theory: The Philosophical Foundations* Manchester University Press Manchester 1995 p248

⁵¹ McAllister *Political Behaviour* p203-209

⁵² Hirst "Representative Democracy and its Limits" p190

claim to representative democracy merely disguises an "elective despotism"⁵³ which has only a passing concern for the interests of those it purports to represent. These criticisms have led a number of political theorists to argue against both Schumpeter's minimalist account and Mill's liberal model of representative democracy by emphasising the crucial role of participation in effective democratic processes and seeking new ways to ensure the involvement of all interested citizens in the making of decisions which affect them.

Participatory Models

Bachrach argues against Schumpeter's definition of democracy with an alternative normative account of democratic theory "founded on the self-developmental objective... that at the same time firmly confronts the elite-mass structure characteristics of modern societies."⁵⁴ Against Schumpeter's claim that mass society requires elites because the average voter is not rational enough to make sensible political decisions, Bachrach contends in the tradition of Rousseau and Mill: "the majority of individuals stand to gain in self-esteem and growth toward a fuller affirmation of their personalities by participating more actively in meaningful community decisions".⁵⁵ He goes on to argue that the most effective political education is one "which challenges the individual to engage cooperatively in the solution of concrete problems affecting himself and his immediate community."⁵⁶

Bachrach argues that it is only through participation that the common people can develop the skills and power to confront elite control. He is also determined to extend the political into the workplace on the grounds that corporations have become "private governments" engaged in "authoritatively allocating values for society"⁵⁷ and as such should open themselves to the scrutiny of those affected by corporate values and decisions.

In *Participation and Democratic Theory* Carol Pateman follows a similar path. She criticises Schumpeter's claim that democracy is a method rather than an ideal and she argues that participation, both political and industrial, educates and empowers the

⁵³ Macaulay quoted in Hirst "Representative Democracy and its Limits" p198

⁵⁴ Bachrach *The Theory of Democratic Elitism* p99

⁵⁵ *ibid* p101

⁵⁶ *ibid* p103

⁵⁷ *ibid* p103

participant and this is crucial to the health and strength of democracy.⁵⁸ In a later work, *The Problem of Political Obligation* Pateman develops her critique of representative democracy and extends it to take in the liberal model of Mill.⁵⁹ She argues that the question of political obligation is an intractable one for liberal democratic theory because the application of representative democracy to a mass society can only ever marginally involve the average citizen. Pateman suggests that a citizen's binding obligation to a political process can only develop in the context of a participatory democratic system. There is more to political obligation than the duty of occasionally casting a vote and then providing obedience to the system; there is also an obligation to make the system work. Democracy, Pateman contends, can only work where citizens understand that they have a duty to foster democratic processes as a common undertaking and, most particularly, a duty to participate in those processes.

Central to this participation is a commitment not only to partake in the act of decision-making but, even more importantly, to become engaged in the deliberative processes which precede that decision-making: "'Communicative action' is basic to political obligation over the whole of collective life".⁶⁰ Pateman borrows the notion of "communicative action" from Jurgen Habermas who uses it to refer to the verbal and extra-verbal interaction required to establish the interpersonal relations by which situations are defined, actions are considered and common plans are coordinated.⁶¹ Pateman is at pains to ensure that the concept is not limited to the realm of the overtly political but is integrated throughout the individual's life: "The linguistic and other capacities which underlie the individual's ability to perform and understand speech acts are continuous with those necessary for participation in the practice of political obligation."⁶² Thus Pateman refuses to draw line between *personal* and *political* and extends the participatory impulse beyond decisions of the state and into the family, the workplace and the general community.

In *Strong Democracy* Benjamin Barber continues the work of Bachrach and Pateman by contrasting the "thin" liberal democracy practised in the West with a form of participatory democracy he styles "strong": "a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogenous interests than by civic education" which utilises

⁵⁸ Pateman *Participation and Democratic Theory*

⁵⁹ Pateman, Carol *The Problem of Political Obligation* Polity Press Cambridge 1985

⁶⁰ *ibid* p178

⁶¹ Habermas, Jurgen *The Theory of Communicative Action I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* Beacon Boston 1984 p94-101

⁶² Pateman *The Problem of Political Obligation* p178

participatory institutions to resolve conflict.⁶³ Against the disengaged citizenship of Schumpeter and the representative model found in Mill, Barber argues for the much closer engagement of Athenian direct democracy where there was a strong social expectation that citizens would participate in the decisions of the state and a system of education that provided them not only with the technical skills but also the ethical framework to do so. He sees potential for new communication technologies, such as interactive cable television, to assist in this process. The ramifications of this strategy will be discussed in later chapters.

In laying the theoretical groundwork for his participatory model, Barber accepts the absence of any independent criteria and "eschews metaphysics and circumvents philosophical issues of Final Truth and Absolute Morals" to argue that "the ultimate political question is one of action".⁶⁴ Barber argues that democracy should be judged not on the precepts it claims are important but on what it actually does. He accentuates the vital role of deliberation in participation: "At the heart of strong democracy is talk".⁶⁵ But Barber rejects, as a basis for democratic theory, Habermas's notion of "communicative action" because Barber anticipates that any binding definition of reason will limit the scope of democracy and the range of participation⁶⁶.

Barber generates a model of participatory practice along three axes: speaking/listening, cognitive/affective, reflection/action.⁶⁷ This model is significant for two connected reasons. First, while Barber highlights the importance of the traditional democratic virtues - free speech and the unencumbered right to action within the rule of law - he equally privileges the moment of introspection - listening and reflecting. Second, he broadens this introspection beyond the rational cognition of free thought that is at the heart of the liberal democratic model to include the affective. Thus Barber accepts that citizens are both rational and emotional and he insists that participation includes the right to the opportunities to think and feel, not only to talk and act. In dissolving the boundaries between personal and political realms and private and public spaces, Barber is opening the possible topics and methods for deliberation. The breadth of Barber's notion of "talk" is apparent as he lists its nine functions within the participatory process:

⁶³ Barber, Benjamin *Strong Democracy* University of California Press Berkeley 1984 p117

⁶⁴ *ibid* p121-129

⁶⁵ *ibid* p173

⁶⁶ *ibid* p130

⁶⁷ *ibid* p174

1) to articulate interests, 2) persuasion, 3) agenda setting, 4) exploring mutuality, 5) affiliation and affection, 6) maintaining autonomy, 7) expressing individual experience and emotions, 8) reconceptualisation and 9) community building.⁶⁸ To Barber, it is the very breadth of what may be admitted as political talk that creates the dynamic power in democracy. One particular example of the dynamic power of talk in democracy can be seen in his discussion of persuasion. As will be seen in following chapters, some critics argue that the application of persuasive techniques is an affront to autonomy and therefore counter-democratic, but Barber points out that:

the rhetorician's resort to public arguments suggests something of the ability that the idea of the public has to legitimise politics.... [E]ven the narrowest construction of persuasion moves the polity beyond talk as the expression of wholly private interests and becomes a link to stronger forms of democracy.⁶⁹

Even self-interested and manipulative persuasion is useful when it emerges into the public domain, Barber argues, because it then becomes part of the deliberative process in the collective realm and thus opens itself up for critique and discussion. As will be seen in later chapters, the interchange of arguments and opinions that develops as various interested parties participate in public debate produces a "rhetorical exchange" which provides citizens the opportunity to think issues through as they come to their own positions which is a crucial prelude to informed democratic decision-making.

John Mathews⁷⁰ and Paul Hirst⁷¹ return to the guild socialism of G.D.H. Cole developed in the first two decades of this century for a particular model of participatory practice they call "associative democracy". Hirst argues that in the space provided by "the exhaustion of the great competing intellectual systems of social organisation, liberal democratic capitalism and collectivistic state socialism"⁷² there is the potential to "imagine a system that combined citizen choice with public welfare: associationalism"⁷³. Mathews and Hirst both argue for the gradual replacement of the state with networks of voluntary (though publicly funded) associations based around particular local interests such as the workplace and the community. Those associations, they suggest, should be integrated into national and global interests through broader associations (such as unions and social movements).

⁶⁸ *ibid* p177ff

⁶⁹ *ibid* p180

⁷⁰ Mathews, John *The Age of Democracy* Oxford University Press Melbourne 1989

⁷¹ Hirst *Associative Democracy*

⁷² *ibid* p1

⁷³ *ibid* 1994 p6

The argument for associationalism suggests that these loose arrangements offer not only the opportunity for participation but also the means to adapt to changing circumstances and new political forces in ways bureaucracies cannot and the private interests of markets do not want to do. To overcome the elitism and distance from the decision-making processes produced by representative democracy, associationalism, like other forms of participatory democracy, wants to decentralise decision-making and so limit the scale and scope of decisions to dimensions that invite participation.

Logical limitations to participatory democracy

While less work has been done on the logical limitations of participatory democracy compared to the work discussed above with regard to representative democracy, there are nevertheless a number of issues about the participatory model that require consideration. The logical limitations to participatory democracy may be divided into four categories: coordination, engagement, scale and coercion.

Ancient critics saw the potential for direct citizen participation in democracy to encourage instability and imprudence⁷⁴. Contemporary participatory models are still prone to the same criticism because they rely on a putative enthusiasm to participate without making clear the nature of the coordination mechanisms they would employ to tackle urgent, complex problems. It might be pointed out that free and voluntary associations are technically incapable of producing the compulsion that may be required to deal with crises such as health epidemics, economic breakdown or military assault. The issue of coordination is exacerbated by the problem of ensuring that citizens will engage in the participatory process, particularly if there is wide-spread ambivalence about the efficacy of the act of participation itself.

While voting in a representative process involves minimal outlay for a small return, engagement in a participatory process involves a very large outlay of time and energy for a return that may be equally small after any decision finally made has been considered and amended by layer upon layer of networked associations which may have an interest in the decision. Thus it may well be irrational for a rational person to participate. In response to this problem, the Athenian model of direct democracy initially relied on Scythian slaves who were charged with the responsibility of rounding

⁷⁴ Aristotle *Politics* 1304b-1305a

up laggards. Later it provided payment for attendance at the Assembly; even then a quorum was only fifteen percent of those eligible to participate.⁷⁵

The issues of coordination and engagement arise partly from the scale of operations required for democratic involvement in a mass society. While the Athenian model of direct democracy functioned effectively because all interested citizens could gather in the one place, this is no longer feasible even in larger cities, let alone for national or global constituencies. While, as Barber suggests, there is the potential for emerging interactive communication technologies to overcome this problem by allowing a constituency to participate in debate and decision-making via TV, computer, phone and cable where access for all can be guaranteed⁷⁶, this does not overcome the amount of time required for the participants to engage in deliberation and decision-making, let alone process the huge volume of information required to reach an informed position, on the large number of complex issues that are now the province of government action.⁷⁷

A further problem for participatory theory arises from the potential for the subversion of the individual autonomy at the heart of free participation by various forms of coercion. Bachrach points out that the personality quirks of participants and the stratagems of interpersonal psychology that might be utilised by those aspiring to fill leadership roles can warp the democratic nature of participatory processes:

under some conditions participation may feed the pathological needs of the participants and thereby impede development rather than facilitate it. Under other conditions, what appears to be free, meaningful discussion may in reality be a subtle process of manipulation in which the feelings and thoughts of those participating are induced by the leader.⁷⁸

Anne Phillips similarly warns of the dangers of conformity in small groups, even without formal leadership, and draws on the experience of the women's movement to point to the danger of "homogeneity [where] an overly consensual - indeed illiberal - politics... made it peculiarly difficult to agree to disagree."⁷⁹

The issue of coercion arises again when participatory processes move beyond the small scale. With larger groups and intricate networks of decision-making, the propensity to form power elites re-emerges. Carole Pateman has pointed to the correlation between

⁷⁵ Dahl, RA *Modern Political Analysis* 4th ed Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs 1984 p96

⁷⁶ Barber *Strong Democracy* also McLean *Democracy and New Technology*

⁷⁷ Hyland *Democratic Theory* p255 also Phillips, Anne "Must Feminists Give Up on Liberal Democracy" in Held *Prospects for Democracy* p100

⁷⁸ Bachrach *The Theory of Democratic Elitism* p101

⁷⁹ Phillips "Must Feminists Give Up on Liberal Democracy" p99

social and economic status and political participation: whether in capitalist United States or socialist Yugoslavia better educated and more highly skilled people are more likely to participate in democratic forums than those with fewer skills and education.⁸⁰ Anne Phillips points out the problems in achieving broad-ranging participation by citizens:

the potentially inegalitarian implications of a politics that relies on meetings ...The higher the demands placed on participation, the more inevitable that it will be unevenly spread around; the more active the democratic engagement, the more likely it is to be carried by only a few.⁸¹

Further, within the participatory model there is no systematic defence against organisation from below being destroyed or co-opted by concerted action from outside forces. Barber highlights this concern when he outlines the potential for his participatory model to be taken over by the very elites it was designed to circumvent: "strong democracy means widespread and ongoing participation in talk by the entire citizenry. Left to the media, the bureaucrats, the professors and the managers, language quickly degenerates into one more weapon in the armory of elite rule."⁸² These issues are discussed in more detail in the following chapter which highlights the crucial role of deliberation in democracy and explores the potential for the mass media to limit that deliberation.

New Directions for Democracy

As has been seen above there are numerous logical limitations to both the representative and participatory models of democracy. The question must be asked: do any of these problems, singularly or in combination, provide a conclusive reason for rejecting the concept of democracy as impossible in theory or unachievable in practice? This thesis argues that while the problems outlined above point to particular limitations in various theoretical accounts and practical programs, none refute the notion of democracy as an on-going experiment constantly recreating itself by adapting to theoretical developments and changing circumstances. Further, this thesis takes the opportunity to use the critiques of both representative and participatory models to develop the notion of democracy and suggest improvements to its institutional forms to increase participation and improve representations. Between the representation/ participation dichotomy

⁸⁰ Pateman, Carol "The civic culture: a philosophic critique" in Almond, GA & Verba, S (eds) *The Civic Culture Revisited* Little Brown Boston 1980 p91

⁸¹ Phillips "Must Feminists Give Up on Liberal Democracy" p101

⁸² Barber *Strong Democracy* p197

explored in contemporary democratic theory, there is the chance, as Anthony Arblaster suggests, to theorise paths for the evolution of the democratic system to make it both more representative and more participatory.⁸³ Norberto Bobbio systematises this insight in *The Future of Democracy* where he argues that, while totalising models of democracy may be unworkable;

between pure representation and pure direct democracy there is not the qualitative leap which advocates of direct democracy believe... [but] a continuum ... [I]n a mature system of democracy both forms of democracy are necessary but they are not, taken on their own, self-sufficient.⁸⁴

Bobbio goes on to argue that the notion of representation must be extended beyond the parliamentary to the everyday and the notion of political equality extended beyond the right to vote. Chantal Mouffe goes further to broaden the field where the project of rethinking democracy can occur beyond the representation/ participation dichotomy to the ground between "the democratic logic of identity and equivalence and the liberal logic of pluralism and difference".⁸⁵ As was noted above, Mouffe does not underestimate the extent of this project. A few possible alternative approaches to rethinking democracy are discussed below.

One path that has been followed by a number of theorists is to argue for a revitalisation of the concept of citizenship and an emphasis on the educational processes required to equip individuals with the skills to participate effectively in an expanded representative model. Danilo Zolo argues that the opportunity exists to confront the increasing social complexity and globalisation which challenge the basic assumptions of traditional democratic theory. To do this, Zolo claims, citizens need to develop the skills to reclaim the basic civil and political rights that allow them to exercise the autonomy and rationality required to ensure the visibility and accountability of power.⁸⁶

In 1949 Thomas Marshall laid the groundwork for contemporary discussion of citizenship with an argument for its reformulation to ensure not only the civil rights required by the nascent market economy of the eighteenth century (free speech, fair trial etc) and the political rights won as mass consumer markets developed in the nineteenth century (free choice in secret elections etc) but also the social rights that the twentieth century mixed economy could provide (social welfare generally).⁸⁷ By drawing attention

⁸³ Arblaster, Anthony *Democracy* Milton Keynes Open University Press 1987

⁸⁴ Bobbio, Norberto *The Future of Democracy* Polity Press Cambridge 1987 p53

⁸⁵ Mouffe "Preface: Democratic Politics Today" p14

⁸⁶ Zolo, D *Democracy and Complexity* Pennsylvania State University Press 1992

⁸⁷ Marshall, TH *Class, Citizenship and Social Development* Uni of Chicago Press Chicago 1964 p65-122

to the malleable but key role of citizenship in democracy, Marshall has influenced many other theorists to redevelop the concept in light of emerging social and political conditions.⁸⁸

Recently Mouffe has argued that the re-affirmation of all the citizenship rights enumerated by Marshall is important in societies where they are under threat, but that the rights do not exist in abstract:

A citizen cannot properly be conceived independently of her insertion in a political community.... [A] radical, democratic citizen must be an active citizen who acts as a citizen, who conceives herself as a participant in a collective undertaking.⁸⁹

Mouffe goes on to refuse the distinction between public and private: "We cannot say: here end my duties as a citizen and begins my freedom as an individual.... this is precisely the tension between liberty and equality that characterises modern democracy."⁹⁰ Below it is argued that this tension not only characterises modern democracy but, as it is worked out in debate and deliberation, has always provided democracy with the dynamism it requires to produce action and change. In further chapters, the role of the citizen in a democracy where deliberation occurs significantly in the mass media is explored.

Henry Giroux sees the potential for democratic renewal through educational intervention designed to produce an active citizenship via a "truly critical pedagogy [which] would also uncover the latent possibilities, needs and hopes that point to the possibility for further analysis and struggle".⁹¹ More recently, in Australia, there has been a movement for "active citizenship"⁹² that led to establishment of the Civics Experts Group. Its report, *Whereas the people...* called for the design of a curriculum that teaches the skills and values required by citizens for participation in Australian political life.⁹³

Paul Hirst however is critical of the emphasis he considers is placed on citizenship in discussion of democratic theory because it ignores the globalising processes which are

⁸⁸ see for example Pixley, Jocelyn *Citizenship and Employment: investigating postindustrial options* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1993

⁸⁹ Mouffe "Preface: Democratic Politics Today" p4

⁹⁰ Mouffe, Chantal "Democratic Citizenship and Political Community" in Mouffe, Chantal (ed) *Dimensions of Radical Democracy* Verso London 1992 p238

⁹¹ Giroux, Henry A *Schooling for Democracy* Routledge London 1989 p28

⁹² Davidson, Alistair *From Subject to Citizen* Cambridge Uni Press Cambridge 1997 p134-136

⁹³ Civics Expert Group *Whereas the people...* AGPS Canberra 1994

undermining the nation states to which citizens belong and it disregards the "complex multi-focal politics" which is developing.⁹⁴ In particular Julian Thomas and Denise Meredyth are critical of the emphasis citizenship curricula place on neo-religious "core values" at the expense of teaching "a range of practical and ethical capacities required to negotiate one's various role as a citizen or resident".⁹⁵

It is significant for the argument of this thesis that a number of other theorists also turn to educational intervention as a means to instill various values in order to renew representative democracy. David Held concludes his exhaustive analysis of democratic models with the observation that the dual roles of democracy are to reform state power and restructure civil society around the principle of individual autonomy which is to be produced by educational intervention.⁹⁶

Similarly Hanna Pitkin goes beyond Burke's circular definition of representation discussed above (that is: representation is what the electors elect representatives to do) to use a mix of linguistic and historical analysis in order to locate representation in the field between characterisation, symbolism and agency, between "standing for" and "acting for" the constituency. She then goes on to argue that the effectiveness of representation rests in the challenge "to construct institutions and train individuals in such a way that they engage in the pursuit of the public interest".⁹⁷

In a similar vein, Ross Harrison concludes his review of the development of democratic theory with a reflection on the paradoxes inherent in representation with particular reference to recent theoretical conflict between liberal autonomy and communitarian equality. Harrison suggests that the way out of the seeming impasse between individual self interest on the one hand and collective disregard for the individual rights and aspirations on the other, rests in citizens learning impartiality (that is the disregard of self interest and collective concern for the welfare of the individual) as a discipline and the greater application of that discipline in democratic institutions generally.⁹⁸

John Burnheim pursues a completely distinct pathway by rejecting elective representative democracy as inherently oligarchic and arguing instead for a system he calls "demarchy[:]" decision-making bodies should be statistically representative of those

⁹⁴ Hirst *Associative Democracy* p13

⁹⁵ Thomas, Julian & Meredyth, Denise "Pluralising Civics" *Culture and Policy* vol 7 no 2 1996 p13

⁹⁶ Held *Models of Democracy* p283

⁹⁷ Pitkin *The Concept of Representation* p240

⁹⁸ Harrison, Ross *Democracy* Routledge London 1993

affected by their decisions."⁹⁹ Burnheim points out that the rotation of political office and the selection of office-holders by lot was a traditional democratic procedure until two hundred years ago¹⁰⁰ and that his suggestion merely brings those practices up-to-date and applies them to the contingencies of mass society. Where the statistically selected representative holds office for only a short time, this system would appear to be a powerful antidote to the professionalisation of politics but, it may be noted, likely to be subject to the same limitations in producing effective coordination as were addressed in the discussion of participatory democracy above.

Another path has been pursued by John Rawls who has returned to the social contract theory of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau and mingled it with Kant's work on the categorical imperative to argue against J.S. Mill's utilitarian liberal democracy.¹⁰¹ Rawls suggests that a rational basis to justice and thus politics may be found in the "hypothetical" contract to which rational people would agree "behind a veil of ignorance" where no one knew their social and economic position or their individual assets and abilities.¹⁰² From this basis Rawls generates a constitutional framework guaranteeing civil liberties with an economic order devoted to achieving social justice via individual participation in free speech and the choice of electoral representatives with "just" majority rule.¹⁰³ Central to this process is a "deliberative rationality" where decisions are made to satisfy "fundamental desires" after "careful reflection" and in the possession of "full information".¹⁰⁴ Thus democracy is a practical guarantee of Rawls' hypothetical contract because it allows the removal of corrupt, unfair and totalitarian governments in free elections.¹⁰⁵

Towards a Definition of Democracy

The above discussion of the state of contemporary democratic theory provides the opportunity to posit a working definition of democracy. As was noted in Chapter One, democracy is an open and continuing project with "no hope of final reconciliation"¹⁰⁶.

⁹⁹ Burnheim *Is Democracy Possible?* p9

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* p9-10

¹⁰¹ Rawls, John *A Theory of Justice* Belknap Cambridge, Mass 1971 p22-27

¹⁰² *ibid* p11-12

¹⁰³ *ibid* p60-61, p221-228

¹⁰⁴ *ibid* p356-362, p416-417

¹⁰⁵ Levy, Jacob T "The liberal defence of democracy" *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1994) vol 29 p586

¹⁰⁶ Mouffe "Preface: Democratic Politics Today" p14

The historical fluidity of the concept and its dynamic potential to adapt and develop as part of the process of democratic change mean that it is impossible to enunciate any binding definition of democracy, or even arrive at a final set of ideals in which democratic practices are indisputably based. To do so, according to Barber, limits the scope of democracy and the range of participation in it¹⁰⁷ and, it might be added, the potential for it to adapt and develop in response to democratic initiatives.

However the impossibility of a binding definition does not prevent the proposal of a working definition of democracy that:

- 1) overtly accepts that part of its definitive role is that the definitive is always a matter for debate and
- 2) is available for further adaptation and even outright rejection where it raises more practical or theoretical problems than it solves.

In this context the discussion above has identified a number of recurring themes which may contribute to the formation of a working definition of democracy:

- 1) democracy requires popular rule whereby the sovereignty of a democracy rests with the aggregate of the citizenry, and those citizens must exercise that sovereignty at regular intervals;
- 2) democracy requires equal rights for all citizens to participate in the democratic processes which therefore requires a relatively high degree of social equality and;
- 3) democracy requires protection of basic liberties, including most particularly a commitment to free speech, and also an adherence to the rule of law in so far as it limits the state from interfering with citizens' abilities to be involved in the democratic processes.

Consideration of these themes reveals the important role of process in describing the functions of democracy and raises the possibility that democracy exists not where a set of ideals informs a set of institutions but rather where institutions provide the opportunity to question and debate which ideals should inform its decisions. By locating democracy not as ideals or institutions but as the processes by which those ideals and institutions interact, the focus of any attempt to define democracy shifts

¹⁰⁷ Barber *Strong Democracy* p130

from the provision of a formal, "ideological" account to a recognition of the mechanisms by which citizens realise their collectivity. This collectivity arises not from any totalising impetus but merely from the need for citizens to manage internal social conflict and to act together from time to time to maintain and improve their lives.

Thus the key attribute of democracy is that it exists as a mechanism which allows for the peaceful resolution of the tensions not only, at a practical level, between the different social interests of citizens but also, at a theoretical level, between autonomy and cohesion, between the individual and the social, between private and public. Where the actions to resolve these tensions are systematised into a dynamic mechanism which manages conflict by creating peaceful change, then that mechanism is also producing and reproducing democracy itself. Examples of such mechanisms range from Parliaments to school committee meetings, from processes of local conciliation to negotiations in international forums.

It is important to note that this definition does not rely on foundations or values that in turn require justification, but on the contingent operations of the democratic mechanism that both allows the simple definitions of democracy stated at the beginning of Chapter One to apply and also gives form to the many, more complex democratic concepts discussed above and in the following chapter. Most significantly, this definition does not require that democracy be universally beneficent. It accepts that democracy can make mistakes while providing for a high degree of malleability in actual democratic practices so that mistakes may be confronted, learnt from and overcome. To adapt Mouffe¹⁰⁸ in order to arrive at a working definition: democracy requires the recognition of the multiplicity of social logics and the necessity of their articulation through mechanisms which are available to all citizens and which produce collective decisions.

Two pressing issues emerge from the working definition above. The first issue is the crucial role of deliberation between citizens in the operation of the mechanism which produces democratic decisions. This issue will be considered in depth in the next chapter. The second issue arises around the unresolved position of elections as part of the democratic mechanism. As will be seen in later chapters, theoretical consideration of both deliberation and elections is central to realising the formal and practical democratic possibilities offered by the election campaign. The particular concern of the next section however is the way in which elections operate as part of the democratic mechanism by bridging the processes of representation and participation.

¹⁰⁸ Mouffe "Preface: Democratic Politics Today" p14

Elections as Representation and Participation

As was seen above, proponents of representative democracy view electoral competition as a definitive element for democratic systems in mass societies. Both Schumpeter and Mill suggest that in large scale societies such as the modern nation state, direct participation in all decision-making is unrealistic but it is the exercise of the franchise that allows the limited participation that makes such political systems democratic. While Schumpeter limits the role of the election to rejecting one unsatisfactory elite in favour of an alternative elite, Mill sees the election as an opportunity for the citizenry to develop their own social responsibility and civic virtue as they consider which alternative government will best aid the further positive development of the society and the state. An earlier proponent of representative democracy, James Madison, argued that elections avoid the potential anarchy of "pure democracy" because they allow for the clarification of contentious issues and are likely to produce representatives capable of pursuing the best interests of the citizenry as a whole.¹⁰⁹

In the more recent critiques of representative democracy discussed earlier in this chapter, elections were seen to have three major theoretical defects: they cannot allocate citizens' policy preferences effectively, they necessarily install elites and they do little to produce change. These critiques rest on the proposition that elections in themselves produce democracy. They expand the role of elections beyond what can be sustained by the collection of mundane practices that make up the election: candidates nominating and campaigning; citizens voting and; officials counting honestly and accurately. These practices in themselves do not produce democracy. As was seen above broad access to free deliberation is required before any system is effectively democratic. Thus, it may be concluded here, elections alone can never be the final determinant of democracy; they are merely tools which may be put to democratic use just as they are put to oligarchic use. Nevertheless, elections do have a number of theoretical purposes which may produce practical effects in conducive circumstances.

A point of clarification is required before moving on to consider those purposes. In a mass society elections only haphazardly produce policy outcomes that exactly reflect the collective opinion of citizens because in such a society policy issues will necessarily be complex and "public opinion" difficult to gauge. Also the creation and application of policy will continue after the election when new circumstances may arise which can and should affect decision-making. Rather, and this is the first significant purpose of

¹⁰⁹ Held *Models of Democracy* p64

elections, they prevent elites from becoming totalitarian dictatorships by providing peaceful opportunities for the exercise of what Hyland describes as "the law of anticipated reaction". It is not, he argues, "the last election that exercises controlling power over the government of the day, but the anticipation of the next election."¹¹⁰ Thus, it may be concluded here, even if elections can never quite properly represent the multiplicity of interests in society, even if they always tend to elitism, they are still a key moment for democracy because they do allow for unmediated demotic participation in the democratic mechanism to create change.

An election is the one moment when citizens have a clear and decisive power over government. Politicians dread the electoral backlash and frequently allow electoral considerations to dominate the political processes, as David Mayhew shows in his study of the US Congress.¹¹¹ That elections allow the law of anticipated reaction to operate peacefully and at regular intervals should not be diminished. Even if democracy is "only a system for processing conflicts without killing one another"¹¹², then one would have to point out that, in terms of human suffering, it is vastly superior to many alternative systems which countenance or give rise to political murder.

Secondly, while elections may allow for little more than the circulation of elites, this is hardly surprising while their purpose is to produce governments which are *sui generis* elites. At the same time they go some way to meeting what Hyland identifies, borrowing his imagery from cybernetics, as "the law of requisite variety [which] requires a complexity in control of inputs that matches the possible variety of desired outputs."¹¹³ Universal suffrage gives elections a legitimacy as expressions of the collective will and the regular occurrence of upset victories, successful independent candidates and minor parties or coalitions of independents holding the balance of power suggest that citizens may exercise their votes to produce the outcomes they desire, rather than merely act as "pawns" subservient to the purposes of political parties. Even if one accepts Barry Hindess's definition of society as a "spurious actor" because it has "no identifiable means of reaching and formulating decisions, let alone of acting on them"¹¹⁴, elections would appear to be precisely such opportunities for the citizens

¹¹⁰ Hyland *Democratic Theory* p253

¹¹¹ Mayhew, D *Congress: The Electoral Connection* Yale University Press New Haven 1974

¹¹² Przeworski, Adam *Democracy and the Market* Cambridge Uni Press Cambridge 1991 p95

¹¹³ Hyland *Democratic Theory* p254

¹¹⁴ Hindess, Barry *Political Choice and Social Structure* Edward Elgar Aldershot 1989 p6

who make up the vast bulk of interested parties in any given society to make and act on political decisions.

Thirdly, it may be argued that while elections do not have a record of successfully producing revolutionary change, they not only allow adaptation and reform but do so while ensuring if not support, at least sufferance from the citizenry. The ability of the electoral process to simultaneously produce change and cohesion arises from two seemingly contradictory functions of the election: it is both the moment when autonomous citizens are empowered to exert control over the government and simultaneously the moment citizens accept disempowerment as they cede their autonomy to government and consent, with whatever reservations about changes they would argue for in the future, to the existing democratic system. It is this empowerment/disempowerment contradiction and the potential revealed in the oscillation between these two conditions that produces the dynamic effect on which democracy depends.

In millions of discrete events citizens take charge and accept the consequences of taking charge, in millions of pencil marks citizens express their opinions about who should represent them and agree to go along with the decision of the aggregate. In an act of ritual abnegation of power that finally shows they were worthy of power, the government vacates its position and waits for the opinions of the citizens to determine the composition of the government. At first glance there may be little at stake here beyond the circulation of elites, but in theory and in fact this is the solution to Downs' paradox because any outcome is possible and it is for the citizenry to produce it. Elections are not only a potent corrective to governmental excess but also a real opportunity for citizens to participate unequivocally in the direction of government in a way that makes democracy democratic.

This is perhaps why proponents of participatory democracy have been hesitant to dismiss elections altogether. Even Marxist advocates of direct democracy who problematise the effectiveness of mass elections in producing democracy nevertheless accept a role for elections in the choosing of delegates from local or workplace groups to regional or industry groups.¹¹⁵ Recent advocates of participatory democracy such as Pateman and Macpherson, while continuing to emphasise the centrality of local, "face-to-face" decision-making to democracy, even go so far as to accept a continuing role for general elections in ensuring regional and national coordination and in providing a

¹¹⁵ Held *Models of Democracy* p130

defence against "Leninist" subversion of public institutions by small, well-organised elites.¹¹⁶

Thus elections emerge as the glue of democracy. They are a real, experiential bond between the government and the governed. The strength of that bond is reflected in research which shows that while a quarter of voters participate in elections out of a sense of duty, almost half vote because of the sense of satisfaction they derive from their participation.¹¹⁷ Despite the formal problems discussed above, the reality is that when people cast a vote they give a (grudging, perhaps) acceptance of the democratic system which, in turn, supplies the government with a working legitimacy. While any citizen can put him or herself forward for election, while there is free discussion of the issues, while there is no coercion in the polling booth and while the counting of votes proceeds fairly and honestly, then there is the possibility for the people to exercise their will. As the moment of mass decision making, elections provide the opportunity for direct participation, and election campaigns have the potential to open spaces where new and marginal ideas can be introduced and deployed against established interests. As will be seen in later chapters, the deliberative aspects of currently existing electoral process may be limited because they are predominantly produced by "professionals" in the employ of political parties applying adaptations of sociological and public relations techniques to win contests that change very little, but where the opportunities for free speech and deliberation remain then the electoral process still offers the space for authentic, demotic struggle and contestation.

While election campaigns may appear peripheral to everyday life, their function as the moment of acquiescence to existing political institutions marks them out as significant events and points to their potential to become more effective expressions of the outcomes of demotic deliberation. The very presence of the election campaign already provides national and local pressure groups with the opportunity to intervene in the democratic process not only during campaigns but also outside campaign times when they can maximise their impact by the implied threat of intervening during campaigns. Further, the open outcome of the election encourages citizens to exercise their rights to engage in free and frank deliberation through whatever means they can access. Democracy is reinvigorated where marginalised groups and aggrieved, or interested, individuals can use the space afforded by elections to construct creatively their own representations and introduce these into broader deliberative processes.

¹¹⁶ *ibid* p257-262

¹¹⁷ McAllister *Political Behaviour* p32

To do so requires a capability to enter the meta-narrative of the campaign by deploying the rhetorical techniques and technologies from which it is built. While there are powerful interests constantly seeking to obscure and mystify these techniques and technologies, close examination reveals some opportunities for intervention available even to marginalised groups. These are issues which are more fully explored in a practical context in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. In the next chapter, the review of contemporary democratic theory is continued with a view to exploring the role of deliberation in producing democracy and the means to overcoming what is identified as the coercive role of the mass media.

Chapter 3

DELIBERATION AND THE MASS MEDIA

Democratic Theory II

... some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects.

Bob Berelson¹

Outline

The review of democratic theory in the preceding chapter suggested the recurrence of debate and discussion as key elements in all models of democracy along the representation-participation continuum. This highlights the key role played by deliberation in the process of democratic decision-making and raises the possibility that there is potential to remake the macro-political landscape by theorising the means to create greater deliberative participation in existing representative institutions. Limitations on the exercise of free speech, particularly the coercive political function of the mass media, are seen by theorists as obstructions to deliberation in currently existing representative institutions. However, some theorists have sought to identify the gaps in the coercive practices of the mass media and others have attempted to refocus theoretical concern on the power inherent in the audience as "citizens of the media". By distinguishing between propaganda and rhetoric, the latter emerges as a practical and ethical discipline properly available to all citizens and with the potential to renew critical, democratic engagement in democratic deliberation. The discussion of contemporary democratic theory in this and the preceding chapters suggests a number of criteria by which the deliberative effectiveness of rhetorical practices within different democratic institutions might be judged.

Deliberative Models

It was seen in the previous chapter that democratic theorists have suggested a range of trajectories along which they might proceed to resolve the representation-participation dichotomy; renewal of the notion of citizenship, reinvigorating citizenship education, experiments with statistical representation and Rawls' approach to achieving justice all

¹ quoted in Diamond, Edwin & Bates, Stephen *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on TV* The MIT Press Cambridge 1984

offer potential methods to recreate democracy. Another path that has been explored by various theorists has produced a number of ideas which may be grouped together under the heading "deliberative democracy". This is defined as the resolution of political conflict "through an open and uncoerced discussion of the issue at stake with the aim of arriving at an agreed judgment... whereby initial preferences are transformed to take account of the views of others."²

It is useful to consider the range of democratic theories discussed in the preceding chapter as a continuum between Schumpeter's minimal model of representative democracy requiring only limited citizen involvement and the complex models of participatory democracy requiring a strong commitment to engagement from citizens. From consideration of that continuum, it emerges that the one constant in democratic theory is not free elections or the rule of law but that upon which they depend: free political speech. Free speech is just as vital to Mill's liberal democracy as it is to Hirst's associations; it is just as important in Mouffe's citizenship theory as it is in Burnheim's demarchy.

It is the golden thread from the Athenian assembly to the experiments with new communication technologies. Even Schumpeter's electoral competition requires opposing elites to put their cases after considering "genuine group-wise volitions".³ Philip Green argues that "[f]ull and free public discussion and debate is an absolute prerequisite to any process of democratic decision making",⁴ and for Barber, "At the heart of strong democracy is talk".⁵ The ubiquity of deliberation as an essential element of democratic practice at so many points along the continuum suggests the crucial role discussion and debate play in the prelude to democratic decision-making and thus in democracy itself.

John Dryzek offers a comprehensive model of deliberative democracy. He argues against the instrumental rationality of current representative democracy and suggests a line of thought from Aristotle to Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt and Alasdair Macintyre which posits the practical reason of a communicative rationality which rejects domination, strategy and deception⁶. He shows that this communicative rationality is best expressed in "discursive designs"; these are social institutions "around which the

² Miller "Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice" p75

³ Schumpeter *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* p270

⁴ Green, Philip *Retrieving Democracy* Methuen London 1985 p219

⁵ Barber *Strong Democracy* p173

⁶ Dryzek, John S *Discursive Democracy* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1990 p15

expectations of a number of actors converge... for recurrent communicative interaction... as citizens, not as representatives".⁷ To function effectively "as a site for recurrent communicative interaction" these institutions must allow no exclusions, no hierarchy, no complicity in state administration and no formal rules, while promoting participation in debate governed by informal canons of free discourse, focusing on particular problems shared by those involved and requiring that decisions be made by consensus.⁸ Dryzek points to incipient discursive designs in mediation, dispute resolution, regulatory negotiation, policy dialogue and international conflict resolution⁹ and he shows how those designs have been approximated in new social movements.¹⁰

Anthony Giddens follows a similar path to produce another model of deliberative democracy when he argues that in the "double dissolution of tradition and nature" there is the potential for a "utopian realism" which deals with the rapid pace of social change in a creative way¹¹. He points out that "Democratization processes today are driven by the expansion of social reflexivity and detraditionalization" so that while "well established debates pitting participation against representation offer little purchase... dialogic democratization" creates forms of social interchange that contribute to reconstructing social solidarity and further cultural cosmopolitanism by connecting autonomy and solidarity.¹²

For Giddens democracy is not a gauge of the "general will", but rather a deliberative process where greater transparency creates greater effectiveness¹³ because "democratization combats power, seeking to turn it into negotiated relationships"¹⁴ In distinguishing practical dialogic democracy from Habermas's "ideal speech situation", Giddens argues that it is already evident in "the pure relationship" of personal life, social movements and self-help groups and is developing in other arenas as corporations negotiate with relevant parties to overcome the insecurity of the global economy and nations establish deliberative forums to overcome the insecurity of the global state.¹⁵

⁷ ibid p43

⁸ ibid

⁹ ibid p43-48

¹⁰ ibid p48-50

¹¹ Giddens, Anthony *Beyond Left and Right* Polity Press Cambridge 1994 p249-249

¹² ibid p111-112

¹³ ibid p113-115

¹⁴ ibid p132

¹⁵ ibid p117-124

Proceeding from these deliberative models, it is possible to theorise the central role of deliberation in democracy with reference to two key, inter-related elements: autonomy and cohesion.

1) Autonomy is a complex concept that encompasses not only self-government in terms of the individual maintaining his or her own independence, self-sufficiency, personal freedom and political equality but also "the willingness and ability of persons to shape their lives through rational deliberation."¹⁶ The principle of autonomy extends the notion of self-government to include self-regulation in consultation with others in an open forum as, for example, when one's opinions are adapted in light of arguments found to be more compelling in the course of debate.

2) Further, ready access to deliberation provides for the production of a significant level of social cohesion because discussion and debate allow competing ideas to contend in a forum where people relate "not merely by asserting their wills or fighting for their predetermined interests, but by influencing each other through... reasoned argument, evidence, evaluation and persuasion".¹⁷ Thus deliberation can take a plethora of views and, with the good will of the participants, can progress by argument towards the wisest, most mutually satisfying position or at least produce a compromise which bears the imprint of all participants and to which they can conditionally consent.

At this point it is appropriate to appreciate how effective deliberation can be in legitimating democracy by dissolving the logical limitations to the representative and participatory models discussed in Chapter One.¹⁸ While some proponents of both representative and participatory democratic models were seen to locate the production of autonomy and cohesion at the point of the citizen's active engagement in the political process, it is important to appreciate the way in which it is the full, free and frank participation in deliberation that underpins the effective operation of democracy. For example, problems around Arrow's work on the "impossibility" of accurately reconciling individual preferences into a collective decision are resolved to the extent that deliberative democracy does not seek to accord each person's initial preference an equal weight and then calculate a median point; rather, it seeks to create a consensus by allowing an equal opportunity for all interested parties to contribute to a discussion that works towards an outcome which reflects "the common interest of the collectivity".¹⁹

¹⁶ Gutmann "Democracy" p417

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Cohen, J "Deliberation and democratic legitimacy" in Hamlin, A and Pettit, P (eds) *The Good Polity* Blackwell Oxford 1989

¹⁹ Miller "Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice" p75-76

Problems around elitism are confronted directly in the deliberative process which allows leadership to be under constant scrutiny and thus made transparent and therefore open to all participants. Similarly the problems of coordination and coercion associated with participatory democracy can be worked out within a deliberative processes which aims to develop a broad-ranging consensus because issues of timing, cohesion and the subversion of autonomy can be addressed and resolved as part of the process. Downs' paradox and associated problems relating to the amount of information to be digested for effective democratic participation may be resolved because deliberative democracy requires only that citizens be involved in the discussion of issues significant to themselves and to the extent they believe the issues warrant their involvement. Therefore it is up to individual citizens to exercise their autonomy as they weigh their potential input against prospective outcomes and make their own choice about the number and level of their engagements, about whether they are intimately involved in, or merely ensuring what Gutmann calls the "ongoing accountability"²⁰ of, those processes that are important to them.

It is thus possible to draw some further conclusions about the central role of deliberation in defining democracy. In producing the peaceful movement from the disparate ideas and aspirations held by a group of individuals to a social decision by which those individuals consider themselves bound, deliberation requires the frank exchange of views that allows new ideas to arise. It requires that those views and ideas be intellectually tested with all the skills of reason and persuasion that those individuals have to offer; it allows opinions to mutate and transform until a decision is made to which most participants are happy to be bound - at least until next time - because they have said everything they could to convince their fellows. Deliberation binds individual autonomy and social cohesion together through a process of political discussion that allows broad operation of the internal dynamic of the democratic mechanism discussed in Chapter Two. To generalise this insight: effective democratic deliberation provides an equality of potential participation by autonomous individuals which, when mediated through free speech in deliberative forums, tends to produce a provisional consensus for the collective actions decided in those forums.

Deliberation and Representation

It is significant to note that emerging models of deliberative democracy tend to mirror the participatory models discussed above with their emphasis on relatively small-scale

²⁰ Gutmann "Democracy" p418

participation in the production of micro-political solutions and a general antipathy towards the current systems based on representative models of democracy. This is hardly surprising as it is in these small-scale interactions, whether in the local community or committees concerned with issues of global significance, that an interpersonal dynamic can operate most effectively to ensure that all participants can speak and that all contentious points can be argued fully. The smallness of the group allows an intimacy where an issue can be considered with some subtlety, and formulations of the problem gradually refined until a consensus on the solution emerges. A large number of participants does not allow the same level of productive interpersonal contact and typically breaks down into "sides" and factions.

Dryzek points to incipient discursive designs in situations involving as few as two or three participants - such as mediation and dispute resolution - or in arrangements involving more participants, but which are still focused on a small set of specific outcomes such as regulatory negotiation, policy dialogue and international conflict resolution²¹. He also envisages discursive designs located in "a public space where individuals can congregate and confront the state."²² Anthony Giddens suggests that his model of dialogic democracy is tangential to the state and best exemplified by relationships in personal life, social movements and self-help groups²³. David Miller suggests a system where "decisions are parcelled out to the sub-constituencies that are best placed to make them, or most affected by their outcome".²⁴

The focus on small scale units of deliberation by each of these thinkers points to the potential to solve a variety of seemingly intractable problems in forums that can actively involve all interested parties in personal interaction removed from the formalised opposition produced in larger, more anonymous groups. However, it is also significant that each of these thinkers hints at the potential for extended models of deliberative democracy to remake the macro-political landscape. Dryzek suggests that "if the state, bureaucracy, private enterprise, and family are always going to be with us, then perhaps they merit democratisation too."²⁵ Giddens notes that dialogic democracy "refracts back on" the state by encouraging "the democratising of democracy"²⁶ and

²¹ Dryzek *Discursive Democracy* p43-48

²² *ibid* p220

²³ Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p113, 117-124

²⁴ Miller "Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice" p89

²⁵ Dryzek *Discursive Democracy* p220

²⁶ Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p113, 132

Miller raises the possibility of a hierarchy of deliberation with local bodies feeding "higher level ones" via representatives.²⁷

How then might the deliberative model of democracy find application in currently existing systems of representative democracy? The answer is difficult because the mass nature of society means that much key deliberation in currently existing representative democracy occurs in currently existing organs of the mass media. This is not to dismiss the importance of interpersonal discussion and small group debate but merely to acknowledge the difficulties in producing authentic democratic deliberation in mass societies. As was seen above, deliberation can legitimate democratic processes, but if and only if those processes can guarantee free speech and an equality of potential participation. These are major provisos and significant stumbling blocks to the achievement of effective democracy. There is a deep-seated and well-justified concern among theorists, discussed below, that the media have the ability to mould and censor debate in mass society. While deliberative democracy seeks formally to confront the logical limitations of elitism and coercion inherent in representative and participatory models by ensuring an equality of access to debate and discussion in relatively small groups, the hegemony that results from the centralised role of broadcast media in mass society generally, and in respect of representative democracy in particular, remains an intractable problem regardless.

The Limits of a Free Press

The key protection and encouragement for deliberation within the theory of representative democracy has been an adherence to the principles of free speech and free opinion expressed through a free press. John Stuart Mill has given what is perhaps the most famous argument for free speech through a free press. In *On Liberty* he argued that free expression of opinion was a means for citizens to gather and share information in order to establish the truth or otherwise of any particular political opinion. Mill gives four reasons why unrestricted public discussion among citizens is likely to lead to the truth:

- 1) Any opinion which is censored because it is allegedly false may turn out to be true: "to deny this is to assume our own infallibility"²⁸;

²⁷ Miller "Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice" p89

²⁸ Mill, John Stuart "On Liberty" in his *On Liberty and Other Essays* p59

2) although an opinion is false, it may contain a portion of truth that improves the quality of the prevailing view through debate produced by "the collision of adverse opinions"²⁹;

3) although an opinion is true it will soon degenerate into "dead dogma"³⁰ if it is not open to challenge: "The fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing when it is no longer doubtful, is the cause of half their errors".³¹

4) similarly, any doctrine not subject to debate will be enfeebled, lose its meaning and be "deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct"³².

The proposition that free speech leads inexorably to the truth is problematic for a number of reasons. The argument from free speech to truth can only be made, Frederick Schauer argues, if there is a suppressed premise that an "invisible hand" of debate guides free speech to the truth, similar to the way Adam Smith's putative invisible hand supposedly guides free enterprise to the most efficacious economic arrangements.³³ Unfortunately there is no theoretical necessity that the adversarial process of political debate will produce the truth any more effectively than economic competition produces a productive sharing of wealth or the adversary process of the judicial system produces justice. Another problem for the argument from free speech to the truth is the ineffability of the truth itself. Mill was sanguine about the ephemeral nature of truth and accepted that what constitutes truth changes with time, but nevertheless, he argued, that a free press is the most likely means to ensure the debate required by democracy to come to a working account of the truth, albeit unfinished and imperfect.³⁴

More recently Thomas Emerson provides a comprehensive argument for free speech that does not rest on truth alone but also on the propensity of free speech to assure individual self-fulfillment, provide the potential for wide participation in decision making and achieve a more adaptable and hence more stable community which can maintain the precarious balance between healthy disagreements and necessary

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid* p40

³¹ *ibid* p49

³² *ibid* p59

³³ Schauer, *F Free Speech: a philosophical enquiry* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1982 p16

³⁴ Mill "On Liberty" p20ff

consensus.³⁵ Variations of these latter three points are summarised as the argument for free speech "from democracy"³⁶: it is for the citizenry as a whole to decide the direction of government policy and, even if it is wrong, its access to full information is a necessary prerequisite for freely making that decision and then, because they have freely made the decision with all available evidence (while anyone can still argue against it further) all are bound by it. To assist in this process, Emerson argues, democratic governments have a responsibility to foster a "system" of ancillary rights: to form and hold beliefs, to communicate ideas, to remain silent, to hear others, to inquire, to have access to information and, by corollary, to assemble and form associations.³⁷

One argument for free speech that is not addressed in the discussion above is that it is a commercial imperative for the entrepreneurs who operate the free press. The first restriction on press freedom in Great Britain was at the behest of printers: laws providing "protection of the native printer against foreign competition"³⁸. The Stationers Company was chartered when the burdens of censorship became too large for the Royal Court to administer, and printers and publishers were given the power to suppress and control undesirable printing, the first example of media self-regulation.³⁹ The printers' battle for a free press in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rested primarily on "their desire to engage unhampered in the pursuit of wealth"⁴⁰ before any commitment to the philosophical principles of free speech.

John Milton's defence of free speech, *Areopagitica* begins as an attack on the principle of licensing as an intrusion on free trade and, far from being an opponent of censorship, Milton advocated the use of "the fire and the executioner" against "mischievous" works,⁴¹ himself working as a censor during the period of the Commonwealth.⁴² Similarly John Locke opposed the licensing system because it "injured the printing trade"⁴³ and Benjamin Franklin's sternest defence of free speech was "An Apology for Printers" where he pleaded in mitigation for publishing a scurrilous advertisement: "That

³⁵ Emerson, Thomas I *The System of Freedom of Expression* Random New York 1970 p6-7

³⁶ Schauer *Free Speech* p35-46

³⁷ Emerson *The System of Freedom of Expression* p3

³⁸ Siebert, RS *Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776* University of Illinois Press Urbana 1965 p30

³⁹ *ibid* p64ff

⁴⁰ *ibid* p6

⁴¹ Milton, John quoted in Levy, Leonard W *Freedom of the Press from Zenger to Jefferson* Bobbs-Merrill Indianapolis 1966 pxxi

⁴² Siebert *Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776* p195-197

⁴³ Levy *Freedom of the Press from Zenger to Jefferson* pxxii

I got five shillings by it [and that] none who are angry with me would have given me so much to let it alone."⁴⁴

In following the argument for free speech as a commercial imperative, it is interesting to note that many disputes over free speech are produced by a clash of corporate interests with governments as the former seek to maintain a commercial advantage. Some recent cases before the High Court of Australia are instructive. In *Australian Capital Television v The Commonwealth*⁴⁵ the Court found in favour of a media corporation and ruled that a ban on paid TV and radio political advertising during election periods was unconstitutional because it limited the free communication of political ideas. In *Nationwide News Pty Ltd v Wills*⁴⁶, the Court found in favour of Rupert Murdoch's *The Australian* and ruled invalid a section of industrial relations legislation making it an offence to use words calculated to bring the Arbitration Commission into disrepute because it also infringed the right of free political communication. In *Theophanous v Herald & Weekly Times*⁴⁷ the Court found for another Murdoch newspaper on the grounds that the media had a broad power to publish defamatory material on political affairs, as long as the process of publication was not reckless.

While the Court found that the proper operation of the democratic mechanism requires a right to free political expression and that right is inherent in the Australian Constitution, there is a certain irony in the fact that all these cases represent victories for corporations. By way of contrast, in *Langer v The Commonwealth*⁴⁸ the Court found against an individual who advocated a method of lodging a formal vote that exhausted without expressing a preference for any of the major parties. The *Electoral Act* forbids the advocacy of anything other than a full preferential vote even though a vote that expresses any preference is valid. A majority of the Court found that this constraint did not limit the right to free political speech. Most recently in *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation*⁴⁹ the Court has confirmed that the implied right of free political communication does not give rise to an individual citizen's right to free speech but rather operates to restrict legislative power over the mass media.

⁴⁴ Franklin, Benjamin "An Apology for Printers" in Levy *Freedom of the Press from Zenger to Jefferson* p8

⁴⁵ (1992) 108 ALR 577

⁴⁶ (1992) 108 ALR 681

⁴⁷ (1994) 124 ALR 1

⁴⁸ (1996) 134 ALR 400

⁴⁹ (1997) 71 ALJR 818

The forgoing discussion suggests that the defence of free speech has become, in large part, a battle by corporations against government encroachment on their commercial operations and has little to do with citizens accessing the deliberative process to affect the outcome of the operations of representative government. This point prompts a return to Mill who, as was noted in Chapter Two, expressed an unfocussed disquiet about the role of the press, saying it was "the real equivalent, *though not in all respects an adequate one*, of the Pnyx"⁵⁰ As will be seen in Chapter Four, the Pnyx (or Assembly) of Athenian democracy provided the opportunity for extended deliberation that underpinned the democratic nature of the *polis*. The Athenian citizen's unfettered access to participation in relatively transparent political debate in the Assembly was both the means to provide feedback on the operations of the *polis* (and thus rule over the Assembly) and also the occasion when citizens gave their practical consent to be governed by the Assembly (so that the *polis* ruled over them). Perhaps what was behind Mill's disquiet was the apprehension that the newspaper press was a partisan, commercial enterprise which could never be an "adequate" forum for citizens' free and frank deliberation: it could never be a site for citizens to rule and to consent to be ruled.

The Coercive Role of the Mass Media

More recent proponents of participatory and deliberative democracy have made explicit their disquiet about the ability of the mass media to function as a forum. Barber saw a danger that if deliberation is left in the hands of the media it "quickly degenerates into one more weapon in the armory of elite rule."⁵¹ Similarly Giddens holds that his model of dialogic democracy will only work where "differential resources aren't used to prevent views being voiced or for a drastic skewing of the conditions of dialogic interchange."⁵²

The role of the mass media in providing the forum for deliberation in current representative democracies raises "fundamental questions" for democratic theory and it is easy to share John Keane's concern that "almost nobody asks basic questions about the relationship between democratic ideals and institutions and the contemporary media".⁵³ The relative absence of discussion of the mass media in democratic theory is remarkable given the way key thinkers such as Mill and Barber have flagged the

⁵⁰ Mill "Representative Government" p310 emphasis added

⁵¹ Barber *Strong Democracy* p197

⁵² Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p132

⁵³ Keane, John *The Media and Democracy* Polity Cambridge 1991 px

problem. In his otherwise systematic *Models of Democracy*, Held makes only one reference to the media in quoting Herbert Marcuse's dismissal of it as a tool of coercion.⁵⁴ In listing the main forms of political participation Birch does not mention activity in the mass media⁵⁵; and even when Giddens raises the issue of differential resources skewing dialogic interchange he pursues the question with reference to the welfare state rather than media access⁵⁶.

Similarly it is interesting to note the absence of positive discussion about the potential use of mass media as part of the deliberative process in recent theoretical and practical work around citizenship and education for citizenship. For example, the Civics Experts Group's Report *Whereas the people...* discusses the role of the media as a source of information on civics issues⁵⁷ but makes no explicit reference to the role the media play in the political process. James Lynch only mentions the mass media to note a survey that found "television and the mass media have an important and often negative effect on young peoples' values"⁵⁸.

In contrast to the relative paucity of work in democratic theory on the role of the media, media theorists have been quite active in exploring the impact of the mass media on the functioning of democracy. The twentieth century has seen the advent of electronic media and the increased "massification" of society. The combination of these factors poses even more problems for Mill's conception of the press as the equivalent of the Assembly. A number of "media effects" theorists discussed immediately below point to the way the media foreshortens opportunities for deliberation by systematically replacing discourse with propaganda. During the course of the twentieth century these theorists have sought to explain the "effects" of the mass media and, in particular, their coercive and anti-democratic effects, with reference to what may be discerned as three distinct critiques which focused on, respectively, the media's content, their form and their operations. While Larry Bartels claims that the inconclusive state of research in the "media effects" area is "one of the most notable embarrassments of modern social science"⁵⁹, it is nevertheless important to explore these critiques to appreciate the ramifications of the mass media for democracy.

⁵⁴ Held *Models of Democracy* p227

⁵⁵ Birch *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* p81

⁵⁶ Giddens *Beyond Left and Right* p132ff

⁵⁷ Civics Expert Group *Whereas the people...* p96

⁵⁸ Lynch, James *Education for Citizenship in a Multi-cultural Society* Cassell London 1992 p51

⁵⁹ Bartels, Larry M "Messages received: the political impact of media exposure" *American Political Science Review* June 1993 p267-285

In the 1920s early theorists of the mass media such as Harold Lasswell advanced what is now summarised as the "bullet" or "hypodermic" account of media influence: the skilful propagandist could so mould the content of a broadcast that it unerringly stimulated the audience's dispositions and preconceptions to produce a desired response.⁶⁰ This "strong" effects theory held that the mass media was a vehicle through which selected content could "shape opinion and belief, change habits of life, actively mould behaviour and impose political systems."⁶¹ The rise of the Nazi Party in Germany and its use of the mass media to broadcast overt propaganda were seen as confirmation of the strong effects of the mass media.⁶² George Orwell attempted to explain the power of mass media propaganda by analysing the content of political language and showing how it could be over-inflated with extended metaphor, pretentious diction and meaningless words "to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."⁶³ In his novel *1984* Orwell further developed his critique of the content of mass media with his concept of *newspeak*: a language with a shrinking vocabulary designed for use by the media to make heretical thoughts, particularly against the state, literally unthinkable.

By the early 1940s "strong effects" media theory was under empirical challenge by an element of the Frankfurt School led by Paul Lazarsfeld.⁶⁴ His studies of voting behaviour showed exposure to campaign propaganda communicated through the mass media had only "minimal effects" on citizens.⁶⁵ Voters mostly had long-term party allegiances that were reinforced, he concluded, by the campaign material of those they supported while the material of those they opposed was ignored. Word-of-mouth communication with community "opinion leaders" was found to be a more significant source of political information than the media.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Ward, I *Politics of the Media* Macmillan South Melbourne 1995 p23-25

⁶¹ McQuail, D "The influence and effects of mass media" in Janowitz, M & Hirsh, P (eds) *Reader in Public Opinion and Mass Communication* Free Press London 1981 p263

⁶² Ward *Politics of the Media* p28

⁶³ Orwell, George "Politics and the English Language" in his *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* vol 4 Penguin Harmondsworth 1970 p170

⁶⁴ for details of the theoretical and practical divisions between Lazarsfeld and other members of the Frankfurt School see Jay, Martin *The Dialectical Imagination* Heinemann London 1973 p188-193, 222-223

⁶⁵ Ward *Politics of the Media* p32-33

⁶⁶ *ibid* p33-36

Through the 1940s and 1950s, Lazarsfeld's findings were extrapolated and expanded into a general theory of "minimal" media effects: that the media had only a slight impact on people's behaviour and beliefs. One interpretation Lazarsfeld gave to the data on which minimal effects theory was based was that the media did not particularly interfere in democratic processes because the media did not have the ability to deliver political messages with any predictable effect.⁶⁷ This interpretation led to one particular strand of the minimal effects theory which was promoted in research funded by the media industry and carried the proviso that skilful research could assist in producing advertising that gained the attention of small percentages of the audience and became the subject of word-of-mouth discussion which could produce a significant market share for a product because, as Lazarsfeld's collaborator, Bob Berelson remarked "some kinds of communication... have some kinds of effects."⁶⁸

However, another of Lazarsfeld's interpretations of his data argued that minimal effects of the media were intimately connected to the form of its output: the flood of unrelated fragments of news constantly bombarding the audience did not encourage citizens to participate in political deliberation but rather acted to "narcotise" them.⁶⁹ Thus the minimal effect of the media was produced because its form so overwhelmed the audience that they were rendered powerless. This position reflected the more theoretical work of other members of the Frankfurt School such as Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer who argued that the coercive force of the cinema rested in its form:

Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies. The sound film, far surpassing the theatre of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond within the structure of the film, yet [who is also unable to] deviate from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story; hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Lazarsfeld, P, Berelson, B and Gaudet, H *The People's Choice* Columbia University Press New York 1944; see also Faber, Ronald J & Storey, Claire M "Recall of information from political advertising" in Newman, Bruce & Sheth, Jagdish (eds) *Political Marketing: Readings and Annotated Bibliography* American Marketing Association Chicago 1985 p101-6; and more recently in the Australian context Burrows, Dave "Mass media campaigns: worthwhile or wasted resource" *Connexions* 8/4 July/Aug 1988 p14-16

⁶⁸ quoted in Diamond & Bates *The Spot*; see also Ward *Politics of the Media* p36-39 and; Klapper, JT *The Effects of Mass Communication* Free Press Glencoe 1960

⁶⁹ Lazarsfeld, P & Merton, R "Communication, Taste and Social Action" in Byron, L (ed) *The Communication of Ideas* Cooper Square New York 1948

⁷⁰ Adorno, T & Horkheimer, M *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Verso London 1979 p126

More recent critics of television have argued that the form of the medium limits the potential for viewers to analyse its output rationally: "Television works as a positive affect."⁷¹ These critics argue that television is a very useful tool in arousing the emotions because of its ability to evade perceptual filters and to communicate directly to the subconscious: television, argues Derrick De Kerckhove, "is now translating our past visual biases in terms of a direct access to the central nervous system."⁷² Marshall McLuhan was the first to point out that TV was more an "audio-tactile" rather than a visual medium. Its frenzied presentation of fragmented images "cut to the music" render it visually meaningless "when we consider that our visual validation of the world consists of continuous scans of a slowly changing environment."⁷³ There appears to be a scientific consensus emerging that television viewing slows brain electrical activity, particularly in the left hemisphere where information processing and analysis occur.⁷⁴ While this effect limits the ability of the viewer to recall information, at the same time "TV programs artificially manipulate the brain into paying attention through the use of frequent visual and auditory changes."⁷⁵ This hypnotic effect ensures, Merrelyn Emery argues, that viewers retain experience in the unconscious which they can recognise again and even perhaps act upon, most profitably for the advertiser, at the point of sale: "A coherent dynamic is established between viewer, advertisement and point of sale... TV's power is seen to lie in exploiting our unconscious ability to recognise while reducing our ability to consciously recall."⁷⁶

Paul Corcoran goes further still to argue that television produces a decline in literacy and a return to orality⁷⁷ which is anti-democratic because it limits informed political debate so that it is no more than:

the residue of speech forms increasingly reminiscent of the incantory displays of oral culture. The "image" and the "mood" of the performance, more than the content or coherence, are essential... [The] task is to veil, rather than reveal, information...⁷⁸

⁷¹ Emery, Merrelyn "The Dynamics of TV Marketing of Products and Concepts" *Media Information Australia* no 46 November 1987 p36

⁷² De Kerckhove, Derrick "Classical Rhetoric and Communication Theory" *Communication* vol 7 1983 p197

⁷³ Emery "The Dynamics of TV Marketing " p36

⁷⁴ *ibid* p35

⁷⁵ Juan, Stephen "The 'TV Brain'" *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 November 1992 p14

⁷⁶ Emery "The Dynamics of TV Marketing" p35

⁷⁷ Corcoran, Paul E *Political Language and Rhetoric* University of Queensland Press St Lucia 1979 p20

⁷⁸ *ibid* p204

Robert Hughes similarly identifies the mass media, and the images of television in particular, as the catalyst for the victory of "persuasion by spectacle" over argument, and concludes that this has led to a qualitative decline in democracy.⁷⁹

Thus this second strand of "minimal" effects theory leads back to a different account of "strong" media effects: specific pieces of content may be insignificant but the psychological impact of the form of the mass media exerts a powerful negative influence on deliberative processes. The other strand of the "minimal effects" thesis led to a plethora of empirical work in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s that confirmed the view that the media were relatively harmless to democracy and mostly reinforced the pluralist views of the society in which that media were produced.⁸⁰

This account of the minimal effects thesis began to be contested in the 1970s by a number of theorists who suggested that, rather than content or form being the primary determinants of the mass media's impact on democracy, it was the way the elements of the mass media organised their work. There were three empirical interventions which made significant contributions to the work of refocusing media theory on "relatively strong" effects produced by the way the media organised its work: George Gerbner and Larry Gross's "cultivation hypothesis" identified the way the public's perceptions of a crime "problem" were shaped and cultivated by the ways in which the media reported and portrayed criminal violence⁸¹; Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's observations on agenda setting indicated that the rank order of issues voters nominated as important in an election closely correlated with the rank order of issues raised in the press⁸² and; Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's "spiral of silence" theory suggested that the suppression or amplification of viewpoints in the media produce a decrease or increase in the willingness of citizens to express those viewpoints⁸³. In the same period Stuart Hall's *Policing the Crisis* theorised the processes involved in the media construction of a "moral panic" about mugging to suggest a theoretical link between the operations of the media and the limiting of free-ranging discussion.⁸⁴ Also Louis Althusser theorised the media as Ideological State Apparatuses which, he argued, institutionally produce and

⁷⁹ Hughes, Robert "The Fraying of America" *Time* 3 February 1992 p82

⁸⁰ Stevenson, Nick *Understanding Media Cultures* Sage London 1995 p37

⁸¹ Gerbner, G & Gross, L "Living with television: the violence profile" *Journal of Communications* vol 26 no 2 1976 p173-199

⁸² McCombs, M & Shaw, D "The agenda setting function of the press" *Public Opinion Quarterly* vol 36 1972 p176-187

⁸³ Noelle-Neumann, E "Spiral of silence: a theory of public opinion" *Journal of Communication* vol 24 no 2 1974 p 43-51

⁸⁴ Hall, Stuart et al *Policing the Crisis* Macmillan London 1978

reproduce "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"⁸⁵ and so constrict the opportunities for uncoerced debate between those individuals.

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky have given a detailed analysis of how the mass media operates to empty the deliberative domain by the "manufacture of consent"⁸⁶. They argue that while the media in a democratic society should be "independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth", the reality is that "the powerful are able to fix the premises of the discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear, and think about and to "manage" public opinion by regular propaganda campaigns".⁸⁷ They detail how the concentration of media ownership, the influence of corporate advertisers inherent in the media's reliance on advertising revenue, the privileged and uncontested position of experts and the homogenous world-view produced by the media all act to limit the potential for new, different, dissenting or demotic voices to be heard. Herman and Chomsky appreciate that the role of experts and the reliance on an homogenous world-view are concomitants of the way news is produced: the mass media, they point out "have daily news demands and imperative news schedules that they must meet."⁸⁸

Demographic and social shifts, the monopolistic tendencies of commercial competition and the introduction of capital intensive electronic media have produced a concentration of media ownership and the dominance of a few outlets. This, Keane argues, means fewer opportunities for the expression of a broad diversity of demotic voices.⁸⁹ As news-rooms and programming come under greater managerial control with fewer journalists facing tighter deadlines, there is also the pressure for those journalists to mimic content and avoid contentious and difficult views, resorting, practising journalist Carl Bernstein notes, instead to "illusionary and delusionary... celebrity... gossip [and]

⁸⁵ Althusser, L "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses" in his *Lenin and Philosophy* Monthly Review Press New York 1971 p162

⁸⁶ Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam *Manufacturing Consent* Pantheon New York 1988. The concept first employed in Lippmann, Walter *Public Opinion* Allen&Unwin London 1932

⁸⁷ Herman & Chomsky *Manufacturing Consent* pxi. See also Carey, Alex *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy* UNSW Press Sydney 1995 and Orr, John "The silent estate" *The Bulletin* 20 November 1990 p43-6

⁸⁸ Herman & Chomsky *Manufacturing Consent* p18

⁸⁹ Keane *The Media and Democracy* p51-91

sensationalism".⁹⁰ It is not so much blatant censorship as the subtle pressures to conform through self-censorship that is the real danger to open debate.⁹¹

The expectation is that this situation will only get worse as technology allows the introduction of one-person news crew: a journalist constantly on the road, responsible for all the technical details, reacting to news without the time, energy or resources to understand it.⁹² The very real danger exists, argues Michael Crichton, that the information produced by this process will be even more superficial, speculative, obsessed with simple extremes and dominated by the limited concerns of the few proprietors and managers who control the centralised processes of the mass media.⁹³ This is the concern of Jean Leca who argues that "the explosion of communications" has produced no communication except to allow the discourse of authority in a flow of empty spectacles and self-referential simulacra, with criticism of this process being quickly subsumed by it: "The critique of the media and the spectacle produces a succession of complacent exhibitions of criticism, which are themselves nothing but spectacles. Citizenship is diluted in the nonsense."⁹⁴ The result appears to be that within the highly centralised, increasingly integrated structure the broadcast media are exhibiting there appears little opportunity for the diversity of demotic voices required for effective deliberative democracy.

Gaps in Mass Media Coercion

The preceding two sections suggest a most pessimistic outlook for democratic deliberation within the mass media. While the mass media champion the right of free speech, they act, theorists conclude, systematically to obscure its possibility. The

⁹⁰ Bernstein, Carl "Journalism and the growth of the idiot culture" *Guardian Weekly* 14 June 1992 p21. For more detailed accounts of the frenzy associated with political news gathering see Crouse, Tim *The Boys on the Bus* Random House New York 1972 and Thompson, Hunter S *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail* Popular Library New York 1973

⁹¹ for a detailed account of the pressures to conform in practice consider Pell, Eve *The Big Chill: How the Reagan Administration, corporate America and religious conservatives are subverting free speech and the public's right to know* Beacon Press Boston 1984

⁹² Shapiro, Robert D "Have camera, will travel" *Wired* July/August 1993 p74-77

⁹³ Crichton, Michael "The mediasaurus: today's mass media is tomorrow's fossil fuel" *Wired* 1.4 September/October 1993 p56-59

⁹⁴ Leca, Jean "Questions on Citizenship" in Mouffe *Dimensions of Radical Democracy* p26-28

increasing concentration, centralisation and commercialisation of the mass media appear to have foreclosed avenues for demotic participation in currently existing representative democracy. However, a number of theoretical counterpoints and interventions suggest that there may be ways in which deliberative processes within the mass media may be rethought and remade to open them to effective demotic participation.

Three particular gaps in the coercive practices of the mass media are identified here: the potential use of commercial competition as a means to promote a diversity of views; remaking the public sphere particularly by fostering non-state public service media and adapting new communication technologies; and an appreciation of the audience's propensity to use the media to its own creative and political ends.

While "strong" media effects theory removes deliberation from the demotic realm by giving whomever controls the central broadcasting mechanisms an over-riding power to set the agenda for democratic debate, those mechanisms are not as a whole completely totalising forces. Commercial enterprise allows some competition between different media corporations that may produce a diversity of editorial positions.⁹⁵ Even within a single newspaper or channel there is a commercial imperative to present a diversity of views in order to build a large audience from a population that holds diverse opinions. While not seeking to overstate arguments for the media market as a "bulwark of freedom"⁹⁶, commercial media outlets do offer limited opportunities for demotic expression via letters to the editor, talkback radio and "real" TV programs composed largely of the audience's own video work. This material is always liable to manipulation in the editorial process but it is nevertheless closely monitored and scrutinised within representative government for its political implications.⁹⁷

There is also the potential within existing media structures for journalists and other media workers, individually or collectively, to insist on, as Orwell argued they should, "the freedom to report what one has seen, heard and felt, and not to be obliged to fabricate imaginary facts and feelings."⁹⁸ As with all the mythology surrounding the

⁹⁵ Consider for example the ideological differences fuelling competition between Ted Turner's CNN and Rupert Murdoch's FOX cable news networks: Young, Steve "Fox News takes on CNN" at http://cnnfn.com/hotstories/companies/9610/07/fox_pkg/index.htm 7 October 1996

⁹⁶ For a thorough-going critique of this position see Keane *The Media and Democracy* p52ff

⁹⁷ for a good account of talk-back monitoring reports and their use by government see Wright, Tony "What people think" *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 August 1995 p4

⁹⁸ Orwell, George "The Prevention of Literature" in his *Collected Essays* vol 4 p84

notion of the Fourth Estate⁹⁹ - that putatively autonomous sphere of social influence where the press balances the power of the governments and corporations which own it - Orwell puts journalists in a position of unjustified, unrepresentative and unaccountable power *vis a vis* their fellow citizen. Nevertheless the possibility remains that where journalists are resourceful and build their careers in ways that allow them to exercise their personal judgment, then they may have the opportunity to report the facts honestly and even-handedly and produce work that "raises the consciousness and diminishes prejudice... [and is] a significant force for social good"¹⁰⁰.

A number of theorists have argued that there is the potential to remake what Habermas calls "the public sphere": the domain of social life in which "public opinion" forms.¹⁰¹ In the literary salons, political clubs, debating societies, coffee houses and newspapers of England in the early modern period, Habermas argues, a universalistic, liberal and rational political discourse flourished to produce an autonomous sphere from which the emerging bourgeoisie could criticise the state and civil society. Habermas argues that commercialisation of the press in the nineteenth century saw the transformation of the public sphere, and its newspapers in particular, from the journalism of private persons to "the consumer services of the mass media"¹⁰² which privileged the private interests of owners and advertisers. Nevertheless he sees some potential for the recreation of the public sphere as "a public of organized private persons" engaged in the rationalisation of social and political power through mutual control of rival organisations which exhibit "publicness" in their internal structure and in their dealings with the state and each other.¹⁰³

Habermas has in return been criticised for "deeply flawed" history in presenting the newspapers of eighteenth century England as the site of rational deliberation when they were actually involved in "an elaborate web of faction fighting, financial corruption and

⁹⁹ a term first employed by Macaulay in Great Britain in 1828 to contrast the press to the Lord Spiritual, Lords Temporal and Commons but now used to contrast the press to the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government - see Electoral and Administrative Review Commission *Review of Government Media and Information Services* EARC Brisbane April 1993 p12

¹⁰⁰ Masters, Chris "Taking pride in journalism" *Australian Journalism Review* vol 10 1988 p4

¹⁰¹ Habermas, Jurgen *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Polity Cambridge 1989

¹⁰² *ibid* p181

¹⁰³ *ibid* p222ff

ideological management".¹⁰⁴ Nancy Fraser further criticises Habermas's account of the public sphere from a feminist perspective and in particular for its failures to confront the needs to eliminate social inequality, to accept a multiplicity of publics, to break down the distinction between public and private and to integrate the state and civil society in order "to envision democratic possibilities beyond the limits of actually existing democracy".¹⁰⁵ To this end Fraser suggests that a truly public sphere requires

subaltern counterpublics ...parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs¹⁰⁶

She explains the success of US feminist subaltern counterpublic in terms of its ability to produce its own space to clarify a language that was then introduced to the broader public by creative use of the mass media.

Keane argues that there is an opportunity to remake the public sphere by allowing "public service media" to develop current and emerging technologies into generally accessible forums for broad-ranging deliberation.¹⁰⁷ However, as Keane points out, where public service media outlets are state-funded they share with other elements of the state sector a tendency to elitism and final control by the state that precludes them from being a complete answer to democracy's deliberative needs.¹⁰⁸ He proposes the development of non-state public service media to act as "a dense network or 'heterarchy' of communications media... controlled neither by the state nor by commercial markets... publicly funded, non-profit and legally guaranteed."¹⁰⁹ This is based on an expansion and formalisation of already extant publishing cooperatives and community radio stations in the context of new technologies where "[c]ommunication comes to be seen as flows among publics rather than as an exchange of discrete commodities"¹¹⁰. Similarly, against the homogenisation of the news along corporate agendas, Herman and Chomsky stress the importance of the role of the alternative media in opening debate and finding a way around the hegemonic control of the media.¹¹¹ In Australia the growth of

¹⁰⁴ Curran, J "Rethinking the media as a public sphere" in Dahlgren, P and Sparks, C (eds) *Communication and Citizenship* Routledge London 1991 p41

¹⁰⁵ Fraser, Nancy "Rethinking the public sphere" *Social Text* no 25/26 1990 p56-77

¹⁰⁶ *ibid* p67

¹⁰⁷ Keane *The Media and Democracy* p115ff

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* p118-119

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* p158

¹¹⁰ *ibid* p162

¹¹¹ Herman & Chomsky *Manufacturing Consent* p307

community media, both radio and more recently television, offer some opportunities for otherwise marginalised voices to find expression.¹¹²

There are connections here to the argument originally made by Marshall McLuhan that because "electricity does not centralise, but decentralises"¹¹³, the electronic media extend opportunities for involvement in a space similar to the public sphere by "participation or completion by the audience".¹¹⁴ Mark Posters has developed this argument to claim that we are presently witnessing the advent of "the second media age" which is supplanting the first media age of centralised broadcast media emanating from a few sources to many consumers. The second media age is characterised by *decentred* media systems with global reach that will eventually be readily accessible to all and so produce a new politics based on the communication of many to many.¹¹⁵

Hans Magnus Enzensberger does not directly address the issue of public sphere but his proposal to place the technical means of media production in the hands of ordinary people amounts to a radically demotic account of the public sphere.¹¹⁶ He rejects what he calls "the liberal superstition that in political and social questions there is such a thing as pure, unmanipulated truth" and rather argues for "a revolutionary plan [which] must make everyone a manipulator" so that "by producing aggressive forms of publicity which were their own, the masses could secure evidence of their daily experiences and draw effective lessons from them".¹¹⁷ In putting forward his theory of the media, Enzensberger acknowledges the importance of Walter Benjamin's argument that techniques of reproduction utilised in photography and film have a liberating potential because of their "destructive, cathartic... liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage [while] permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation".¹¹⁸

¹¹² for an account of these possibilities put to practice see Carroli, L et al *Radio Timewarp* 4ZZZ Brisbane 1985 also Holman, Leanne 4ZZZ: A History and Evaluation of a Public Broadcaster BA thesis Griffith University 1989

¹¹³ McLuhan, Marshall *Understanding Media* Routledge London 1994 p36

¹¹⁴ *ibid* p23

¹¹⁵ Posters, Mark *The Second Media Age* Polity Cambridge 1995 p19-29

¹¹⁶ Enzensberger, HM "Constituents of a theory of the media" in his *Raids and Reconstructions* Pluto London 1976 p20-53

¹¹⁷ *ibid* p26-34

¹¹⁸ Benjamin, Walter "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" in his *Illuminations* Fontana London 1992 p215

There is in Benjamin's work a crucial shift from the "ritual" around issues of production and ownership to the "politics" of audience reception¹¹⁹. In this context Helen Irving's scepticism about the power of mass media effects to impact significantly on the audience's critical faculties is a useful contribution to the theoretical reclamation of the autonomy of the citizen audience.¹²⁰ Stuart Hall has pointed to the distinctly different processes involved in *encoding* and *decoding* media texts and argued that the message intended by the producers may be read in a variety of ways by the audience: they might accept the preferred reading; negotiate their own reading by contesting the preferred message or; produce an oppositional reading by rejecting the preferred strategy.¹²¹

John Fiske argues that viewers appropriate media output for their own purposes, that they talk about it, subvert it and "read between the lines" to produce their own interpretations.¹²² More specifically Fiske argues that the distance between parliament and citizen allows citizens to produce their own "semiotic democracy" of sceptical readings of the media which incorporate the "popular pleasure of 'seeing through'... whoever constitutes the powerful them of the moment".¹²³

In *Popular Reality*, John Hartley systematises the political import of audience reception theory when he notes that post-modernity has seen the transformation of what constitutes "knowledge" from the coercive instrumentality and enforced reality of "imperial information"¹²⁴ to the hermeneutics of intertextual intersubjectivity where meanings are liable to constant negotiation.¹²⁵

This is a significant moment because it returns media theory to the negotiated meaning which produces two-way communication and which is always the ground on which free deliberation occurs. Further, Hartley argues

"the shift of emphasis from the real to communication brings with it a shift from a technology of control to a technology of interactive semiotic participation where citizens of the media use TV news as their forum".¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ *ibid* p217-218

¹²⁰ Irving, H "Little Elves and Mind Control" *Continuum* vol 4 no 2 1991 p98-111

¹²¹ Hall, Stuart "Encoding and decoding" in his *Culture, Media, Language* Hutchinson London 1980

¹²² Fiske, John *Understanding Popular Culture* Unwin Boston 1989

¹²³ Fiske, John "Popularity and the politics of information" in Dahlgren, P & Sparks, C (eds) *Journalism and Popular Culture* Sage London 1992 p49

¹²⁴ Hartley, John *Popular Reality* Arnold London 1996 p42

¹²⁵ *ibid* p244 with particular reference to Langton, Marcia *Well I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television* AFC Sydney 1993

¹²⁶ Hartley *Popular Reality* p43

What is particularly useful is the precise way in which Hartley sketches the "citizen of the media" and the means by which he or she participates in democracy. He argues that the readership of mass media creates itself as "an imagined community whose public sphere is symbolic, but much more real than the Roman Forum ever was for the general public".¹²⁷ This public sphere is located in "the private domain [of] home, suburbia and television" that can incorporate everything from the reasoned speech of Habermas to simple pleasures of game shows and "engage readers not only in self-expression and communication, but also in truth-seeking description and critical argument".¹²⁸ It is particularly television that provides "a mechanism for communicating across class, gender, ethnic, national, and other boundaries" and allows the audience to be citizens of a symbolic community "as small as their home, town or faction, and as big as humanity".¹²⁹ The politics of this symbolic community is not only evident in the news coverage of formal representative democracy but also in "other politics... produced and sustained in the interstices of drama serials, nature documentaries and current affairs, or in the relationships between certain stars, styles or musics and their fans".¹³⁰

While Hartley returns immense political power to the audience, it is not clear how they might exercise that power beyond changing the channel. He concludes *Popular Reality* with the advice that "now the outcome is up to you".¹³¹ The challenge remains to theorise the means to create greater deliberative participation in democracy generally and existing representative institutions in particular. If the mass media are the main forums for democratic deliberation then citizens must have the potential to make their voice heard or it is not a democracy. While, as was seen above, there are potentials for demotic use of the mass media through the gaps provided by their commercial, competitive nature, by building public spheres for autonomous deliberation and by appreciating the hermeneutic capabilities of the citizen-audience, the questions that remain are: exactly how "citizens of the media" might create greater deliberative participation in existing representative institutions and how citizens can gain the necessary skills to intervene effectively in the mass media in order to realise their demotic voice. Answering these questions is the work of the remainder of this thesis and, as was foreshadowed in Chapter One, begins with a return to the ancient art of

¹²⁷ *ibid* p71

¹²⁸ *ibid* p72

¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹³⁰ *ibid*

¹³¹ *ibid* p251

rhetoric in order to ascertain, as Minson suggests: "certain mundane ethical abilities of a *disciplinary* and *rhetorical* character which are required of a responsible participant"¹³².

Rhetoric and Propaganda

In Chapter One a preliminary distinction was proposed between the persuasive manipulation of rhetoric and the coercive manipulation of propaganda. It is useful at this point to return to that distinction prior to establishing a set of criteria by which the deliberative effectiveness of various democratic institutions may be judged. The distinction between rhetoric and propaganda is based on an appreciation of the rational aims of rhetoric as opposed to the coercive imperative of propaganda. Rhetoric, like propaganda, does seek to manipulate the audience, but unlike propaganda which comes from power with a view to reproduce the conditions of that power, rhetoric comes from citizens and refuses to treat the audience instrumentally by foreclosing discussion, but rather offers arguments and leaves the final decision on any particular issue to the audience as fellow citizens.

The subversive potential of rhetoric has long been recognised. The Roman experience suggests that the power of rhetoric was not lost on the "thinly disguised oligarchy"¹³³ that ruled that city and its empire. The Roman Senate banned the teaching of Latin rhetoric in 92 BC although it still allowed the teaching of Greek rhetoric. A facility in Greek was an upper class accomplishment and so while their children could learn the techniques of rhetoric, the lower classes and particularly its upwardly mobile members, the *nouveau riche*, could be denied access to the effective use of language in a political context.¹³⁴ Where, as will be seen in the following chapter, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* claims that its aim is to extend dialectical argument to improve the quality of demotic deliberation, Cicero's *De Oratore* is explicitly a primer for the aristocracy and is concerned with "progressively narrower matters of style" that allow the orator to "be vehement in exerting influence"¹³⁵. Cicero took much from Aristotle but he broke up Aristotle's unified account of rhetoric and, it is suggested, established the groundwork for a practice of propaganda distinct from rhetoric by relegating the argumentative skills

¹³² Minson "Ascetics and the Demands Of Participation"

¹³³ Stone I.F. *The Trial of Socrates* Little Brown & Co Boston 1988 p6

¹³⁴ *ibid* p43

¹³⁵ Lawson-Tancred, HC "Introduction" to Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* p55

to "practical wisdom", while leaving oratory as the search for eloquence in the theatre of politics.¹³⁶

Machiavelli was the first modern thinker to address the new formations of political power that were developing to deal with the emerging mass society. He introduced a pragmatism which has left an indelible imprint on the practice of political communication and opened the possibility of propaganda. Machiavelli argued that people find it difficult to accept "a world of becoming", so they seek out constants in the illusions of religion or, at the other extreme, utopian ideals. They are transfixed by any "spinner of fancies and illusions concealing the true nature of events."¹³⁷ Machiavelli accepted the futility of seeking to dispel well-entrenched illusions; rather he sought to unmask them in order "to teach the political actor how to create and exploit the illusions."¹³⁸ In *The Prince* he points out that "contemporary experience shows that princes who have achieved great things have been those who have given their word lightly, who have known how to trick men with their cunning".¹³⁹ But while a prince might have to act like a beast, he should not be seen to be a beast. Machiavelli grasped the importance of image in politics: "Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are."¹⁴⁰ A prince "should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, guileless and devout. And indeed he should be so. But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how."¹⁴¹

The term "propaganda" was coined by the Catholic Church in 1622 when it established the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* to respond systematically to the arguments expounded by the Protestant Reformation by propagating Church doctrine.¹⁴² The term was used in a neutral fashion to denote any political communication until the World War Two when it acquired a more negative connotation informed by the practices of Nazi Germany and its Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Josef Goebbels. With an instruction to mould mass public opinion in the interest of the Nazi regime, Goebbels took charge of all mass media in Germany, introduced blanket censorship and provided every home with a radio.¹⁴³ He pursued a comprehensive program to ensure

¹³⁶ cf Cicero's attitude towards democracy and theatre discussed by Stone *The Trial of Socrates* p265

¹³⁷ Wolin, Sheldon *Politics and Vision* Little Brown Boston 1960 p212

¹³⁸ *ibid* p213

¹³⁹ Machiavelli, N *The Prince* Penguin Harmondsworth 1961 p99

¹⁴⁰ *ibid* p100

¹⁴¹ *ibid*

¹⁴² Ward *Politics of the Media* p29

¹⁴³ *ibid* p25

that all information flow was in the interests of the regime. He insisted on direct access to the highest level of intelligence so he could tailor propaganda to produce required responses in Germany and among the Allies.¹⁴⁴ On the home front he attempted to steer a path between frustration and unsustainable hope to create "an optimum anxiety level".¹⁴⁵ He appreciated that "propaganda cannot immediately effect strong counter-tendencies"¹⁴⁶ but realised that by repeatedly labeling people and events with easily learnt phrases and slogans he could touch the audience's existing emotions to evoke the desired response.¹⁴⁷ This is not to say that Goebbels saw his work as the perpetual production and distribution of political slogans. He knew that "to be perceived, propaganda must evoke the interest of the audience".¹⁴⁸ The movies made under his control worked within existing genres, particularly musicals, to spread the Nazi message with some subtlety. He is said to have told one producer: "Don't come to me with political films."¹⁴⁹ Goebbels conceived propaganda as the production of a total world-view that, once inculcated in the populace, would produce instinctual responses that matched the requirements of the regime.

In the aftermath of World War Two, propaganda was defined as the conscious fabrication of falsehood and aligned with "the big lie" technique of the constant and inventive repetition of a falsehood until it so dominates discussion that it is widely assumed to be the truth.¹⁵⁰ Jacques Ellul attempted a more subtle explanation of propaganda than the "big lie" thesis by distinguishing between political and sociological propaganda: the first is where a group uses techniques of influence to achieve precise ends, the second is where an ideology is assimilated by an individual who then uses it in inter-personal communications.¹⁵¹ It was within the context of this more subtle view that Herman and Chomsky made the argument discussed above that propaganda is not just a tool of totalitarian regimes but that at least since World War One democracies have sought systematically to propagate a totalising view-point in the geo-political interests of capital.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁴ Doob, LW "Goebbels' Principles of Propaganda" Katz, D et al (eds) *Public Opinion and Propaganda* Holt, Rinehart & Winston New York 1954 p510

¹⁴⁵ *ibid* p519-521

¹⁴⁶ *ibid* p521-522

¹⁴⁷ *ibid* p518-519

¹⁴⁸ *ibid* p513

¹⁴⁹ *We have ways of making you think* (video recording) ABC-TV 4 February 1993

¹⁵⁰ Foulkes, AP *Literature and Propaganda* Methuen London 1983 p9

¹⁵¹ quoted in *ibid* p11

¹⁵² Herman & Chomsky *Manufacturing Consent* p1-35

As will be seen in Chapter Four Aristotle was all too aware of the propagandistic ends to which the techniques of rhetoric might be put. Much of his motivation for *Rhetoric* is to combat those evil ends by ensuring the proponents of good are equally well armed so that the good's natural appeal may prevail.¹⁵³ In one way, political communication is always the same: it is an attempt to manipulate collective attitudes to particular opinions and actions. In this sense all rhetoric is propaganda, as was acknowledged in the "descriptive and non-controversial" use of the latter term before 1920¹⁵⁴.

The distinction between rhetoric and propaganda is not always clear. In common parlance the words are frequently practically synonyms. In political practice, they are useful terms to describe the opponent's position. They both make use of the mass media. They both seek to convince the audience of a partisan position. They both exist in the realm of expediency that accepts the malleability of facts. Rhetoric, like propaganda seeks "to re-define responses towards certain objects by the management of the available supply of symbols."¹⁵⁵ It is how each practice seeks to manipulate symbols that is the basis of their difference. While propaganda involves the systematic propagation of a universalistic doctrine, rhetoric aims merely to sway an audience of citizens on a particular issue. Thus propaganda is a form of compulsion that seeks to end debate about political ends, while rhetoric is a means to rational deliberation which accepts that debate can never end. Propaganda is a tool of totality, rhetoric a means to change. Because propaganda is so ensconced within its own system, it does not offer the space for rational reconsideration of itself, while rhetoric retains elements of the rational and the dialectical which means that it is always open to testing and modification. In these terms, rhetoric is different from, even antithetical to, propaganda.

The central role of the mass media in contemporary democracy and their potential to be used for propaganda suggest that a close understanding of the techniques of media manipulation is crucial for citizens to understand what is occurring in the political process, let alone to participate in that process. Rather than lament democracy's failure to represent a broad range of views, perhaps those committed to democracy would be better occupied assisting citizens to come to a better understanding of the nature of mass media techniques and to develop the skills to improve the quality of deliberation within the forums of currently existing representative democracy.

¹⁵³ Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1355a

¹⁵⁴ Lasswell, Harold D *Propaganda and Promotional Activities* University of Chicago Press Chicago 1935 p3

¹⁵⁵ *ibid* p13

Criteria of Effective Democratic Deliberation

The preceding analysis of democratic theory raises the possibility that there may be criteria with which to test the effectiveness of rhetorical practices in producing democratic deliberation in a variety of democratic institutions. In theorising the central role of deliberation in democracy, it was noted that two interrelated elements emerge: autonomy and cohesion. It is argued here that it is the interplay between these two elements that both creates and limits the democratic mechanism. Analysis of that interplay below generates a set of criteria by which deliberative effectiveness may be judged and which will be applied in the various democratic situations discussed in succeeding chapters.

Autonomy requires that citizens have the opportunity to participate in the production of cohesion through engagement in the deliberative process by fully and freely exploring and evaluating options so that they can both govern (and for this they must be ensured *access* to deliberative mechanisms) and knowingly and willingly consent to the government of others (and this requires *transparency* so they are fully informed of all aspects of the deliberative process). Cohesion requires that citizens have the opportunity to exercise their autonomy through engagement in the deliberative process to arrive at definitive decisions in order both to exercise control over government (and thus provide *feedback* on previous decisions and the manner in which they were executed) and also conditionally limit their autonomy by consenting to abide by decisions (and thus allow for *coordination* of collective action).

Ready access to deliberative involvement is an important test for the level of effective autonomy allowed by any democratic institution.¹⁵⁶ As was seen above, only open and equal access to the decision-making process by all those concerned about an issue can guarantee that all relevant positions are advanced and that the relative importance to individuals or groups of various ramifications arising from different outcomes of the issue can be made apparent by the intensity of their involvement in discussion. Thus relatively open access ensures that there will be the breadth of contention required to produce the best result for the greatest number of those affected and therefore produces the maximum consent to a decision which in turn reinforces the effective operation of the democracy.

¹⁵⁶ This argument is made in some detail in Mayer, Henry "Right of Reply" in Tiffen, Rodney (ed) *Mayer on the Media* AFTRS/Allen&Unwin Sydney 1994 p92-101

As a criterion, access is difficult to measure. While numerical indicators are useful (for example: percentage of adult population enfranchised, attendance numbers at community consultation meetings etc), these reflect neither the intensity nor quality of involvement. Further complications arise from the plethora of ways in which access may be restricted, including through institutional, cultural and economic means. In the first case law, regulation or institutional practice may formally restrict the right of citizens or classes of citizens to involvement in a particular debate (for example: citizens have no right to partake in parliamentary debate) or may be used informally to deter citizens from exercising their rights to access (for example the use of defamation actions resulting in the bankruptcy of a political opponent).

Similarly cultural practice may limit citizens' access to debate through overt discrimination (for example where religious bigotry denies sizeable portions of populations significant involvement in political life) or through less obvious means (for example: holding political meetings in the early evenings when those caring for children will be busy preparing their meals and putting them to bed). Finally while property qualifications for voting are no longer common in avowedly democratic polities, it is becoming increasingly common that independent wealth is needed to purchase the research, advertising, direct mail and media consultancy services required to run successfully for political office. Thus access must be measured with reference to both the number of participants able to become involved in political deliberation and also the quality and effectiveness of their involvement.

Transparency in the way discussion and debate function in particular settings is another important test of autonomy within the context of the "complex equality" provided by contemporary democratic institutions.¹⁵⁷ The very complexity of democratic deliberation arising from the interaction of different arguments from many sides put with varying degrees of intensity and judged by the diverse rationalities of the participants provides many opportunities for elites and vested interests to deploy democratic deliberation for their own ends to defeat the autonomy of citizens. To counter this tendency there is the need to ensure that the processes of deliberation are obvious and available so that all citizens have a clear understanding of the operations of those processes. To do this, the test of transparency should extend not just to the formal "rules" of debate but also to the informal conventions governing the discussion and, most particularly, to the techniques of persuasion.

¹⁵⁷ The importance of transparency in ensuring "complex equality" is implied by Walzer, M *Spheres of Justice* Blackwell Oxford 1983 p19ff

There are two reasons for accentuating the importance of transparency as a criterion for democratic deliberation. At a general level, access is meaningless unless citizens can understand how the deliberative process functions. Only transparency can guarantee the clear and readily available understanding of the process of deliberation required to allow citizens the opportunity to develop the techniques and skills to intervene effectively where they wish to do so.

Secondly it is important for all citizens to understand the processes of democratic deliberation so they can properly interpret the arguments of others, analyse those arguments into their constituent parts and make reflective, autonomous decisions about how they judge the validity and appeal of those arguments. Thus transparency should be measured with reference to both the availability of the formal rules and informal conventions of democratic deliberation and the ubiquity of skills citizens require to become authentically involved in discussion and debate.

Feedback is an important test of the cohesiveness produced by democratic deliberation.¹⁵⁸ As was noted above, democracies are on-going systems that must continually redefine their operations to adapt to change. For a democracy to survive it must constantly review its operations to gauge its deliberative effectiveness and its ability to deliver outcomes in tune with the needs of the citizens. It can only do this where citizens have the opportunity to reflect on the impact of decisions and return those reflections to the decision-making process for purposes of correction and control. Feedback can be either "negative" to oppose the input of previous decisions and, for example, counteract excesses, or "positive" to reinforce previous decisions so that deliberative forums can learn from their successes. Systems of feedback can be either formally centralised through a defined control mechanism (as, for example, are parliamentary petitions and questions without notice) or informal and diffuse, operating throughout the system (for example, the conversations, phone calls and letter to the editors that are often described by politicians as "anecdotal" evidence about the "mood" of the electorate). The effectiveness of feedback processes must be measured both quantitatively (the number of opportunities for citizens to reflect on and review decisions and the number of times those opportunities are exercised) and more importantly by the willingness of the democratic institution to adapt its policies and operations in response to the feedback received.

¹⁵⁸ Negative feedback is suggested as one of a set of criteria "to test the claims to ecological rationality of social choice mechanisms" in Dryzek, *J Rational Ecology* Blackwell Oxford 1987 p46-48

Finally another test of the cohesiveness of democratic institutions is the effectiveness of the coordination they produce.¹⁵⁹ To be effective democratic deliberation must end in decisions which produce action. While there is nothing wrong with hypothetical debate to explore the theoretical ramifications of potential decisions, no democratic institution can long survive without taking action to protect and reproduce itself, particularly by producing collective action which reaffirms its purpose to participants. Where that collective action is orderly, harmonious and well coordinated then energy and resources are not wasted in the counter-productive circumstances produced by random and acrimonious decisions. Thus the first prerequisite for effective coordination is the ready involvement of committed citizens who give their consent to limiting their own autonomy because they have been involved to the extent they desire in the deliberation process. The second prerequisite for effective coordination in a democracy is a willingness of deliberative bodies to cooperate and to ensure transparent methods for the democratic conflict resolution between themselves. Levels of coordination can be measured with reference to intensity and duration of conflict, the ease of its resolution and the residual acrimony that remains after its resolution.

Positive movement on any one of these four criteria constitutes an improvement in the effectiveness of democratic deliberation but none should be privileged at the expense of another because there is no easy way to measure the relative importance of each nor can the results of that privileging be predicted with any degree of certainty.¹⁶⁰ For example a large increase in citizens exercising their rights to a particular form of access may lead to so much "filibuster" and repetitive debate that by the time the decision is made circumstances have changed so irrevocably that the decision is irrelevant and subsequent actions lack in coordination. Similarly excessive feedback could lead to obfuscation by an overload of data that lessened the level of transparency over the decision-making process. As will be seen in further chapters, the quality and quantity of rhetorical practice is not so high that it would be wise to privilege any facet of democratic deliberation at the expense of any other. Nevertheless, before considering how rhetorical practice and democratic deliberation might be better facilitated in the future, it is important to test past and present democratic institutions against the criteria outlined above to appreciate the pitfalls and possibilities facing attempts to improve the quantity and quality of debate and discussion in democratic decision-making processes.

¹⁵⁹ Coordination is another of the criteria suggested at *ibid* p48-51

¹⁶⁰ Dryzek, John S *Democracy in Capitalist Times* Oxford University Press New York 1996 p6ff

To this end three particular democratic formations have been chosen for investigation in this thesis utilising the criteria outlined above. The first is the classical Athenian state, a model of democracy which, particularly through the theoretical work of Aristotle, still exercises a significant influence over the consideration of democratic theory. It was within Athenian democracy that the practices of rhetoric initially developed and a return to the context of that development and the content of those practices provide an excellent opportunity to establish the ground for a more contemporary account of rhetoric by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of rhetorical practice in the Athenian model.

The other two events chosen for investigation are recent election campaigns in which the author was involved as a participant observer: the 1991 Brisbane City Council election and the 1993 Australian federal election. The focus on election campaigns provides the opportunity to study the operations of currently existing representative institutions at the moment when they are most open to demotic intervention. While representative democracy provides other opportunities for demotic intervention through, for example, grass-roots lobbying and interest group campaigns, they generally employ techniques for building support and intervening in the mass media that are also employed, and indeed originally developed for, election campaigns.

These two particular campaigns recommend themselves for a number of other reasons: they are relatively recent and so still relevant to contemporary practice; they are close together in time and so bear comparison and; most particularly, they are examples of "surprise" or "upset" victories where in one case an incumbent campaign and in the other case an insurgent campaign prevailed against the expectations of the media and other "experts". Thus each of the campaigns studied shows potential ways to utilise gaps in the "coercive" constructions of the media to produce outcomes against institutional expectations. While each of these results were to the benefit of political parties, the concluding chapter of this thesis points to ways in which marginalised and critical demotic voices can utilise the rhetorical techniques revealed in discussion of party election campaigns to open more channels for discussion and produce an improved standard of deliberation.

Chapter 4

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RHETORIC Political Deliberation in Athenian Democracy

...rhetoric is found to be possessed of a narrative tendency to contend, contest, and thus perfect the mutual capacity of speaker and audience for responsible social conduct.

Thomas Farrell¹

Outline

In exploring the role of deliberative participation in producing effective democratic practice, a return to the Athenian model of democracy reveals the efficacy of rhetoric in ensuring that demotic deliberation precedes political decision-making. The development of rhetoric can be traced from tribal and bardic uses of language to create social cohesion by "magic", through the Sophists' ad hoc pedagogy designed to produce decisive political action out of diffuse human interests by "reason" and on to Aristotle's comprehensive system which he characterised as a discipline of practical reason that is the technical and ethical counterpart of dialectical reason. The Athenian experience shows that by teaching the technical skills and ethical responsibilities involved in marshalling arguments into formulae to convince mass audiences to take collective action, rhetoric ensures a level of effective participation that counters (though it does not completely negate) the influence of existing elites and allows for a relatively high degree of political responsiveness. By applying the criteria for effective democracy developed in chapter one to the Athenian model, it is possible to locate a general theory of rhetoric, at the juncture of practical reason and democratic deliberation, as a discipline to sustain democratic institutions by empowering citizens to participate in debate and discussion within the bounds of ethical responsibility.

Relevance of Athens and Aristotle

Before reviewing the classical development of rhetoric, it is important to consider why the Athenian model of direct democracy, particularly as it was described, criticised and theorised by Aristotle, continues to exert as powerful an influence over democratic

¹ Farrell "The tradition of rhetoric and the philosophy of communication" p153

theory as it has for the last five hundred years. There are a number of reasons why this may be the case. Etymologically, the word democracy has its roots in the Greek *demokratia* which was first used by Herodotus to describe the Athenian system of government, particularly from around 507 BC when the Constitution of Kleisthenes came into force.² While, as Hyland argues, it would be fallacious to conclude that since the Greeks invented the word, they created "a pure and uncorrupted paradigm"³, nevertheless the historical origins of the word and the practice are a useful place to begin to explore the idea of democracy, particularly as so much detail and debate about it were systematically recorded in the classical period by Aristotle.

Conceptually, as was seen in the earlier chapters, the project of democracy has been impossible to complete, since one of the functions of democracy is constantly to discuss and adapt itself. Theorists need to return to previous models to provide substance for the on-going discussion about which democratic formations are most efficacious. The Athenian model provides an example so distinctively different from modern models that it significantly opens the field of discussion about what democracy may be.

Empirically, Athenian democracy worked: for about two hundred years a system of direct democracy survived, and although there were hiatuses of tyranny and external conquest and a variety of excesses and abuses, the Athenian democracy learnt from these problems and overcame them, adapting to changing circumstances and allowing the city to prosper until it was overwhelmed by the imperialism of Rome. Thus the actual practices of democratic Athens provide many useful object lessons that still reward theoretical investigation.

While Birch's warning that "the Greeks gave us the word, but did not provide us a model"⁴ is designed to point out how very different their assumptions and practices were from those of modern democrats, it is important to appreciate that the Athenian "model" was always "indeterminate"⁵ and thus open to contest. So the return to Athens is always an important prelude to the on-going discussion about the nature of democracy because that return simultaneously centres discussion on both practical precedent and theoretical alternatives. The return to Athens accentuates its differences in comparison with contemporary models and opens new directions in which discussion

² Hyland *Democratic Theory* p46

³ *ibid* p37

⁴ Birch *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* p45

⁵ Hyland *Democratic Theory* p46

can move to provide a dynamic basis from which to advance debate about democratic theory.

As the pre-eminent systematiser of Greek political thought and practice, and as someone who wrote towards the end of the democratic period, Aristotle continues to exert a particularly strong influence over democratic theory. A wide variety of democratic theorists have found their inspiration in Aristotle: John Stuart Mill argues that Aristotle propounded a "judicious utilitarianism"⁶ in arguing for possibility of increasing human happiness through politics; John Rawls refers to a key principle of human motivation as "the Aristotelian principle"⁷ which posits that "human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities... and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized"⁸; and other twentieth century liberal thinkers including Leo Strauss and William Galston have sought to revise Aristotle's politics to incorporate a modern metaphysics.⁹

The key "metaphysical" problem which analytical positivists such as G.E. Moore point to in Aristotle's work is his "ethical naturalism" which uses an empirical account of human nature to generate normative moral terms and thus, says Moore, derives 'ought' from 'is'.¹⁰ This position has been confronted by a disparate group of thinkers including Hannah Arendt, Max Horkheimer, Jurgen Habermas and Alasdair MacIntyre who have sought to rehabilitate Aristotle by establishing how ethical precepts do arise predominantly from empirical analysis of what improves or worsens human life.¹¹ These thinkers suggest that central to this process of moving from empirical facts to ethical precepts is the reinstatement of "authentic and reasonable public discourse"¹² based in a "communicative rationality"¹³ that revisits Aristotle's notion of practical reason arising out of the sphere of free communication in human communities.

Aristotle's account of practical reason may thus be seen to have a particular relevance to the development of deliberative models of democracy. As will be seen below, there is much important preliminary work in his political, ethical and logical treatises, but his account of practical reason is set forward most comprehensively in his *Rhetoric*. Before

⁶ Mill "On Liberty" p29

⁷ Rawls *A Theory of Justice* p424-433

⁸ *ibid* p426

⁹ Plant, Raymond *Modern Political Thought* Blackwell Oxford 1991 p25

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Dryzek *Discursive Democracy* p14

¹³ *ibid*

turning to a close consideration of that work, it is useful to appreciate the context which informed it.

Tribal and Bardic Influences

Prior to the Greek experiments with democracy discussed below, persuasive language had been the province of sorcery and religion. As De Kerckhove says: "Rhetoric was a sort of democratisation of magical practices."¹⁴ It is useful to isolate the nature of these "magical practices" in order to clarify the full scope of rhetoric. The animistic and totemistic explanations of tribal societies¹⁵ were expressed through costume, painting, dance and most particularly song which infused words with lilt, balance and tone that seemingly gave them "magical" and "mystical" powers:

Once words have begun to be accommodated to music, they display qualities which might not be expected of them in their ordinary duties... The melody of the words exerts an attraction like that of a musical melody, and both matching something in ourselves.¹⁶

The power of the song was extended to create an attempt at power over the world, typically expressed through "chants, some of which had very practical magical purposes - to avert the evil eye, to cure some disease, or to propitiate some demon."¹⁷ More generally, songs and chants provided the tribal person with the techniques to "drill his emotions and compose his thoughts [and so] gives him a defence... [against] the extreme uncertainties and hazards of his existence".¹⁸

Thus song was a social product that offered a sense of spiritual certainty and political cohesion which allowed the tribal person, and the tribe, to persevere and survive. The power that song infused in words remained with the words, at least in their mythical/ritual context, so in tribal society invocation is power and as Paul Corcoran points out: "To name... spiritual forces was to invoke their power... the formula of the spell was inextricably bound up in the speech itself... the spoken word was the magical

¹⁴ De Kerckhove "Classical Rhetoric and Communication Theory" p186

¹⁵ for example see Mowaljarlai, David & Malnic, Jutta *Yorro Yorro* Magabala Books Broome 1993 and for western interpretations of those explanations consider Chatwin, Bruce *The Songlines* Penguin New York 1988 and King-Boyes, M *Patterns of Aboriginal Culture* McGraw Hill Sydney 1977

¹⁶ Bowra, CM *Primitive Song* Weidenfield and Nicholson London 1962 p276

¹⁷ Eliot, TS *On Poetry and Poets* Faber London 1957 p16

¹⁸ Bowra *Primitive Song* p282

power."¹⁹ Further, the creative use of language, the application of rhythm, assonance, alliteration and word-play could lead to deeper, more complex and more convincing levels of explanation. These explanatory "myths" were reinforced by the very resonance of ritual language to "persuade" individuals to remain as members of the tribe and thus produced a higher degree of social cohesion than physical coercion ever could.²⁰

With the development of agriculture and more intensive human settlement, the diffuse power of the tribe gave way to the concentrated social power of leaders who utilised coercive physical power and religions formalised around gods (often themselves) to construct strict formations of social cohesion and related concentrations of wealth.²¹ But even all-powerful god-kings cannot rely solely on force and appeals to the divine in extreme and emergency situations. The delivery of key words at appropriate moments, for example before battles, after disasters or in aristocratic councils, was a central act of post-tribal leadership. *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Bible* and *Beowulf* all record moments where people are welded together and convinced to action by the appropriate words of leadership.²²

In arriving at the right words at the right moments, kings often relied on the services of court poets or bards. The bard occupied a crucial position in feudal societies of ancient²³ and medieval times²⁴. The bards' proficiency with words and song²⁵, their training in memorising genealogy, laws and stories²⁶ and their mystical insights²⁷ provided chieftains and kings with expert advice on political communication and useful assistance in the production of social cohesion. Typically, the Celtic bard produced an intense,

¹⁹ Corcoran *Political Language and Rhetoric* p15-16

²⁰ Berger, Peter *The Social Reality of Religion* Penguin Harmondsworth 1973 p18-30

²¹ Jaynes, Julian *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* Houghton Mifflin Boston 1977 p138-144

²² Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture* p13; for an informative instance of the role of language in the leadership of the chieftain see Sturluson, Snorri *King Harald's Saga* Penguin Harmondsworth 1966 p150-151

²³ Burnet, John *Greek Philosophy* MacMillan London 1968 p23

²⁴ Cruise O'Brien, Marie "The Role of the Poet in Gaelic Society" in O'Driscoll, Robert *The Celtic Consciousness* Braziller New York 1981 p243ff

²⁵ Calder, DG et al (eds) *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry II* DS Brewer Cambridge 1983 pxiii

²⁶ on each of these points respectively see Jackson, KH (ed) *A Celtic Miscellany* Penguin London 1971 p227; Hughes, K *The Early Celtic Idea of History and the Modern Historian* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1977 p13-15 and Herm, Gerhard *The Celts* Weidenfeld and Nicolson London 1976 p240 and; *ibid* p239

²⁷ Freeman, Mara "Word of Skill" *Parabola* Spring 1995

dynamic "spiralling of thought"²⁸ by deleting verbs and definite articles, by dispensing with tense and by favouring the unmarked verbal noun. The "magic" of the bard was in the stylistic techniques which drew the maximum power to inspire action and commitment from the fewest possible words.

These reflections on political communication in pre-democratic tribal and bardic societies are of relevant to the study of rhetoric because 1) they suggest "magical" ways in which relatively non-coercive linguistic practices such as chanting, prayer, singing and story-telling are more effective in producing social cohesion than the alternative of coercive physical discipline and 2) they point to a "magical" power in words which continues to persist today so that, as Cecil Bowra points out: "when, through their sound and rhythm and sense, words exert so strong a hold on us that we can think of nothing else, we still speak of their enchantment".²⁹

These two observations lay the groundwork for the development of rhetoric as a form of practical reason with an ethical and technical basis in the production of democratic decisions 1) from relatively non-coercive deliberation rather than fear of physical discipline and 2) by utilising not just logic but other forms of argument that an audience might find persuasive such as those that rely on an appeal to emotion or the character of the speaker. In appreciating how the "magic" of tribal and bardic practices was transformed into Aristotelian practical reason, it is important to clarify the nature of the deliberative and democratic experiments of the Greek enlightenment.

The Athenian Model of Direct Democracy

The origins of Greek democracy can be traced to the processes of tribal consultation.³⁰ Kenneth Maddock points out that these consultations were typically governed by the principle of "egalitarian mutuality"³¹ where each initiated member of the tribe had equal standing in the exhaustive discussion preceding collective action. Robert Adams suggests that these tribal consultations were formalised in early cities where political authority "rested in a assembly of the adult male members of the community"³², a point reinforced by Martin Bernal who claims a political system close to democracy is evident around

²⁸ Calder *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry II* pxiii

²⁹ Bowra *Primitive Song* p276

³⁰ Watson, P & Barber B *The Struggle for Democracy* Allen & Co London 1990 p55-85

³¹ Maddock, Kenneth *The Australian Aborigines* Penguin Ringwood 1974 p166

³² Adams, Robert M "The Origins of Cities" *Scientific American* Special Issue vol 5 no 1 1994 p16

1000 BC in the Phoenician practices of consensual decision-making which were later copied by the Greeks.³³ What is certain is that a number of developments coincided in pre-classical Greece (from 800 to around 500BC) which prompted first Chios and then other city-states to experiment with forms of diffused decision-making.³⁴ The overthrow of tribal kings by aristocrats, long distance sea trade, intensive agriculture and the introduction of coinage "created a stratum of newly rich agrarian proprietors [with wealth] not matched by any equivalent power in the city."³⁵

These changes coincided with the development of a streamlined alphabetic script which "achieved enough precision to promote new patterns of decoding activity relying principally on sequence analysis".³⁶ The new pattern of decoding allowed the animistic and theocratic explanations of mythology to be confronted by an emerging intellectual independence evident in, as Bowra says:

a desire to understand things more exactly, to penetrate the mystery which enveloped them, to explain them in rational language, and to find principles and rules in nature rather than the inexplicable whims which myths ascribed to the gods.³⁷

This nascent intellectual independence was continually under challenge from the inherent irrationality which arose from the city-states' tribal and theocratic origins and which was expressed through ritual shame, madness and mystery religions³⁸, but this wealthy new class applied a developing rationality to its trade and enterprise and also to the politics of the city-states which led, during the sixth and seventh centuries BC to a decline in the power of kings and aristocrats.

Once the power of the aristocrats was broken, further conflict arose between the powerful rich and the poor *hoplites*, the self-armed and largely self-sufficient infantry that formed the backbone of the army in time of war. Where that conflict was resolved with the application of rationality to produce economic justice and constitutional power-sharing (as Solon and then Kleisthenes did in Athens during the sixth century BC), then democracy gradually developed as a participatory form of government which

³³ Bernal, Martin *Black Athena* Vintage London 1991 p22

³⁴ Held *Models of Democracy* p13-15

³⁵ Anderson, Perry *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* New Left Books London 1974 p30

³⁶ De Kerckhove "Classical Rhetoric and Communication Theory" p183

³⁷ Bowra, CM *The Greek Experience* Cardinal London 1973 p188

³⁸ Dodds, ER *The Greeks and the Irrational* University of California Press Berkeley 1951

allowed open debate in large forums that made prompt and binding decisions.³⁹ But for the Athenians, democracy was not just a set of institutions; it was an entire mode of life whose "basis was not so much individual material welfare or comfort as communal pride".⁴⁰ It was a mode of life dedicated to the pursuit of individual and collective happiness and the realisation of the good life through active participation.⁴¹

It is significant in terms of both practical politics and the theoretical consideration of autonomy that, as Perry Anderson notes: "The precondition of later Greek 'democracy'... was a self-armed citizen infantry".⁴² Thus before democracy was a theoretical construct, it was an assertion of practical power by the citizenry and the political reforms that institutionalised the power of the *demos* into democracy flowed directly from the practical power of citizens to organise collectively and fight in their own interests, at first physically and then in participatory politics. Access to political forums was not granted to citizens; rather they created it.

From Kleisthenes' Constitution onwards, sovereign and practical political power in Athens rested in the hands of the Assembly (or *Ekklesia*) of citizens.⁴³ The citizenry was composed of all adult males with two Athenian parents and who had not displayed a lack of manly virtue by, among other things, deserting in war or prostituting themselves.⁴⁴ The Assembly met for deliberation forty times a year and for important decisions required a quorum of 6,000 of the 40,000 citizens eligible to participate. It attempted to make decisions by consensus but where that was impossible a simple majority prevailed. The agenda for the Assembly was prepared by the Council of Five Hundred (or *Boule*) which was composed of 500 men over thirty years of age selected by lot. The Council was chaired by a president who held the office for one day only. Magistrates and courts were selected by lot for short periods with no provision for re-selection but military leaders were elected and were eligible for repeated re-election.

Pericles' Funeral Oration is one of the few contemporary positive accounts of Athenian democracy that remains extant and it captures the notion that democracy is produced by the citizenry when it insists on access to and transparency of decision-making processes. Democracy, he argued, is something more than simple majority rule. The test

³⁹ Held *Models of Democracy* p14

⁴⁰ Curtis, Michael *The Great Political Theories* vol 1 Avon New York 1965 p23

⁴¹ MacIntyre, Alasdair *After Virtue* Duckworth London 1985 p135-136

⁴² Anderson *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* p33

⁴³ The following outline is derived from *ibid* and Held *Models of Democracy* p13-35

⁴⁴ McLean *Democracy and New Technology* p5-6

of democracy is that "its administration favours the many instead of the few"⁴⁵ and it achieves this end precisely because it affords equal access and freedom to speak regardless of class or status. Pericles saw the democratic *polis* as a neo-tribal institution where bonds of blood and shared experience meant that individuality was balanced by the interests of the group. Thus he could say "far from exercising jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes".⁴⁶ but also point out that those who avoid their democratic duties are regarded "not as unambitious but as useless"⁴⁷ or, as another translation puts it: "we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say he has no business here at all."⁴⁸

Citizenship brought both rights and responsibilities. Liberty was not just freedom from excessive restraint but also a duty to participate. Equality was judged not so much quantitatively as qualitatively and everyone was expected to aim for the same high standards: "refinement without extravagance, knowledge without pedantry; wealth we employ more for use than show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining to struggle against it."⁴⁹ However Pericles' argument for democracy was not based on fairness alone but also on its effectiveness: the *polis* was strong, the quality of life improved because the democratic system required extensive deliberation before a decision was made: "instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all."⁵⁰ Democracy was the most efficient way to transform the multiplicity of interests and views in the society into action because full and free debate generally led to the most beneficial course.

Admittedly, it was a limited form of democracy by modern standards. An individual's legal rights could be over-ridden by the Assembly: the rule of law was subservient to majority rule, sometimes with tragic consequences.⁵¹ Also, more people were excluded from the democracy than were included. Women and slaves played no part in the formal decision-making process which was dependent on their labour to free the male citizenry

⁴⁵ Pericles "Funeral Oration" in Thucydides *The History of the Peloponnesian War* Encyclopaedia Britannica Press Chicago 1952 s37

⁴⁶ Pericles "Funeral Oration" s37

⁴⁷ *ibid* s40

⁴⁸ Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Harmondsworth Penguin 1972 p147

⁴⁹ Pericles "Funeral Oration" s40

⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵¹ see for example Xenophon's account of the trial of the Generals following the battle of Arginusae quoted in Held *Models of Democracy* p24-27

to participate in state affairs.⁵² Athenian democracy also suffered the same problems of elitism and manipulation that were identified in previous chapters as afflicting contemporary democratic models. Anderson captures limits and potentialities of Athenian democracy in the tension between rich and poor: on the one hand Athenian democracy was "diluted by the informal dominance of professional politicians over the Assembly, recruited from traditionally wealthy and well-born families" and on the other it "was always liable to upsets and challenges because of the demotic nature of the polity."⁵³ Anderson's reading of Greek history suggests that democracy was only ever a construction of the powerful to create popular acquiescence to the state which they ruled for their own particular interests but that the residual power of the citizen, given voice through radically free speech, could still affect political life.

Anderson's Marxism echoes the classical Cynic view exemplified by Diogenes who saw politics as farce designed to enslave people with their own consent.⁵⁴ Nevertheless it was Diogenes who showed the ability of language to subvert political power by refining and deploying two powerful oral forms (the *chreia* - a pithy "put-down" and the *diatribe* - a short and direct exposition designed to stimulate discussion⁵⁵) to challenge and question the status quo. For example when Diogenes was taken as a slave he is said to have remarked: "The art of being a slave is to rule one's master."⁵⁶ Diogenes understood well one of the great "discoveries" of the Greek enlightenment: the ability of newly "invented" descriptions of a political situation to invert that situation and produce the ground on which debate can occur. This technique is at the heart of classical rhetoric and, by extension, contemporary accounts of communicative rationality.

Central to the Athenian model of democracy was a freedom of speech among citizens, particularly in the Assembly. It was more than a right, it was a responsibility required for the effective operation of the participatory democracy. I.F. Stone identifies four different Greek words for freedom of speech: *isegoria* and *isologia* encapsulate the equal right to speak in the Assembly which was the basis of equality among citizens; *eleutherostomou* which comes from the theatre and suggests that a freely given opinion has greater moral force than a speech that is produced with inter-personal, economic or institutional constraint and; *parrhesia* which might be translated as a brutally frank and

⁵² *ibid* p23-24

⁵³ Anderson *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* p38

⁵⁴ see for example Davenport, Guy (trans) *Herakleitos and Diogenes* Grey Fox Press San Francisco 1976 p43

⁵⁵ Rankin, H.D. *Sophists, Socratics and Cynics* Croom Helm London 1983 p233

⁵⁶ Davenport *Herakleitos and Diogenes* p42

direct speech that was directed to revealing the actual substance of the matter under discussion.⁵⁷

Unconstrained by laws of defamation or the concept of official secrets, political debate was "candid and vituperative", marked by "a remarkable degree of outspokenness".⁵⁸ Ironical and satirical humour was accepted as an important element of debate because it was seen to reveal the complex and quirky intimations and intuitions of the citizen's mind at which more polite and formal speech could only hint and so achieved a deeper and more sincere debate that strengthened the resolve of citizens to abide by collective decisions: "A people which can laugh at itself is well armed against many catastrophes."⁵⁹

To the Athenians, free speech was much more than a right to enunciate a position. It was also the citizen's duty to overcome "stage-fright" and the fear of public speaking, to withstand personal attacks and insults, to stand up straight and speak clearly in order to communicate what he really thought and felt about an issue in compelling arguments. Having contributed to the decision-making process as best he could, the citizen was constrained to abide by the decision thus made. Free speech, in short, was an intellectual, emotional and physical exercise that bound the *polis* together.

But free speech did not occur in a vacuum and there was the gradual realisation that the effective exercise of free speech could be taught. Within the open forum of the Athenian Assembly, and in similar bodies all over the Hellenic world, it soon became apparent to keen students that there were more and less effective means of convincing people to pursue an action. By applying analysis to debates within political forums, the techniques of effective political communication were revealed and formed into early versions of rhetoric: a science, albeit inexact, which the Sophists taught to citizens who wished to effectively exercise their free speech in the Assembly.⁶⁰ It might be suggested that those in most need of this education were not the sons of the aristocracy who gained the polish and perspicacity to perform well in the Assembly within the upper class milieu in which they grew up, but rather the sons of the commoners who needed to be drilled in the skills of effective persuasion to make an impact in the Assembly where they could improve the prospects of themselves and their class. Thus, to make a preliminary sketch of a major theoretical point to be revisited below, by allowing

⁵⁷ Stone I.F. *The Trial of Socrates* Little Brown & Co Boston 1988 p215-230

⁵⁸ Bowra *The Greek Experience* p92

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Barrett, Harold *The Sophists* Chandler & Sharp Novato 1987 p5

previously marginalised voices to be heard effectively, rhetoric was a means to counter the influence of the elite.

The Sophists

As was seen above, a number of factors coalesced in Greece during the sixth century BC which undermined the autocratic rule of kings and aristocrats and replaced their orthodoxy and inflexibility with democratic experiments that allowed for rational deliberation. The parallel development of rationality and democracy is apparent from the progress of the Greek "enlightenment": the practical materialism of Thales developed around 600 BC at precisely the time Solon was introducing the first major proto-democratic reforms to Athens; the rationalist pantheism of Hecataeus and Xenophanes was current as Kleisthenes introduced full democracy to Athens late in the sixth century BC⁶¹; and the empirical methods of the Sophists are evident during the early period of mature Athenian democracy in the fifth century BC⁶².

Traversing the Hellenic city-states, the Sophists studied the knowledges, morals and politics they found, particularly in deliberative assemblies, and applied rational techniques to "create subjects by inventing definitions and concepts"⁶³. Just as other scientists pursued a primitive form of the empirical method in the natural world, the Sophists gathered examples from political assemblies of how an elegantly formed statement swayed an audience or an acute understanding of human nature got the desired result, and they distilled from these examples the essential rules for convincing those assemblies to a course of action. The Sophists were teachers and in Athens they found a ready market not just for lessons on rhetorical technique but also for the broad general knowledge of human and natural affairs that effective rhetoric required. The key Sophists were foreigners with limited political rights in Athens but they met a real need as democracy developed and those beyond the old aristocratic families sought access to political power. Experience in the democratic assemblies convinced many that persuasion was a useful and necessary aid to both individual and civic advancement and worth the cost of tuition.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* p180, also Burnet *Greek Philosophy* p25-27

⁶² Solmsen, F *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* Princeton University Press Princeton 1975 p3

⁶³ Curtis *The Great Political Theories* p25

⁶⁴ Barrett *The Sophists* p7

The first influential Sophist evident from the historical record is Protagoras of Abdera who believed that virtue could be taught and willingly took payment to teach it. He took an avowedly practical attitude to knowledge that is best summed up by his position on religion: "Of the gods, I cannot say either that they exist or that they do not; it is a difficult subject, and life is not long enough."⁶⁵ Protagoras introduced the humanist notion that "man is the measure of all things".⁶⁶ To the question "which man is the measure?" Protagoras, according to Plato, held that "things are to me as they appear to me, and to you as they appear to you".⁶⁷

This position points to the hermeneutic processes of interpretation at the centre of the deliberative process: as two opposite statements may be "true" depending on their proponent's point of view, then there is always the possibility that there are two (or more) sides to any argument and it is the business of each proponent to make their position prevail by the effective use of language, an art which Protagoras professed to teach. He escaped from the absolute relativism which this position suggests by accepting that the competing merits of the two sides could be viewed dispassionately, with reference to the institutions and conventions that "raised men above brutes"⁶⁸. This insight suggested that means were at hand to resolve peacefully disputes that could interfere with the optimum operation of commerce and communal life. While Protagoras would not accept that laws were innately good, he held that they were useful in so far as they helped people work and function together in society. Protagoras used language to challenge both the gods and the fabric of society but by his practical interventions he showed that effective use of language in debate was the strongest defence available against spiritual and social disintegration.

"Speech is a powerful lord," declared another of the foreign Sophists, Gorgias⁶⁹ who brought to Athens a systematic understanding of the power in political language derived from his experience in the short democratic experiment in his home city of Leontinoi, Sicily. Gorgias appropriated the techniques of poetry to create a new and exciting form of oratory that used rhythm, pattern and metaphor to engage the audience and carry the argument. His use of assonance and, particularly, antithesis⁷⁰ mined the language to

⁶⁵ Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* Harvard University Press Cambridge Mass 1972 p465

⁶⁶ Diogenes Laertius *Lives* p463

⁶⁷ Plato *Theaetetus* Harvard University Press Cambridge Mass 1987 152a

⁶⁸ Burnet *Greek Philosophy* p94

⁶⁹ Barrett *The Sophists* p15

⁷⁰ for a detailed account of the role of antithesis in the fifth century experiments with language see Solmsen *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* p83-125

establish an internal dynamic of similarity and contrast across both the sound and sense of the words. He borrowed from Pythagorean musical theory concepts such as "figure" and "trope" that allowed him to analyse more deeply the dramatic tension produced by repetition and return in a speech and to produce a more complex reading of the persuasive patterns in language.⁷¹

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Gorgias to rhetoric was his appreciation of the persuasive role of psychology generally and the irrational in particular. He suggested that rhetoric can be an irresistible force that controls the listener's emotions through "witchery" and "sorcery" and can have the same impact on the soul that drugs have on the body.⁷² He borrowed the emotions and techniques of poetry and showed the way in which they might produce "the conscious guidance of another person's soul" to lighten and deflect the force of pure reason. Gorgias established that "the same emotions that may be aroused by speech may also be allayed by it."⁷³ In this same mode, he pointed to the power of humour: "the opposition's seriousness is to be demolished by laughter, and the laughter by seriousness."⁷⁴ The destruction of his city after betrayal of its democratic experiment by its own upper class during a conflict with neighbouring Syracuse, left Gorgias with a profound scepticism best summed up in his statement: "Nothing is, if it were, we could not know it, if we knew it, we could not communicate it."⁷⁵ His argument for this position involved the application of the paradoxical insights of Zeno and the Eleatics to cosmology.⁷⁶ By delving into the terrain between appearance and reality, Gorgias established that appearance, or at least the language of appearance, is every bit as real as the language of reality. While this position might lead some to a relativism that concluded that might is the only basis of right, Gorgias insisted on the practical power of language and observed that sustainable might can only be produced by what is right.⁷⁷ Politically, his scepticism found expression in his strong defence of weak causes and his student, Alcidas is credited with being the first philosopher to challenge slavery with the statement: "God has left all men free, nature has made none a slave."⁷⁸

⁷¹ Burnet *Greek Philosophy* p96-97

⁷² Arnhart, Larry *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* Northern Illinois University Press De Kalb 1981 p23

⁷³ Solmsen *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* p47

⁷⁴ Barrett *The Sophists* p15

⁷⁵ Burn, AR *The Pelican History of Greece* Penguin Harmondsworth 1974 p250

⁷⁶ Solmsen *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* p10-14

⁷⁷ Burnet *Greek Philosophy* p97-98

⁷⁸ Stone *The Trial of Socrates* p44

Among the minor Sophists, Thrasymachus of Chalcedon emphasised the subtle uses of language by experimenting with the ironic use of antithesis so the locution understates the effect intended⁷⁹ and also by pointing out the power of affective appeals delivered in a low-key, less than grand, style.⁸⁰ His irony was perhaps misunderstood by Plato who made him responsible for the doctrines that there is no absolute good, that right is always determined by "the interest of the stronger" and that it is acceptable to argue for any point without regard for morality or truth.⁸¹ Prodicus of Keos taught that language is the product of human agreement⁸² and pursued an intricate understanding of the subtle differences between synonyms⁸³. In promoting "the correct use of words" he revealed the power in the nuance of language and while, as Friedrich Solmsen points out, one reading of his work suggests that language is static and given, another reading draws out its potential for malleability.⁸⁴ Hippias of Elis opposed all specialisation and promoted an enthusiastic self-sufficiency. He was famous for his willingness to lecture on any subject and taught the use of mnemonics to assist the student's memory to retain information and marshal arguments.⁸⁵ While mnemonics might be viewed as no more than a reflexive use of language on itself to produce a technical extension of memory, it may also be viewed as the prototype of a meta-language that produces comprehensive recall of arguments and counter-arguments and thus more effective deliberation.

While the Sophists had different conceptions of the world and society and different aims and methods as teachers, they were united by their experiments in what Thomas Kent calls "paralogic hermeneutics"⁸⁶, experiments that continue to make them relevant now. The Sophists accepted that any account of the world is incomplete and contradictory because language can never produce an exact replica of the world but rather is the tool for the mutual interpretation of each others' views of the world.

The Sophists, aware of the paradoxes of Zeno⁸⁷, understood that language created the distance between appearance and reality and applied this cleavage to questions of human conduct to suggest that reality was never fixed because it was always open to

⁷⁹ Solmsen *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* p84

⁸⁰ Barrett *The Sophists* p20-21

⁸¹ Burnet *Greek Philosophy* p98-99

⁸² Barrett *The Sophists* p18-19

⁸³ Solmsen *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* p91

⁸⁴ Solmsen *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* p108

⁸⁵ Barrett *The Sophists* p22-23

⁸⁶ Kent, Thomas "Paralogic hermeneutics and the possibilities of rhetoric" *Rhetoric Review* vol 8 no 1 Fall 1989 p25ff

⁸⁷ Burnet *Greek Philosophy* p85

debate. However, John Burnet points out, the Sophists were not paralysed by the relativism these insights produced but instead they saw in the open-ended processes of linguistic interpretation and reinterpretation, the opportunity for exchange that allowed a community to mould itself as it adapted to and created change. Heraclitus had shown that change was the condition of the world, but the Sophists realised that change could be directed by the effective use of language in human deliberation and that democracy offered particularly effective forums for these exchanges of interpretation to lead to not an account of the truth that would immediately be under challenge, but rather to action. Thus the rhetoric that the Sophists taught was more than a set of technical tricks to manipulate the audience, it was the means to use, create and invent language in an open-ended "communicative interchange... [which] enables the participants to enter new dialogic relations that consequently engender different effects in the world."⁸⁸ Thus first and foremost rhetoric was an aid to assist deliberation, particularly in democratic forums.

Nevertheless Socrates and his pupil, Plato, characterised the Sophists as agents of self-interest, taking money to teach the young to argue convincingly regardless of the truth.⁸⁹ Further, they argued that the rhetoric which convinced the crowd to action was an insignificant pursuit because style not substance prevailed and, as Socrates said, the Assembly could be convinced by skilful oratory that an ass was a horse.⁹⁰ The Sophists were easy targets for Socrates and Plato, certainly in Plato's accounts of their meetings⁹¹, when they were lured away from social deliberation that sought to resolve contradiction and into the play of the Socrates' own particular rhetoric: the dialectic of the inner group where any lapse in formal logic (such as contradiction) was held to discredit the Sophists' arguments. Thus the "truth" became not an issue for social deliberation but the product of small group interaction and contradiction not the beginning of debate but the end.⁹²

The political content of Socrates' and Plato's position cannot be ignored. While the Sophists depended for their livelihood on educating the lower orders in the techniques of persuasion, the disdain with which Socrates and Plato held them was perhaps, Anderson and Stone suggest, fuelled by their own anti-democratic position dictated by

⁸⁸ Kent "Paralogic hermeneutics and the possibilities of rhetoric" p31

⁸⁹ Plato *Theaetetus*

⁹⁰ Plato *Phaedrus* Bobbs-Merrill New York 1956 260c

⁹¹ see for example Plato *Gorgias* Penguin Harmondsworth 1971

⁹² *ibid* 475-476

their allegiance to an aristocracy that coveted political power for itself.⁹³ Socrates lampooned democracy and dismissed the possibility that competing attempts at persuasion might guide the Assembly to the best decision it could make.⁹⁴ While the Sophists sought to teach virtue and wisdom with reference to social institutions, for Socrates these things were unteachable; they could only be approached by listening to the voice within after the long and deep reflection of a philosophical life. Corcoran suggests a reading of Plato's *Republic*, with its theory of ideal forms, as an argument against the oral tradition generally and the Sophists in particular. The Sophists are criticised for working from the conventions of morality as they found them and thus conceiving morality "solely in terms of mimetic appearance" rather than abiding form and so, Corcoran argues "the Sophist is an enemy of truth and an accomplice of the oral tradition."⁹⁵

At one point Socrates gave the Sophists grudging approval for their discovery "that there is nothing dependable either in facts or arguments"⁹⁶, a position that Socrates' own dialectic had led him to accept in his discussions with Hippias on truth and falsity⁹⁷. Socrates' way out of this dilemma, in the moment before his death, is to avoid the deliberative nature of the argument about argument:

we must not let it enter our minds that there may be no validity in argument. On the contrary we should recognise that we ourselves are intellectual invalids... brace ourselves and do our best to become healthy... [and] produce the strongest possible convictions in ourselves.⁹⁸

This reads as though, after a life-time of debate, Socrates finally realised that the dialectic could not lead to an everlasting truth. Had Socrates pursued his other powerful critique of democracy, the improbability of reaching the social good by the unfettered exercise of self-interest⁹⁹, then he might have considered that the pursuit of the collective interest is perhaps the highest form of self interest and so there is some solace in our transient contribution to the advance of human understanding and the general well-being, the advance to which the influence of Socrates contributed so much.

⁹³ Anderson *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* p30 see also Stone *The Trial of Socrates* p41

⁹⁴ Plato *Gorgias* 502-503

⁹⁵ Corcoran *Political Language and Rhetoric* p26-28

⁹⁶ Plato *Phaedo* from *The Last Days of Socrates* Penguin Harmondsworth 1969 90c

⁹⁷ Stone *The Trial of Socrates* p57

⁹⁸ Plato *Phaedo* 90e-91b

⁹⁹ Plato *Gorgias* 502-503

Aristotle's Practical Reason

The treatise on Rhetoric is a magazine of intellectual riches... His principles are the result of extensive original induction [from] the living pattern of the human heart. All the recesses and windings of that hidden region he has explored... The whole is a textbook of human feeling; a storehouse of taste; an exemplar of condensed and accurate, but uniformly clear and candid, reasoning.¹⁰⁰

By fusing the practice of critical analysis with the practical techniques of convincing a crowd, Aristotle reconstructed rhetoric as a rigorous form of practical reason to navigate the speculative, expedient and dynamic process of creating the majority required to produce a result in a democratic forum. By applying practical reason to the disparate jumble of observations and precepts produced by the Sophists, Aristotle made rhetoric the pre-eminent social science of his time and put it at the centre of political, and therefore human, life. While rhetoric was derided then, as now, as mere sophistry¹⁰¹, Aristotle rehabilitated the practice by establishing that it is unavoidable. Even the opponents of rhetoric use language to make their case and to do that effectively they must persuade their audience by pursuing some rhetorical strategy.

Aristotle's lecture notes are the first full written account of rhetorical practice that remain extant and as such they apply a distinctly literary critique to the oral tradition. The continuities in this process are more clearly appreciated when the history of the key concept of *logos* is understood. *Logos* went from meaning "words" and "speech" in Homer, to include, as literary practices developed, "writing" and the "definition" of words and then, as writing was used to draw out logical inferences, "reason" and finally, in Plato, "Reason" as a guiding ideal.¹⁰² Aristotle's life work was to return practical content to *logos* and his work on rhetoric should be viewed not just as a summation of practical reason but also an attempt to assert the role of reason in practical affairs. While the work of Aristotle is firmly in the Socratic and Platonic tradition, he sought to escape their idealism by close and systematic empirical study of the world. To do this he had to confront the ambiguity inherent in the language used to describe the world. This ambiguity is a result of the ambivalent and always unfinished relationship between the world and the human mind, dependent on the vagaries and uncertainties of perception (in one direction) and representation (in the other). Language is forever caught in this

¹⁰⁰ Copleston, Edward *A Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review against Oxford* 1810 quoted in the Cooper, Lane "Introduction" to Aristotle *The Rhetoric* Appleton New York 1932 pxi

¹⁰¹ see for example Gordon, George N "Aristotle as a Modern Propagandist" in Havelock, Eric A & Hershbelle, JP *Communication Arts in the Ancient World* Hastings House New York 1978

¹⁰² Hintikka, Jaakko *Time and Necessity* Oxford University Press London 1973 p1-27

ambiguity and ambivalence but Aristotle appreciated that language is also the only way out of the contradictions it produces. The mathematical models that informed the pure reason of Socrates and Plato and that were comprehensively stated by Aristotle in his *Logic* are useful tools in the search for truth and certainty, but as Aristotle's work on contingency reveals, they can never come to an absolute conclusion in a world subject to change.

In place of the theory of forms Aristotle described a teleological world always moving from potentiality to actuality. By proving that there is "that which is [properly] possible but not necessary"¹⁰³, Aristotle can then describe a world "that exists in a particular condition, and also [is] capable of becoming something different, perhaps even better."¹⁰⁴ The moment of movement in human society is the decision which necessarily requires a simultaneous move, as Arnhart says, "beyond the confines of scientific demonstration"¹⁰⁵ into the unknown uncertainties produced by action. Aristotle however holds that the move beyond "scientific demonstration" does not require any rejection of reason. While the rigour of scientific analysis may be blunted, not only by the imponderables of contingency but also irrationality of human emotions, reason can be applied to this complexity in pursuit of the best outcome. In human society, this is the realm of ethics, politics and, to move from one to the other through the use of language, rhetoric.

Thus Aristotle's defence of rhetoric against Socrates' and Plato's charges that it produced intemperance in the polis and immorality among the young is based in establishing that rhetoric is more than manipulation: it is a practical form of reason for moving from the problems of the present to a better future and so contributes to "the developing human condition itself."¹⁰⁶ In Aristotle's view, the operation of rhetoric in open debate allows people to realise and then decide what is in their own best interests and thus ensures that good prevails. While the techniques of rhetoric may be used for bad ends, as in the propaganda of totalitarianism, where competing arguments are allowed free play in the rhetorical field then the process of deliberation tends to produce a self-correcting mechanism. Where rhetoric is about persuasion (rather than say compulsion) it is "a contest that brings forth the best among those who offer opposed positions on practical questions [so that] the audience is engaged in such a way that allows it to see more

¹⁰³ *ibid* p40

¹⁰⁴ Farrell "The tradition of rhetoric" p153

¹⁰⁵ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p4

¹⁰⁶ Farrell "The tradition of rhetoric" p156-162

clearly and act more judiciously."¹⁰⁷ To understand the basis for Aristotle's optimism with regard to the beneficial effects of rhetoric, it is necessary to understand how his view of rhetoric fits into the overall schema of his work and then, through a close analysis of the text of *Rhetoric*, how rhetoric functions to ensure the deliberative facet of democratic practice.

The notion that *Rhetoric* plays a central role in Aristotle's philosophy continues to be controversial because of the priority that has been accorded to the comprehensive and systematic logic found in his works *Categories*, *On Interpretation* and *Prior Analytics*. But by understanding the crucial role of rhetoric in asserting "the place of reason in political life"¹⁰⁸, its importance to Aristotle's philosophy becomes apparent. With regard to the texts, it would appear that rhetoric was the motor of Aristotle's philosophical inquiries. One of the earliest of his (now lost) dialogues, *Grylus*, was a response to Socrates and Plato's attack on rhetoric in *Gorgias* ¹⁰⁹. As will be seen below, rhetorical investigations have close links with his psychological inquiries in *De Anima* and the construction of his aesthetic theory in *Poetics* but, most importantly, *Rhetoric* is the key link between *Ethics* and *Politics*. Aristotle explicitly gave rhetoric a position equal to logic in his claim, at the very beginning of *Rhetoric*, that "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic"¹¹⁰. This claim suggests an important corollary: while rhetoric is an often imperfect attempt to apply reason to the uncertain and often irrational practicalities of human affairs, it is just as significant as the pure reason of the syllogism. To grasp the importance of *Rhetoric* it is crucial to understand Aristotle's ethical and political positions and how rhetoric connects them. Ethics and politics both seek the same end: "And that end, in politics as well as in ethics, can only be the good for man."¹¹¹ But while the ends of ethics may be reached by rigorous logic, the practical ends of politics can only be pursued by rhetoric, the art of the practical reason. "Rhetoric, in short, may be the only remaining link between reason, as a practical act, and virtue as a possibility."¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *ibid* p172

¹⁰⁸ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p3

¹⁰⁹ Ferguson, John *Aristotle* Twayne New York 1972 p23 cf Jaeger, Werner *Aristotle* Oxford University Press London 1948 p29

¹¹⁰ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* Penguin London 1991 1354a

¹¹¹ Aristotle *Ethics* Penguin Harmondsworth 1953 p27

¹¹² Farrell "The tradition of rhetoric" p170

Ethics

Ethics begins with the hypotheses that "the good is that at which all things aim".¹¹³ Aristotle argues that while all humans agree that they seek happiness, they disagree about what happiness entails and so it is the function of ethics to uncover the means of "living well and faring well"¹¹⁴ and maintaining their souls (the distinctive trait that makes them human) "in accordance with the best and most complete form of goodness."¹¹⁵ Happiness is more than momentary bliss¹¹⁶ but the good life is inherently pleasant because pleasure is a psychological experience.¹¹⁷ Fortune can supply the opportunity but only the individual can create happiness.¹¹⁸ Happiness arises from the right condition of the soul.¹¹⁹ The soul is both rational and irrational and, from the attributes of the latter, "spring the appetites and desire in general".¹²⁰ Nevertheless, Aristotle argues, it is possible that even the irrational can respond to reason and that is why we find admonition and censure "not ineffective".¹²¹

Following a detailed critique of individual virtue¹²² Aristotle returns ethics to its political context with reference to the collective pursuit of justice and practical wisdom¹²³ and an extended account of friendship¹²⁴ which he sees it as an indispensable requisite of life. Friendship is seen as a bridge between self-interest and the collective consciousness, forming the self and forming others through the exchange of frank opinions in the relatively private sphere that pre-figures the work of rhetoric in the more public sphere. Finally, after addressing the question of pleasure to discern the importance of desire in prompting activity, Aristotle extols the value of the contemplative life before accepting the necessity of the social to moral life: "For the moral activities are human par excellence. When we display courage or justice or any other virtue it is in our dealings with our fellow men."¹²⁵

¹¹³ Aristotle *Ethics* p25

¹¹⁴ *ibid* p29

¹¹⁵ *ibid* p39

¹¹⁶ *ibid* p39

¹¹⁷ *ibid* p42

¹¹⁸ *ibid* p43-44

¹¹⁹ *ibid* p51

¹²⁰ *ibid* p52-53

¹²¹ *ibid* p53

¹²² *ibid* p60-137

¹²³ *ibid* p139-192

¹²⁴ *ibid* p227-285

¹²⁵ *ibid* p287-309 quote at 305

It is in this context that we should read his dismissal of the Sophists and their "mere" rhetoric.¹²⁶ By concentrating solely on the words, Aristotle claims, the Sophists avoid the deep theoretical understandings that come from contemplation of actions and events and miss the real insights of political science. Nevertheless, theory by itself is "unable to push the many in the direction of lofty principle"¹²⁷; rather, the young must learn what is good through habit and education so they are amenable to persuasion and those who would make laws must come to terms with human desire in order to practice "the art of politics".¹²⁸

This distinction between the art as opposed to the science of politics is significant for this thesis. The art, while informed by the science, is something more than the science, something much more practically inclined and something, in a democracy at least, that requires the use of rhetoric for citizens to convince themselves to action. Aristotle appreciates the key role of communication in the practical pursuit of an ethical condition. Happiness is produced by the care of the self in concert with the care of one's fellow citizens and it can only be achieved through an on-going deliberation about what is good for the self, for the collectivity and for both together. But ethics are not produced by deliberation in the abstract, they are produced by the consideration of difficult, empirical cases and that consideration requires if not the direct participation, at least the interest, of all citizens.

Politics

Before turning to see how Aristotle remade the Sophists' art of rhetoric, it is useful to analyse his science of politics to understand the place of language and deliberation in improving the human condition. His teleological position is clear at the outset: *Politics* begins with an account of the city-state as the highest form of political association because the shared discourse of speech and reason (*logos* in the Greek) that makes the polis possible also produces the most fulfilling life possible.¹²⁹ He then locates the basic political constituent, not the individual but the household. Aristotle, Robert Berki argues, grounds his account of politics not in Plato's

¹²⁶ *ibid* p314-315

¹²⁷ *ibid* p310

¹²⁸ *ibid* p315

¹²⁹ Aristotle *Politics* Oxford University Press London 1946 1252a-1253a

aspiration to make the state resemble an 'individual' whose concerns and desires are in unison... but [on] a 'plurality' of families and households whose separate material interests together make up the fabric of the political community.¹³⁰

The unfinished tension between public and private lives is an important motivating force in his politics. As Judith Swanson points out: just as the social makes the individual possible, individual virtue provides a profoundly moral influence on society.¹³¹ Aristotle's economics may be considered regressive by contemporary standards although it is an accurate account of his own times: he accepts slavery and the subservience of women and permits piracy as a form of acquisition¹³². But Aristotle sees a direct connection between the rule of the house-holder over the house and the rule of the citizen over the (democratic, at least) city-state.¹³³ The citizen has a responsibility to bring the same intensity and care to political decisions as he does to domestic decisions, immerse himself in the participatory processes and then, once the decision is made, pursue it with a profound obedience.

Aristotle then proceeds to outline the positive and negative forms of the *polis* or city-state: rule by one (monarchy and tyranny), rule by a rich few (aristocracy or oligarchy) or rule by the many poor (democracy where it was orderly and ochlocracy where it was rule by the mob).¹³⁴ Aristotle draws a number of means through these types of government to advocate a mixed form of constitutional government ruled through consensus and consultation by the middle classes.¹³⁵ He then reviews the causes of revolution and stability before turning to the nature of the ideal state.

While this search is truncated unexpectedly in the middle of a discussion on musical education, Aristotle has already highlighted the key role of participation: "Goodness by itself is not enough: there must also be a capacity for being active in doing good."¹³⁶ The ideal state that Aristotle never arrives at in the extant text of his *Politics* must require the enlightened citizen to be in active pursuit of spiritual and physical self-sufficiency among a wide circle of friends and fellow citizens. This pursuit, it may be noted, would be premised on a web of mutual support and a process of collective deliberation extending across the whole *polis*. One reason to think that collective deliberation is

¹³⁰ Berki, R N *The History of Political Thought* Dent London 1977 p65

¹³¹ Swanson, Judith A *The Public and the Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* Cornell UP New York 1992

¹³² Aristotle *Politics* 1253b-1256a

¹³³ *ibid* 1276b-1278b

¹³⁴ *ibid* 1278b-1295a

¹³⁵ *ibid* 1295a-1301a

¹³⁶ *ibid* 1325b

central to Aristotle's conception of the pursuit of happiness is the limit he proposes on the population and size of cities to ensure that all citizens could gather together in order to hear speakers in the one place.¹³⁷

Thus against the idealism of Plato's *Republic* with its impossible and ultimately stultifying harmony, Aristotle understood that the science of politics involved the transformation of complex interests through discussion and debate in open forums into social arrangements that allowed for the maximum individual happiness. In his work on logic, Aristotle did much to make human communication more exact and the path of reason clearer, but he also appreciated that the pursuit of the good in the practical world comes down to the expedient use of contingent language in collective deliberation: in short, the application of rhetoric.

The Text

Whether it was for the practical, commercial purposes of running the Lyceum in competition with Isocrates' school of rhetoric¹³⁸ or because of his scientific commitment to the empirical study of the real world, including politics as it is practised, Aristotle produced a comprehensive work on the subject of rhetoric wherein, as Kent points out, "both the production and analysis of discourse are reduced to logico-systemic processes and then codified according to certain ontological categories".¹³⁹ Aristotle's *Rhetoric* systematises the language of practical deliberation and he signalled the depth of rationality he saw necessary in political deliberative processes by beginning the book with the statement "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic"¹⁴⁰, a direct assault on Socrates' account of rhetoric as the counterpart of cookery.¹⁴¹ By equating rhetoric and dialectic, Aristotle demands that rhetoric be taken seriously, not just as a means to an ends but also as a core activity in the maintenance of social and spiritual cohesion. He has a simple argument for this proposition: that while the purpose of dialectic is to discover proofs of the truth, the purpose of rhetoric is similarly to discover proofs, but proofs that lead an assembly or an audience to collectively advantageous action and therefore happiness.

¹³⁷ *ibid* 1325b-1327a also 1330a-1331a

¹³⁸ Lawson-Tancred, HC "Introduction" to Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* p7

¹³⁹ Kent "Paralogic hermeneutics and the possibilities of rhetoric" p24

¹⁴⁰ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1354a

¹⁴¹ Plato *Gorgias* 462

In this common search for proofs, the dialectic touches ground in rhetoric to have a political impact and to play out its social purpose: "for the proofs alone are intrinsic to the art (of rhetoric)."¹⁴² The speaker must know the Sophists' tricks in order to be on guard against them and ready to refute them or even use them for the greater good.¹⁴³ For Aristotle however, and here he is at pains to distinguish himself from the Sophists and correct them, the most effective tool in rhetoric is not emotive language or even psychological insights into the audience, but the *enthymeme*, "the flesh and blood of proof"¹⁴⁴. The nature of the enthymeme is explored fully below but here it may be briefly described as a truncated syllogism of probable yet effective proof derived from the application of dialectical technique to mundane events and common opinions.

Rhetoric then is defined as "the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits."¹⁴⁵ Thus the art of rhetoric is something more than merely delivering a speech which is just the end product the audience experiences. The work of rhetoric begins with the research and planning that Aristotle called "invention", the initial discovery of the appropriate premises from which a convincing set of rhetorical proofs could be built. Some proofs pre-exist (for example witnesses and depositions), but the rest the speaker must "invent".¹⁴⁶ Thus it is apparent that the word "invention" marks the distance between logic (where premises are either true or false) and rhetoric where nothing is ever certain and the speaker must deal with the possible, the probable and the expedient. However, "invention" is not an invitation to fabrication; rather it is a rigorous and rational process of discovering convincing and therefore persuasive arguments. The importance of "inventing" proofs in Aristotle's schema may be appreciated when it is noted that almost eighty percent of the text is dedicated to the categories of proof and only twenty percent to the issues of style and composition that preoccupied other teachers of rhetoric.

Before turning to a detailed analysis of the forms of proof, Aristotle analyses the three categories of rhetoric (forensic, ceremonial and political). Each of these categories is based in a social purpose related to the three different forums where rhetoric is practised and thus the three kinds of audience and even the three different time frames to which each relates. While different aims and conventions apply in each category of rhetoric, all are means to collective activity. The deliberative rhetoric of the political forum is

¹⁴² Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1354a

¹⁴³ *ibid* 1355a

¹⁴⁴ *ibid* 1354a

¹⁴⁵ *ibid* 1355b

¹⁴⁶ *ibid* 1355b

particularly relevant to this thesis but Aristotle's treatment of the other categories also contains useful insights.

The aim of forensic oratory is to prosecute or defend a person and convince the courts. It is concerned with the justice and injustice of particular actions and events in the past. Aristotle dwells at length on the search for pleasure that drives people to break the law. His appreciation of the roles of rational, but more particularly, irrational appetites and the power of the imagination in forming human pleasure ("an instantaneous sensory resolution to the natural state"¹⁴⁷) provide a strong platform for his further discussion of the emotions and their use as a category of proof.

Epideictic (or display) oratory is designed to praise or blame a person to spectators in any ceremonial forum. It is concerned with approval or denigration as things stand at the time of the event. An effective ceremonial speech probes what is noble (in eulogy) or base (in censure) in a character and so underlines the importance of ethos in preparing any speech.

Deliberative oratory aims to persuade or dissuade the constituents of a political forum. It is concerned with exhorting them to an expedient, or deterring them from a harmful, course of action for the future. While Aristotle's discussion of political oratory encompasses a number of set pieces about key issues such as revenue, war, defence, trade and legislation, he also argues that to pursue happiness as an end in the political forum, the speaker must use expedient means: "the assigned scope of deliberation is expediency"¹⁴⁸. Aristotle is aware that to achieve a social end, one must win the argument and this awareness of the imperatives of real politics informs his discussion of the practicalities involved in the process of invention and his adaptation of the syllogism to the foreshortened enthymeme required to persuade and prevail in the public arena.

Categories of Proof

Aristotle argued that there were three categories of rhetorical proof: those from character, emotion and reason. The aim of the speech will determine the quantity and mix of categories required. Reason is the central and conclusive form of rhetorical proof because in the "grand enthymeme" of the overall presentation ("the instrument that

¹⁴⁷ *ibid* 1369b

¹⁴⁸ *ibid* 1362a

combines all the elements of persuasion" as Arnhart puts it¹⁴⁹) each of the minor enthymemes is subsumed into an overarching and rational whole where proofs from character and emotion must match and reinforce those from reason.

As the use of character and emotion relies on psychological rather than dialectic insights, these forms of proof do not touch on the truth or falsity of an issue but they should be used effectively because people will judge the speaker by them regardless. This is a recognition that rhetoric is more than laying out a rational argument, it is also a psychological exchange: the audience is not just convinced by argument but by the argument as it relates to them personally because a conviction is not held in abstract (where one might find a theoretical truth) but rather in the mind of each member of the audience. Next, Aristotle considers the characteristics of each category of proof.

Aristotle considers two aspects of character: the character of the speaker and the character of the audience. While, as William Fortenbaugh points out, Aristotle elides these two aspects of the consideration of character¹⁵⁰, he does outline the importance of both. Initially, he styles character as form of proof he calls *ethos*: the convincing character of the speaker. Aristotle argues that it is important to create the appropriate impression of character so that "the speech is given in such a way as to render the speaker worthy of credence."¹⁵¹ Aristotle, it might be argued, appreciated the importance of what is now described as "image": how speakers create trust and reaffirm their core messages through the presentation of their personality. In the introduction to his discussion on the use of emotion, Aristotle points out the importance of

this appearance of the speaker to be of a certain kind and his making the audience suppose that he is disposed in a certain way towards them... [by showing] three causes of the speakers' themselves being persuasive... common sense, virtue and goodwill.¹⁵²

In the body of the work, however, instead of detailing how the speaker might create a character towards which the audience will be well disposed, Aristotle discusses the equally important question of how to assess the character of the audience: "Let us... go through the characters of men in regard to their emotions, habits, ages and fortunes".¹⁵³ While Aristotle avoids dealing with the technicalities of how to project character in this

¹⁴⁹ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p55

¹⁵⁰ for recent work on this point see Fortenbaugh, William "Aristotle's Account of Persuasion through Character" in Johnstone, CL (ed) *Theory, Text, Context: Issues in Greek Rhetoric and Oratory* SUNY Press Albany 1997

¹⁵¹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1356a

¹⁵² *ibid* 1377b-1378a

¹⁵³ *ibid* 1388b

part of the book, he does show that he appreciates the importance of "demographics": speakers must strive to understand their audiences by assessing their age, wealth and habits and opinions.

The lack of detailed work on the speaker's construction of *ethos* is a significant absence in the *Rhetoric*: the plasticity of character and the techniques of constructing and reconstructing an image are still difficult and elusive subjects in politics because speakers must project personae to which the audience can relate positively or the arguments proffered will be ignored.

Aristotle offers some useful insights into this difficult project in two other books. *Ethics* deals with the construction of the moral self with a strong awareness of the public and private constituents of personality and their constant inter-play: "...it is right for the good man to be self-loving because he will [benefit himself] by performing fine actions and by the same process will be helpful to others."¹⁵⁴ Further, when turning specifically to "the man of affairs", Aristotle is keen to distinguish honour "that depends more on those that confer than on him who receives it" from the personal moral qualities "almost inseparable from [their] possessor"¹⁵⁵. Aristotle, it may be observed, does not remark on how moral qualities may be separable from their possessor but overall this passage suggests that the *ethos* of the public figure is rightly a construction for the audience.

Aristotle's *Poetics* addresses the construction of character in tragedy which, with his notion of spectacle, has a relevance to the construction of character for political audiences. In Athens the theatre played a major role in the construction of social cohesion and the nature of Athenian politics both complemented that role and transformed its techniques to the political "stage".¹⁵⁶ Aristotle's theory of tragedy provides useful guidelines for the work of creating the most effective image for the speaker: "In the characters there are four points to aim at. First and foremost, that they shall be good."¹⁵⁷ The other qualities of strong theatrical characters are also very useful guides to the construction of a plausible public persona: it should be appropriate, real

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle *Ethics* p276

¹⁵⁵ *ibid* p30

¹⁵⁶ Green, JR *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* Routledge London 1994, also Graf, Fritz "Gestures and conventions: the gestures of Roman actors and orators" in Bremmer, Jan & Roodenburg, Herman *A Cultural History of Gesture* Polity Press Cambridge 1993 p36-58

¹⁵⁷ Aristotle *Art of Poetry* Oxford University Press London 1940 p41

and consistent . Further, characters should "endeavour after the necessary or the probable."¹⁵⁸

Thus to draw Aristotle's work on character together, the persona projected by the speaker must be true to the self even while it is a product which needs to remain malleable. To fail to produce a mask is to refuse to appeal to the audience and thus to condemn the speaker to irrelevance. To fail to adapt the mask to changing circumstances is to refuse to take the audience seriously with similar consequences. The audience is always looking for the persona; it will construct one regardless, so it is obviously much better to offer a construction that appeals to the audience and that reinforces the core of the argument offered rather than take the chance that the audience will find a persona for the speaker at odds with their own temperament and the arguments offered.

Emotion was the second category of proof considered by Aristotle and it is important because it can "bring the giver of judgement into a certain condition"¹⁵⁹. When Aristotle isolated *pathos* or the appeal to emotions as a separate form of proof, he opened an important part of practical politics to rigorous scrutiny. While the Sophists had realised the importance of emotions and systematised the technologies of "magic" borrowed from tribal and bardic communication, they had no comprehensive psychological theory. In *De Anima* Aristotle did produce a psychological theory that gave an account of the psyche as, according to Ferguson: "embedded in matter... [so that] mind and body are aspects of the same substance and separable only in thought."¹⁶⁰ So while reason is the pre-eminent function of the psyche, Aristotle approached the complexity of the mind empirically to draw out the intriguing inter-relationships between mind and body as they are evidenced in the interplay between reason and the emotions. In applying these insights to the political process, Aristotle sought to reveal how the psychological aspects of a discourse might complement and reinforce the logical aspects and how logic might affect the passions.

Aristotle confronted the Platonic and Socratic account of rhetoric as a mere appeal to emotion by establishing exactly how important the psychological exchange is in political discourse. To weld social opinion in the way required for concerted collective action, Aristotle saw it as necessary not only to lay out the logic but also to touch the appropriate emotions of the audience in order to convince them. He wrote in *Rhetoric* : "For things do not seem the same to those who love and those who hate nor to those

¹⁵⁸ *ibid* p41-42

¹⁵⁹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1377b

¹⁶⁰ Ferguson *Aristotle* p94

who are angry."¹⁶¹ He explains that emotions are complex because they are created by three interacting factors: the object of the emotion, the setting of the events and the psychology of the participants. A shift in one sphere causes shifts in the other spheres and may lead to a complete shift in the emotions of the audience. For example, the audience may be indignant and ready to blame someone (the object of emotions) but a skilful reinterpretation of the setting of events might touch the audience's psychology and so they see how easily they could be in a similar situation which in turn could lead them to pity the person.

Aristotle is very aware of the tenuous nature of the emotions and their variable relationship to the fluctuating physical realities of pain and pleasure.¹⁶² To grasp the full texture and range of the emotions, he outlined them as a series of opposites: Anger/Calm, Enmity/Friendship, Fear/Confidence, Shame/Favour, Indignation/Pity, Envy/Jealousy.¹⁶³ He suggests a number of ways the speaker might move the audience from one emotion to its opposite where this is advantageous to the speaker's argument. The first emotion discussed by Aristotle is anger and its primacy is significant. It is the most potent political force and always at the edge of even the most sedate political contests. He sees the further categories of emotion as pathways to or from anger. Anger provides ready access to the most deep-seated and impulsive aspects of human consciousness because each person "is guided towards his peculiar anger by his present suffering"¹⁶⁴. Anger is intimately bound up with the instinct for self-preservation and thus provides the most productive means to bring forth action.

The third and most powerful category of rhetorical proof is logic. This is not the pure, ideal logic of the induction and deduction that finds its clearest expression in the syllogism¹⁶⁵ but the practical, every day reason of the particular situation encapsulated in example and enthymeme. While a valid syllogism moves from true premises to a necessary conclusion, an enthymeme moves with the same rational force from probable, simplified premises to a pertinent conclusion. An instructive example of the enthymeme is: "Given that in exile we fought to return, are we, now that we have been restored, to flee so that we need not fight?"¹⁶⁶ It moves from the practical, probable premise via a

¹⁶¹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1377b

¹⁶² ibid 1378a

¹⁶³ extracted from ibid 1378a-1388b

¹⁶⁴ ibid 1379a

¹⁶⁵ for a comprehensive outline of Aristotle's concept of the syllogism see Ferguson *Aristotle* p34-40

¹⁶⁶ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1399b

suppressed premise (it is worth staying here) to a conclusive call to action, packaged as a question designed to move the debate along.

Aristotle suggests a large range of *topics* or enthymemes that are the products of previous invention and thus proven groundwork on which the speaker can build arguments.¹⁶⁷ The list of topics is far from complete. It is more like a working document to prompt "brainstorming" but while Aristotle offers a jumble of ideas, Arnhart classifies them into three general categories¹⁶⁸: cause-effect (for example: education makes you envied but it also makes you wise enough to deal with envy), quantity (if tall boys are treated as men then short men should be treated as boys) and relational (if war is responsible for present evils, then we should right them by peace). Just as there are invalid syllogisms, there are also apparent enthymemes or "illusory topics"¹⁶⁹ which contain false premises or formal fallacy. Aristotle lists a number of examples because speakers must be ready to refute the apparent enthymeme when it is used against them or even use it positively when circumstances warrant. There are three categories of illusory topics: verbal (for example claiming authority by diction or using different meanings of the same word as though they are identical), exaggeration (when the accused accentuates the seriousness of an accusation, it makes him appear innocent because a guilty person would seek to minimise the seriousness of the charge) and various forms of the sign fallacy (he was wicked therefore he must be a thief).

The Enthymeme

The construction of the enthymeme is an act of "real or apparent demonstration"¹⁷⁰. It is the product of human invention. Some of these products endure, most notably as maxims¹⁷¹, and most follow well-worn patterns that mimic valid syllogisms. Analysis of the "common topics" Aristotle outlined in *Rhetoric* suggests five "rules" governing the creation of enthymemes. In the context of modern logic, the enthymeme skates across a number of modes - from propositional to predicate to probabilistic logics in the first three rules. This reflects the roots of the enthymeme in a pragmatic logic that is encapsulated in rules four and five.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid* 1379a-1400b

¹⁶⁸ following Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p148

¹⁶⁹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1401a-1402a

¹⁷⁰ *ibid* 1356b

¹⁷¹ *ibid* 1394a-1395b

The first rule relates to structure required to convince people. Just as rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic, *the enthymeme must maintain the form and the force of dialectical reason* by arguing: "if certain conditions obtain, then something else beyond them will result"¹⁷². While inductive demonstration from many similar cases (that is, the use of example) may be a useful tool in the art of rhetoric, the near-deductive force of enthymemes "make more of an impression"¹⁷³.

The second rule requires that *the enthymeme suppresses what is unnecessary*, either because it is obvious or pedantic: "if any of [the premises] were well known, there would be no need to mention them. The hearer supplies them for himself".¹⁷⁴ Obscurity in an argument is produced by its excessive length. Clarity by contrast is produced by sticking to the core argument with a limited number of premises "accepted by the judges... and this because the opinion seems to be clear to all or a majority."¹⁷⁵

The third rule stresses that *the enthymeme is a logic of the indeterminate*. The work of practical politics is not full of necessary or universal truths. As Stone says: "Men do not have to deliberate upon what is certain but upon what is uncertain."¹⁷⁶ No human action is inevitable and, until it occurs, remains in the realm of the probable: "the probable is what happens for the most part, not absolutely, as some define it, but in connection with things that admit of being otherwise".¹⁷⁷ While the syllogism expresses the logic of necessity as it argues from true premises to true conclusions, the enthymeme argues with a logic of probability from premises that are mostly true to conclusions which can only be really tested when put into practice. Just because logic deals with indeterminacies does not mean that it is any less rational than when it deals with necessities: "Probabilities are fit objects of reason because they presuppose regularities in things, and regularities are not random or chance events."¹⁷⁸

The fourth rule is a development of the third: *the enthymeme is a logic of the expedient*: "the assigned scope of the deliberator is expediency (for debates are not about the end but about the means to it...)"¹⁷⁹. Armed with probable premises, rhetoric is then a battle in the realm of possibility to achieve ends upon which at least a majority can agree. The

¹⁷² *ibid* 1356b

¹⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁷⁴ *ibid* 1357a

¹⁷⁵ *ibid* 1396a

¹⁷⁶ Stone *The Trial of Socrates* p94

¹⁷⁷ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1357a

¹⁷⁸ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p8

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1362a

two limits on the field of the expedient are the good and the audience. Aristotle justifies rhetoric teleologically, as a practical means of leading the audience to the best possible outcome: *rhetorical expediency* is a means to the pursuit of happiness and so it is intimately bound up with what is good. In appreciating the limits to expediency it is vital to understand possibilities and constraints of the ethical field. In the first place Aristotle argues that because the good is more obvious and appealing, "because truth and justice are naturally superior to their opposites"¹⁸⁰, it is easier for the case for good to prevail than the case for a worse solution. Aristotle does not propose any universal Good but rather the general good that all citizens know by intuition: "Let the good, then, be whatever is to be chosen for its own sake and that for which we choose other things, and the objects of general desire".¹⁸¹ To appreciate these "objects" is to understand the audience and set the ground for the work of communicating with them. Aristotle recognises the centrality of expectation to the process of effective communication. A good enthymeme, like a drama, draws the audience into its own world: "the [enthymemes] that cause the most stir are those which in the beginning, though they are not superficial, people anticipate (for the audience take pleasure in themselves for anticipating the point)"¹⁸² and even the slow ones will recognise the point when it is reached.

The last two rules discussed above cannot be read to imply that rhetoric occurs in some theoretical other world. The successful use of rhetoric requires the manipulation of the possible and the probable in the real world. So the fifth and final rule is that *the enthymeme addresses the real situation* and the actual properties that one is discussing: "one must first grasp the elements, either all or some of them. For if you had grasped none of them, you would not be able to draw conclusions from anything."¹⁸³

From this discussion of enthymemes, an account of the work of rhetoric emerges. Rhetoric takes the form of a dialectical argument while ignoring any elements which are unnecessary to convince the audience. The argument then makes the most expedient use of the play of possibilities and probabilities revealed by the situation in order to convince the audience to action. But while rhetoric is seemingly instrumental in purpose, any argument occurs against all the other rhetorical arguments offered at a particular time and so is communicative in function. The interplay of competing

¹⁸⁰ *ibid* 1355a

¹⁸¹ *ibid* 1362a

¹⁸² *ibid* 1400b

¹⁸³ *ibid* 1396a

rhetorical arguments produces a process of deliberation that while limited by the practicalities of convincing the audience is nevertheless practical in its effects.

The Strategy of the Argument

Aristotle's discussion of topics ends with some reflection on the use of amplification and diminution to establish the impact of an argument¹⁸⁴ which leads into his treatment of style and composition. There is no escaping Aristotle's personal disdain for matters of style. There is a sense in which, as Arnhart points out, he only addresses the area as "a concession to corrupt listeners."¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, as the audience is the judge of the speech, it is an area that cannot be avoided and so he applies rational analysis "to show how the style and arrangement of speeches can sustain, rather than undermine, the practice of rhetoric as a form of reasoning."¹⁸⁶ While the enthymeme is the building block of the argument, it is the argument's construction, the way the blocks are put together that will cause the argument to convince an audience. Thus the global strategy of the argument, the narrative techniques that draw elements of character, emotion and logic together in a coherent and persuasive whole are "an integral part of Aristotle's theory of rhetoric as a rational discourse."¹⁸⁷

In relation to style, Aristotle underlines how rhetoric developed from poetics by way of acting and so is governed by similar principles of dynamics, harmony and rhythm. But these techniques carry heavy luggage: all forms of representation, and the spectacle in particular, require the subterfuges of imitation where "a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility."¹⁸⁸ Aristotle does not accept any inherent good in a stylish presentation but as the aim of rhetoric is to effect public opinion, then speakers simply find that they communicate more effectively when the argument is presented using vivid images, metaphor, simile and wit, with clarity, propriety and purity, in a strong (but non-metrical) rhythm.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ *ibid* 1403a-1403b

¹⁸⁵ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p163

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷ *ibid* p161

¹⁸⁸ Aristotle *Art of Poetry* p77. Compare with Debord, Guy *Society of the Spectacle* Black&Red Detroit 1977

¹⁸⁹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1404b-1414a

Similarly he does not see the composition of a speech as central to its worth but notes that the successful argument has a clear sense of narrative¹⁹⁰. Like all narratives, the speech functions best with a beginning that establishes a theme, a middle that carries it to a climax and an end where the whole is summarised. But unlike other narratives, the argument must not only state the case but also demonstrate it, so the middle is also divided into a further three categories: narration - the statement of the facts; proof and refutation - to establish the speaker's case and rebut that of the adversary; and altercation - the use of (often ironic) ripostes to counter the opponent's charges. The epilogue is a brief, comprehensive statement of the argument from character, emotion and logic that leaves the audience inclined towards one's case.

Aristotle's treatment of style and narrative reveals much about his views on the power of language. To harness that power, as rhetoric seeks to do, requires the speaker to traverse the dangerous field not just between appearance and reality but also between truth and lies. Metaphor epitomises these dichotomies which provide language with its dynamic. Aristotle's ambivalence towards metaphor reveals its problematic function: in his *Logic* "he denigrates metaphorical speech as 'unclear'"¹⁹¹, yet in the *Rhetoric* he argues that "metaphor preeminently involves clarity".¹⁹² At one level a metaphor is always a lie, a claim that something is other than it is. Yet the metaphor, like the enthymeme, says Aristotle, brings "swift understanding"¹⁹³ and so is the archetype of communication.

If language was just for reporting mundane facts then it would produce only a perfunctory view of the world. But language is conducive to exchange and participation (as passive as it may appear). The very use of language reveals new patterns and effects. There is always a compromise between formulating an idea and expressing it, but once the idea is in the collective arena it takes on a life of its own and realises its power in other minds, particularly as it informs their decisions to act. Effective communication does not increase that compromise, rather it maximises the potential for participation by giving other minds pleasure in learning something new.¹⁹⁴

Aristotle's prescriptions for effective communication rest on active metaphors: they should link the commonplace to the unfamiliar, the actual to the potential by finding the

¹⁹⁰ *ibid* 1414a-1419b

¹⁹¹ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p172

¹⁹² Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1405a

¹⁹³ *ibid* 1410a

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*

right levels of wit and vividness, charm and distinction for the particular audience. Thus the metaphor is a metaphor for all language which gains its power from its dynamic role in mediating human activity from the past to the present and, most importantly, from the present to the future. Though Aristotle disdains the techniques of style and composition, he nevertheless accepts their importance as tools in convincing the audience to act. As will be seen in the further chapters of this thesis that map the terrain of contemporary electoral strategy, producing and reproducing the narrative takes most of the time and energy in a campaign but this effort is most successful where that narrative reinforces and restates the central argument which itself is a cohesive blend of logic, emotion and character expressed in an abbreviated form.

Rhetoric and Deliberative Democracy

Aristotle's account of rhetoric underlines the crucial role he saw it playing in ensuring the deliberative process within the *polis*. By systematising the ad hoc collection of technical skills developed by the Sophists and drawing out the ethical work inherent in marshalling arguments into formulae to convince mass audiences to take concerted action, Aristotle theorised rhetoric as a process to ensure effective and responsible participation in the *polis*. Aristotle's theory of rhetoric is thus a clear and significant progression beyond the Sophists. His dissatisfaction with their program is clear at the end of *Politics* and most pointedly in an addendum to his work on logic, *Sophistical Refutation*, where he systematically addresses modes of fallacious reasoning used by the Sophists. By putting rationality at the heart of rhetoric and insisting on the practical application of reason in the *polis*, Aristotle underlines function of rhetoric as the means to argument and disputation in the political realm. He thus takes a step beyond the Sophist's goal of constructing a fine speech to reveal the crucial social purpose of rhetoric: to allow for effective deliberation.

How then does Aristotle's account of rhetoric within the Athenian context meet the criteria for effective democratic deliberation outlined in the previous chapter? In terms of access, the Athenian model of democracy must always be judged poorly because of the high percentage of the city's population excluded from the political process: women, foreigners, slaves, even free men without sufficient "manly" virtues. Beyond this very obvious limit to access, no citizen was barred from political participation. In Pericles words: "advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit."¹⁹⁵ Furthermore the availability of rhetorical

¹⁹⁵ Pericles "Funeral Oration" s37

pedagogy offered in a competitive market by Aristotle and many others further opened the opportunities for democratic participation by ensuring that citizens (who could afford the price of the training) could acquire the skills to be effective in their participation.

Instead of aristocrats and oligarchs completely dominating the Assembly, the sons of the new middle class and even the thrifty poor had the opportunity to intervene effectively in the political process and so counter the power of existing elites. When combined with attitudes of self-sufficiency and autonomy that arose from the origin of the citizenry as self-armed warriors, the techniques of rhetoric allowed the deliberative processes of the Assembly to produce, as Anderson says, "upsets and challenges"¹⁹⁶. Athenian democracy did not eliminate elites but when combined with an available rhetorical pedagogy, it ensured stiff competition between elites and the ever-present opportunity for those beyond the elites to speak and sway the decision-making process.

In terms of transparency, Athenian democracy prided itself on its openness even where that transparency was to Athens' strategic disadvantage: "We throw open our city to the world... although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality."¹⁹⁷ Certainly the practice of choosing membership of key positions by lot and limiting the time those positions could be held meant that all active citizens required a clear understanding of the political processes and how to make these work. Again rhetorical training made an important contribution by teaching both the valid and invalid techniques of persuasion so that participants in debate could analyse and reveal the stratagems of their opponents.

In terms of feedback, the formal right of citizens to participate and the openness of the floor of the Assembly ensured a high level of accountability and the ready opportunity for citizens to intervene where previous decisions were judged wrong. Two interesting examples of the ability of the Assembly to provide the opportunity for feedback are in Xenophon's account of the aftermath of the battle of Arginusae.¹⁹⁸ The Assembly found the victorious generals guilty of failing to save troops ship-wrecked after the battle and decided that they should be summarily executed. Not long afterwards, Xenophon says, the Assembly acknowledged that the generals were executed without recourse to a fair trial and jailed the instigators of the summary justice.

¹⁹⁶ Anderson *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* p38

¹⁹⁷ Pericles "Funeral Oration" s39

¹⁹⁸ quoted in Held *Models of Democracy* p24-27

This incident shows the ease with which the Assembly could provide feedback to its appointees and its own members who were judged to have misused it. This incident also indicates some of the problems the Assembly had with coordination. As Held says:

the vulnerability of the Assembly to the excitement of the moment; the unstable basis of certain popular decisions; and the potential for political instability of a very general kind due to the absence of some system of checks on impulsive behaviour.¹⁹⁹

Later changes to the Athenian Constitution attempted to counter these problems by more firmly establishing decision-making procedures. Relatively long periods of political stability, its military victories and its enduring architectural monuments indicate that the Athenian Assembly was capable of complex feats of coordination.

In summary, it is apparent that while the Athenian model had elitist elements and was prone to a degree of instability, it nevertheless allowed a high level of formal demotic participation which, through the teaching of rhetorical techniques to a self-selecting group, tended to produce a moderate level of authentic democratic deliberation. The crucial point in considering the contribution of rhetoric to this deliberation is to appreciate that rhetoric is more than the one-way process of delivering a speech. It is a process profoundly based in exchange. The location of rhetoric is: "the assembly...deliberating together instead of a speaker declaiming to the mob...and the smallest rhetorically significant unit will be the exchange rather than the speech."²⁰⁰

Aristotle's contribution was to recognise that while these exchanges are not the intimate experiences of Plato's symposia with their abstract reason, they were nevertheless occasions marked by equally valid rational debate and that the mass collectivity of rhetorical practice is precisely what produces its social significance as practical reason. While the dialectic is the intimate exchange from indubitable premises to theoretical truth, it was not an efficient or sufficient method for creating the broad-based social belief that precedes action in the contingent and often urgent politics of the city. Thus when Aristotle states the tripartite analysis of the speech event that still informs communication theory today: "For the speech is composed of three factors - the speaker, the subject and the listener", he is quick to point out "it is to the last of these that its purpose is related".²⁰¹ He thus highlights the vital role of the audience in

¹⁹⁹ *ibid* p27

²⁰⁰ Brownstein, Oscar L "Aristotle and the Rhetorical Process" in Fisher, Walter R (ed) *Rhetoric: A Tradition in Transition* Michigan State University Press East Lansing 1974 p21

²⁰¹ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1358a-b

receiving and interpreting the message, participating in the hermeneutic creation of the exchange of ideas necessary for deliberation. Aristotle is emphasising that communicating *with* the audience is not just a technical requirement (that is, so they understand the speaker) but also is an ethical necessity (so that they share equally with the speaker in the communicative process). It is in this dynamic tension between the technical and the ethical that a general theory of political rhetoric may be discerned: rhetoric is a necessary precondition for democracy.

Athenian democracy was not without its limitations but the availability of rhetoric played a significant role in encouraging authentic democratic deliberation in the collective exchanges of practical reason. The teaching of rhetoric tended to broaden the quantity and quality of demotic participation and thus reinforce the democratic nature of the *polis*. Or to put that in another way, as democracy is an open process, in order to participate effectively in democratic deliberation, citizens require the skills of rhetorical invention. The politics of democratic deliberation requires the invention of arguments that convince citizen-participants of a set of propositions so they can consent to a collective action. Ideally this process occurs with a commitment to mutuality that allows for a provisional unanimity. The vital point that elevates rhetoric beyond the merely instrumental construction of a majority is the simultaneous ethical requirement that the process of deliberation is a collective one and so for the collective benefit rather than for the benefit of an elite. Thus rhetoric, by becoming more generally available and clearer in its social purpose, may be understood not as a means to manipulate democracy but as a means to sustain democratic institutions by empowering citizen participants with the creativity required for rhetorical invention while restraining them with the ethical responsibility for informed and constructive participation.

From the Greek experience, there is an important lesson for current constructions of democratic citizenship. While the notion of robust, free-flowing debate that follows its own logic in search of consensus has been foreshortened by the mass media, a renewed rhetoric designed to counteract the mass media's coercive power offers the possibility that democracy might recreate itself so that all citizens have an equal opportunity to express themselves and so that a more diverse range of frankly stated and freely given opinions can emerge and be contested in collective deliberation.

Chapter 5

THE INSURGENT CAMPAIGN

1991 Brisbane City Council Election

Outline

This chapter is a study of the construction and communication of political rhetoric in the 1991 Brisbane City Council (BCC) election campaign that resulted in an "upset" victory for the "insurgent" challengers. The production of this result against the expectations of academic commentators, the media and all the campaign teams involved suggests that this is a useful case to consider in order to appreciate how contemporary forms of political rhetoric may provide the means to overcome the coercive power of both the media and entrenched political incumbency. This chapter seeks to draw out the practical and ethical potential of the contemporary practice of political rhetoric by 1) clarifying how Aristotelian rhetorical techniques may be adapted for use in representative democracies through complex meta-narrative strategies utilising modern communication technologies and 2) with reference to the criteria outlined in Chapter Three, establishing the quantity and quality of deliberation available to citizens in the election campaign process, particularly for those with critical and marginalised voices and low budgets. This chapter analyses the stages of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) campaign and its integration of professional campaign techniques with "grassroots" and "guerilla" strategies. Working from key texts produced by the ALP campaign (including electoral data, opinion polling, focus group research, press releases, press reports, TV advertisements and direct mail), this chapter identifies the strategies which produced the surprise result of this election and suggests ways in which these strategies might be subsumed into a reformulated rhetorical practice with a heightened awareness of its ethical responsibilities to produce greater demotic participation in deliberative processes.

Insurgency

Stephen Mills places the concept of "insurgency" at the centre of modern electoral practice and points out how the fast pace of the electronic media (as opposed to the

print media) creates greater potential for effective campaigns from challengers.¹ The old nostrum that "oppositions don't win elections, governments lose them" is no longer true. Mills points out that "Oppositions can gain votes and win elections through effectively using the methods of tracking and targeting."² These methods are discussed in more detail below and in further chapters.

Mills outlines the way in which, as far back as the 1949 Liberal campaign led by Robert Menzies, opposition political machines in Australia have succeeded when they have run disciplined and effective campaigns based on market research and electronic advertising because they can exploit their one advantage over governments: "they do not have to cope with the day-to-day demands and compromises of administration and thus can stick closely to a disciplined formula of destabilisation."³ Sam Rubesohn, the advertising agent recruited by Menzies from Labor to run the Liberals' 1949 campaign well understood the functions of insurgency. Mills quotes him as saying that "vigorous attack directed against chinks in the other man's political armour is of vital importance in assuring the effectiveness of election advertising".⁴ The United States offers a number of other informative examples where well organised "under-dogs" have produced upset victories.⁵

The concept of insurgency comes from the conduct of rebellions and revolutionary wars. The Romans coined the term to describe the uprisings of the conquered but not subservient tribes of their Empire, and the Roman general Fabius Maximus adapted the techniques employed by those rebels when confronted with the superior forces of Hannibal. He adopted a policy of avoiding open battle and using the terrain to bog down and dissipate the stronger enemy.⁶ In modern times insurgency is typically waged as guerilla war conducted by irregular forces within a state and aimed at alienating the mass of the population from the authority of the established government with a view to its final overthrow.⁷ As will be seen below, whether as a "guerilla" movement or an election

¹ Mills, Stephen *The New Machine Men* Penguin Ringwood 1986 p87

² *ibid*

³ *ibid* p88

⁴ *ibid* p89

⁵ see for example Beiler, David "White Knights, Dark Horses: The Kentucky Governor's Race of 1987" and Schmidt, David "How they Whipped "Whoops" in Washington State" both in Sabato, Larry (ed) *Campaigns and Elections: A Reader* Scott, Foresman Glenview 1989 p155-164 and p191-203 respectively

⁶ Plutarch *Makers of Rome* Penguin London 1965 p51-83

⁷ Guevara, Che "Guerilla warfare: a method" in Gerassi, John (ed) *Venceremos* Panther London 1969 p384-388

campaign, by refusing to play the government's game, the insurgents create their own game which they just might win.

The successful Labor campaign for the Lord Mayoralty during the 1991 BCC elections is an interesting example of the contemporary application of insurgency techniques to an electoral competition for a position within an institution of representative democracy. It is of interest because it was "a major electoral upset"⁸ that was produced neither by an outright rejection of a corrupt or incompetent party nor by the expectations of the media editorialised into "common wisdom" but rather by the citizens in response to the campaigns put to them.

The media considered the incumbent Lord Mayor, Sallyanne Atkinson "impregnable"⁹ and "invincible"¹⁰ and neither public nor internal party opinion polls ever hinted at a major shift of voter sentiment away from her. The citizens, however, weighed up the competing campaigns in the last few days of the election period and, as is indicated by the result, found hers unconvincing. The Labor campaign had no idea they had a winner in their leader and Atkinson's challenger, Jim Soorley did not expect to be catapulted into control of one of the largest local authorities in the world with an unprecedented swing.¹¹

But while Atkinson produced a token campaign and "ran on her record", Labor developed a rhetorical exchange with the citizen-audience that allowed it to turn the constituency's negative perceptions of the incumbent revealed in quantitative and qualitative research - a vague dissatisfaction with her rates system, waste disposal policies and ambitious personal style - into its own positive campaign. This campaign centred on fair rates, city-wide recycling and a cut to the Lord Mayoral salary and opposed a planned waste disposal facility. Thus the Liberals could not attack Labor's policies without exacerbating their own "negatives" and so undercut their own strengths as effective and efficient city managers.

While there is no suggestion here that this election campaign is an archetype for effective deliberative democracy, analysis of the campaign does provide useful insights into the operations of a successful insurgent election campaign which in turn provides

⁸ Tucker, D & Neylan, M "Lord Mayor Superstar" *Australian Studies in Journalism* no 3 1994 p254

⁹ Charlton, Peter "Slowly but Soorley" *Courier-Mail* 26 September 1992

¹⁰ Tucker & Neylan "Lord Mayor Superstar" p272

¹¹ Stockwell, Stephen "Can the Libs pull a Citizen Soorley in 1994" *Brisbane Weekend Times* 13 November 1993 p12-13

the opportunity to develop theoretical reflections about the part the election campaign may play in opening opportunities for deliberative intervention within the processes of representative democracy. Beyond the instrumental account of the insurgent campaign given in this chapter, there is also consideration of the ethical potential of the insurgent campaign to provide citizens with more effective means to participate in their representation. This chapter will proceed by detailing the course of the campaign in the next seven sections with a brief reflection on some theoretical ramifications that might be drawn from the preceding material at the end of each section. Those theoretical ramifications are then summarised and developed in the final section of this chapter with particular reference to the criteria for effective democratic deliberation detailed in Chapter Three.

Brisbane Background

The politics of local government, even in an entity as large as the BCC, get little attention from the press or academia¹² Some brief background on the history and structure of the Brisbane municipality is therefore useful. Founded in 1825 as a penal colony, Brisbane became a municipality in 1859 shortly after the colony of Queensland was separated from New South Wales.¹³

In 1924 the reformist State Labor Government passed the *City of Brisbane Act* which amalgamated two cities, six towns, ten shires and parts of a further two shires into a single entity.¹⁴ The city covered an area of three hundred and seventy five square miles extending approximately ten miles from the GPO and the Council charged with administering this area was to be made up of twenty Alderman each representing a single ward with the Mayor elected directly by all adult voters.¹⁵

Brisbane is, Doug Tucker points out, "a unique experiment in the Australian context"¹⁶ as the nation's only capital city with a single local government administration

¹² Chapman & Wood *Australian Local Government* p60: "Lord Mayoral elections in the four other state capitals seem not as well documented as those in Perth and Hobart."

Also Tucker, D "Charles Edward Chuter: An Architect of Local Government in the Twentieth Century" *Queensland Geographical Journal* 4th series vol 3 June 1988 p61

¹³ Cole, John R *Shaping a City* William Brooks Brisbane 1984 p15

¹⁴ Tucker, JD et al *Local Government in Queensland Volume 1* Australian Institute of Urban Studies Canberra 1981 p85-6; Cole *Shaping a City* p29-30

¹⁵ *ibid* p39, 43

¹⁶ Tucker *Local Government in Queensland* p88

responsible for both "local" and metropolitan functions. Tucker further observes that "Activities undertaken by two tiers of local government in other Australian cities were brought together under a single jurisdiction... If there was a model, it was New York."¹⁷ While there is debate about the model for Greater Brisbane¹⁸, that amalgamation has left the Brisbane City Council (BCC) governing the seventh largest electorate in Australia after the Federal Government and the five State Governments excluding Tasmania. The efficiency and democratic efficacy of the "Brisbane model" of local government is still a matter of contention.¹⁹

The most significant figure in Brisbane's municipal history since its amalgamation is Clem Jones who was Lord Mayor from 1961 to 1975. Sewering Brisbane was Jones' "most widely recognised and appreciated" achievement²⁰ but his unstinting support for development left a lasting mark on Brisbane. Jones had previously been "the city's largest private developer"²¹ and he instituted a policy of "planning by negotiation"²² which had the benefit of forcing developers to bear more of the cost of providing basic services but had the disadvantage of being, Tucker suggests, "unpredictable and arbitrary".²³ By the 1980s the results of Jones' commitment to unfettered development had become apparent. With the conurbation centred on Brisbane spreading far beyond its own municipal boundaries, the region was facing the possibility of becoming "a worst case scenario... [with] urban sprawl gone mad".²⁴

In 1985 a resurgent Liberal team led by former journalist Sallyanne Atkinson mounted a strong campaign against the Labor incumbents. After twenty-four years of continuous Labor administration, it was easy for Atkinson to characterise Labor as "mere captives

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ see for example Cole *Shaping a City* p45. In parliamentary debate on *The City of Brisbane Act* Labor in fact pointed to the success of Greater Cities such as Glasgow, Birmingham and Chicago. While New York City has responsibilities even wider than those envisaged for Greater Brisbane (eg police), its borough system acts to diffuse civic power and distinguishes it from the greater city model.

¹⁹ Stockwell, Stephen "The Brisbane Model: considering a unique experiment" *Urban Policy and Research* vol 13 no 2 June 1995 p89-96

²⁰ Tucker, Doug "Queensland" in Power, J. et al *Local Government Systems of Australia* Australian Government Printing Service Canberra 1981 p427

²¹ Cole *Shaping a City* p195

²² Tucker "Queensland" p428

²³ *ibid* p429

²⁴ Collins, Tony *Living for the City* ABC Sydney 1993 p14-6

of old ideas...the product of the smoke-filled room"²⁵ while styling herself as the "vigorous, dynamic, progressive" mother from the suburbs. She portrayed herself as an ordinary person - someone listening to people "in butchers' shops" and at the same time as a force above the fray - someone who has a vision:

The next Lord Mayor will be a true representative of the people reflecting their hopes for the future. The Lord mayor should be the spirit of the city, someone who is in touch, who understands what real people want and need.²⁶

Though the Green Party ran in the election, it is interesting to note that Atkinson did not mention the environment by name in her policy speech but professed an environmental sympathy which at the same time did not harm her business supporters: "A city is not just bricks and mortar...I will offer a range of incentives to ensure that our past is preserved for the future...The river is almost certainly Brisbane's most valuable natural asset... it has enormous potential."²⁷

The 1985 BCC election resulted in Atkinson defeating Labor's Roy Harvey (see table 5.1 for analysis of electoral returns). However once she was elected another agenda emerged: to make Brisbane "a prosperous place to do business".²⁸ Her main achievements to this end during her first term were a new Town Plan which promised "more open, positive and imaginative planning"²⁹, structural reforms to Council administration³⁰ and the commissioning of a strategic plan for Brisbane³¹. But the issue that preoccupied the media was her bid for Brisbane to host the 1992 Olympic Games.³² While that bid eventually failed, Doug Tucker and Mark Neylan show how Atkinson utilised the media opportunities it provided, and particularly the support of the *Courier-Mail*, to establish herself as a passionate and positive advocate for a city

²⁵ Atkinson, Sallyanne Brisbane's Tomorrow Liberal BCC Lord Mayoral Campaign Policy Speech 1985 p1-3

²⁶ Atkinson Brisbane's Tomorrow p3

²⁷ Atkinson Brisbane's Tomorrow p5-30

²⁸ Atkinson, Sallyanne "Brisbane: city on the move" *Professional Administrator* vol 37 no 6 Dec 1985/Jan 1986 p5

²⁹ Heywood, Phil "Brisbane's development in zones" *Australian Planner* vol 24 no 4 December 1986 p29

³⁰ Neylan, Mark "Sallyanne Atkinson: her rise and fall" *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration* no 65 July 1991 p21-2

³¹ for details of the development of this plan see Stimson, Robert "A place in the sun? Policies, planning and leadership for the Brisbane region" *Urban Futures Journal* vol 2 no 2 July 1992 p51ff

³² Tucker & Neylan "Lord Mayor Superstar" p257-259

TABLE 5.1 - Lord Mayor and Total Ward Returns, Brisbane City Council Elections 1985-94

	1985	1988	1991	1994
Turnout	475,299(87.5%) ³³	420,042(83.2%)	449,566(87.1%)	449,444(86.4%)
LORD MAYOR				
Liberal	209,651 (51.8%) ³⁴	252,771 (63.2%)	185,395 (45.3%)	171,057(38.8%)
ALP	179,968 (44.4%)	133,938 (33.5%)	184,557 (45.1%)	229,196(52.0%)
Other(Green etc)	15,429 (3.8%)	13,071 (3.3%)	39,404 (9.6%)	40,432(9.2%)
Informal	10,835 (2.6%)	20,259 (4.8%)	40,210 (8.9%)	8,759(1.9%)
2PartyPref%³⁵ (Lib/ALP)	53.3/46.7	64.5/35.5	48.4/51.6	44.5/55.5
Swing		Lib 11.2%	ALP 16.1%	ALP 3.9%
WARDS				
Liberal	206,468 (50.9%)	230,326 (57.0%)	181,905(45.4%)	202,988(46.3%)
ALP	186,637 (46.0%)	163,952 (40.6%)	184,958(46.2%)	205,945(47.0%)
Other	12,304 (3.0%)	9,538 (2.4%)	33,499(8.9%)	29,649(6.8%)
Informal	10,376 (2.5%)	15,993 (3.8%)	46,939 (10.4%)	10,822(2.4%)
2PartyPref%³⁶ (Lib/ALP)	52.3/47.7	58.0/42.0	48.1/51.9	49.0/51.0
Swing		Lib 5.7%	ALP 9.9%	Lib 0.9%
Cumulative Vote-split	1.0%	6.5%	0.3%	4.5%

that she had, via the Olympic bid, "put on the map".³⁷ Journalists christened her the "lord mayor superstar" and canvassed her potential as a future Prime Minister.³⁸ By skilful management of her media image³⁹, Atkinson came to personify Brisbane's "coming of age" as it developed a new sense of "sophistication"⁴⁰ in its preparations to host World Expo 88.⁴¹ It was in this environment that Atkinson easily won re-election in March 1988.

³³ Percentage figures in plain are derived from the total vote

³⁴ Percentage figures in bold are derived from the formal vote

³⁵ Preferences notionally distributed Lib/ALP at 40/60 in 1985 and 1988. In 1991 preferences were actually distributed Lib/ALP at 32.6/67.4. With the introduction of optional preferential voting in 1994 scrutineers report 20% of Independents' vote exhausted and the remainder went Lib/ALP 66.6/33.3.

³⁶ Total preferences distributed in same proportions as those actually distributed ie (Lib/ALP) 1985:46.4/54.6, 1988:41.0/59.0, 1991:31.7/68.3, 1994: 18.4% exhausted then the remainder went 37.6/62.4.

³⁷ *ibid* p258, 259.

³⁸ *ibid* p259, 261

³⁹ Jones, Michael *Managing Local Government* Hargreen Melbourne 1989 p159

⁴⁰ Yeates, Helen "A reading of Brisbane restaurants" *Australian Journal of Communications* no 16 December 1989 p195-213

⁴¹ Bennett, Tony "The shaping of things to come: Expo88" *Cultural Studies* vol 5 no 1 January 1991

The 1988 City Council Campaign was a dramatic failure for Labor, as can be seen from tables 5.1 and 5.2. At the outset the prospects were, according to ALP State Secretary and Campaign Director Peter Beattie, "positively dismal"⁴² and they steadily deteriorated. When none of the sitting Aldermen wanted to give up his or her ward for what would almost certainly be an unsuccessful challenge to Atkinson, Beattie turned to Jeannie Davis (wife of his factional ally and MP for Brisbane Central, Brian Davis).

TABLE 5.2 - BCC Ward Analysis 1985-91: 2pp Margin (and Swings)

Ward	1985	1988(to Libs)	1991(to ALP)
Bracken Ridge	Lib 1.5	Lib 13.1(+11.6)	Lib 5.0(+8.1)
B'fast Creek	Lib 6.9	Lib 17.3(+10.4)	Lib 6.4(+10.9)
Camp Hill	Lib 2.7	Lib 10.4(+7.7)	ALP 0.3(+10.7)
Carina	ALP 3.4	Lib 1.4(+4.8)	Lib 1.1(+0.3)
Chermside	Lib 1.3	Lib 10.3(+9.0)	ALP 0.4(+10.7)
Coopers Plains	ALP 2.4	Lib 1.6(+4.0)	ALP 5.3(+6.9)
Deagon	ALP 8.2	ALP 3.8(+4.6)	ALP 10.6(+6.8)
Doboy	ALP 11.2	ALP 5.9(+5.3)	ALP 20.4(+14.5)
Eagle Farm	ALP 10.8	ALP 10.3(+0.5)	ALP 17.1(+6.8)
Ekibin	Lib 7.3	Lib 13.3(+6.0)	ALP 2.9(+16.2)
Enoggera	ALP 5.7	ALP 3.4(+2.3)	ALP 12.2(+8.8)
Fairfield	Lib 5.2	Lib 13.0(+7.8)	ALP 5.4(+18.4)
Holland Park	Lib 2.4	Lib 12.6(+10.2)	Lib 2.8(+9.8)
Inala	ALP 10.8	ALP 4.7(+6.1)	ALP 17.4(+12.7)
Jamboree	Lib 18.7	Lib 22.8(+4.1)	Lib 9.5(+13.3)
Kalinga	Lib 7.7	Lib 9.2(+1.5)	Lib 3.5(+5.7)
Kianawah	ALP 12.1	ALP 6.2(+5.9)	ALP 18.9(+12.7)
McDowall	Lib 11.1	Lib 20.4(+9.3)	Lib 8.7(+11.7)
Paddington	ALP 6.0	ALP 6.7(-0.7)	ALP 8.8(+2.1)
Pullenvale	Lib 27.2	Lib 29.3(+2.1)	Lib 22.5(+6.8)
Rochedale	Lib 12.3	Lib 20.4(+8.1)	Lib 1.6(+18.8)
Runcorn	Lib 5.1	Lib 21.4(+16.3)	Lib 6.4(+15.0)
Spring Hill	ALP 4.9	ALP 1.3(+3.6)	ALP 14.7(+13.4)
Taringa	Lib 23.0	Lib 25.3(+2.3)	Lib 18.0(+7.3)
The Gabba	ALP 4.5	ALP 7.7(-3.2)	ALP 14.5(+6.8)
The Gap	Lib 11.5	Lib 16.3(+4.8)	Lib 9.1(+7.2)

⁴² Beattie, Peter *In the Arena* Boolarong Brisbane 1990 p125

Jeannie Davis was not a strong media performer and was hampered in any contest with Atkinson by, as Beattie says, "a total inability to project an artificial personality"⁴³.

Beattie's failure to set the policy agenda also compromised the campaign from the outset. Early research⁴⁴ showed that there were dissatisfactions with the Atkinson administration on rates, roads and transport but more interestingly there were many minor issues centering around the perceived waste of Council resources (on the failed Olympic bid, Expo 88, the inefficient garbage service and "lazy" Council employees) that might have proved fertile ground. Despite Davis's claim to have "mapped out a program of major policy launches" at the launch of her candidature⁴⁵, party documents show that three weeks later only one launch was planned (on heritage and environment, which was not a target issue) and Beattie handed the whole policy launch schedule to the BCC Labor caucus who might be expected to be predominantly preoccupied with holding on to their own wards.⁴⁶ Davis's first major attack on Atkinson (on the matter of Council indebtedness) contained errors of arithmetic and Atkinson used the opportunity to high-light Davis's lack of credentials and even demanded an apology for Davis's implied accusation that Atkinson had misled the public.⁴⁷

Labor embarked on a mini-campaign with TV advertisements but this merely served to accentuate what was perceived as Davis's wooden and unsympathetic persona. The media were more interested by the imminent Expo 88, and Campaign Director Beattie admits that his campaign "plodded" from there.⁴⁸ On election day, as table 5.1 shows, Davis only achieved 35.5% of the two-party preferred vote, a swing of 11.2% to Atkinson. The Labor Aldermen fared better with a swing against them of only 5.7% and the loss of only two wards (see table 5.2). The low turnout in the compulsory election (83.2% compared to 87.5 % in 1985 - see table 5.1) suggests that some traditional Labor supporters were so disenchanted that they simply failed to take part.

With reference to Aristotelian categories, it might be argued that Atkinson developed a meta-enthymeme which integrated 1) her character as a progressive, positive person who could combine suburban motherhood with activities on the international stage, 2)

⁴³ *ibid* p125

⁴⁴ Queensland ALP BCC quantitative research Brisbane March 1987 table 3

⁴⁵ Davis, Jeannie Speech Notes ALP BCC Lord Mayoral Campaign Policy Speech 10 August 1987 p6

⁴⁶ Beattie, Peter Decisions from the BCC Campaign Meeting Queensland ALP document 31 August 1987

⁴⁷ "Mayor demands apology over loan mistake" *Northside Advertiser* 9 September 1987

⁴⁸ Beattie *In the Arena* p126

an emotional pride she shared with the citizens in Brisbane's "coming of age" and 3) a more formal, rational argument about the need for the Council to become efficient and outward-looking to assist Brisbane city to become part of the global economy. This seamless rhetoric was skilfully communicated, predominantly through "free" editorial media over a number of years.⁴⁹ In contrast, Labor's 1988 campaign failed to come together on either a thematic or an organisational level, its candidate was apparently incapable of successfully communicating either a positive image or a detailed argument through the media and Labor failed to create a rhetorical exchange with the citizen-audience.

Labor Resurgent

In December 1989, Queensland Labor won State Government for the first time in thirty-five years.⁵⁰ Despite the Fitzgerald Inquiry (which uncovered a network of corruption through the conservative State government and the Queensland police force), the acrimonious departure of long-time Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen and the subsequent dumping of his successor, Mike Ahern, shortly before the election, Labor was never a certainty to win. There was always the danger that the Nationals would maintain their level of support in their malapportioned country seats and that Brisbane voters would turn to the Liberals as a safe alternative to the divided ALP, particularly if Atkinson entered the election and was promoted as a potential Premier.⁵¹

Swan carefully "massaged" the issues of environment, education and the Nationals' reputation for corruption into a campaign that promised a program of prudent change that appealed to the middle-ground of Queensland politics. He also countered the Liberals' potential to promote themselves as an alternative to the Nationals by detailing their association with the Nationals and showing it was "arithmetically impossible" for the Liberals to dominate a coalition. This "pincer" movement, Swan believes, "corralled" the conservative campaigns so Goss could claim to be "the only change for the better".⁵²

⁴⁹ Tucker & Neylan "Lord Mayor Superstar" p255-264

⁵⁰ for a detailed account of the election see Whip, Rosemary and Hughes, Colin A. (eds) *Political Crossroads* University of Queensland Press St Lucia 1991

⁵¹ note, for example, the ALP research showing that the Liberals had made a 10% gain by mid 1988 while the Labor vote had gone backwards, quoted in: Swan, Wayne "The Labor campaign" *ibid* p96

⁵² Swan, Wayne Campaign Directors Report presented to Queensland ALP State Council 10 February 1990

Goss's victory heralded a new era in Queensland. His government introduced a program of reforms to the parliament, the police and the public service. The electoral boundaries were redistributed to end a malapportionment that had favoured the National Party. The area of the state covered by National Parks was doubled. According to Goss's biographer, Jamie Walker, Labor experienced an extended "honeymoon period" with both the media and the citizens, the so-called "Goss Gloss".⁵³ At the 1990 Federal election Queensland Labor won two extra seats and a further two National Party seats across the border in New South Wales fell to Labor after campaigning by Wayne Goss.

Nevertheless by mid-1990 Labor was not in a strong position for the scheduled March 1991 BCC elections: there was no Labor candidate for the Lord Mayoralty; no Alderman could be convinced to resign his or her ward to challenge Atkinson, and the Party had only budgeted about \$400,000 for the campaign (compared with over \$4 million for Goss's 1989 campaign). The Party did, however, have some strategic advantages: because the BCC is established under a State Act, some key BCC decisions had to be referred to the Minister for Local Government, Tom Burns, who met regularly with Campaign Director Wayne Swan. The Party had an experienced campaign infrastructure including, in particular, the ability to generate electorate wide direct mail and, in key areas, tightly organised bands of Party members with a proven commitment to hand deliver personally addressed direct mail to the right houses.

The Labor campaign also had on hand a large amount of qualitative and quantitative research about the community's perception of Mayor Atkinson which the ALP had commissioned before the 1989 State election, when it appeared that she might enter State politics. Qualitative research showed that she was viewed as an "honest" politician with particular appeal to women but there were some reservations expressed about her by a few of those who participated in the focus groups: "all PR, more interested in pay rises/superannuation - 'Salaryanne'... having poor quality male advisers".⁵⁴ Quantitative research in the electorate of Yeronga, where it was considered she was most likely to stand if she did decide to enter State politics, showed that her approval rating was 65%, the same as for Wayne Goss but that her approval rating amongst swinging voters was, at 68%, a full 13% above his.⁵⁵ More than half the people thought she would make the best Liberal leader as against barely a third who supported the actual leader, Angus Innes. More than half of all voters and 57% of "swingers" said she was positive, decisive and spoke her mind. Her biggest negative attribute, mentioned

⁵³ Walker, Jamie *Goss* Uni of Queensland Press St Lucia 1995 p187

⁵⁴ Queensland ALP State Election qualitative research 1988-9

⁵⁵ Queensland ALP quantitative research Yeronga September 1989

by 28% of the swingers, was that she was overpaid. Other major negative images were that she was too dogmatic, dictatorial, egotistical, superficial and took too many overseas trips. The research also revealed a relatively lower approval of Atkinson from home makers compared to working women.

It appears that Atkinson was caught in a dilemma produced by her commitment to see that Brisbane participated in the globalisation process. To represent her constituency she had to undertake overseas lobbying but her extensive travel itinerary put her at a distance from her constituents. While Atkinson had a high level of support because of her success in communicating the well-integrated enthymeme discussed above (that she was doing a professional job assisting Brisbane "come of age" on the international stage), it is ironic that it was precisely these attributes that were the source of negative perceptions about her. Using her "negatives" against her in an argument, in Aristotle's words, "from the contraries",⁵⁶ had to be handled carefully by the ALP campaign so that any attack did not harm those making the attack more than it harmed Atkinson's campaign. Analysis at the time proved to be prophetic: "Direct attacks on her are counterproductive. Our best opportunity is to embroil the Liberal Council in something messy - a planning, development or environment issue that they cannot solve."⁵⁷

Initial Qualitative Research

In mid-1990, as the selection of Lord Mayoral and ward candidates was continuing, Labor commissioned "image" and "issues" qualitative research through four groups of ten "low-committed" voters from key marginal wards.⁵⁸ The participants in these research groups suggested that there was no major dissatisfaction with the Council's record. Atkinson's strong media image dominated participants' perceptions of the Council and her role in the recent celebrations of the Story Bridge's 60th anniversary was strongly approved. The cost of domestic rates was on people's minds as were, to a lesser extent, garbage, toxic waste, traffic, buses, juvenile gangs and police numbers. There was no great awareness of the timing of the election but it was assumed that Atkinson would win. There was less certainty on the question of who would win in the wards and confusion over who Labor's Lord Mayoral candidate would be. But it hardly mattered because people were happy with Atkinson and it certainly wasn't "time for a

⁵⁶ Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1397a

⁵⁷ Stockwell, Stephen (ed) Brisbane City Council - Summary - Statistics and previous research Queensland ALP document July 1990

⁵⁸ Queensland ALP BCC qualitative research July 1990

change". Her positive attributes emanated from her strong personality. She was generally seen as a strong political performer who had not lost the common touch. She had put Brisbane "on the map" and thus she was above party politics.

Negative perceptions of her were only offered after persistent inquiring by the facilitator of the qualitative research groups and it is interesting to note that these too emanated from Atkinson's strong persona. This qualitative research confirmed the ongoing, low-level sense of dissatisfaction with the Lord Mayor that was evident in the research discussed above, conducted prior to the State election in the previous year. A few participants claimed her egotism was manifest in high salary and the number and frequency of her overseas trips. This dissatisfaction was summed up by one participant who said that while she had been once "all for Brisbane", she was now more interested in herself. An added factor since the earlier research was the very public promise to Atkinson by federal Liberal leader Andrew Peacock of a safe seat in the House of Representatives and a front-bench position if she switched to federal politics. While she did not make the move at the time she did say "I'm sure now that the federal arena is where my future lies"⁵⁹ and research participants suggested Atkinson's political ambitions indicated that she was losing her concern for Brisbane: "she's coasting... she's done her dash... she has no current achievements". There was a concern among participants that she must be losing control of the everyday processes. As one participant said: "She doesn't have her hands on any more."⁶⁰

The qualitative research revealed that Labor was perceived as having one positive attribute: a real concern for the city and its effective management. On the issues, persistent questioning by the facilitator of the research groups showed that participants had a number of continuing concerns. While the Liberals' most obvious increase in rates, a \$20 "green levy", was generally approved, the new Differential Rating System was not clearly understood. Participants feared that it would be unfair, hitting old people in older suburbs, and they asked whether it was a general rates rise in disguise. The participants did not think that the Lord Mayor had given a clear explanation of the system. As one participant said: "I don't know what she is doing." On the issue of garbage removal, Atkinson had another strong positive attribute. People loved the newly introduced Otto bins: wheeled garbage receptacles supplied to every house. The bins were convenient, reduced odours and allowed a significant mechanisation of the

⁵⁹ Robson, Frank "The Sallyanne Factor" *Australian Magazine* 24 February 1990 p20-28

⁶⁰ all participant quotes taken from Queensland ALP BCC qualitative research July 1990

garbage collection process with attendant cost savings. Nevertheless there was a perception that the Council was not doing enough to implement promises to introduce recycling. People were keen to recycle; they just wanted the facilities or pick-ups to do it. There was also a low level of awareness about reports in the *Courier-Mail* of a delay in letting waste disposal tenders⁶¹ which led into a discussion of the potential locations of new waste disposal facilities.

Altogether these "niggling" concerns about the issues were taken by participants as further evidence that Atkinson had lost a feel for the every day concerns of Council while she pursued her own national and international agenda. The research recommended that the ALP exploit these early glimmers of dissatisfaction by suggesting that the Council was not performing at maximum efficiency and that it had "run out of steam" since Expo and the failed Olympic bid. It was pointless to attack Atkinson directly as that would only risk creating a wave of sympathy for her but there was a chance for Labor to create its own positive issues from negative perceptions about Atkinson and her administration, and run on them. One conclusion of the research was that: "The stress should always be on the need for good management of the Council, rather than on any shortcomings of the Lord Mayor."⁶²

The central task of the ALP campaign became evident: it had to turn negative perceptions about Lord Mayor as an aloof, over-spender with a desire to be anywhere but Brisbane into something positive, not just for itself but more importantly for the citizen-audience. In "inventing" its contribution to the exchange with citizens, the campaign could not be seen to be negative or childish (for example, the campaign could never use the expression "Salaryanne") but it could show that it did take the audience/electorate far more seriously than Atkinson's administration did by clearly laying out the processes it would utilise to create greater accountability in the Council. Thus the campaign had the opportunity to transform an instrumental necessity (the production of winning policies) into an occasion of increased transparency which would open the Council to greater critical scrutiny.

⁶¹ see Doughty, Jane "City will delay \$600m waste disposal deal" *Courier-Mail* 2 June 1990 p2

⁶² Queensland ALP BCC qualitative research July 1990

Opening Strategies

As the Lord Mayor of Brisbane is directly elected by all voters and a candidate for the position cannot also be a candidate for a ward, none of Labor's sitting Aldermen wanted to risk their wards challenging Atkinson. ALP Organiser Lindesay Jones came across Jim Soorley at the West End Branch meeting and was impressed by his "panache" in wearing a business suit to an ALP meeting in this relatively radical, working class area.⁶³ Soorley was a former "radical" priest who had some media experience from the campaign he organised for the release of Father Brian Gore, a worker-priest imprisoned in the Philippines by the Marcos regime. Subsequently Soorley gained a Masters degree in organisational development at the Loyola University in Chicago before leaving the priesthood to become a management consultant.

With this background Soorley exhibited a mix of concern and competence which suggested he might make a credible ALP candidate. With little preparation, he was launched as a "hands-on" achiever ready to tackle everyday issues like rates, recycling, environment and making the Council administration more open and efficient. He told a sceptical media conference in the City Square that Brisbane had been languishing under the Liberals and he was ready to work full-time to solve people's problems. Also chosen around this time were the candidates for the wards. Labor's six sitting Aldermen were re-endorsed and three new candidates were chosen for wards where the Labor incumbents were retiring. But it was in the marginal Liberal wards where the campaign would have to make an impact and a further six "quality" candidates were chosen in targeted seats where either Labor needed a small swing to win the ward or the Liberal Alderman was retiring. While some of the swings required were large, the campaign organisers knew that they were not impossible as most of the targeted wards were represented by Labor at Federal and State levels. In various ways the candidates had careers and profiles in their own communities that re-enforced the "hands-on" message being delivered by Soorley. Generally the ward candidates had the strong local branch support that would be necessary for the large amount of "leg-work" required to deliver the direct mail and unaddressed communications that were envisaged as key elements of the campaign.

The Labor campaign commenced with the themes Fair Rates, Efficient Management and a Clean Environment and although emphasis shifted during the campaign as events dictated, these were still the Labor issues at the end of campaign as well. This consistency, it will be argued below, was a major contribution to its success. Labor

⁶³ conversation with ALP organiser Lindesay Jones July 1990

concentrated on the issues because it knew it was never going to improve its position if the campaign concentrated on personalities as it had in 1988. The first major campaign event was a rates mobilisation. The action was designed to highlight the perceived shortcomings of the Liberal administration in the area, particularly the fact that some suburbs with high property values had recently received a rates cut while almost everyone else had suffered a rise. Labor promised a fair, equitable, predictable and "compassionate" rates policy while leaving the detail sketchy. A Rates Caravan was launched as a mobile information centre and taken to street stalls and protests which were held by candidates and branch members to highlight the issue at the grassroots level.

The campaign also set out on a regular round of press and policy releases on subjects such as Bushland Preservation, Council Efficiency, Accountability for Overseas Trips, Sewerage, Waste Management Contracts and Rates. All utterances from the campaign were on the core themes and whatever opportunities offered were adapted or "spun" to fit the themes. The campaign launched policies at locations that reinforced the message it was trying to get across; for example the bicycle policy was launched on a bicycle and Soorley was persuaded to ride a bicycle for the media.

Bit by bit the campaign earned a few more centimetres coverage in the *Courier-Mail*. It was always going to be difficult to gain coverage in the *Courier-Mail* because it was such a strong supporter of Atkinson.⁶⁴ To get campaign messages across, it was necessary to develop a close relationship with the "local" press, the "free" suburban newspapers. To get a return from them meant localising every story for the impact that it would have on each particular paper's area of distribution.

The other means of communication was direct mail. The first round of mail went out in targeted wards on the letterhead of the relevant candidate. It expressed a love of Brisbane and a commitment to make a difference right there in the appropriate suburb. It went on to give a one paragraph biography before reiterating the themes: fair rates, "hands-on" management and the environment. The letter also included a survey form to give the recipient an easy way to respond and the candidate's phone number to emphasise the candidate's accessibility.

The opening phase of the ALP campaign indicate a number of strategies utilised to develop the processes of rhetorical exchange between the campaign and the citizen-audience. Choice of candidates and issue selection reflected the preoccupations of the

⁶⁴ Tucker & Neylan "Lord Mayor Superstar" p258-259

citizens in so far as these could be gauged through limited qualitative research, analysis of news reporting and word of mouth. The campaign did not have the money or influence to rely on promoting its messages in the mainstream media either through advertising or editorial copy so its only alternative was to utilise more "grassroots" channels such as street stalls, street advertising (the Rates Caravan), local newspapers and direct mail. The "grassroots" nature of these activities emphasised the accessibility of the Labor campaign which provided a useful contrast to the perceived "aloofness" of the incumbent and it also provided the opportunity for citizens to provide feedback to the campaign. In this context the survey form included in the first direct mail to marginal seats was a clear invitation for citizens to participate in an exchange of ideas with the campaign. The survey form did not have any "scientific" basis (which at least the qualitative research could claim) but it did have the effect of establishing the potential for a two-way interchange which is necessary for effective rhetoric.

Initial Quantitative Research

Labor's first quantitative research was conducted in October 1990 as a telephone survey of 400 voters in the ward of Fairfield (which needed a 13% swing to fall to Labor).⁶⁵ The poll emphasised how far Labor was behind the Liberals. While Lord Mayor Atkinson had strong support, Jim Soorley's name was only recognised by four out of ten voters, even after prompting. On voting intention Atkinson had a 13% lead but it was significant that 20% of those interviewed were undecided or voting for a minor party. When the undecided respondents were allocated, Atkinson led Soorley 57% to 40% and she did significantly better than that amongst women. Overall it was a 9% swing to Labor from the 1988 result but there was still a long way to go. In the ward, where the Liberal Alderman was retiring, the vote was much closer: 37% Liberal, 35% Labor but 26% were undecided or voting for a minor party. Only 20% recognised the Labor candidate's name after prompting.

There was no major dissatisfaction recorded with the Council. Two-thirds of those interviewed were satisfied with the Council's performance, including half the Labor voters and 58% of the "soft" voters. Three-quarters of the 18-34 age group were satisfied with the Council and dissatisfaction grew in older age brackets. There was some dissatisfaction about rates. They were thought too high; recent rises affected two-thirds of those interviewed, half of them significantly, and the Liberal's new rating

⁶⁵ information below extracted from Queensland ALP quantitative research report, Fairfield Ward October 1990

system was considered likely to force older people out of their homes "unfairly". The researchers commented that rates were "an important motivator, with strong vote-switching potential." The environment was another issue that affected voting intention. Atkinson was perceived as having a positive commitment to the environment, but there was also a feeling that the Council could be doing more about recycling. It was the only issue where a majority of respondents did not think the Council was doing a good job.

A minor cause of dissatisfaction, mentioned by 13% of respondents, was the Lord Mayor's overseas trips and 10% of people nominated "costs" as a vote determining issue. This quantitative research showed that Labor's initial strategy was having some effect but still had a long way to go. After three months of campaigning, Soorley was beginning to be recognised and rates and environment were building as issues but themes of accessible, accountable management which highlighted the Lord Mayor's central negative attribute as an aloof "big-spender" with little concern for Brisbane had barely caught on at all. It became clear that while Soorley maintained his positive campaign, Atkinson's record needed radical re-interpretation.

Soorley strengthened his position on rates. As the Council distributed its quarterly rates bill, the ALP campaign launched its Rates Policy and publicised it with the Rates Mobilisation, a day of protests and street stalls. Also the campaign organisers wrote, produced and distributed a letter from Soorley to every house in Brisbane. The key sentence sought to turn "niggling" concerns about the rates bill into an emotional response:

It just isn't right that average people have to sell their homes to pay rates. There's no certainty in the Liberals' system. A big rise could happen to anyone any time. Will your family be forced out next?

At about the same time, the campaign launched a "visionary" recycling policy that promised to introduce a comprehensive recycling program that would take Brisbane "into the twenty-first century". Besides appealing to the public imagination on green and waste issues, the policy also touched on the rates issue with the promise of a rate rebate for those who participated in the scheme. The policy was also designed to confront the Lord Mayor's perceived dominance on green issues by calling for the entire council to switch to the use of recycled paper, which was then only used in the Lord Mayor's office.

All through the second half of 1990, the issue of waste management "simmered away". Labor's first qualitative research had shown that there were concerns about the Council's

position on the issue.⁶⁶ In June 1990 the Council had avoided making a decision about waste disposal, even though a proposal from Pacific Waste Management (PWM) for a large land-fill at Rochedale was its preferred option.⁶⁷ This gave Rochedale residents, coordinated by local real estate agents who were concerned about a potential lowering of property values and its impact on their business, the opportunity to organise opposition⁶⁸. In September Deputy Premier Tom Burns, whose responsibilities included local government, extended the Council's time to reach a long term solution for Brisbane's waste disposal needs. The Council had asked for a six month extension to make the decision, putting it off until after the election but Burns insisted a decision had to be made in three months.⁶⁹ Burns had also criticised PWM's plan for a land-fill at Rochedale, comparing it unfavourably with the Kingston toxic waste site which had cost the State Government millions to clean up.⁷⁰

By late October the Rochedale Dump had become a major issue in the area adjacent to the proposed site and the ALP campaign was presented with an opportunity to tie the Lord Mayor to a negative issue while Soorley could take a position of principled opposition.

The opportunity arose when Atkinson was scheduled to open a park next to the Dump site. The local residents held a demonstration at the park opening and invited Soorley to address them. It was an unprecedented chance for the Labor campaign to highlight Atkinson's poor green record. Atkinson was booed and jeered as she opened the park. Soorley was refused the opportunity to use the "official" public address system but his opposition to the Dump as it was presently planned was enthusiastically cheered by the residents. The TV coverage of the event allowed Soorley to position himself as "greener" than Atkinson. More importantly, Atkinson was seen to appear crestfallen as she experienced her first negative reaction from the public. Atkinson stirred up the issue further by complaining of the residents' "Nazi style tactics" which only gave their cause more coverage.⁷¹

The Labor campaign was having an effect, at least in City Hall. In a bid to establish her "hands-on" credentials the Lord Mayor wore a hard hat, Wellington boots and manual workers clothes to inspect drains. To establish the Lord Mayor's "hands-off" lack of interest in the everyday operations of Council, the ALP campaign had to "invent" some

⁶⁶ Queensland ALP BCC qualitative research July 1990

⁶⁷ Doughty "City will delay \$600m waste disposal deal" p2

⁶⁸ Doughty, Jane "Dump it!" *Courier-Mail* 23 August 1990 p9

⁶⁹ "City delays ruling on its rubbish" *Courier-Mail* 5 September 1990 p17

⁷⁰ Doughty, Jane "Burns raps waste plan" *Courier-Mail* 10 September 1990 p1

⁷¹ "Nazi claim blasted" *Southern Star* 14 November 1990 p3

symbolic news stories that would implicate her in media "scandals" arising from her ambitions, "jet-setting" and apparent lack of concern. *The Sunday Mail's* Guy Ker had a "roving brief" from the paper to investigate and report such scandal and he had previously pursued an interest in Soorley's living arrangements, staking out his flat with a photographer in the hope of revealing embarrassing personal details.

When Liberal Party infighting caused a pamphlet on Liberal Party letterhead entitled "Sallyanne's Slush Fund" to be leaked to the ALP campaign, the facts in it were checked for veracity and then it was passed on to Ker. The infighting had arisen because the Liberal Party proper was low on resources after unsuccessful State and Federal campaigns while the independent "Committee to Elect Sallyanne Atkinson" (CESA) was relatively wealthy but unwilling to share their money with the Liberal campaign for the BCC wards. CESA was made up of property developers, real estate agents and business identities and the pamphlet suggested that donors were "guaranteed direct access to Atkinson by giving to her slush fund." Ker confirmed the detail and published the story⁷² and then on the next day Soorley released his access and accountability policy promising, among other things, to eliminate slush funds. The story was raised again when ALP State back-bencher Rod Welford raised the issue in Parliament and questioned the potential for a conflict of interest.⁷³

The "slush fund" story set the tone for the following month when, with little initiative from the ALP campaign, the media highlighted a number of Atkinson's "negatives" with stories including her plans to switch to the federal sphere; a detailed analysis of her six overseas trips in the preceding year; her high salary; and an independent poll in a business weekly which found that almost half of the Brisbane-based companies surveyed believed that there was corruption "within the administration of the Brisbane City Council"⁷⁴. Then a member of the ALP campaign team, reading the international version of the *Guardian*, noticed an article towards the back about the mayor of Nice disappearing with billions of francs from municipal funds. After confirming that Brisbane was a "sister city" to Nice, the matter was brought to the attention of Guy Ker and a *Sunday-Mail* story resulted, accompanied by a photo of Atkinson and the Mayor of Nice signing documents and the following reaction from Atkinson: "There are so many rumours about people in politics. Look at all the things they say about Maggie

⁷² Ker, Guy "Secret fund gives Sallyanne muscle" *Sunday-Mail* 26 August 1990 p15

⁷³ Queensland Legislative Assembly *Hansard* 4 September 1990 p3407 & "Slush fund inquiry bid" *Courier-Mail* 5 September 1990 p7

⁷⁴ "Survey points to council corruption" *Business Queensland* 8 October 1990 p1

Thatcher, or about Richard Nixon, though those proved correct."⁷⁵ Soorley responded by promising of a Code of Conduct for City Hall.

Late in 1990 the ALP campaign encountered a couple of problems that threatened to undermine it. First, the Rates Caravan was involved in a car accident and ended up beyond repair at the police yards. As a symbol of the campaign, the fate of the Rates Caravan was disturbing. Then Soorley's management consultancy became insolvent and his reputation as an efficient and effective "hands-on" manager was severely compromised. The effort to turn Atkinson's negative into his positive was seriously undermined. The ALP campaign went into "spin control" and managed to dilute Guy Ker's sensational account with material from the *Sunday Mail's* State political columnist, Pat Gillespie, blaming the recession, distancing Soorley from the company and recording Soorley as promising to save the staff from unemployment.⁷⁶ Nevertheless media interest in the campaign dissipated as the summer distractions arrived.

In its second stage, the ALP campaign continued to advance the enthymeme from contraries which was at the core of its rhetorical strategy by deploying a number of ancillary Aristotelian common topics discussed in Chapter Four: Atkinson's apparent aloofness from the everyday concern of citizens was reinforced with arguments from "similar cases" (the Rochedale Dump) and "mutual interrelation" (the "slush fund" and Mayor of Nice).⁷⁷ Also with Soorley's first major direct mail, the opportunity was taken to begin the process of interweaving his rational arguments (against rates) with arguments from character (his concern for the impact of the Liberal's policy) and with arguments from emotion (by raising the question of who would have to sell their home as a result of this policy).

The ALP campaign also continued to build the structure of its rhetorical exchange with the citizen-audience through both the formal procedures of opinion polling and direct mail with open-ended questions and the more informal methods of "grassroots" campaigning (for example, the Rates Mobilisation and the Rochedale Park opening). Also the Labor campaign sought to respond to citizens' negative perceptions of Atkinson by producing a complex narrative about the Lord Mayor's lack of interest in

⁷⁵ Ker, Guy "Sister City Scandal: Brisbane gets a slap in the face" *The Sunday Mail* 21 October 1990 p18

⁷⁶ Ker, Guy and Gillespie, Pat "Company failure won't stop Jim" *The Sunday Mail* 4 November 1990 p1

⁷⁷ Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1397a

the day-to-day running of the city that pointed to her failures in finalising a waste management plan, her federal ambitions and her international travel. While none of these procedures in themselves represent a systematic means for creating an authentic interchange between the campaign and the citizen-audience, taken together they begin to sketch the breadth of activities and the number of channels required to produce useful exchanges of ideas and opinions between the campaign and the citizen-audience in the complexity of mass society.

The Dump

The second and final set of four qualitative research groups was commissioned by the Labor campaign in early February⁷⁸. Awareness of the campaign was minimal, a third of the participants in the groups did not know the BCC elections were imminent and none reported observing any campaign activity. Only twenty percent of participants could name Soorley as the Labor candidate and he was not seen by the participants as providing any real challenge to Atkinson. Atkinson was still strongly admired by many participants for her strong leadership and good media image. Her promotion of Brisbane, the Commonwealth Games and Expo were identified as her major achievements. This indicates Atkinson's success in creating an overarching persona which so completely subsumed Brisbane's "coming of age" that she was credited with achievements that had nothing to do with her: holding the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane was a Labor initiative and the Games occurred while she was in opposition.

Nevertheless participants' negative perceptions of Atkinson had increased and gained focus: they regarded her as "power hungry" and arrogant, thought she took too many overseas trips and believed she had awarded herself huge salary increases: many participants referred to her as "Salaryanne". On voting intention her support was still strong but some participants had begun to talk about "time for change" and indicated that they were willing to switch from Atkinson to Greens and independents because of the Rochedale Dump issue.

While there was no certainty that Labor would benefit from this vote-switching, it was particularly significant that the Rochedale Dump had emerged as the key issue with the need for recycling as a distant, though connected, second issue and that rates and Council management had diminished in significance. All the work that the Labor campaign had put in on rates and "hands-on" management had barely made an impact,

⁷⁸ Queensland ALP BCC qualitative research February 1991

but the strength of feeling about the Dump was a clear indication of the direction the campaign had to take from that point. The Dump had moved beyond a localised issue. Participants in the qualitative research groups felt that it was a major issue for the future of Brisbane and that perhaps a very expensive mistake was about to be made. Participants expressed concerns about the length of the contract, the huge and unjustified expense, the size of the project, the environmental dangers, the lack of exploration of other technologies, unconvincing argument for the Dump from Atkinson and the possibility of "underhand" dealings. One participant welded together the environmental and corruption potential of the Dump with the line: "It smells a bit. There were rumours about Pacific Waste Management years ago." Most significantly, the concerns about the Dump had spread beyond Rochedale residents, and participants suggested that it was a matter of city-wide interest. Recycling was seen by participants as an important and related issue, particularly among the women with responsibility for domestic chores including garbage disposal. As previous quantitative research showed that Labor was doing significantly worse among women compared to men⁷⁹, the possibility arose that recycling was perhaps a means to bridge the gap. The Liberal approach was seen by participants as piecemeal and patchy: too little, too late and poor in comparison to other cities. Labor was not seen as having an alternative policy.⁸⁰

"The Dump" gave Labor the opportunity to run together citizens' major preoccupations - the environment and recycling - with other campaign themes such as achieving value for the rates dollar and the "hands-off" approach of the Atkinson administration. By promoting media interest, doing city-wide direct mail and airing low-cost TV advertisements on low rotation, Labor sought to turn an ill-defined unease about the Rochedale facility into an issue over which citizens could register a protest vote. In February, the Council finally made the decision to go ahead with the Pacific Waste Management's proposal for Rochedale. The opposition of residents adjacent to the project was so strong that the Liberal Alderman for Rochedale crossed the floor to vote with Labor against the proposal. While his crossing of the floor minimised his involvement in the issue, it suggested to the rest of Brisbane that the Dump was indeed a major issue. Then a submission from the ALP campaign to the Criminal Justice Commission highlighted the land deal for the site in which Atkinson's administration paid about \$10 million more for the site than it was worth. The Labor campaign refined its Dump rhetoric: from now on the Dump was to be called the "Superdump". It launched the slogan "A vote for the Liberals is a vote for the Superdump" and all direct mail now centred around the Rochedale issue, developing it into a matter of city-wide

⁷⁹ Queensland ALP quantitative research report Fairfield Ward October 1990

⁸⁰ Queensland ALP BCC qualitative research February 1991

concern about associated environmental dangers, lack of recycling, traffic chaos and rates increases the Superdump might produce. Then the campaign organisers received a phone call from Ron Aggs, a long-time critic of waste management practices. He suggested that the campaign should do a computer search of US newspapers to see what turned up about PWM's parent company, Waste Management Inc (WMI). A cursory search produced a mass of information which detailed almost \$50 million in fines against WMI and its affiliates for environmental and corporate breaches. The campaign launched a major offensive with the material.

The Council and PWM responded with a number of print-intensive full-page and double-page newspaper advertisements that stressed the safety of the facility with headings such as "Why it's safe" and "A pledge to Brisbane". This strategy however lacked credibility: the advertisements were in such technical language and presented in such dense columns of small type that they were not easy to read and invited suspicion of a deeper agenda. The Labor campaign attacked PWM's attempts to protect Atkinson and when plans surfaced for a television documentary on the Dump co-produced by PWM and the Council, there was the opportunity to attack again. Clumsy handling by both Atkinson and PWM had turned the issue into a "hot potato"⁸¹. The Labor campaign released a detailed alternative to the Superdump, emphasising the need for recycling and creative management of waste disposal with new technologies. The BCC Labor Caucus pushed the issue further by insisting on special Council meeting to vote on rescinding the Dump decision because of new environmental evidence. While their motion failed, the Liberal Alderman for Rochedale once again crossed the floor and the Liberals were unresolved on the issue.⁸²

By late February, the Dump was clearly the central election issue but there was a concern in the ALP campaign that the issue might lose significance in the month before the election. To maximise debate about the issue the campaign decided to go beyond pamphlets and direct mail and use television advertising. The advertisements were cheap and effective, designed not as propaganda to lock up votes but as an invitation to the citizen-audience to engage in a rhetorical exchange. Four variants of an extremely simple 15-second advertisement were produced on computer (and so did not require expensive studio time). Each variant stated an established fact about the Dump and then posed a related question before stating "The Liberals won't face facts. The Superdump is an expensive mistake. The Liberals won't listen." Finally a photo of Soorley came on screen with the voice over: "Jim Soorley and Labor: the positive alternative." The ALP

⁸¹ "Dump cited as 'hot potato' *Southern Star* 20 February 1991 p14

⁸² Salmon, Kate "Dump rescind bid fails" *Southern Star* 20 February 1991 p1

campaign could not afford many placements of the advertisements, so they were scheduled to appear predominantly in cheaper off-peak, day-time periods. The campaign also formally launched the advertisements at a press conference so they gained extra screenings in the evening news.

The handling of the Rochedale Dump issue has a number of theoretical ramifications for this thesis. In the first instance, the way some participants in the research groups were beginning to reassess their support for Atkinson because of this issue indicates the potential for a "logical" policy issue to reflect back on the established "character" of an opponent in ways that disrupt his or her carefully constructed grand enthymeme. Thus the ease with which a rhetorical situation may be "re-invented" leads to a second theoretical insight that might be derived from the handling of the Dump issue: although Atkinson occupied the dominant position in the media's construction of the election, the "unfinished" and expedient nature of politics (following Aristotle) suggests the opportunity for alternative political forces to respond to the alternative constructions of the news produced by the citizen-audience (following Hartley) to undermine any "official" media position. Thirdly, the central role of the exchange in developing an effective rhetorical strategy is again evident: while the Council and PWM's print advertisements sought to close discussion about the issue with appeals to expertise and authority as signified by the technical detail in fine print, the ALP's TV advertising was designed to open up the debate with a variety of questions that would assist demotic discussion so that the real work in promoting the issue was not done by the ads *per se* but by the deliberation they provoked.

Final Stage Strategies

Atkinson formally launched the Liberal campaign in early March. Her policy speech did not engage with the issues at any great length and ignored the Rochedale Dump while emphasising her leadership credentials and the part she had played in Brisbane's "coming of age".⁸³ A large part of the speech concentrated on the strategic *Brisbane Plan*, commissioned in Atkinson's first term and now delivered.⁸⁴ The plan however detailed the means to integrate Brisbane into the developing global economy and did little to address the mundane issues with which citizens were preoccupied. Further, the

⁸³ Atkinson, Sallyanne Speech Notes Liberal BCC Lord Mayoral Campaign Policy Speech 3 March 1991

⁸⁴ Brisbane City Council *The Brisbane Plan: A City Strategy* BCC Brisbane 1991. For a detailed account the Plan's development see Stimson "A place in the sun?" p51

speech gave no commitment that Atkinson would stay as Lord Mayor for her full term which allowed the ALP campaign to highlight her Federal options. Even a laudatory piece in the *Bulletin* was titled "Tomorrow: the world", a headline which suggested her lack of interest in the everyday problems of Brisbane.⁸⁵ The Liberals produced only one TV advertisement and it appears similarly to have misread the mood in the electorate: "Keep Brisbane Shining". This clashed with people's concerns about where their rubbish was going. It was a collage of well-crafted shots of Atkinson that depicted her as a "star" but did little to suggest she took any interest in the issues of the election.

To position Soorley firmly against Atkinson's aloofness the ALP campaign had to draw out his priestly humility and grassroots connections. One simple way it did this was by utilising a flat bed truck adorned with a sign saying: "Jim Soorley and Labor: Working full-time for you". Soorley drove the truck to functions and left it parked at busy intersections. But the main way Soorley emphasised his difference from the Lord Mayor was his promise to take a salary cut if he won the election. While the Dump was an on-going problem for Atkinson, there was no expectation that dissatisfaction with her handling of the issue would be translated into significant support for Soorley. The campaign needed a clear "point of difference" that showed the electors they did have a choice and for maximum effect it ideally would be announced in Soorley's policy speech at the campaign launch.

Wayne Swan came up with the idea that if Labor won, the Lord Mayor's salary would be cut. It was not original. Candidates had promised the same thing to advantageous effect during election campaigns in the United States but it was Swan who kept a close eye on developments in the United States and realised that the salary-cut promise would firmly position Atkinson as the "high-flier" and Soorley as the humble candidate who put the rate-payers first. The ALP policy launch was held in a hotel on the Brisbane River; the speech used the location as an affirmation of Brisbane. Soorley's speech emphasised the river, the vision of the city's founder, John Oxley, and the hard work of civic leaders like Clem Jones as well as the many ordinary people who helped create "this beautiful city".⁸⁶ There was also plenty of policy detail in the speech: during the course of the campaign Soorley had launched twenty three policies summarising his commitments on the key themes: fair rates, accountable management, the Dump, recycling and the environment. He also gave a commitment to serve the full 3-year term, full-time, and challenged the Lord Mayor to make a similar commitment.

⁸⁵ Jarratt, Phil "Tomorrow: the world" *The Bulletin* 19 March 1991 p84

⁸⁶ Soorley, Jim Working full time for Brisbane ALP BCC Lord Mayoral Campaign Policy Speech 10 March 1991

He then outlined his three point accountability plan: cut the Lord mayor's salary package by \$60,000, restrict overseas travel by the Mayor, Aldermen and Council staff and establish a Pecuniary Interests Register. He also promised to dismantle the Lord Mayor's personal public relations team and to introduce a number of reforms to make Council meetings democratic, such as a right for citizens to address the Council.

After the campaign launches, ALP research made it clear that Atkinson was in a secure position with 53% of the voters favouring her, almost twice the support that Soorley had at 28%.⁸⁷ The high level of undecided and minor party voters (19%) should have had little effect on the election's outcome because Atkinson was so far ahead. But the Labor campaign looked carefully at the polling in the wards. It showed that while the Liberals led 39% to 33%, almost 30% of the electorate had not decided which of the major parties they favoured.⁸⁸ The Labor campaign concluded that there were still a lot of voters undecided about where their preferences would eventually go and attempted to continue to engage them in rhetorical exchange with a second round of advertisements that accentuated the points of difference between the Liberal and Labor campaigns while posing questions and making invitations to further consider the issues: "Which of these two people get paid the most, the person who runs the country or the person who runs Brisbane?"; "Makes you wonder why our rates have spiralled"; "Compare my rates and recycling policies to those of my opponents". All the advertisements ended "Jim Soorley and Labor: the positive alternative" because by positioning its campaign as an "alternative", Labor sought to keep the citizen-audience's decision open and the process of rhetorical exchange going.

In the last fortnight of the campaign, instead of focusing on their own positive campaign, the Liberals spent a lot of time and energy complaining about Labor's campaign which drew attention to Labor's message in a way that gave it a currency it might not otherwise have had. The Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) is a lobby group established by commercial TV stations and one of its functions is to provide self-regulation of advertising standards by approving all TV advertising before it is screened. Traditionally FACTS had given political and other "advocacy" advertising a wide latitude because it did not seek the role of censor and supported the principle of free speech. Labor's BCC election advertisements were approved through normal channels and had been running for several days when the Liberals complained on 19 March. They argued that the Lord Mayor did not earn more

⁸⁷ Queensland ALP BCC quantitative research March 1991

⁸⁸ for further analysis of this research see Oakes, Laurie "Aunt Sally, a winning side-show" *The Bulletin* 9 April 1991 p30

than the Prime Minister. The Labor campaign responded with an attack on the Liberals for attempting to gag debate and FACTS decided that the Liberals' complaints were without substance.

On 20 March the Liberals rewrote their complaint and FACTS general manager Tony Brannigan withdrew approval for Labor's advertisements at a time and in a manner that allowed Atkinson to embarrass Soorley in a TV debate. The next day the *Courier Mail* put the decision on the front page with a table based on Liberal Party figures comparing Atkinson's and Hawke's salaries.⁸⁹ The Labor campaign appealed the FACTS decision and accused the Liberals of banning the advertisements for telling the truth. After considering Labor's submission the following day, Brannigan lifted the ban, once "cosmetic" changes were made and the advertisements were back on air that night.

The attempt to stop Labor's TV advertisements by appealing to FACTS not only gave Labor's advertisements free air-time on the high-rating evening news but also suggested that the Liberals were sensitive to criticism and had something to hide.⁹⁰ The Liberals tactics merely highlighted the size of Atkinson's salary and so kept the issue before the electorate. Meanwhile, during the final week, Labor delivered another round of direct mail into targeted wards while Soorley had a busy schedule of grassroots meetings and driving the truck through peak-hour traffic.

During the final stage of the campaign, while Labor stuck to its positive agenda which highlighted its opponent's weaknesses, the Liberals responded by arguing about the details of Labor's campaign and failed to promote their own positive attributes: Atkinson's strong leadership, her part in ensuring that Brisbane "came of age", her environmental record and her sound management practices. By refusing to shift from the positions it found most advantageous, Labor effectively dictated the terrain in which the debate occurred during the final week of the campaign when the large contingent of undecided voters were making up their minds. Further through its television advertising, its direct mail and Soorley's grassroots activities, the Labor campaign sought to keep open the rhetorical exchange between itself and the citizen-audience at both formal and interpersonal levels.

⁸⁹ Doughty, Jane "Atkinson wins" *Courier Mail* 21 March 1991 p1

⁹⁰ Doughty, Jane "Banned ads reappear - with minor alterations" *Courier Mail* 22 March 1991 p2

Analysis and Conclusions

While the media and academic commentators assumed that Atkinson would be returned comfortably⁹¹, as table 5.1 shows, Soorley achieved a swing of 16.1% to finish with 51.6% of the two-party preferred vote. He finished slightly behind Atkinson on primary figures but preferences from the Greens went 65% to Labor and only 35% to the Liberals and this was enough to give victory to Soorley. The Labor campaign organisers had hoped for an effective performance in the wards and, as table 5.2 shows, it held all the wards that had sitting Labor Aldermen and won another five wards with swings of up to 18.4%. The wards worst effected by the Rochedale "Superdump", Rochedale and Runcorn, saw swings of 18.8% and 15.0% respectively although they stayed in Liberal hands.

In looking for the reasons for Labor's success, two key issues emerge which have particular relevance for this thesis: 1) Labor adapted key Aristotelian rhetorical techniques to produce an insurgent strategy by creating a meta-narrative which utilised all available communication technologies and 2) it constructed a rhetorical exchange between itself and the citizen-audience by keeping open the processes of political deliberation at both an actual and a symbolic level.

In the first instance, it is possible to reformulate the ALP's insurgent campaign in Aristotelian terms: confronted with an opponent who had constructed a well integrated enthymeme around the notion of Brisbane's "coming of age" and across the fields of character, emotion and logic, the ALP campaign constructed an counter-enthymeme of relative expediency based on the common topic "from the contraries"⁹². The ALP campaign took the negative perceptions that its opponent's enthymeme had produced and which were revealed by quantitative and qualitative market research and then "invented" positive policies which highlighted the opponent's negative attributes. Simultaneously, the ALP campaign was engaged in the construction of a positive enthymeme around its Lord Mayoral aspirant. In personal appearances, direct mail, free media and advertising, Soorley sought to weave his rational arguments (about policy) with arguments from character (his concern and pay-cut) and arguments from emotion (produced by the personal involvement promised by the "hands-on" theme).

⁹¹ Neylan, Mark "The battle for Brisbane" *Directions in Government* March 1991 p12-14; also his remarks in Doughty, Jane "ALP faces tough task in council poll, says expert" *Courier Mail* 21 March 1991 p24; and also Doug Tucker's remarks in Doughty, Jane "Atkinson plea: don't return hostile council" *Courier Mail* 23 March 1991 p2

⁹² Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1397a

One point to consider in reflection on this election, is what effect would have been produced by a better organised defensive campaign from the Liberals. The outcome of the election should not be allowed to cloud Atkinson's strength before it. If at any stage, the Liberals had concentrated on the promotion of her positive attributes and refused to engage with Labor on the Dump or the salary-cut, then the final result may have been much different. The entire Dump issue could have been avoided if the Liberals had made the decision earlier and established it as *fait accompli*. They could then have continually and consistently asked the questions: "What would you do that was any different?" and "Where else would you put it?" Also, the Liberals had the resources to air as many advertisements as it took to position the debate in their own terrain and highlight Atkinson's positives. Instead, by responding to Labor, the Liberals made Atkinson's salary and arrogance the issues of the last week. Labor merely stood its ground and in doing so, it might be said, allowed the Liberals to defeat themselves.

Thus connections between the strategies employed by the ALP campaign and the "insurgent" guerilla strategies discussed at the beginning of this chapter become clear. Like the successful guerilla campaign, the insurgent election campaign may turn the terrain and the opportunities provided by the government to its own benefit. While carefully marshalling its forces and keeping them mobile, the insurgent campaign seeks to turn the government's campaign back on itself at the same time as attacking the government's weak points when and where most damage can be done. Although these strategies are not explicit in the work of Aristotle, they are implicit in his notions of expediency and invention and most particularly in some of the "common topics" he discusses. The crucial point for this thesis is that the integration of Aristotelian rhetorical techniques with insurgent "guerilla" strategies provides opportunities for marginalised and critical voices to utilise campaign techniques to participate in deliberation about the composition and policy orientations of representative governments.

To pursue these insurgent strategies and, as will be suggested in the next chapter, to pursue effective "incumbent" electoral strategies as well, the election campaign needs to produce a "meta-narrative". The role of strategy in utilising the mass media for deliberative purposes should not be underestimated: the complexity of communicating a variety of messages to a variety of audience segments and gauging the variety of responses from disparate members of the citizen-audience requires more than an intuitive response from the campaign. It requires a systematic and on-going strategy to keep the opportunities for rhetorical exchange open. The mass nature of modern society

suggests the need for systematic complexity at a number of stages of the election campaign. The citizen-audience is not a singularity but a multitude of individuals with a diversity of formative experiences, life-styles and political positions. Further, at least some of their political positions change and adapt during the course of the electoral campaign. To be effective, that is, to engage the citizen-audience, a particular campaign needs to construct a meta-narrative by interweaving over time a large number of messages and arguments with relatively high degrees of both mutual consistency and flexibility and then delivering the relevant sections of that meta-narrative by appropriate media to appropriate portions of the citizen-audience.

Thus a basic distinction between Aristotelian rhetoric and contemporary variants arises. While Aristotle was essentially concerned with the analysis and production of the single speech for delivery at the one appropriate occasion in time, contemporary rhetorical technique is concerned with the analysis and production of complex webs of messages over an extended period not only through speeches but also through direct mail, advertising and editorial copy as well as any other appropriate means. Nevertheless, Aristotelian rhetorical technique remains available for adaptation to the meta-narrative strategies required for contemporary election campaigning. Reflection on the nature of this meta-narrative leads to consideration of contemporary forms of rhetorical exchange.

While much of the analysis above is instrumentally focused on winning elections rather than promoting a deeper level of demotic deliberation *per se*, it opens discussion about the relationship between the campaign and the citizen-audience and explores the means by which each might engage in the processes of political deliberation, at not only a symbolic level but also in actual practice. While activities typically occurring in the rapidly changing and expedient environment of contemporary electoral processes would rarely be equivalent to the considered reflection on dialectical arguments that is suggested by some definitions of "deliberation", the meta-narrative of the insurgent election campaign nevertheless does offer opportunities for discussion and debate that may be inclusive of a large portion of the citizen-audience, and these are discussed below with reference to the criteria of effective democratic deliberation outlined in Chapter Three.

While election campaigns in representative democracy are typically played out in accord with the expectations of the mainstream media, the above analysis of the ALP campaign in the 1991 BCC elections show that the potential remains for "outsiders" to access the spaces for debate formally provided by the election in order to confound those expectations. This potential has application beyond the model of two-party

confrontation usually utilised by the mainstream media to describe elections. Any citizen with the required deposit can nominate for a seat and anybody with the requisite skills can seek to construct a media campaign. Where "outsiders" respond to and develop the alternative constructions of the news produced by the citizen-audience themselves, there is the potential for them to undermine any "official" media position. There is also the potential for them to utilise personal contact, street stalls, street advertising, community meetings, local newspapers, direct mail and other "grassroots" communications to pursue an exchange with the citizen-audience outside formal media channels. The very "grassroots" nature of these activities creates an accessibility which contrasts with the "closed" nature of party campaigns in the mainstream media. Further, activities such as the distribution and analysis of surveys and door-knocking allow citizens the access to participate directly in the exchange of ideas with candidates and campaigns. Such activities increase the potential for deliberative interchange between citizens and candidates' campaigns which not only produces the occasional surprise result but also generally improves the quantity and quality of access within the democratic process. This increased access opens the possibility for a more critical and demotic politics.

In contrast, with reference to transparency, the ALP's campaign, constructed as it was within the boundaries of an entrenched political party, did little to increase citizen autonomy by improving the availability of either the formal rules or informal conventions. By its focus on Atkinson's perceived aloofness, it did promote policies that, when implemented, opened the Council to greater critical scrutiny and provided for some degree of citizen involvement in Council meetings. Further the campaign's interest in the way the decision to proceed with the Dump was made did highlight some ways in which corporations pursue their interests in their dealings with the Council. But generally, the campaign itself did little to produce deeper understanding of the electoral process.

However, with regard to feedback, the ALP campaign and the result it produced did accentuate the importance for democratic institutions to monitor constantly feedback from the citizen audience. The failure of Atkinson's administration to gauge whether the outcomes it delivered were in tune with the needs of citizens provided the ALP campaign with the opportunity to produce the result it did. By contrast, the ALP campaign, and the subsequent Soorley administration, utilised a range of devices from opinion polling to community meetings and personal interaction in order to elicit feedback from the citizenry and they accorded that feedback a high degree of significance in decision-making processes.

Finally the ALP campaign subjected itself to a high degree of coordination. Decisions within the campaign were made in an orderly fashion and then implemented with a relatively high level of harmony. Perhaps the low expectations of success in the Lord Mayoral campaign meant that not much personal prestige was invested in the campaign and this precluded the personality clashes that are often a feature of such campaigns. Further, the campaign as a whole provides an excellent example of the ability of elections to replace incumbents whom the citizen-audience regards as unsatisfactory. That this process is achieved peacefully underscores the role elections play in coordinating cohesion within representative democracy.

To summarise the contribution of the ALP's 1991 BCC campaign to the development of greater deliberation and a more ethical politics within the institutions of representative democracy, it may be concluded that analysis of the campaign reveals some means to improve access and feedback by explicating methods of creating a strong rhetorical interchange between the campaign and the citizen-audience. While this particular campaign was caught in the predominantly binary opposition of Liberal and Labor parties, the above analysis provides insight into how recent political party election campaigning works as a meta-narrative and an institutional structure which may be subverted by marginal and critical political forces to pursue deliberative processes more generally through the mass media.

Chapter 6

THE INCUMBENT CAMPAIGN

1993 Australian Federal Election

We have... put together a pretty canny little story... We have been able to spin a giant tale, an interesting tale

Paul Keating¹

Outline

Prime Minister Paul Keating and his Australian Labor Party were expected to lose the 1993 Australian federal election. Opposition Leader John Hewson had brought the previously disunited Liberals together behind his *Fightback!* manifesto. The opinion polls and commentators all suggested an easy Liberal victory at the start of the election campaign. This chapter reviews the rhetorical strategies Keating and the Labor campaign employed to turn that situation around and produce an "upset" victory. While Keating and Labor used their incumbency to maximum political effect, they intertwined their incumbent advantages with a sophisticated use of rhetorical techniques to create a fruitful exchange with the citizen-audience by constructing a complex meta-narrative and delivering appropriate arguments at appropriate times through appropriate media. Labor's successful incumbent campaign is worthy of study in the context of this thesis because 1) it allows for a greater understanding of election campaign processes by revealing much about the adaptation of Aristotelian techniques to the processes of rhetorical exchange and democratic deliberation available in currently existing representative democracy and 2) it suggests the means to reconstruct rhetoric with a renewed ethical content which both increases the general level of transparency about the operations of representative democracy and empowers marginal and critical insurgent political forces to participate.

Incumbency

There are two sorts of incumbent campaign. The first is typically a second term campaign where the Opposition is weak, the incumbent's administration is seen to be relatively blameless and the conclusion is forgone. In these circumstances, the

¹ Keating, Paul "Authentic Keating" *Independent Monthly* April 1993
p13

incumbent campaign typically requires little diversion of resources while relying on the leader's strong image to prevail. Ronald Reagan's 1984 *Leadership That's Working* campaign for the United States presidency and Wayne Goss's 1992 Queensland state election campaign are useful examples of successful second term campaigns. As was seen in the preceding chapter, a strong incumbency is no guarantee against an upset victory by insurgent opponents. Campaigns for third and successive terms are typically premised on the possibility of defeat, which is the second form of incumbent campaign. Malcolm Fraser's 1980 federal election campaign, Joh Bjelke-Petersen's 1983 Queensland state election campaign and John Major's 1993 British election campaign are all examples of successful incumbent campaigns where long-term governments prevailed despite strong opposition and internal division. The one advantage that the defensive incumbent campaign has is its influence over the terrain. The fate of Sallyanne Atkinson shows the danger in ceding this advantage. It could be used to effect as Fraser did when he redescribed the ALP's "fair" tax reforms as a tax on the family home or as Joh Bjelke-Petersen or John Major did when they reinterpreted Labo(u)r's promises of change as threats of higher taxes. But there are few better examples of a defensive incumbent campaign than the Australian Labor Party's effort in the 1993 Australian federal election when Keating and Labor won against the expectations of commentators and pollsters.

Just as the insurgent campaign can usefully deploy guerilla techniques, it is interesting to consider some connections between the tactics of defensive siege warfare and those required by the successful incumbent campaign. The incumbent campaign must blunt the Opposition's attack by parrying it with all available resources while simultaneously looking for every opportunity to outflank it or turn it back on itself.² To these ends, the 1993 Federal Labor campaign made full use of all the advantages of incumbency: preparing the terrain so they could "outflank" their opponents, positioning themselves to ensure the Liberal's best efforts were self-defeating, carefully "husbanding" resources to achieve maximum effect. Labor constructed strong defences by forming coalitions with key sectional groups (unions, women, ethnic and art communities). They turned the Liberals' *Fightback!* policy back on Hewson by making the policy's main initiative, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) the main issue of the campaign. Then in the final weeks, Labor raised concerns on other aspects of Liberal policy: Hewson's industrial relations agenda, his plans to dismantle Medicare and the damage that could be done by his "economic rationalist" approach.

² For details on tactics for defensive siege warfare see Pepper, S and Adams, N *Firearms and Fortifications* University of Chicago Press Chicago 1986; also Montgomery *A History of Warfare* Collins London 1968 p213-293

As was the case in the last chapter, there is no suggestion that this election campaign is an archetype for effective deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, by subjecting the operations of a successful incumbent election campaign to analysis, a better appreciation of the operations of currently existing representative institutions is produced. This in turn provides the opportunity to develop theoretical and ethical reflections about the part the election campaign may play in opening opportunities for deliberative intervention within the processes of representative democracy. This chapter will proceed by detailing the course of the campaign in chronologically ordered sections, with a brief reflection on some theoretical ramifications that might be drawn from the preceding material at the end of each section. Those theoretical ramifications are then summarised and developed in the final section of this chapter with particular reference to the criteria for effective democratic deliberation detailed in Chapter Three.

Background

1991 saw celebrations of the centenary of the formation of the political units that became the Australian Labor Party. Those units had been established with an avowed commitment to working class interests because of growing distrust of liberal-radical politicians.³ The party prospered in the atmosphere of growing class conflict and industrial antagonism brought on by the recession of the 1890s. It gradually became more disciplined in pursuit of a parliamentary program of moderate reform⁴ including the introduction of the "white Australia" policy, protectionist tariffs and a bureaucratised industrial relations process⁵, policies which may now seem inhumane or economically self-defeating, but which at the time improved the wages and conditions of Australian workers.

³ Jupp, James *Australian Party Politics* Melbourne University Press Melbourne 1964 p56

⁴ see Dalton JB "An interpretative survey: the Queensland labour movement" in Murphy, D, Joyce, R and Hughes, Colin *Prelude to Power* Jacaranda Brisbane 1970 p5

⁵ for Labor's definition of itself in relation to free trade see Jupp *Australian Party Politics* p56-60; for the development of its position on immigration see Gollan, R *Radical and Working Class Politics* Melbourne University Press Melbourne 1966 p163ff; and for its role in the development of industrial relations see Rickard, John *Class and Politics* ANU Press Canberra 1976

While the concept of class is presently under challenge as an empty category⁶, its power in the political psychology of the Australian electorate should not be underestimated. The remnants of the notion of class provide a set of referents to social conditions which gave Keating and Labor the opportunity to differentiate their policies from the somewhat more liberal-radical prescriptions of *Fightback!* Despite Keating's commitments to tariff reduction and deregulation of the labour market over the preceding ten years of Government, he managed to make both issues major points of difference between the Labor and Liberal parties by subtly shifting Labor's policy to the benefit of the working class.

To appreciate the context of the 1993 Federal election, a brief account of the preceding ten years of Labor government is necessary. Hawke's 1983 victory⁷ ushered in a decade of safe, consensus politics which nevertheless saw "the redefinition of the ideas and institutions by which Australia is governed"⁸ overseen predominantly by Keating as Treasurer. At first Hawke's and Keating's interests and personality traits complemented each other. However, after Labor's poor showing in the 1984 double dissolution their relationship became brittle and Keating became certain that he would make a better leader.⁹ Keating's resentment was given a clear focus when his favoured option for tax reform was undermined by Hawke in 1985,¹⁰ and it emerged publicly in 1986 when he warned that the government (that is Hawke's government) had to rein in the economy before Australia became "a banana republic".¹¹ Keating's success in promoting economic rationalism as the government's ruling ideology saw him begin to describe himself as "the real prime minister" from this time.¹² With his mix of Italian elegance (his Zegna suits) and a profoundly Australian language (gutter invective woven seamlessly with economic jargon), Keating created himself as the working class boy from Bankstown who could talk to the corporations: what Meaghan Morris describes as "a basic synthesis of 'street-smart' and 'high-flier' modes is what defines, by resolving old class-cultural oppositions, the Keating semantic field."¹³

⁶ see for example Hindess *Political Choice and Social Structure*

⁷ for detailed accounts of this period see Kelly, Paul *The Hawke Ascendancy* Angus&Robertson Sydney 1984 and Penniman, HR (ed) *Australia at the Polls: the national elections of 1980 and 1983* Allen&Unwin Sydney 1983

⁸ Kelly, Paul *The End of Certainty* Allen&Unwin St Leonards 1992 pix

⁹ *ibid* p135-152 also *Losing the Unlosable* (video recording) ABC-TV 5 April 1993

¹⁰ Kelly *The End of Certainty* p155-177

¹¹ *ibid* p196-227

¹² *ibid* p223

¹³ Morris, Meaghan *Ecstasy and Economics* EmPress Sydney 1992 p19

Though Hawke's electoral and party support prevented Keating from making a challenge before the 1987 election, afterwards he began a "subtle... subterranean... performance orientated" campaign that saw him exert such intellectual dominance over the government's agenda that, Paul Kelly argues, he effectively asserted his right to be the next Prime Minister.¹⁴ While Keating did not have sufficient support in caucus to pursue his goal immediately, the threat of "the Paris option" (retiring) elicited the secret Kirribilli agreement out of Hawke: the Prime Minister promised to retire in Keating's favour mid-way through the next term.¹⁵ During the 1990 federal election the electorate was disillusioned and Hawke was hampered by high interest rates and a nation-wide pilots' strike but Environment Minister Graham Richardson engineered a strategy to attract second preferences from Green, Democrat and independent voters after they had given vent to their disillusion with the mainstream parties. Labor's primary vote fell but Hawke's government was re-elected with a reduced majority.¹⁶

By late 1990 Hawke had made it clear to Keating that he did not want to leave the Prime Ministership for at least another year. Keating felt that would not give him enough time to win the following election so the stage was set for a leadership battle: "between an egomaniac (Hawke) and a megalomaniac (Keating)."¹⁷ While Hawke saw himself as the embodiment of the Australian people in "his low-brow, sports-mad, nationalistic, ex-boozing, track-suit-and-gold-watch way"¹⁸, Keating saw himself as a visionary leader, with the intellectual scope to bring the nation to greatness despite itself,¹⁹ a point he made by comparing himself to the opera star Placido Domingo in the speech which began the formal battle for the leadership.

The leadership battle went on all through 1991 and gave John Hewson the opportunity to develop policies that met with a high degree of public support. Keating chipped away at Hawke's credibility, losing the first challenge, in May 1991, 44-66 and then moving to the back bench where his mere presence highlighted the government's malaise. Despite a poor budget and the government's continuing slide in the polls, the matter was not resolved until just before Christmas. Hawke's failure to confront the Liberals' *Fightback!* package had ceded policy authority to them. His failure to confront double digit unemployment highlighted the party's loss of purpose. By mid-December a

¹⁴ Kelly *The End of Certainty* p434-435

¹⁵ *ibid* p454

¹⁶ Bean, Clive et al *The Greening of Australian Politics* Longman Cheshire Melbourne 1990; also Kelly *The End of Certainty* p524-594

¹⁷ *ibid* p450

¹⁸ Mills, Stephen *The Hawke Years* Viking Ringwood 1993 p4

¹⁹ Kelly *The End of Certainty* p621

majority of caucus was convinced that their only hope for resurgence was to replace Hawke. Keating won the second challenge 56-51.²⁰ He had fifteen months before an election was due.

Analysing the political situation in terms of Aristotelian rhetoric at the point when Keating won the Prime Ministership, both Hewson and Keating had produced similarly incomplete enthymemes. They had both established themselves as strong characters with avowedly "rationalist" policies but neither had developed a particularly strong emotional connection with the citizen-audience. From the moment of his victory over Hawke, however, Keating was recreating his image. His performance at the press conference immediately after his elevation was the antithesis of the brash politician who had uttered the comment: "this is the recession we had to have". He was reserved, staid and "more than a little nervous at the great responsibility"²¹. He sought to redefine his image by making four promises: to "give everything I have got to the job and the country", to "deal honestly with people, to tell them the truth", to "fight the battle against unemployment and for economic recovery" and to "restore unity and harmony to the government".²² These promises sought both to establish an emotional connection with the citizenry and to open the ground of the rhetorical exchange he sought to have with them.

Groundwork

The task confronting Keating was enormous. Unemployment was at 10.5%, Newspoll had Labor trailing the Opposition 36-51 and the Liberals were united behind a policy that had caught the public imagination. Nevertheless from shortly after the time *Fightback!* was launched, Labor's polling made it aware that one of its key elements, the GST on consumption expenditure, was negatively perceived by the electorate.²³ Over the summer, Keating continued his low-key performance while he developed his own response to *Fightback!* He launched the *One Nation* statement in late February, emphasising its employment creation aspects. *One Nation* had dual roles: at one level it was a response to *Fightback!* designed to limit the impact of the Liberal plan by showing that Keating had his own scheme to get the economy moving; at another level,

²⁰ *ibid* p615-659

²¹ Peake, Ross "For Keating and Labor 1992 was a leap year in more ways than one" *Canberra Times* 19 December 1992 pC1

²² Grattan, Michelle "Keating's year at the top" *The Age* 18 December 1992 p9

²³ conversation with Wayne Swan, ALP National Executive Member, December 1991

it was a return to Keynesian/New Deal economic policies designed to win back traditional Labor supporters to a government that was not afraid to accept its social responsibilities and pursue a vision. As Graham Richardson says, "this statement was all about Labor being Labor."²⁴ Similarly, Keating pursued traditional Labor concerns and expanded his emotional appeal to the broader community by fostering the debate on Australian identity: "defining, refining and urging a greater sense of Australian nationalism"²⁵.

Hugh Mackay's report on qualitative research conducted in April 1992 shows that while the electorate was unimpressed with both leaders, Keating had successfully "done a Lazarus" to reposition himself as a contender and Hewson had failed to use the success of *Fightback!* to position himself at all.²⁶ Mackay's major finding was that the groups were "astonished by their own turnaround in feelings about Paul Keating."²⁷ The resentment they had felt towards him during his challenges to Hawke were gradually giving away to an appreciation of his strength and seriousness of purpose. He was seen to have refreshed and invigorated the Labor Party, giving it a new sense of direction. Keating even avoided some of the responsibility for the recession which he had said "we had to have". Now the participants in the groups thought the causes were international and Keating was seen as concentrating on bringing the country out of it. Keating's negative attributes were "his nasty streak", particularly his "foul mouth" and the suspicion that his egotistical desire for power was stronger than his concern for the average Australian; "Keating doesn't really espouse the common man", as one participant put it.²⁸

In contrast, Hewson was seen as "the invisible man... a rather, grey, shadowy presence... People are puzzled about his background; unsure of his policies; uncomfortable with his style; perplexed by his... failure to... communicate with the electorate."²⁹ Many in the groups were not even sure of his name, they did not know where he had come from, what his qualifications were or where his vision would lead the country. The groups summed up their attitudes to Hewson with phrases like: "just treading water... doesn't radiate anything... plodding along... a wimp... no personality... bland... non-entity... off the boil."³⁰ Mackay had found that the participants in his

²⁴ Richardson, Graham, *Whatever It Takes* Bantam Sydney 1994 p348

²⁵ Grattan, Michelle "Keating's year at the top" p9

²⁶ Mackay, Hugh "The Keating/Hewson Factor" Mackay Research Lindfield April 1992

²⁷ *ibid* p4

²⁸ *ibid* p9

²⁹ *ibid* p10

³⁰ *ibid* p11-12

research were "unstable, unfocussed and uncommitted... subject to short-term influences ...liable to shift back and forth several times between now and the next Federal election."³¹

Keating and Labor were pursuing an active policy of "building coalitions" with various sub-sets of the electorate. This process drew attention to Hewson's negative attributes of wealth, elitism and uncaring economic rationalism by pushing Labor's own "politics of inclusion" which combined Hawke's themes of consensus and bringing people together with what Michelle Grattan describes as "a strong sense of class politics".³² Keating's office specialised in making contacts with an interest group just as the Liberals alienated it. The members of Labor's social coalition make an interesting list of disparate and often conflicting groups: women, immigrants, youth, unionists, welfare beneficiaries, business, environmentalists, aborigines, artists and churches. The members were never in coalition with each other, only with the government and in various ways the Hawke and Keating governments had implemented policies to the benefit of all these interest groups. James Jupp and Marian Sawyer document the Offices, Agencies, Councils, Commissions and Royal Commissions which Labor had established since 1983 in response to sectional lobbying and note that incumbent governments have a natural advantage over Oppositions because democracy allows the use of public funds and public servants to address problems raised by the public. "This advantage has obviously irked the coalition parties and led them to threaten the abolition or severe curtailment of many agencies and programs if they were returned."³³ These threats only served to alienate further members of those groups. Labor's Campaign Director Bob Hogg highlighted Hewson's problem with community groups in September: "In the last two weeks... he's attacked in speeches people who I don't think have molested him at all, teachers, nurses, welfare workers, unemployed and people who rent property."³⁴

In many cases Labor was just ensuring it had support in its traditional constituency: welfare recipients tend to live in Labor electorates; unionists are likely to vote Labor; nineteen Labor electorates had more than 5% of the population not fluent in English, the conservatives represented none.³⁵ By consolidating these blocs, Keating limited the leak

³¹ *ibid* p31

³² Grattan, Michelle "Keating's year at the top" p9

³³ Jupp, James and Sawyer, Marian "Building Coalitions: The Australian Labor Party and the 1993 General Election" *Australian Journal of Political Science* vol 29 Special Issue 1994 p12

³⁴ quoted in Lawson, Valerie "The Spin Doctors" *Financial Review-Weekend Magazine* 12 February 1993 p1

³⁵ Jupp & Sawyer "Building Coalitions" p23

of support to the Liberals as economic conditions pushed traditional supporters to consider voting for the Opposition. But Keating was also pursuing "swinging" voters by underlining differences between Labor and the Liberals on sensitive social issues such as Aboriginal Affairs, government support for the arts and sex discrimination.³⁶ Sometimes Keating's method was as simple as sending a letter of support to all the feminist "Reclaim the Night" rallies around Australia.³⁷

Jupp and Sawyer contrast Labor's view of society as the sum of social groups with the Liberals' view, derived from public choice theory, of a society constituted by rational individuals and their families.³⁸ Thus the Liberals claimed to speak for the "little people" (or, as Menzies put it, the "forgotten people") rather than vested interests, while Labor endeavoured to speak to the citizenry through their constituent groups. Hewson limited his political strategy because not only did he resist forming coalitions with key groups but he was also seen to be avoiding any semblance of rhetorical interchange with people generally. This detachment also confirmed the citizen-audience's perception that Hewson had a lack of emotional involvement with them. In contrast Keating used the coalition building exercise to promote his emotional connection with the citizen-audience and so complete the construction of the meta-enthymeme he presented. Then, in the final weeks of the campaign, as is detailed below, Keating drew these groups together, sometimes with detailed promises, sometimes by pointing out they had nowhere else to go and sometimes just by being at the right place at the right time. The success of this approach is reflected in the rise in Labor's primary vote in the election.

The GST

As was noted above, it was clear from Labor research conducted shortly after the launch of *Fightback!* that the GST was not popular with the electorate. While the issue was diluted by the approval Hewson received for having a plan to respond to the economic situation and by Keating's second leadership challenge, the question of a new tax remained a concern for the citizen-audience. The Queensland ALP produced a glossy direct mail pamphlet contrasting the effect of Hewson's tax reforms on an average family and a rich family (see appendix 6.1). This pamphlet subtly raised the issue of class by ensuring that most people would identify with the average family while very

³⁶ Grattan "Keating's year at the top" p9

³⁷ Jupp and Sawyer "Building Coalitions" p18

³⁸ *ibid* p10-27

few could identify with the upper-class types whom the Liberals appeared to favour. The Liberals responded with their own glossy pamphlet linking attacks on the elderly with the high rate of unemployment and promising more jobs through *Fightback!* As a piece of political communication it certainly had strong images that caught people's attention but the message was confused. Keating compared it to Liberal scare campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s: "Reds under the beds", "the Chinese are coming to get us in their sampans" and "the red arrows from China".³⁹ He also claimed that it was a copy of United States material and it certainly lost something in the cultural translation. It may have raised fears but it did little to show people how *Fightback!* would overcome them. The Liberals did employ a number of United States Republican consultants during the course of the campaign and their inability to translate United States techniques into effective tactics in Australia will be a recurring theme in this chapter.

Similarly, two television advertisements the Liberals released in September 1992 failed to effectively position their campaign. One was an attack on Keating's infamous line: "This is the recession that Australia had to have." The advertisement consisted of Keating repeating that sentence six times, each time a little slower and the voice-over concluding: "He said it. He did it. And he'll do it again." The other advertisement featured Keating's nodding head superimposed on a factory worker seemingly endorsing Hewson arguments for *Fightback!*⁴⁰ As a package the advertisements did not work. The negative advertisement blamed Keating for the recession but the positive advertisement did not promise much for the average person, just tax cuts for business. When Hewson fell behind Keating as preferred leader as these advertisements went to air, one advertising executive summed up the problem: "The Liberals spent a lot of money reminding the public what it already knows, instead of selling their own policies which people are still very uncertain about."⁴¹ The GST was not mentioned in the advertisements at all. The Liberals missed the opportunity to define the GST and Labor saw the potential in defining it themselves.

As the ALP considered its options after the August budget, the GST emerged as the Opposition's biggest single negative feature and Keating drew attention to the size of the tax the Liberals planned and the impact it would have on both "low-income" and "average" Australians and he declared that the election would be a referendum on the

³⁹ Stevens, Tim "Fightback campaign another reds under beds ploy: Keating" *Australian* 2 June 1992 p1

⁴⁰ Taylor, Lenore "Liberals begin campaign putting Keating in picture" *Australian* 25 September 1992 p1

⁴¹ Lloyd, Simon "Liberals ads fail to pay off" *Financial Review* 24 November 1992 p30

GST.⁴² Labor's coalition-building and background briefing began to produce results when churches and consumer groups were reported to have left Liberal briefings on *Fightback!* unconvinced that the GST would have any benefits for low income earners or average consumers.⁴³

As can be seen at table 6.1, the polls in late 1992 began to show first Keating edging ahead of Hewson as preferred Prime Minister and then Labor overtaking the Liberals as preferred party. These results led to Labor considering a pre-Christmas election and when that was decided against, the attack on the GST was intensified because it was obviously working. In the Liberal Party, the realisation that they had been eclipsed by Labor for the first time since the previous election led to internal friction and even to the threat of a leadership challenge against Hewson.⁴⁴

For the Liberal campaign an important part of Hewson's meta-enthymeme was the "non-political" element in his character. "I came in to politics to do a job. I don't play the political game," he told ABC radio.⁴⁵ Part of refusing to "play the political game" was, he indicated, that his word was his bond: he told the truth, he meant what he said, he could be trusted. Hewson had previously committed himself to implementing the full *Fightback!* package saying, for example "we will fight on. We will stay with what we have got. The Fightback package is the only answer"⁴⁶ By early December the Liberals' own research showed the unpopularity of the GST, particularly as it applied to food items. For a month the published opinion polls turned against Hewson (see table 6.1) and Liberal campaign director Andrew Robb had research that showed that the GST was the main issue preventing undecided voters from giving their support to the Liberals.⁴⁷ On 7 December, Saulwick was the last of the major four polling firms to put Labor ahead and when Newspoll came out on the morning of 8 December with Labor surging to a 7 point lead, the pressure on Hewson became irresistible. In an interview in Brisbane, Hewson announced that *Fightback!* would be rewritten. On 18 December he

⁴² Grattan "Keating's year at the top" p9

⁴³ Taylor, Lenore "Meeting with Coalition fails to quell Fightback fears" *Australian* 5 November 1992 p8; Cribb, Julian et al "Reith slams consumer body" *Australian* 16 November 1992 p1-2

⁴⁴ *Losing the Unlosable*

⁴⁵ quoted in Grattan, Michelle "Is John Hewson starting to crack?" *The Age* 10 December 1992 p11

⁴⁶ quoted in *ibid*

⁴⁷ Kitney, Geoff and Garran, Robert "Weight of warnings forced Hewson moves" *Financial Review* 10 December 1992 p5 also *Losing the Unlosable*

Table 6.1 - Published opinion polls preceding Fightback 2 launch

Date	Pollster	Preferred PM	Lib-ALP
7 Sept	Saulwick		47 - 30
8 Sept	Newspoll	Keating 35-34	43 - 40
	AGB	Hewson 37 -33	43 - 37
	Morgan		42 - 39.5
22 Sept	AGB	neck and neck 36-36	42 - 41
28 Sept	Morgan		44 - 38
6 Oct	Saulwick		48 - 37
7 Oct	Newspoll		46 - 38
	Saulwick	Hewson by 10 points	
10 Oct	AGB	Keating 37 -34	41 - 41
	Morgan	Keating 44 -43	44 - 41
	Newspoll	Hewson 38-34	48 - 39
27 Oct	Newspoll	Keating 37-36	49-37
2 Nov	Saulwick		43 - 40
	Morgan	Keating 46-41	44-40.5
3 Nov	Saulwick	Keating 45 -41	
	AGB	Keating 38 -35	41 - 43
10 Nov	Newspoll	Keating 39 -35	41 - 45
16 Nov	Morgan	Keating 44.5-36	40.5 - 44.5
17 Nov	AGB	Keating 38 - 34	41 - 43
24 Nov	Newspoll	Keating 39 - 32	43 - 44
30 Nov	Morgan	Keating 48 - 39	40.5 - 45.5 47 - 53 2 pp
1 Dec	AGB	Keating 42 - 31	40 - 46
7 Dec	Saulwick	Keating by 10 points	39 - 44
8 Dec	Newspoll	Keating 43 - 30	40 - 47

announced that the GST would not apply to basic food items and childcare and made a number of other promises that softened its impact on low and middle-income earners. The Liberals improved in the polls strongly. By mid-January, Newspoll had the Liberals back in the lead 47-42.

As the Liberals' improvement in the polls shows, Hewson successfully repositioned himself on the GST and thus recreated his own meta-enthymeme by diverting attention from what was perceived as his stern character and intense rationality to emphasise an emotional element that had previously been absent from his overall argument. Of equal significance, Hewson repositioned himself as a politician who could listen. By giving up his claims to be "non-political" (an impossible position for a politician) and adapting his approach to the GST, Hewson indicated that he was willing to engage in some form of rhetorical exchange with the citizen-audience. Hewson's rhetorical shift produced immediate benefit for him in polling terms and underscored the instrumental advantages of the construction of a complete enthymeme within an environment of even symbolic open exchange between campaign and the citizen-audience. It also indicated the importance the citizen-audience affords to ethical facets of the meta-narrative: Hewson's changes to his rhetorical position were not only "smart" politics but also a signal that he could accept criticism and adapt his policies, a signal that was well received by the electorate.⁴⁸ While Labor had put a lot of time and energy into making the GST an issue during the last quarter of 1992 and also into making an argument "from the contraries" by defining their positive features in terms of the Liberals' major negative attribute, the shift back to Hewson after the announcement of his changes to *Fightback!* shows how tenuous the incumbent's control of the terrain can be when the insurgent refuses to engage on the incumbent's terms.

Preliminary Arrangements

Despite the perception in January 1993 that Labor had descended into what Tom Burton described as "pre-poll paralysis"⁴⁹, Keating, having returned from holidays on 14 January, declared the next day that equity would be a major issue in the campaign. Labor began to broaden their anti-GST arguments and to communicate them in marginal seats.

⁴⁸ By mid-January, Newspoll had the Liberals back in the lead 47-42.

⁴⁹ Burton, Tom "Keating cruels his own chances" *Financial Review* 5 February 1993 p3

While Hewson had successfully taken the sting out of the GST with the relaunch of *Fightback!*, research showed the issue was still troubling voters. They had many unanswered questions about the GST and, as the Liberals had not sought to confront those questions, the way was open for Labor to provide the answers. Two other areas where Labor perceived that the Opposition's policies could be turned against them were industrial relations and health. *Fightback!* contained plans for dismantling both Medicare (which provided universal health care) and the arbitration and conciliation processes (which the conservative parties considered advantaged workers over employers). These aspects of *Fightback!*, the Labor campaign believed, added to the perception that Hewson was unconcerned about the effect of his policies on average and low income earners and they were targeted by Labor.⁵⁰ The biggest negative aspect Keating faced was the continuing high level of unemployment and Labor campaigners saw that it was necessary to argue that *Fightback!* was not going to be any more effective at reducing unemployment than Labor's policies. The account director from Labor's advertising agency, Bill Currie, subsequently outlined the strategy that was developed with Hogg at this time:

Issues

1. GST
2. Dr Hewson is Dr Strangelove
3. Hewson is GST
4. and there are no jobs in it

Schedule

- Week one: evil GST
Week two: evil GST and industrial relations
Week three: evil GST and Medicare
Week four: evil GST won't work because there are no jobs in it.⁵¹

Labor's advertising translated this simple rhetorical strategy into a series of complex, inter-related messages that communicated strong clear images and distinctive sounds to the citizen-audience. The construction of that complexity is discussed further below but advertising was just one element of Labor's meta-narrative. Another element was communicated through direct mail and the then ALP Assistant National Secretary Gary Gray outlined Labor's three phase direct mail plan.⁵² The first phase began shortly after the 1990 election

⁵⁰ Currie, Bill 1993 Election paper to Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference, University of Technology, Sydney 13 July 1994; also Bolt, Cathy "ACTU financial clout for ALP's election budget" *Financial Review* 15 January 1993 p3

⁵¹ Currie 1993 Election

⁵² Mills, Stephen "Election '93: Battle of the mailbox" *Financial Review* 1 February 1993 p1-2

"with a strong emphasis on local issues, in a bid to give its candidates local credibility and to distance them from the political problems of Canberra... providing community information in a non-partisan way... [or] inviting [voters] to a resident's meeting... where [a] problem could be discussed amicably over coffee."⁵³

The second phase in late 1992 had drawn strong contrasts between government and Opposition policies. The final phase, during the formal campaign, consisted of "persuasion pieces" about the campaign issues.

In appreciating the structure of Labor's meta-narrative, it is important to note that the advertising and direct mail were carefully targeted at audiences likely to affect the outcome of the election. The purpose of election campaigns, for political parties, is not necessarily to gain a majority of the popular vote but to gain majority support in a majority of seats so their party can then form a government. Indeed, Labor had won the 1990 federal election (78 seats to the coalition's 69 plus one independent) with only 49.9% of the two-party preferred vote. Redistribution and by-elections had changed the situation only marginally, so the notional state of the parties going into the election on new boundaries was Labor 77, coalition 68 and independents 2.⁵⁴ The Opposition had to win five seats from Labor to form a government, which it could do with a uniform swing of less than one percent. A swing, however, is never uniform and local issues were affecting political fortunes variously in each state. Labor's former pollster, Rod Cameron, had pointed to the increasing influence of state matters in federal politics.⁵⁵ Labor's campaign was defensive (targeting marginal seats already held by Labor) in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, where state Labor administrations were not held in high regard by the electorate,⁵⁶ and aggressive (targeting Opposition-held marginal seats) in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania where Liberal administrations were in power. Because of these state variations, the brief to Labor's advertising agency was to create seven different campaigns, all mentioning the GST but highlighting state differentials. In Queensland, Northern Territory and Tasmania the GST's impact on tourism was a key theme while in South Australia the combined impact of the GST and the coalition's zero tariff policy on manufacturing was central.⁵⁷

⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁴ Mackerras, Malcolm "General Election, 13 March 1993: Statistical analysis of the results" *Australian Journal of Political Science* vol 29 Special Issue 1994 p158-184

⁵⁵ Ramsey, Alan "Pollster poleaxes the latest polls" *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 September 1992 p23

⁵⁶ see for example Grant-Taylor, Tony "The Goss gloss may not shine for Keating" *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 February 1993 p13

⁵⁷ Currie 1993 Election

At the same time as Labor was planning how to communicate its messages into targeted seats through advertising and direct mail, it was also planning a multi-faceted strategy of direct appeals to and through each element in the coalition of social groups it had built in the previous decade and reinforced in the previous year.

Labor made effective use of its traditional union connections. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) produced television advertisements, direct mail and printed materials concentrating on the Opposition's industrial relations and health policies as well as the impact of *Fightback!* on women.⁵⁸ The ACTU's Martin Ferguson and Jennie George addressed meetings in large workplaces in marginal electorates, with George concentrating on places with predominantly female work forces.⁵⁹ Unions adopted electorates for letterboxing and the staffing of polling booths and health unions adopted eight marginal seats in which they distributed glossy "Save Medicare" brochures produced by the ACTU.⁶⁰

Women were also targeted by Labor, an approach Carol Johnson claims was assisted by the masculinist overtones of *Fightback!*, the policy's very name suggesting the aggressive pursuit of self-esteem.⁶¹ While women tend to be politically conservative⁶², they also tend to be progressive on social issues, particularly those that address institutional unfairness to women.⁶³ Labor sought to position itself "on the women's side" in a new National Agenda for Women delivered by Keating in the first week of the campaign.⁶⁴ The Agenda cemented the government's links with the women's movement by committing itself to action on a range of equality issues. In the same week the government took the equity issue directly to young women in the electorate by using Keating's major economic statement to announce increased payments for child care, the cost of which many young women saw as a tax on their earning capacity. Labor also integrated its message to women with its messages on the GST by pointing out that the new tax would put up the price of tampons. Deputy Prime Minister Howe held a press

⁵⁸ Bolt "ACTU financial clout for ALP's election budget" p3

⁵⁹ Bolt, Cathy "ACTU after the woman's vote" *Financial Review* 22 January 1993 p9 and telephone conversation with ACTU marginal seats coordinator, Andrew Casey 25 March 1993

⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁶¹ Johnson, Carol "Fightback and Masculine Identity" *Australian Feminist Studies* no 17 Autumn 1993 p81-92

⁶² McAllister *Political Behaviour* p138; Renfrow, Patty "The Gender gap in the 1993 elections" *Australian Journal of Political Science* vol 29 Special Issue 1994 p118-133

⁶³ Confirmed in *ibid*

⁶⁴ Jupp & Sawyer "Building Coalitions" p15

conference in front of the tampons and sanitary napkin display in an Adelaide chemist shop. Others have pointed out that this appears to be the first time menstruation has become an election issue.⁶⁵

While debate about the size, unity and importance of the ethnic vote continues⁶⁶, Labor held twice as many seats as the Liberals where over 25% of the voters were born overseas or were from a non-English speaking background⁶⁷. Labor had a clear strategic advantage in highlighting its support for ethnic communities and pursued that advantage by advertising in the ethnic media and "wooing" its journalists⁶⁸.

Keating made an appeal to the youth vote, most spectacularly in *Rolling Stone*. He appeared on the front cover of the Australian edition wearing a pair of Rayban sunglasses. In the visual language of those under forty it said "cool" in unmistakable terms (see appendix 6.2). The accompanying interview by four "hip" individuals (Peter Corris, Reg Mombassa, Linda Jaivin and Kathy Bail) was conducted in the Ashfield Hotel where the band Keating had once managed, The Ramrods, had played during the 1960s.⁶⁹ His careful endorsement of the republic spoke directly to the issue of national identity, while his easy familiarity with popular culture might have suggested to *Rolling Stone* readers that he was one of them.

Welfare organisations gave grudging support to Labor.⁷⁰ While high levels of unemployment were creating more welfare recipients, their lobby group saw the Opposition's policies as particularly disadvantaging the poor. The welfare lobby conceded that the Liberals' economic policies would be a stimulus to employment but, they argued, the positive aspects of Hewson's policies "are greatly outweighed by the massive cuts proposed by the Coalition in other forms of essential public assistance for people in hardship. Their overall effect would be deeply damaging."⁷¹ Merle Mitchell from ACOSS explained: "Labor would cause less hardship than the Coalition."⁷² As is

⁶⁵ *ibid* p19

⁶⁶ *The Ethnic Vote* (video recording) SBS Television 7 May 1995

⁶⁷ Jupp & Sawyer "Building Coalitions" p23

⁶⁸ see for example Rubenstein, Colin "Immigration, multi-culturalism and the 1993 federal election" *Migration Action* vol 15 no 1 February 1993 p22-28

⁶⁹ Corris, Peter et al "Paul Keating" *Rolling Stone* issue 481 March 1993 p38-47

⁷⁰ Australian Council of Social Services Election Briefing Kit ACOSS paper no 54 March 1993 p1

⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² quoted in Jupp & Sawyer "Building Coalitions" p15

seen below, this theme of Labor being the lesser of two evils fed into Keating's last minute attacks on Hewson as a "punisher".

By the time Keating called the election in the first week of February, Labor had the elements of its meta-enthymeme in place. At the heart of Labor's case was an "argument from the contraries" that invented its positive attributes from the negative attributes of the Liberals' *Fightback!* document. As Bob Hogg put it: "We didn't have much in the way of new initiatives. We actually made a decision to run on their policies."⁷³ This was a point he later reiterated: "We had to turn the election on its head. We ran on their policies and demolished them."⁷⁴ Connected to these "rational" policy issues, were the issues of character and emotion. As Hugh Mackay had already found, neither leader was particularly trusted⁷⁵ and their campaigns, at one level, were about who could be trusted just a little bit. By reaffirming the coalition of Labor's traditional supporters, Keating positioned himself as "defender of the weak" which gave him the opportunity to draw Hewson as defender of the strong and powerful. Further, Hewson's background as a Baptist Sunday school teacher who had found a new faith in economic rationalism was used to paint Hewson as a zealot.⁷⁶ Throughout the course of the campaign, Keating carefully moulded himself as the more trustworthy leader from whom the voters had less to fear. He was assisted by Hewson's persona which appeared wooden compared to Keating's "strong and expressive eye contact [and] spontaneous facial reactions".⁷⁷ But beyond the detail of the enthymeme itself, Labor had established a large, complex and multi-faceted structure with which to communicate its message mostly to those people it needed to convince in order to win the election. Labor also ensured that there were the means for messages to return from the citizen-audience to the campaign whether formally, through invitations to reply to direct mail or to attend morning teas with candidates and Ministers, informally through opportunities to respond through institutions of the coalition of pro-Labor interest groups (letters to ethnic newspapers and youth magazines, lobbying through interest groups, questions at union-organised meetings) and even symbolically in response to the open-ended questions in Labor's advertising. It might be concluded from this analysis that the meta-narrative assumes

⁷³ "Labor won on Liberal policy" *Financial Review* 9 July 1993 p10

⁷⁴ Hogg, Bob 1993 Election paper to Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference, University of Technology, Sydney 13 July 1994

⁷⁵ Mackay "The Keating/Hewson Factor"

⁷⁶ consider for example Alan Ramsey's contribution to a Hewson biography on *Sunday* (video recording) Channel 9 14 February 1993

⁷⁷ McCarthy, Patsy "The men and their messages - Election '93" *Australian Journal of Communication* vol 20 no 2 1993 p17

not only a complex story but also complex ways of communicating it and of receiving feedback from those who receive it.

Phase One

On Sunday 7 February Keating called the election with a frank assessment of his chances: "We know it's going to be a struggle... it's too hard to call and there is no point trying."⁷⁸ He took the initiative and made three major policy statements over the next three days: new trade initiatives for Australian companies to participate in Asia; a major economic statement designed to encourage growth and; initiatives on women's equality. Bob Hogg has pointed out that it was "unusual" for a campaign to be so positive so early: "things that would normally have been in the policy speech were in the first week. But I think it was important for us to say that we have got some positive messages on the record before we attack the other side."⁷⁹ On Thursday unemployment figures were released showing a million people out of work "for the first time in Australia's history"⁸⁰ and the Liberals screened their first advertisement highlighting the threat of unemployment to ordinary people by showing typical voters walking unsuspectingly in the cross-hairs of a gun. "No one is safe," the voice over went as the gun-sights settled on a middle-aged white collar worker and the gun is cocked. "Don't be next. Labor's got to go."⁸¹ Liberal media briefing suggested that: "the subliminal text is that of Paul Keating as the economic sniper."⁸² The advertisement did not say that the Liberals would turn unemployment around⁸³ or even suggest that they were a positive alternative.

On Sunday 14 February, Keating and Hewson met for the first of two formal television debates broadcast nationally by the ABC and Channel Nine. The commercial station, Nine introduced its own refinements including "the worm", a moving graph recording how 120 undecided voters in a studio audience responded to the debate. The audience's response was gauged as they manipulated the dial of a "perceptomonitor", an electronic tool used by market research companies to assess the effectiveness of TV advertising and programs. As Channel Nine's Richard Carleton explained:

⁷⁸ quoted on *Sunday* 14 February 1993

⁷⁹ *Losing the Unlosable*

⁸⁰ "1,017,600 - Jobless breaks barrier" *Telegraph Mirror* 12 February 1993 p1

⁸¹ *Gunsights* Liberal Party TV commercial (video recording) first aired 11 February 1993

⁸² Milne, Glenn "Liberals launch a campaign of fear" *Australian* 12 February 1993 p1

⁸³ noted by Graham Richardson on *Sunday* Channel 9 14 February 1993

Turn the dial to the right it means that you like what is being said, turn it to the left you don't like it. Each of these perceptomonitor is hooked into a central computer which averages out the reaction of the whole audience. What you will see in the bottom left of your screen is a graph showing how well or poorly the leader is being received. Above the gold line you like him, below it you don't.⁸⁴

Keating's first answer extolling the economic credentials of the government left the audience unmoved until he brought up the GST. The worm moved up rapidly and as the Liberals' Victorian President later said: "you didn't need to be Albert Einstein to know that from Sunday night onwards we could be in trouble... because whilst 10% of the people are unemployed, 100% were going to be paying GST."⁸⁵ It was a lesson that Keating and the Labor campaign took to heart. At the same time there were lessons there for the Liberals. When Hewson talked about unemployment and creating jobs, he got a very positive response but any mention of *Fightback!* pulled the worm down. Unemployment was obviously the key issue for the Liberals: all attempts by Keating to explain the issue or speak positively about the economy were met with indifference. While the studio audience via the perceptomonitor scored the debate 54 to Keating, 53 to Hewson, the real effect of the debate became apparent when commentators called it a draw and Newspoll's subsequent opinion polling gave it decisively to Hewson⁸⁶.

Labor responded by honing their anti-GST rhetoric with a new range of language that emphasised the size, uncertainty and complexity of the tax and highlighted the responsibility small business would have in gathering it. Labor's anti-GST advertisements commenced with a voice-over and white words on a black background both saying "How Dr Hewson's GST would change your day". Then a range of household goods and services was mentioned and shown and as each item was obscured by an old fashioned cash register slide bearing the legend "+15% GST", a cash register ring would be heard and the announcer would say "up". One useful example of the breadth of the meta-narrative produced by the Labor campaign arose from these advertisements. When research showed that "each ring of the cash register was another nail in (the Liberals') coffin"⁸⁷, extra radio time was booked to reinforce the message by keeping the cash register's ring going all day with advertisements that reminded each station's demographic that the cost of purchases they were likely to make would go up 15%: shopping and sales for women, CDs and concerts for youth, going to the races for

⁸⁴ Carleton, Richard on *The Great Debate* (video recording) Channel 9 14 February 1993

⁸⁵ Kroger, Michael on *Losing the Unlosable*

⁸⁶ "Hewson wins debate: Newspoll" *Australian* 15 March 1993 p1

⁸⁷ Currie 1993 Election

punters and surfing equipment for sea-side electorates.⁸⁸ The Liberals were prepared for Labor's scare campaign on the GST and immediately put to air an advertisement which attempted to minimise the GST problem. It featured an aggressive plastic bag of rubbish labelled "Scumbag of scares" slowly being deflated when confronted with the Liberals' promise to abolish a raft of other taxes that would make food and petrol cheaper and leave average families better off.

Keating responded by suggesting that the GST was a "scary" tax and that even the rubbish bag in the advertisement would have a GST on it. He then challenged Hewson to a debate that night on Channel Nine's *A Current Affair*. Unlike the formal debate the previous Sunday, there were no particular rules. Compere Mike Willesee was to moderate and the subject was the GST. By limiting the subject matter to Hewson's biggest negative aspect, Keating maximised his chances of prevailing. Hewson would find it difficult to raise the unemployment issue and would be left to justify a new tax. Andrew Robb says that the Liberals had little choice but to put Hewson on, otherwise: "The Prime Minister still would have had his half hour on GST, plus he would have had the opportunity to say that we were running and hiding"⁸⁹ As it transpired, Keating did dominate by reading long lists of items that would be taxed and hectoring Hewson with new rhetorical refinements

[This is] the biggest lifestyle changing tax in the nation's history. This is not like any other tax. This is not one of the small pocket taxes. This is a monster. This is a tax that will intrude into areas of Australian life where taxes never intruded before... A huge monster tax is not going to help Australia.⁹⁰

Hewson lost the personal battle of wills. He was left appealing "Can I have a go" when Keating said that he would turn ironing ladies into tax gatherers. He appeared confused on detail of the GST's implementation. The *A Current Affair* debate was a pivotal moment in the election campaign: "We were beginning to see a pattern of Keating's seeming to have more pithy positive statements to capture the audience attention than Hewson could find about his plan."⁹¹ Bob Hogg summarised the exchange: "what Paul did was sort of, I guess, wrestle him to the ground on the GST and get it up as an issue. And it stayed up from then onwards."⁹² By the end of the debate, Keating looked very confident. He had done the job he set out to do. In the following days, the campaign increased its attacks on the tax in relation to specific industries such as racing and

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ Robb, Andrew on *Losing the Unlosable*

⁹⁰ Keating, Paul on *Current Affair* (video recording) Channel 9 18 February 1993

⁹¹ McCarthy, Patsy "The men and their messages" p20

⁹² Hogg, Bob on *Losing the Unlosable*

tourism that involved or interested key groups of voters. Keating took the opportunity to raise different aspects of the tax, pointing out the dangers in trusting some business people to be tax gatherers: "Every rip-off merchant and hard-edged operator will be in there having a picnic at the public's expense. Not just a picnic but a banquet."⁹³

Key enthymemic clashes in this first phase of the campaign occurred in two distinct arenas: paid television advertising and television debates. The interesting difference between the advertisements of each campaign was not so much their content but their tone: while the Liberals' "gunsights" advertisement was imperative ("Don't be next. Labor's got to go.") and even threatening as it trained the cross-hairs of the gunsights on average looking people, the Labor advertisement was informative ("How Dr Hewson's GST would change your day") and invited viewers to consider their positions. These variations in voice suggested the different attitudes to the citizen-audience by each of the campaigns: the Liberals requiring the audience to confirm their lead in the polls, Labor attempting to keep the opportunity for deliberation with the audience open. The different textures of the two very different debates were also significant. The more formal Sunday night debate, particularly Channel Nine's version with "the worm", was an over-mediated event that precluded reflection in the rush to find a winner. As Philip Bell and Kate Boehringer point out:

To say that politics had become reified as a performance package, 'bought' or rejected by voters conceived as consumers, would seem to understate the triviality of this audience response procedure... we saw this equation of politics with television's own discourses as restricting the potentially conflicting sources of political information, motivation, and value, as denying the capacity of citizens to reflect on politics in the absence of professional, entertainment-oriented mediation.⁹⁴

In short, the formal Sunday Night debate did not reveal more than was already known and restricted the possibilities for reflection. By way of contrast, the informal *A Current Affair* debate produced the opportunity to delve into a key issue and explore its content. Keating did this most effectively for his purposes by enumerating the applications of the GST; Hewson was unable to match Keating's simple argument with anything nearly as effective. Unlike the Sunday night debate, there was no attempt by the program to foreclose reception of the debate by the citizen-audience, who were left to reflect on its import.

⁹³ for a good summary of these initiatives see *Lateline* (video recording) ABC-TV 24 February 1993

⁹⁴ Bell, Philip & Boehringer, Kate "Australian Politics: Still programmed after all these years" *Australian Journal of Communication* vol 20 no 2 1993 p5

Policy Launches

The second phase of Labor's campaign concentrated on drawing connections from the "heartlessness" of the GST to other aspects of *Fightback!* which promised to dismantle industrial relations processes and Medicare. On Friday 19 February Keating concluded the Accord Mark VII with the ACTU, committing the Union movement to the concept of enterprise bargaining while offering significant job protection. Labor then broadcast an advertisement featuring a young man (Adam) called into the boss's office to sign a contract that cuts his wage by \$50 a week. He says that is unfair and refuses to sign. He is summarily dismissed and as he leaves the office there is a line of people waiting for his job. The Liberals responded with an advertisement which highlighted unemployment by showing jobless people disappearing through trapdoors. While it did draw attention to Labor's major negative attribute, it was again based on alarming the unemployed rather than giving them hope.

On Wednesday 24 February, Keating launched the ALP Policy at Bankstown Town Hall. On a stage designed by *Strictly Ballroom* Director Baz Luhrmann, in front of a blue curtain with white letters spelling out AUSTRALIA, surrounded by his family and icons of the Labor movement, Keating talked of the "hope... belief... [and] faith" he had in Australia. The symbolism was strong but the content judged weak: the \$1 billion of spending promises to key interest groups met strong criticism in the media⁹⁵ and mention of a potential Republic was viewed as a distraction⁹⁶. In the aftermath of the launch, a number of commentators pointed out that Labor appeared to lack a consistent, positive theme in its campaign and doubt was raised about its ability to maintain the GST as an issue all the way to election day.⁹⁷ Chance intervened in Labor's favour on the day following the launch when embattled Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney resigned. He had introduced a tax similar to the GST which some journalists claimed "led to a sharp drop in his popularity."⁹⁸ Keating said: "It's bunkum to be arguing that a monster spending tax can promote recovery."⁹⁹ He kept the issue in the media,

⁹⁵ Lagan, Bernard "Keating's week: thunder, lost and regained" *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 February 1993 p11

⁹⁶ Burton, Tom "Polls show Hewson an easy winner" *Financial Review* 26 February 1993 p3

⁹⁷ *ibid* also Howard, John on *Sunday* (video recording) Channel 9 28 February 1993

⁹⁸ Graham, Clyde "GST played key role in downfall" *Australian* 26 February 1993 p7

⁹⁹ Keating, Paul on *News* (video recording) ABC-TV 25 February 1993

enthusiastically drawing parallels with the Canadian situation,¹⁰⁰ and the GST was once again the main issue.

By Friday 26 February, Labor strategists were admitting that their own research showed that they had to win two-thirds of undecided voters in the following fortnight to win the election.¹⁰¹ The experience of the first debate and its own launch suggested to the Labor campaign that it was not going to do that with its own initiatives, and certainly not by apologising for its negative attributes. Their only option was to continue to campaign on the negative aspects of the Liberals' policy: health, industrial relations and, above all, the GST. Keating attempted to draw this theme together at Labor's launch of its arts policy when he drew on the work of historian Manning Clark to distinguish two facets of the Australian ethos that had emerged from its colonial foundations: there were the "enlargers" and the "punishers".¹⁰² As a patron of the arts, encouraging experimentation and expansion, Keating styled himself as the enlarger while Hewson with his economic rationalism and lifestyle-reducing tax was portrayed as the punisher. Perhaps the most useful contribution came from the actor, Sam Neill, whose one-liner was widely reported in the media "Dr Hewson says *Fightback!* will create two million jobs but he doesn't say in which country."¹⁰³ That night Labor launched an advertisement featuring a young woman (Sharon) experiencing the adverse effects from *Fightback!* policies: costs rising, Medicare gone, her pay cut.

The Liberals' policy launch on Monday 1 March was a stark contrast to Labor's set piece with party heroes in Bankstown Town Hall. The Liberals chose a hall in the welfare-oriented Wesley Mission in central Sydney and produced a range of Labor's "victims": unemployed people, failed business people, a debt-stricken farmer and people on hospital waiting lists. It was a passionate response to allegations that Hewson was a heartless, cold economist. After the victims were introduced, Hewson made a speech arguing that *Fightback!* could change all this misery. He confronted the criticisms of the GST in a number of ways: saying it meant "good-bye seven taxes or good-bye secret taxes" and making the claim that because the GST was a tax on expenditure, and everyone was free to spend their money as they wished, "you decide when to pay tax."¹⁰⁴ The Liberals decided against replaying the formal launch in their

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, Peter & Taylor, Lenore "Canada a GST warning: Keating" *Australian* 26 February 1993 p1

¹⁰¹ Kitney, Geoff "Labor bets on a Coalition-driven finish" *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 February 1993 p11

¹⁰² Keating, Paul Strictly Arts ALP Arts Policy 28 February 1993

¹⁰³ Neill, Sam on *News* (video recording) ABC-TV 28 February 1993

¹⁰⁴ Hewson, John on *Liberal Policy Launch* (video recording) Channel 9 1 March 1993

free TV time that night and instead aired a program that featured the "victims" from the day time launch and Hewson talking to the camera in a style more relaxed and expressive than seen anywhere else in his campaign. While it was immaculately produced, attempting both to humanise Hewson and to personify Labor's negative attributes, the launch did not give the Liberals the momentum they needed. The production values of the program were somewhat at odds with the content. It had a style somewhere between "cinema verite" and music video, with jerky, off-the-shoulder camera shots, jump cuts, fast edits, strange angles and unusual framing.¹⁰⁵

The next day, Hewson's coalition partner and National Party leader Tim Fisher criticised the selling of GST, reopening the issue at the very moment the Liberals hoped it would begin to fade. Hewson further exacerbated his GST problems when he stumbled over details of its implementation on the John Laws radio program and then got into an argument with Laws on-air about the importance of the issue. The following evening Hewson had trouble explaining to *A Current Affair's* Mike Willesee how the GST would apply to a birthday cake. The following day Keating made an impromptu visit to a bakery in Nowra in an attempt to capitalise on Hewson's problems with the birthday cake, but was berated by the owner who was experiencing problems with payroll tax. Nevertheless the cake and the GST remained on the front page for another day (see appendix 6.3). As Alan Ramsey pointed out it was Hewson's stumbles rather than Keating's acuity that kept the GST alive in week four.¹⁰⁶

In terms of competing enthymemes, the different campaign launches indicated the conundrum each campaign was facing generally: Labor's attempt to be positive had fallen flat because their unemployment record belied their attempts to point out the upturn in the economy; and the Liberals' attempt to be negative, criticising Labor for creating "victims", was constantly overshadowed by the GST. Labor had trouble establishing the rational elements of its enthymeme and the Liberals had trouble establishing the emotional content of theirs. Labor was assisted in its efforts to keep the GST issue continually newsworthy by not only external factors such as the resignation of the Canadian Prime Minister but also by the activities of the Opposition itself. Hewson's inability to "invent" the lines required to explain the benefits of the GST resulted in a number of stumbles by himself, and internal criticism of that inability (his failure as a "salesman") kept the issue of the GST before the electorate. Labor's persistence in prompting and promoting these GST-related stories suggests another

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy, Patsy "The men and their messages" p21-22

¹⁰⁶ Ramsey, Alan "Hot pies, cold pies and pie-eaters" *Sydney Morning Herald* 6 March 1993 p27

facet of the meta-narrative: beyond the production of a complex story and the complex rhetorical exchange involved in its communication to, and the receipt of feedback from, the citizen-audience, there is also the necessity for campaigns to reproduce key elements of their meta-narrative each day.

Final Phase

In the final phase of the campaign the Liberals put their energies into a series of outdoor rallies in all the major capital cities. It was a technique that was last utilised in Australia by Labor in their unsuccessful 1975 campaign but it had been successfully used by the Clinton campaign in the 1992 United States presidential election. The events were described as "holy roller rallies"¹⁰⁷ and were designed to give the impression of a growing, unstoppable momentum. But they were also a strong reminder of Hewson's fundamentalist religious roots, particularly when he fell into a question and response chant to excite the crowd. The uncontrolled, open-air rallies attracted many who opposed the Liberals' policies and produced strong, clear images of division for television news. The disruption that ensued had strong echoes of the public disturbances that followed the 1975 dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government. Keating distanced himself from the disturbances by asking his supporters to give Hewson complete silence to explain how the GST would work.

Little media attention was given to the still massive undecided vote which may have been over 30% of the electorate.¹⁰⁸ Labor continued to mould its messages to appeal to the undecided voters and released six advertisements to the Liberals' three in the final week. The most notable of these Labor advertisements featured a house of cards being carefully built with cards depicting Liberal policies - "end to Medicare bulk billing", "GST and no jobs in it" - until the whole house falls down to the words: "Dr Hewson's plan just doesn't stack up." Labor's advertisements continued to refine the GST and associated themes into vote determining issues to the last. By contrast the Liberals' advertisements were seen to be still seeking focus.¹⁰⁹ One featured a mother complaining that her son left school with good grades but still hasn't found a job. She concludes that Labor has given him no hope and no future. Again the Liberals' advertisements on

¹⁰⁷ for example Ewart, Heather on *7.30 Report* ABC-TV 4 March 1993

¹⁰⁸ O'Reilly, David "Labor voters made last-minute decisions" *Bulletin* 23 March 1993 p15

¹⁰⁹ consider for example Warneford, Penny "Election ads helped Libs lose" *Adnews* 26 March 1993 p15-16

unemployment failed to push their point of difference: the Liberals could give hope for work. Another Liberal advertisement released in the last week of the campaign was an apology for the GST, complaining about Labor's "secret taxes". Counter-attacking Labor in this fashion only highlighted the GST without showing how the GST might increase employment.

The second and final formal debate occurred on Sunday 7 March with a much more energetic exchange between the leaders who were allowed to question each other and were even given some leeway to talk over each other. Channel Nine had refined the operation of "the worm": the audience was larger and Richard Carleton was more forthright about what the worm might show: "We don't pretend for one moment that this is the perfect representation of Australia".¹¹⁰ Further, rather than indicate if they "liked" what the leader presently speaking was saying, the perceptomonitorers were labelled Keating to the left and Hewson to the right and the audience was instructed to turn the knob to indicate who they thought was "getting the better of the exchange".¹¹¹ The compere began by inviting the leaders to differentiate themselves. Hewson was quick to point out that he had a plan while Keating's response could be summarised with his statement: "We don't want to go to a dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest society." Hewson did not appear comfortable. As Bob Hogg said later: "He sat there like a dead fish... body language saying: I don't want to be here. Let me out."¹¹² Keating continued to hone his rhetoric: "The greatest burden of the tax will fall on women... Once it's introduced it's there forever... grossly inflationary and regressive... wholesale sales tax is a minnow of a tax compared to this monster you have, John."¹¹³

When the debate moved onto unemployment, Keating's language was so careful and "caring" that he even managed to move the worm into the positive while Hewson's strident anti-unionism worked against himself. As the debate drew to a close Hewson made up some ground with his economic vision to improve opportunities for the next generation but Keating won on the worm's minute-by-minute analysis 24-21. When Carleton asked the audience to indicate who they thought had won, Keating again triumphed 54-33 with 13% undecided. Stephen Mills spoke for the commentators. Hewson, he said,

¹¹⁰ Carleton, Richard on *The Second Great Debate* (video recording) Channel 9 7 March 1993

¹¹¹ *ibid*

¹¹² Hogg, Bob on *Losing the Unlosable*

¹¹³ Keating, Paul on *The Second Great Debate*

suffered the fate of a political frontrunner who puts himself on an equal footing with his challenger in a debate. He was cut down, seemingly immobilised by a tenacious Prime Minister who was determined from the outset to make attack the best form of defence.¹¹⁴

During the final week of the campaign Hewson was locked into a schedule of addressing rowdy rallies. By Tuesday he had lost his voice and his wife gave his speech and on Thursday in Brisbane eggs were thrown at him. He managed to catch one of the eggs which he described as "the catch of the series." It provided the image of a winner and at least salvaged something from all the other negative imagery of division that he was producing. At the same time on that Thursday Keating addressed the National Press Club, an engagement which Hewson had cancelled on the grounds that he wanted to be with "real people" rather than Canberra media, but which also avoided the potential of another bruising exchange with Keating. The Prime Minister used the occasion to encapsulate his position in a litany of powerful lines summarising the Liberals' negative attributes:

He asks what could be worse than another three years of Labor. There's a very simple answer. A GST forever... If you don't understand it, don't vote for it... [On Hewson's Australia:] One group pitted against another... Gordon Gekko writ large.¹¹⁵

On Friday 12 March all the newspapers editorialised in support of a vote for the Liberals and Keating was equivocal about his chances when he spoke to a dinner attended by his staff: "we'll see how we go tomorrow when we have a big roll of the dice... I have a sneaking suspicion that we might get back even though the numbers wouldn't tell us we will."¹¹⁶ On election day *The Australian* ran a page one headline saying "It's a cliffhanger" while the *Sydney Morning Herald* said: "It's too close to call". At the polling booths Labor teams arrived an hour earlier than usual (6am rather than 7am for the 8am start of voting) and so ensured they had the prime positions closest to the doors of the booths. They dominated the immediate area by setting up large anti-GST banners and were instructed to say "Here's how to vote against the GST" as they handed out their how-to-vote cards.¹¹⁷

The final phase of the election says much about the parties' different approaches to their campaigns. While Keating continued to refine and remould his language in response to tracking research in order to discount Hewson's policies and draw together a coalition of supporters, Hewson was stuck on an apparently inflexible program of rallies which

¹¹⁴ Mills, Stephen "Keating comes out swinging in round three" *Financial Review* 8 March 1993 p3

¹¹⁵ Keating, Paul *Press Club Lunch* (video recording) ABC-TV 11 March 1993

¹¹⁶ Keating, Paul "Authentic Keating" p13

¹¹⁷ *Losing the Unlosable*

produced footage of confrontation and failed to promote either his positive plans or Keating's negative attributes. Andrew Robb explained: "The capacity to turn that around was pretty limited by that stage. I think there really wasn't the opportunity to reverse the strategy in the last two or three days even if we'd wanted to."¹¹⁸ To return to purely Aristotelian terms: it was Labor's willingness to continue to deploy expedient invention throughout the campaign up to its presentation at the polling booths that provided it with its advantage over its opponents. An exit poll found that 15% of voters said they made up their mind how to vote on election day and that Labor received two-thirds of their votes.¹¹⁹ In contrast the Liberals did not display the same flexibility in adapting their meta-narrative and, in Aristotelian terms, were guilty of "frigidity": the failure to express one's case with clarity and to ensure that one's expression is attuned to content.¹²⁰

Analysis and Conclusions

Keating led Labor to victory with a swing of 5.8% on the primary vote and 1.9% on the two party preferred vote, which increased Labor's majority by three seats. State factors did play a major role, with swings to Labor in Tasmania (7%-3 extra seats), Victoria (4.5%-4) and New South Wales (2.5%-3) and swings to the conservatives in South Australia (1.4%-3), Queensland (1.4%-2) and Western Australia (.9%-2).¹²¹ Labor's success is even more remarkable when it is appreciated that the bias to the ALP inherent in the 1983 electoral amendments had dissipated by 1993 and the bias due to differential concentration of voters in fact favoured the conservative side of politics.¹²²

The conduct of the campaign by Keating and Labor suggests ways in which Aristotelian rhetorical technique has been adapted to the processes of democratic deliberation in contemporary representative models. While, as was seen in Chapter Three, current processes of deliberation are limited by both the mass nature of society and the coercive propensities of the state and media apparatuses in which those processes occur, it has been established above that it is nevertheless possible to identify elements of

¹¹⁸ Robb, Andrew on *ibid*

¹¹⁹ O'Reilly "Labor voters made last-minute decisions" p15

¹²⁰ Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1405b

¹²¹ Millett, Michael "Keating's mandate" *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 March 1993 p1 compare with Mackerras, Malcolm "General Election" p158-184

¹²² Charnock, David "Electoral bias in Australia 1980-1993" *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1994) vol 29 p484-500

Aristotelian rhetoric at work in contemporary electoral campaigning. These elements have been adapted for contemporary circumstance

- 1) in the construction of complex, multi-faceted enthymemes which have become meta-narratives reproduced to reflect the changing circumstances of the campaign,
- 2) in order to create rhetorical exchange involving the use of a multiplicity of media channels to communicate appropriate messages to appropriate segments of the citizen-audience and
- 3) in a variety of "hi-tech" and "grassroots" tools to assist the provision of feedback from the citizen-audience.

Both Labor and Liberal campaigns produced "arguments from the contraries" as their key enthymemes, opposing the GST and unemployment respectively. These enthymemes were recreated as complex meta-narratives across a range of policy positions, emotional states and character dispositions and sought not only to attack the opponent but also to communicate the positive corollary of perceptions of the opponent's negative attributes. Further, there were attempts, with varying degrees of success, to remake these meta-narratives continually during the course of the campaign and to remake them for particular segments of the citizen-audience.

It was seen above how when their confrontation began in early 1992, the enthymemes of both Hewson and Keating were similarly incomplete: they had established themselves as strong characters with avowedly "rational" policies but neither had developed a particularly helpful emotional connection with the citizen-audience. Their attempts to establish the emotional content of their enthymemes continued to the final week of the campaign and became inextricably bound up with their arguments about policy and character and their construction of over-riding meta-narratives. Keating remade himself through the job creation programs of *One Nation*, the building of the "concerned" coalition of traditional Labor supporters and his attacks on *Fightback!* as being doctrinaire and anti-social. Hewson attempted to remake himself with the changes to *Fightback!*, through his "helpful" campaign activities and with his policy launch alongside the "victims" of Labor's policies.

The deciding factor between the two campaigns was Labor's ability to deploy "expedient invention" in fine-tuning its meta-narrative to ensure that it connected with the citizen-audience while the Liberals' "frigidity" suggests an inability to recreate and

re-present their meta-narrative as an effective communication. A useful contrast may be made between the Liberals' failure to make unemployment an issue and Labor's success with the GST. The Liberals allowed unemployment to become an abstract barometer of economic policies because, as Bell and Boehringer note: "unemployment was represented only in statistical, symbolic terms [and] did not translate into the misery of real people"¹²³ while Keating continued to seek the words and images that would keep the GST and its associated perceptions of Liberal heartlessness alive: "a monster tax", "a dog-eat-dog world", "Gordon Gekko writ large". Symptomatic of the Liberals' failure to communicate is that, as one Liberal staffer noted after the event: "They were promising the biggest tax cuts in Australia's history and they never said it."¹²⁴

Keating has been accused of employing the "politics of fear" in his campaign against the GST.¹²⁵ There is an element of truth in this accusation because, as the same critic admits, "attack politics works, and the more aggressive the better."¹²⁶ What this criticism ignores is that simultaneously Hewson was attempting to mount a fear campaign about unemployment. The difference was that Keating found the rhetoric to communicate the emotional content of that "fear" while Hewson's attempts failed to draw out the emotional content in the potential of unemployment for the citizen-audience and so foundered. The Liberals' construction of Labor's victims (in the gunsights, on stage at the launch) allowed that these were things that could happen to other people, while Keating made it clear that no one would avoid the impact of the GST.

Beyond the detail of the meta-narratives themselves are the questions of how they are communicated and reflected upon in the process of rhetorical exchange. While the Liberal-led coalition and the Labor campaign both spent about \$16 million on advertising and direct mail in the course of the election¹²⁷, Labor also established large, complex and multi-faceted structures to communicate its messages and to provide the opportunity for response through non-commercial means. Labor's "coalition-building" allowed it to use networks among unions, women, youth and ethnic and arts communities to spread its messages to appropriate opinion leaders and through them

¹²³ Bell & Boehringer "Australian Politics" p7-8

¹²⁴ Otton, Ric quoted in Lagan, Bernard et al "The pride before the fall" *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 March 1993 p9

¹²⁵ Parker, Derek "The pollsters, the pundits and the politics of fear" *IPA Review* vol 46 no 1 1993 p8

¹²⁶ *ibid*

¹²⁷ Shoebridge, Neil "The Ultimate one-day sale" *Business Review Weekly* 19 March 1993 p26

into the journals, magazines and direct mail distributions read by the appropriate interest groups. Further, Labor ensured that pathways for response from the citizen-audience to the campaign were available formally, informally and symbolically.

A further striking distinction between the campaigns was the different abilities of Keating and Hewson to utilise "free" media (or editorial) opportunities. Hewson never tried to work the media and they repaid him in kind. Their job is to ask searching questions and Hewson took this as an attack and refused to respond. He ignored the Canberra Press Gallery, avoided press conferences and cancelled the National Press Club engagement. Keating, by contrast, used the media to send the messages the campaign required: as is evident in the Nowra cake shots or the cover of *Rolling Stone*, Keating was adept in getting the right image in the right place. Perhaps his greatest success in the course of the campaign was the way he put the GST back on the agenda in week two during the informal debate with Hewson on *A Current Affair*. There is no doubt that the level of democratic deliberation during this debate was perfunctory but it remains the most significant moment in this campaign for democratic theory because it indicates so clearly the strategic political purposes to which the media may be put in the context of currently existing representative democracy. The *A Current Affair* debate did not improve the quality of democracy but its pivotal role reveals how the current form of democracy functions, and suggests the means by which marginal and critical political forces may utilise reconstructed rhetorical techniques through the mass media to assist in the constant work of remaking democracy.

With reference to the criteria of effective democratic deliberation outlined in Chapter Three, it is evident from the above discussion that access to the formal spaces for debate within the 1993 Australian Federal election campaign was limited by the model of two-party confrontation utilised by the mainstream media to describe elections. Nevertheless, some features of the Labor campaign point to the importance of not only symbolic but also practical participation of the citizens in the election. Labor's coalition-building, for example, avoided the mainstream mass media and relied on a "networking" strategy that began within the leadership of sympathetic organisations but then extended out to engage the membership of those organisations in various forms of rhetorical exchange. It would appear that there is the potential in this model of "grassroots" networking to maximise the deliberative interchange between citizens and parties in periods outside of election campaigns in ways which could improve the quantity and quality of access within the democratic process.

With reference to transparency, neither the Labor nor Liberal campaigns revealed much of their own processes and they did little to increase citizens' understanding of the election processes. However, Channel Nine's "worm" did open some previously concealed terrain of the election campaign. As was noted above, the utilisation of market research techniques to gauge the audience's response equated politics "with television's own discourses"¹²⁸ and trivialised the content of the debates between Keating and Hewson in the rush to achieve a "result" which precluded opportunities for reflection. However the worm's "turns" at key moments effectively revealed the issues that preoccupied the "undecided" studio audience and, given the reliance of political campaigns on opinion polling, the preoccupations of the campaigns themselves. While the citizen-audience was reduced to fluctuating quantities, this in itself was instructive because, at one level, that is precisely how campaigners see the electorate.

With regard to feedback, again there were few opportunities for citizens to respond to the campaign though Labor's direct mail and advertising sought to engage targeted audiences and provide opportunities for feedback directly through campaign phone lines and meetings with candidates and Ministers in the case of direct mail and indirectly through open-ended questions in the case of advertising. Attempts by the Liberals to produce symbolic feedback via the "victims" at their policy launch and via the rallies over the final ten days of the campaign would appear (from the election results) not to have been as successful as Keating's attempts to engage the citizen-audience with his refined rhetoric.

With regard to coordination, the ALP campaign suffered from some early dislocation between the party and the Prime Minister's office¹²⁹ which was later confirmed by Bob Hogg who admitted, when questioned about a breakdown in communication: "Like all of us, we had minor difficulties from time to time."¹³⁰ In contrast the Liberal campaign was highly coordinated, even to the extent that it was committed to the street rallies of the final week whether these were effective or not.¹³¹ Overall the campaign points to the problem representative democracy has in coordinating the production of fine-grained results. Keating did not have popular support (and was "disliked" twice as much as Hewson¹³²) but the only way to replace Keating was to accept the GST and other

¹²⁸ Bell & Boehringer "Australian Politics" p5

¹²⁹ Secombe, Mike "Liberal TV campaign puts Labor in shooting gallery" *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 February 1993 p4

¹³⁰ Hogg, Bob on *Lateline* (video recording) ABC-TV 11 March 1993

¹³¹ Robb, Andrew on *Losing the Unlosable*

¹³² AGB McNair/ANU study quoted in O'Reilly, David "The truth about March 13" *Bulletin* 14 September 1993 p18

elements of *Fightback!*. So while the election produced a result, results other than the two effectively available to the electorate may have well been preferred.

To summarise the lessons that may be learnt from the 1993 Australian Federal election campaign and used towards the development of greater deliberation within the institutions of representative democracy and a more ethical politics, it is possible to conclude that authentic forms of access and feedback such as the ALP's coalition-building are more effective in creating a strong rhetorical interchange than symbolic forms such as the street rallies utilised by the Liberals. In terms of transparency, the "worm" that featured in the debates between the leaders did reveal how some of the processes of market research which are utilised by campaigns operate. Further, Keating's use of the debate on *A Current Affair* to focus the overall campaign on the GST does reveal, at least in the analysis above, the potential for strategic use of the media in the campaign process. Overall, consideration of this campaign reveals much about the working processes of currently existing representative democracy and further chapters will explore the potential for the citizen-audience to remake these processes and in turn use them to improve the quality of democratic deliberation in mass society.

Chapter 7

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS AND DEMOCRACY

Retooling Rhetoric

Meaning is always negotiated in the semiotic process... Social Semiotics cannot assume that the texts produce exactly the meanings and effects that their authors hope for: it is precisely the struggles and their uncertain outcomes that must be studied at the level of social action...

Hodge and Kress¹

Outline

The cross-development of political and commercial persuasion techniques in the United States and Australia this century has produced the election campaign processes studied in the preceding two chapters. These campaign processes are now reviewed to reveal how they have consciously and unconsciously recreated Aristotelian rhetorical technique for use in currently existing representative democracy by adapting the new technologies of mass media with reference to insights from the social sciences. While these campaign processes predominantly assist entrenched political forces, there is the potential for the renewed rhetorical techniques those processes utilise to return to their Aristotelian purpose of democratic deliberation.

Aristotelian Basis of Campaign Industry

During the course of the twentieth century political campaigning has become a distinct industry in the United States² that profoundly influences the conduct of election campaigns in Australia:

The old ways - stump speeches, town hall meetings, closely typed handbills - have given way to computers and TV and public opinion polls and group discussions and phone polls and direct mail.³

¹ Hodge, R and Kress, G *Social Semiotics* Polity Press Cambridge 1988 p 12

² see for example Blumenthal, Sidney *The Permanent Campaign* Beacon Press Boston 1980 also Sabato, Larry J *The Rise of Political Consultants* Basic Books New York 1981. For a recent summary of the industry Napolitan, Joe et al "The political campaign industry" *Campaigns & Elections* December/January 1994 p45ff

Campaigns are now orchestrated by, as Mills describes them, "guns for hire"⁴ who employ techniques derived from the utilisation of the commercial media skills of mass marketing and public relations⁵, the managerial philosophies of Ford and Taylor⁶, the strategic game plans of the Rand Corporation⁷ and a psychological appreciation of the function of the emotions in decision-making processes often expressed in statistical terms.⁸ Recent developments in telecommunications and computers allow pollsters to assess quickly the electorate's quantitative and qualitative response to the ideas, issues, personalities and events operating in a campaign. Similarly media consultants can re-position campaigns quickly and effectively, putting their candidate's "spin" on developments and "massaging" precisely those segments of just those electorates needed to win. Television and direct mail, as well as more traditional forms of communication, are used to deliver messages designed to elicit an appropriate intellectual and emotional response at the polling booth.

This chapter explores the way in which, despite these new techniques and technologies, contemporary political campaigns still rely on the core concepts of rhetoric identified by Aristotle because they seek to achieve the same ends: to engage with the minds of citizens in order to persuade them to a particular action.⁹ The formal speech which Aristotle analysed so comprehensively continues to play an important role in politics, perhaps because it provides the opportunity for "the old-fashioned virtues of reason and evidence and logic"¹⁰. But beyond the speech, as has been foreshadowed in previous

³ Mills *The New Machine Men* p3

⁴ *ibid* p1-17

⁵ for historical summary see Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p1-52; for practical accounts see: Mathews, Iola *How to Use the Media in Australia* Penguin Ringwood 1991 and Jefkins, Frank *Public Relations Made Simple* Pittman London 1988; for critical accounts see Tiffen, Rodney *News and Power* Allen&Unwin Sydney 1989 and Leitch, Shirley "The Mass Media Election?" in Ticehurst, G.W.(ed) *Communication Australia* Griffin Sydney 1992

⁶ see for example Murray, Robin "Fordism and Post-Fordism" in Hall, S and Jaques, M (eds) *New Times* Lawrence & Wishart London 1990 p38-53

⁷ Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p5-6. For a simple account of game theory see Williams, JD *The Compleat Strategyst* (revised edition) McGraw-Hill New York 1966

⁸ Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p12 also Marcus, George E "Anxiety, enthusiasm and the vote: the emotional underpinnings of learning and involvement during presidential campaigns" *American Political Science Review* September 1993

⁹ Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture*

¹⁰ Watson, Don "In defence of the noble art of rhetoric" *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 November 1995 p15. A useful overview of political speech writing in Australia is

chapters and as is argued in more detail below, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* still exerts a key influence in the construction and communication of political campaign messages.

As was seen in the preceding two chapters, simple Aristotelian enthymemes have become the building blocks of political arguments which have been recreated as meta-narratives that use all the possibilities of the full range of mass media to communicate a complex web of messages to diverse groups of citizens. Aristotle implicitly applied the logic of the enthymeme to the whole speech and saw the importance of integrating the logical components of an argument with complementary emotional and character components to create an over-arching "body of proof": the grand enthymeme of the whole speech.¹¹ As a proponent of empirical reason, Aristotle saw that the real work of rhetoric is to identify the patterns of facts and emotions which will, in appropriate circumstances, produce a convincing argument for a majority of citizens. One thing that new technologies and techniques cannot alter is that the crucial rhetorical exchange is still, as it was for Aristotle, "mind to mind" at the moment of persuasion. While the location of that persuasion has shifted from the speech to the whole campaign and thus has generated a string of new complexities for the rhetorician, the rhetorician is left to confront those complexities with little more than refinements on the original Aristotelian approach.

However, and here lies the significance of political campaigning for democratic theory, the Assembly which informed Aristotle's accounts of rhetoric and politics as the moment of deliberation and democratic decision-making is not presently available in mass society. Political decisions are no longer determined after all interested citizens have had the opportunity to put their case in a forum where all citizens are guaranteed equal access. The operations of representative democracy have tended to limit the citizen's participation in democratic decision-making to the consumption of messages from political candidates and campaigns and the subsequent marking of the electoral ballot. In this process, democratic deliberation has become a much more diffuse and second-order exercise which typically occurs in a multitude of moments: watching TV in the living room, listening to the radio in the car, in the five seconds between opening a piece of direct mail and throwing it in the bin, in rushed conversations at the canteen and cafe and on the way to the polling booth.

provided by Cotton, Peter "Lipservice" *Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend* 22 July 1995 p35-41

¹¹ Arnhart *Aristotle on Political Reasoning* p37-38

Against this diminution of deliberative participation at this key democratic moment, it is incumbent on democratic theory to explicate the operations of currently existing electoral practice to ensure that

1) the techniques and technologies utilised in the construction of the campaign meta-narrative are transparent so that citizens may appreciate the import of the communications produced by entrenched political forces and

2) citizens have the information necessary to avail themselves of the means to participate in this key moment of currently existing democratic deliberation.

While only the wealthiest of citizens will have the financial resources to intervene in democratic politics at the level of entrenched parties, it is important to appreciate the potential to adapt campaign technologies and techniques for strategic use by marginalised and critical elements of the citizenry.

In the explication of electoral practice, Aristotle's categories remain particularly pertinent: regardless of the complexity of the argument or the technology and strategies used to transmit it, character, emotion and logic are still the main constituents of a persuasive case offered in the process of citizens convincing fellow citizens to action. Below, the political campaign's reworking of the Aristotelian categories are considered before an attempt is made to systematise the means of their application.

Character/Image

It was seen in Chapter Four that Aristotle addressed both the character of the speaker and the character of the audience in his *Rhetoric*. Because the rhetorical exchange requires some level of interpersonal interconnection to create the "mind to mind" experience needed to produce persuasion, both these elements are still crucial in the rhetorical act. Further, the perception of close personal contact created by the electronic media has promoted Aristotle's argument from character to the forefront of contemporary electoral politics where the theatrical presentation of the ethical persona has been recrafted as image-building, and the analysis of the audience has become the science of demographics. Although the relationship between image and demographics remains tenuous, it opens the connections between what political scientists know about

electoral behaviour and what the marketing profession knows about consumer behaviour.¹²

This is not to suggest that this connection improves the deliberative quality of democracy. Democracy, as was established in Chapters Two and Three, is not about citizens consuming politics but rather about their participating in politics. As Dryzek points out: opinion surveys, which are the staple of market research, reduce those studied to objects with bundles of attributes in order to produce an instrumental result.¹³ Pierre Bordieu suggests "public opinion" is a specious category because not everyone has an opinion, not all opinions are of equal value and there is no consensus about whether the right questions are being asked.¹⁴ If democratic politics was reduced to nothing more than the production of decisions in response to opinion polling, then democracy would be debased as citizens' opportunities to debate through the detail of an issue were foreshortened. However, as will be further discussed below, the political campaign does not use polling to close the debate but rather to understand how the mass of citizens are responding to the candidate and the campaign's contribution to debate. Thus market research is a tool to assist Aristotelian "invention" and offers campaigns the opportunity to extend their "mind-to-mind" rhetorical exchange with the citizenry of a mass democracy.

The "image" problem for the campaign is that in a mass democracy where most citizens do not have the opportunity to know the candidate intimately, they will construct their own "intimate" relationship with the candidate based on the observations they make of the candidate's persona, fitting the relationship into their own personal system of relationships as best they can. To address this problem the campaign creates the opportunities to highlight the characteristics of the candidate's persona to which swinging voters, as well as stalwarts, will be attracted. In doing this, the campaign is merely seeking to create an intimacy between the candidate and the citizen despite the limitation of mass democracy.

Regardless of what the candidate says, clothes, hairstyle, speech, posture and attitude will be read by the citizen-audience as statements about the kind of person the candidate is. Communicating the persona has always been an important element in democratic

¹² Nimmo, Dan "Image and voter's decision-making processes" in Newman, Bruce & Sheth, Jagdish (eds) *Political Marketing: Readings and Annotated Bibliography* American Marketing Association Chicago 1985 p118

¹³ Dryzek *Discursive Democracy* p160-162

¹⁴ Bordieu, Pierre "Public opinion does not exist" Mattelart, A & Siegelau, S *Communication and Class Struggle* IG/IMMRC New York 1978 p124ff

politics.¹⁵ Keith Melder makes a strong case for the presence of image in modern democracy at least since the time of George Washington. While Washington and his contemporaries may have called it "reputation", the foundation of the United States rested so firmly on the image of authority and unity embodied by Washington which, in Melder's view, established that he was "the unanimous and only possible choice as first president."¹⁶ Tracing the history of imagery through United States presidential campaigns before television, Melder comes to the conclusion that candidates of old were packaged and managed more completely and simplistically - and in some cases more misleadingly - than any modern-day political consultant could ever engineer. The electronic news media understand only too well that they are creating images, so they make some effort to base the images they create in fact.

What then is character in contemporary rhetorical practice? Part of the work of the election campaign is to construct the candidate's image but what is being constructed? Blumenthal states the answer bluntly

each candidate is a dream problem, a problem that must be solved consciously [by] stimulat[ing] the public's wish fulfilment for the candidate through the manipulation of symbols and images, enticing voters to believe that the candidate can satisfy their needs.¹⁷

Daniel Boorstin identifies the key characteristics of the image: constructed to achieve certain goals, it credibly appeals to the values and common sense of the electorate. It is "vivid and concrete" but still ambiguous enough for voters to supply their own interpretations and draw their own conclusions.¹⁸ Images are devices of shorthand identification in a symbolic universe which are not complete until they are received and processed by the audience. Perhaps the most useful way to achieve an understanding of image is to consider the conditions of failure. What is the effect when the image is faltering? A sure sign of an image problem is when the public and, even worse, the media report that there is "no there there"¹⁹. Political advertising may be turning style into substance but it clearly fails when, after all its efforts, there is no substance apparent.

¹⁵ consider the political impact of gesture and stance traced by Bremmer, Jan "Walking, standing and sitting in ancient Greek culture" in Bremmer & Roodenburg *A Cultural History of Gesture* p15-35 also the tension between theatrical and political modes of presentation in Graf, Fritz "Gestures and conventions" *ibid* p36-58

¹⁶ Melder, Keith "Creating Candidate Imagery" in Sabato *Campaigns and Elections: A Reader* p5

¹⁷ Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p5

¹⁸ Boorstin, Daniel *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream* Atheneum New York 1962

¹⁹ Diamond & Bates *The Spot* p31

While the candidate may possess or project an image, it means nothing until it is perceived: "Each image exists as the person's subjective understanding of things... an image is a human construct imposed upon an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event or person."²⁰ That act of perception contains cognitive, affective and connotative elements and while it is relatively easy to supply the informational and emotional facets to an image, the third facet is equally crucial. The realm of the connotative indicates

how close a voter perceives himself to the political object, ie his proximity along specific dimensions (or with reference to specific matters) of sufficient salience to trigger for him an idea of what he proposes to do about the object.²¹

These considerations point to the limitations of the media campaign: the candidate cannot just be images on a TV screen. There needs to be substance to the candidate, and preferably substance consistent with the media image. The challenge for the campaign is to draw from the candidate a character that has both substance and appeal. There is more to the communication of image than simple presentation. The image also ideally carries consistent logical and emotional messages that appeal to both the reason and desires of the electorate.

Emotion/Desire

The emotional states considered by Aristotle remain a useful guide for traversing the terrain of contemporary desire. While the election campaign cannot absent itself from the policy debate, one key function of the campaign is to elicit an appropriate emotional response at the moment of voting. Technological change has provided powerful means to touch human emotions: personally-addressed direct mail, radio, computer-assisted phone-banking and, most significantly, television.

Where once TV producers used loud, raucous repetition to attempt to lodge the message in the subconscious of the audience, they now look for an instinctual feeling of resonance in selecting music, lyrics, words and images that prompt appropriate responses as they gently "stir" the subconscious. That is why many advertisements mirror dreams. While individuals cannot express the impact of these advertisements

²⁰ Nimmo "Image and voter's decision-making processes" p119

²¹ *ibid* p122

verbally, it can be observed in their behaviour.²² Television producers, Emery argues, have cast off the Lockean, mechanistic view of perception as rational inference from sense-data, to embrace the naive realism of direct perception which holds that humans just extract the meaningful knowledge which they decide they require direct from their environment.²³ In preparing their emotional enthymemes, campaigns rely on the basic affective states outlined by Aristotle to crystallise moments of meaning that address the concerns of the voters. The campaign is attempting to "strike a responsive chord with the reality... the viewer experienced"²⁴ that leaves them more inclined to vote for the campaign's candidate (or less inclined to vote for the opponent).

To probe beyond the cognitive manifestations of opinion, to the values, emotions and feelings that will determine the voter's choice, qualitative research of the citizen-audience utilises small "focus" groups of undecided voters from marginal electorates.²⁵ Practitioners characterise qualitative research as: "an imprecise science which seeks to understand, through discussion, observation and analysis, the psychological motives that underpin consumer attitudes and behaviour in a given market."²⁶ The facilitator of the small groups fosters debate with casual but focused questioning that probes the participants' inclinations and motivations. While this form of qualitative research is no substitute for the thorough-going deliberation which would ideally be debated in a democracy, it nevertheless provides campaigns with the opportunity to observe political discussion among the citizens and to appreciate their arguments and read their body language and tone of voice first-hand.

The affective nature of television dictates much about the presentation of the candidate's persona via that medium. Ever since Richard Nixon's Checkers speech in 1952 when he used a dog given as a gift to deflect concerns about improper campaign donations²⁷, the emotional potency of candidates talking quietly and candidly about their own private life has been exploited to reinforce a political message, or at least to distract from some shortcoming. While before a large crowd the production of charisma involved the expression of a certainty verging on dominance, on television the most efficacious delivery involves talk directed to the emotions using a soft voice and colloquial language

²² Emery "The dynamics of TV marketing" p37

²³ *ibid* p43

²⁴ Schwartz, Tony quoted in Diamond & Bates *The Spot* p119

²⁵ for an historical account of qualitative research see Mills *The New Machine Men* p78-9

²⁶ Adams, Chris "Good researchers are observers, not oracles" *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 June 1993 p36

²⁷ for a detailed account see Diamond & Bates *The Spot* p66-75

that suggests the candidate is communicating intimately with viewers in the privacy of their own living room. While Aristotle's categories of emotions remain a useful guide to the production of an affective response by the contemporary campaign, the electronic media require a much more subtle approach to their application than was appropriate in addresses to large crowds. As Bill Currie said: "The symbolic dimensions of politics rule."²⁸

Logic/Message

In the context of the political campaign, the enthymemes of Aristotle equate to the "lines" which are repeated in a "mantra" in all available forums to produce a cohesive "message" which is the grand enthymeme or meta-narrative designed to engage the citizen-audience in a rhetorical exchange in order to persuade citizens to exercise their franchise in a certain way. Despite the importance of character and emotion in crafting a persuasive message, elections provide citizens with a residual opportunity to express their preferences about the direction of government policy and that requires compelling, logical arguments.

The policy statements of a campaign require their own logical consistency so that opponents cannot portray inconsistency as a sign of weakness and confusion. But beyond that, Aristotle's formulation of rhetoric as the counterpart of dialectic retains a crucial relevance. Politics is more than a dream; it is about effectively tending society, dealing with people and their problems, creating a material future from a material world and drawing real conclusions from real premises. The rationality of rhetoric is always truncated and expedient but it must always be there: anchoring the campaign, focusing "the message", establishing the candidate's credentials, working in tandem with image and emotion to engage and persuade the voter.

The construction and communication of the candidate's message is a central task of the campaign. As Ron Faucheux put it: "The Message is the central strategic rationale as to why a candidate or issue position is the right one at the right time and is preferable to other alternatives."²⁹ The message may be summarised as a slogan which is simple, concise and direct, yet with enough narrative texture to allow the citizen-audience to produce their own complex readings.³⁰ Ideally the message of the campaign is consistent

²⁸ Currie 1993 Election

²⁹ Faucheux, Ron "Great Slogans" *Campaign and Elections* June/July 1993 p26ff

³⁰ *ibid* p26

with, and reinforces, the image of the candidate it seeks to promote. As the campaign progresses, the message needs to be refined and reinterpreted in response to developments from other campaigns and political life generally. This is not to say that the campaign can afford to shift ground erratically. It should seek a level of consistency as it develops new forms of its arguments which are the logical outcome of the candidate's image and the campaign's previously communicated messages. While debate within the campaign is an important element in ensuring that the campaign's message continues to be rational and relevant to the citizen-audience, all media messages from the campaign are ideally consistent and mutually supporting. Thus the campaign, day by day, seeks to build its individual communications into a meta-narrative that persuades the citizen-audience to vote for its candidate.

As was seen in the two preceding chapters, political campaigns seek to communicate their "message" in an environment which reflects the speed and complexity of contemporary media. To this end campaigns are constantly deploying the practical techniques of media management such as position, spin, targeting and tracking in strategies which rely on constant quantitative and qualitative research to produce persuasive arguments after the fashion of Aristotelian "invention". These techniques and strategies are considered below in order to appreciate how, despite their instrumental purposes, they may yield elements of practical reason available to those outside entrenched political forces.

In Chapter Three, it was noted that the mass media are an unavoidable if incomplete forum for politics in mass society and are certainly one effective way of communicating the campaign's message to the minds of the citizen-audience. While the deliberation required by democratic politics is substantially different from the commercial discourses which surround the marketing of a product, as politics and marketing both presently occur to a significant degree through the mass media, certain techniques are mutually applicable. Political campaigns have borrowed the notion of *position* from concept evaluation techniques utilised in product marketing. Greg Mauser argues that

Concept evaluation procedures permit candidates to evaluate alternative postures and positions that they are considering so that they may determine the campaign themes and slogans that would best position them in the political contest.³¹

While this approach sits outside the traditional left/right analysis of voter preference, the adversarial model of political behaviour may always have been over-simplified, the

³¹ Mauser, Greg A "Positioning political candidates" in Newman & Sheth *Political Marketing* p107

result of a professional politics which ignored the complex realities of an electorate of individuals, each with their own histories and their own particular world views. Persuading the swinging or undecided voter is about something more than edging the campaign across some imaginary spectrum; it is about identifying the themes that concern those voters and reinterpreting the campaign, its image and its message, in that light. While, as Christopher Matthews says, "you can *position* yourself anywhere you want to be"³², no campaign can remain credible if it positions itself as something it is not. However, the plasticity inherent in the notion of positioning provides campaigns with the opportunity to position themselves to their best advantage so that they can appeal to their natural supporters as well as targeting potential supporters. Thus, for example, Green candidates opposed to industrial development may position themselves to win the vote not only of their "dark" green core constituency but also of a more conservative group of voters who simply do not want their environment to change.

Once the campaign has taken a position, the application of *spin* is the key work for the campaign. Spin seeks to fine-tune the position of the campaign by managing the media in order to communicate the messages most advantageous to the campaign. The aim of spin is to deflect problems presented by the media by turning those problems into opportunities to communicate the core campaign message. Thus spin is closely related to *damage control*: "the need to manage a crisis, to minimise a problem that suddenly raises its ugly head and can't be ignored."³³ The mass media is liable to be constantly opening up new avenues of debate between competing campaigns and providing the citizen-audience with the space to offer feed-back to the campaigns. To be involved in opportunities for deliberation afforded by the electoral process, each campaign should ideally be reviewing their meta-narrative constantly in order to refine it so that it can engage more effectively in the rhetorical exchange between itself and the electorate.

Vital to the effective communication of the campaign's message is the *targeting* of the message to those members of the citizen-audience who are important in achieving the campaign's goals. Typically in a contest between the two major parties, swinging and undecided voters in marginal seats are targeted with images and messages that are designed to persuade them to vote for the campaign's candidate. However, targeting also has application beyond mainstream political contests because it highlights the importance in all political work of seeking to expand the campaign's supporters by sending messages to more people than those already committed to the campaign's point of view. To understand the effects of its work the campaign can engage in *tracking*. Just

³² Matthews, Christopher *Hardball* Perennial Harper & Row New York 1989 p214

³³ Stewart, Morgan "Damage control" *Campaign and Elections* March 1994 p24-29

as skilful speakers in the Athenian Pnyx could sense the mood of the crowd and tailor their presentations in order to persuade them to a particular point of view, the contemporary campaign similarly seeks to understand the impact it is having on the minds of the citizen-audience so that it can develop its messages and persuade them to a particular action at the polling booth. Ideally the campaign will create a synergy between its tracking and targeting: using tracking research to create the material that will affect targeted voters in ways that will show up in further tracking research and so on.³⁴

Invention/Research

Aristotle underlined the importance of understanding the character of the audience in framing the speaker's rhetorical inventions and, as was seen above, considered it so crucial that he pursued that question rather than a detailed analysis of the formation of the speaker's character.³⁵ The speaker in the Greek polis knew the opinions and attitudes of many members of his audience and could just look around to judge its characteristics in terms of age, class, wealth and power. This allowed the speaker to adapt the speech to the crowd; to "invent" appropriate arguments for the particular occasion. By contrast the contemporary candidate in a mass society needs to employ more complex strategies to achieve the same result.

In the pre-campaign phase, the candidate and key advisers research the demographics and past voting habits of the electorate. Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Electoral Commission publications are useful sources of information as the campaign seeks to "know" the citizen-audience to whom it is appealing.³⁶ The campaign then needs to access statistical and psychographic models³⁷, computer programs and a bank of phone lines to assess the citizen-audience's response to the ideas, issues, personalities and events operating in a campaign by opinion polling.³⁸

³⁴ Mills *The New Machine Men* p8-13

³⁵ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1388b-1391b

³⁶ there is some useful benchmark analysis in Kemp, DA *Society and Electoral Behaviour in Australia* UQP St Lucia 1978

³⁷ for an understanding of the theoretical principles of political marketing see Newman & Sheth *Political Marketing* particularly Shama, Avraham "Political Marketing: A study of voter decision-making and candidate marketing strategy" p10-14 and Ahmed, S.A. and Jackson D.N. "Psychographics for Social Policy Decisions" p27-37

³⁸ for a history and analysis of published opinion polls in Australia see McNair, Ian & Teer, Frank "Political opinion polling in Australia" in Worcester, Robert M (ed) *Political Opinion Polling* MacMillan London 1983 p4-17 and Beed, Terence et al *Australian Opinion Polls 1941-1977* Hale&Iremonger Sydney 1977

As was seen above, opinion polling is no substitute for mass participation in deliberative democracy, but in currently existing representative democracy quantitative research of a representative sample of the citizen-audience offers some opportunities for campaigns to engage in rhetorical exchanges with the citizenry. Bernard Berelson argued that: "opinion research can help a democracy to know itself, evaluate its achievements and bring its practices more nearly in accord with its own fundamental ideas."³⁹ Orwell also thought: "some mechanism for testing public opinion is a necessity of modern government and more so in a democratic country".⁴⁰ Polling is certainly a key tool in keeping campaigns relevant to the electorate. As Mills observes: "One State Government minister commented polls were valuable to him because they helped break down his isolation from the electorate."⁴¹

Polling is about much more than who will win an election. Polls are unreliable for this purpose because a large number of voters decide how they are going to vote in the last few days of the campaign.⁴² Former ALP pollster, Rod Cameron, is quoted as saying with regard to published voter polls that: "they are measuring something, and it is probably something quite interesting, but whatever it is, it's *not* how people intend to vote in the Federal election."⁴³ While voter polls may be little more than indicators of electoral "mood", campaign teams read them closely to ascertain the level of the undecided vote because that indicates the field of opportunity to persuade swinging voters to support the campaign.⁴⁴

Opinion polls are produced from and read against a model of voter behaviour that acknowledges not only the importance of voter intention, issues and policies but also the relevance of candidate imagery, social imagery, current events, emotional feelings, personal events and the epistemic issues inherent in the voter's own system of

³⁹ Berelson, Bernard "Democratic theory and public opinion" *Public Opinion Quarterly* no 16 Spring-Winter 1952-3 p313

⁴⁰ Orwell, George "Propaganda and Demotic Speech" in *Collected Essays* vol 3 p167-8

⁴¹ Mills, Stephen *The New Machine Men* p64

⁴² Totaro, Paola "Seven days that made the difference" *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 March 1995 p2 reporting a McNair exit poll of the 1995 NSW State election that found 26% of respondents claimed to have made up their minds on how to vote on election day and that a further 20% had decided in the last week.

⁴³ Secombe, Mike "Poll vaulting" *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 November 1992 p41

⁴⁴ for a detailed analysis of the problems in interpreting the undecided vote see Fenwick, Ian et al "Dealing with indecision - should we ... or not" in Newman & Sheth *Political Marketing* p38-41

knowledge and belief.⁴⁵ Under this model of opinion polling, a broad range of issues and events are investigated which might contribute to the voters' decisions and which indicate where they may be open to persuasion. Polls serve the useful purpose of establishing the mood of the electorate, finding which issues are important and which positions have appeal to the voters. From this work the campaign can develop and refine the "lines" which constitute its message. Rod Cameron summarised his contribution to campaigns: "The main part of our work was the central campaign structure, the rhetoric from the leaders and ministers, the concentration of the issues, identification of regional emphases and all that PR stuff."⁴⁶

What the polls tell the campaign is secondary to what the campaign does with them. A useful poll is a simulation of the campaign, testing the effectiveness of various strategic feints to create "microcosms rather than unreal abstractions of the campaign."⁴⁷ The campaign can then use the poll to reposition itself, not by changing its policies, but by choosing which ones to emphasise and then by reinventing, reinterpreting and repackaging them in ways that maximise their appeal. Polls "provide the strategy to communicate the reasons behind positions and decisions in such a way that more support for your views might be generated."⁴⁸ Mills points out that: "Politics still needs judgement and skill to determine when and if poll advice should be accepted"⁴⁹ The skill however is not in instinctively knowing when to accept or reject poll advice; rather it is in hearing what the polling has to say and responding to this in the words and images that the campaign "invents".

Communicating Messages

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* direct speech is the only form of communication considered. In contemporary society there are many channels which the campaign can utilise to communicate its message. While, as will be seen below, forms of automated personal contact such as direct mail do have a persuasive effect, in a mass society the mass media are the most significant political site. As Shirley Leitch suggests: "absence from media

⁴⁵ Newman, Bruce & Sheth, Jagdish "A Model of Primary Voter Behavior" in Newman & Sheth *Political Marketing* p62-71

⁴⁶ Lawson "The Spin Doctors" p1

⁴⁷ Harrison, Tubby "Impact Polling: Feedback for a winning strategy" *Campaigns and Elections* no 1 Spring 1980 p8

⁴⁸ Meadow, Robert G & von Szeliski, Heidi "10 myths about political polling" *Campaigns and Elections* August 1993 p49

⁴⁹ Mills *The New Machine Men* p64

products is absence from the public arena and the public agenda of debate."⁵⁰ As was seen in Chapter Three, the mass media can exercise a coercive influence over political debate but by their nature they cannot control the readings that the citizen audience produces of them and they systematically provide opportunities for subversion where critical and marginalised voices can express themselves. To participate in the processes of democratic deliberation offered in currently existing representative democracy, the campaign must effectively communicate through the "noise" of the mass media by understanding the processes and turning them to the campaign's advantage.

There are many useful accounts of the techniques of media management and public relations⁵¹ and detailed analyses of the effects these techniques have on news production⁵². There are some useful journalistic accounts of the minutiae and mechanics of media management in specific campaigns⁵³ and even detailed work studies of journalists during election campaigns⁵⁴ but little has been written about the practicalities of media management in election campaigns.⁵⁵ While no campaign will comprehensively subvert all the filters applied to political events in the process of news production, it is important to recall that the production of the news is work and, like most human activity, is a process of expedient actions dictated more often than not by the limitation of resources and the demand for product rather than by management preferences and institutional agendas.

⁵⁰ Leitch "The Mass Media Election?" p36

⁵¹ Mathews *How to Use the Media in Australia*; Jefkins *Public Relations Made Simple*; Sladen, Christopher *Getting Across: a publicity primer for voluntary organisations* Bedford Square Press London 1973; Kelly, Graham *Managing the Media* Kelly Communication Mt Waverly 1995; Evans, Fred *Managing the Media: proactive strategy for better business press relations* Quorum New York 1987; Howard, Carole & Mathews, Wilma *On Deadline: managing media relations* Waveland Press Prospect Heights 1988

⁵² Tiffen *News and Power*; Herman & Chomsky *Manufacturing Consent* and; Carey *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*

⁵³ for example Thompson *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*; in the Australian context, Lloyd, Clem "The 1990 Media Campaign" in Bean, C et al *The Greening of Australian Politics* and; Grattan, Michelle "Mr Hawke and Media Management" *Institute of Public Affairs Review* 38/1 Autumn 1984 p54-56

⁵⁴ Crouse *The Boys on the Bus*; Kerbel, Matthew R *Edited for Television: CNN, ABC and the 1992 Presidential Election* Westview Press Boulder 1994; and in the Australian context, Ward, Ian "Making Television News - Journalists and politicians at work" *Media Information Australia* no 61 August 1991 p54-62; also *Media Rules* (video recording) SBS-TV August 1996

⁵⁵ Kellems, Kevin Shaw "Handling the press: 20 rules never to break" *Campaigns and Elections* August 1994 p34

To communicate its messages through the mass media, it is incumbent on the political campaign to understand how the news is made so it can mould messages to the parameters by which the media operates.⁵⁶ There are numerous cases to attest that "strategic use of limited resources and clever tactical skill can overcome intimidating odds"⁵⁷. By presenting journalists with images and messages they can easily comprehend at convenient times, the campaign improves the chances of its message being communicated through the mass media. Thus media management seeks to create media "events" by staging "overt acts" to desubliminate and redefine public perceptions.⁵⁸ These events seek to communicate messages, through simple words and relevant, complementary images, direct to journalists and other news producers.⁵⁹ Typically an event is preceded by press releases to inform the media of the event and the issues to be canvassed at the event. Further, there is contact with "opinion leaders" to convince them of the newsworthiness of the event.⁶⁰ The size of the event may range from minor (for example, a "door-stop" interview which allows the candidate to deliver a short "grab" as part of an on-going story⁶¹) to major (for example, a campaign launch or candidates' debate which allow for deeper canvassing of issues and therefore require extensive preparation⁶²).

Media events utilising "props" and physical interaction with members of the citizen-audience tend to provide the strong images that the media find useful but may be counter-productive if not carefully planned (for example the "cake-shop incident" in the 1993 Australian Federal election when Keating's visit to a cake shop to criticise the GST

⁵⁶ a useful guide is provided by Bell, Allan *The Language of News Media* Blackwell Oxford 1991

⁵⁷ Schmidt, David D "How they whipped "whoops" in Washington State" Sabato *Campaigns and Elections: A Reader* p191

⁵⁸ for a brief history of the media event see Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p21-22

⁵⁹ Ward "Making Television News" p55

⁶⁰ The role of personal contact in news production should not be underestimated; see Tuchman, Barbara *Making News* Free Press New York 1978 at px: "news is an interchange among politicians and policymakers, newswriters, and their organisational superiors, and... the rest of us are eavesdroppers on that ongoing conversation."

⁶¹ consider research which indicates the average length of sound bites from US presidential candidates on network news had dropped from 42.3 seconds in 1968 to 9.8 seconds in 1988 reported in Glover, Richard "Blink and you'll miss it" *Sydney Morning Herald* 7 August 1993 p40

⁶² Faucheux, Ron "Candidate Debate Checklist" *Campaigns and Elections* September 1994 p42-44

almost backfired when the proprietor turned out to be a Liberal supporter critical of the Government's tax regime). While media events may be seen as attempts by campaigns to exert greater control over the debate in election campaigns, it is suggested here that there is an alternative reading of them as enthymemic tools with which campaigns pursue debate in the highly mediated processes of the mass media. Of particular significance is that these processes may be utilised by marginalised and critical political forces⁶³.

Ancillary to the processes of media management by which campaigns communicate their messages through "free" editorial space in the media is the use of advertising which Robert Root has analysed as a form of Aristotelian rhetoric that utilises a persuasive message in the exchange between advertiser and audience.⁶⁴ While Ian Ward and Ian Cook argue that the use of TV advertising "forecloses rather than improves the prospect that elections will be decided by informed voters making reasoned judgements at the polls"⁶⁵, the implied right to free political speech in the Australian constitution has ruled out the banning of political advertising.⁶⁶

Thus political advertising is an unavoidable element in election campaigns in currently existing representative democracy and it is useful to appreciate the role advertising has in bonding together the matrix of ideas, images, policies and arguments that make up the campaign into a moment of "emotional exchange"⁶⁷ which nevertheless utilises all the Aristotelian methods of rhetorical argument: character, emotion and reason. While large amounts of money are spent on campaign advertising⁶⁸, there is the potential for marginalised and critical groups to utilise advertising to participate in campaigns. Cheap advertisements can be produced, even on home equipment, and can be run in off-peak times at relatively low cost.⁶⁹ The media launch of any TV advertisement is a news worthy event that gains mainstream coverage. The criticism of opponents' advertising is

⁶³ for example the Tasmanian Greens have successfully utilised the media event to turn local issues into matters of national and international significance; see Barnett, Guy "The Green Lobby's Strategy and Tactics: a Tasmanian Case Study" *Environmental Backgrounder* Institute of Public Affairs no 14

⁶⁴ Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture* chapter 5 "The Rhetoric of Television Commercials" p50-60

⁶⁵ Ward, Ian & Cook, Ian "Televised Political Advertising, Media Freedom and Democracy" *Social Alternatives* vol 11 no 1 1992 p22

⁶⁶ *Australian Capital Television v The Commonwealth* (1992) 108 ALR 577

⁶⁷ Miller, Scott quoted in Diamond & Bates *The Spot* p10

⁶⁸ for example it is estimated that over \$22 million was spent on advertising in the 1993 Australian Federal election, see Shoebridge "The Ultimate one-day sale" p26

⁶⁹ Franzen, John "Lights, camera, action!: creating effective commercials for low budget campaigns" *Campaigns and Elections* August 1994 p30-31

an effective way to spin their efforts back against them. Radio advertising provides a relatively cheap alternative to TV. It allows direct appeal to particular groups of potential supporters among the target audience of the particular station. A campaign can make an "invisible" tactical move on key segments of swinging voters of which "an opponent, political insiders and the news media will remain totally unaware until its impact has already been achieved."⁷⁰

The criticisms that advertisements do not engage viewers in dialogue, that they are intended to create an emotive response and that they are mediated by advertising agencies all point to realities that the campaign has to face in fashioning its advertisements. To be effective, election advertising must be based on an appreciation that "ads are condensed images of wish fulfilment"⁷¹ and crafted so that those wishes develop from the campaign's key messages. TV advertising, in particular, is a development beyond oral and literary forms: "far more dynamic and flexible... dramatic or cinematic rather than promotional."⁷² Despite these differences, the purpose of TV advertising is still to persuade, using all expedient means. Any political advertising that sought "not to persuade, but to control; not to stimulate thought, but to prevent it"⁷³ would quickly doom the campaign that commissioned it to irrelevance because the campaign cannot afford to dictate to the citizen-audience as they make the final decision at the polling booth. As was discussed above, tracking research which questions a sample of the electorate provides some indication to the campaign of the citizen-audience's response to their arguments and David Sawyer would argue that the whole process together strives to achieve the Aristotelian goal of "genuine dialogue with the voter"⁷⁴.

Direct Mail

In the last ten years direct mail has become the other significant site of the political rhetoric in Australia. Its growth in influence can be gauged from the fact that while Mills only makes passing reference to it as a fund-raising tool⁷⁵, parties now put more of their

⁷⁰ White, Joe Slade "Wavelength winners" *Campaigns and Elections* June/July 1993 p45

⁷¹ Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p5

⁷² Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture* p60

⁷³ Corcoran *Political Language and Rhetoric* pxv

⁷⁴ Sawyer, David quoted in Diamond & Bates *The Spot* p6

⁷⁵ Mills *The New Machine Men* p192-7

campaign resources into persuasive direct mail than they do into television advertising.⁷⁶ According to Larry Sabato: "Direct mail combines sophisticated political judgments and psychological, emotional appeals with the most advanced computer and mailing techniques."⁷⁷ It arrives at the voter's home as a personally addressed piece of mail, usually from the candidate, talking directly to the voter within the codes of correspondence, "an epistolary discourse between two people"⁷⁸. The purpose of direct mail is to communicate with the voters, not to win arguments nor impress them with eloquence. The aim is to build a relationship by utilising basic rhetorical modes that will be decisive in the polling booth.⁷⁹

Sabato admits that "the art of direct mail is still inexact... [and]... that last week's magic may not work for this week's candidate."⁸⁰ In an attempt to gauge the effectiveness of direct mail (compared with unaddressed "junk" mail), data derived from the campaigns discussed in Chapters Five and Six has been systematised and tabulated below. While other factors obviously contribute to the outcome of elections, the correlation between the amount of addressed direct mail delivered in a seat and the swings achieved is significant.

In the 1991 BCC election, the ALP campaign utilised its ability to produce and distribute direct mail cheaply in targeted wards. The campaign appreciated the difference between unaddressed "junk" mail and personally addressed letters. While the two city-wide letters from Lord Mayoral candidate Soorley were simply unaddressed, folded pieces of paper, the majority of communications in wards Labor successfully targeted were in addressed envelopes. In the table below, the mailings in five wards are summarised by a factor derived by allocating 20 points for each ward-wide delivery of addressed direct mail and 1 point for an unaddressed letter or pamphlet and by then comparing this with the swing achieved:

The effectiveness of the addressed direct mail can be appreciated by comparing the mailing factor with the swing in each of the seats and particularly by comparing the results in Fairfield, Ekibin, Chermside and Camp Hill with the result in Carina where the

⁷⁶ Ward, Ian quoted in "Colour-conscious ALP won mailbox battle: researcher"
University (of Queensland) News 28 October 1992 p4

⁷⁷ Sabato, Larry J "How Direct Mail Works" in Sabato *Campaigns and Elections: A Reader* p88

⁷⁸ Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture* p28

⁷⁹ for a comprehensive analysis of the Aristotelian basis of direct mail see Root *The Rhetorics of Popular Culture* chapter 3 "The Rhetoric of Direct Mail"

⁸⁰ Sabato "How Direct Mail Works" p99

Table 7.1 - Comparison of ALP mail to swing - 1991 BCC

Ward	Mailing	Factor*	Swing
Fairfield	5 addressed	100	18.4%
Ekibin	3 addressed 1 unaddressed	61	16.2%
Chermside	2 addressed 2 unaddressed	42	10.7%
Camp Hill	2 addressed 2 unaddressed	42	10.7%
Coopers Plains	1 addressed 4 unaddressed	24	6.9%
Carina	3 unaddressed	3	0.3%

* addressed=20 unaddressed=1

candidate did not "believe" in direct mail. Though he coordinated the distribution of two "junk" mail letters and a pamphlet, he only received a swing of 0.3% and failed to win the seat.

The 1993 Australian Federal election saw campaign funds spent on direct mail increase while money spent on television advertising declined.⁸¹ In order to test the relationship between the competing direct mail strategies of the major parties and compare it with swings achieved, samples of direct mail were gathered from the community⁸² and the results from three marginal seats are tabulated below. The factor is derived by applying the formula utilised in table 7.1 to calculate numerical quantities for mailings from each of the major parties and finding the difference between them. That factor is then compared with the swing achieved in each seat.

From this table it is clear that the ALP sent much more addressed mail and much less unaddressed mail than the Liberal parties. Labor's also differed in quality: while all the Liberal addressed mail was in the form of traditional letters, some of the ALP material was "glossy" or "attack" mail which is an personally-addressed pamphlet dense with images that unfolds "something more like television on paper."⁸³

⁸¹ Shoebridge "The Ultimate one-day sale" p26

⁸² "Column 8" *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 February 1993 p1; "Politics recycled" *Sunday Tasmanian* 21 February 1993 p27

⁸³ Easson, Mary "Swing High: Win Lowe" *The Sydney Papers* vol 6 no 1 Summer 1994 p77; see also "Attack mail" *Campaigns and Elections* September 1993 p30-33 and

Table 7.2 - Compare ALP/Liberal mail to swing - 1993 Australian Federal election

Seat	ALP mail	Liberal mail	Factor*	Swing#
Franklin	1 addressed 3 unaddressed	11 unaddressed	23-11 = 12	4.4%
Lowe	3 addressed 7 unaddressed	1 addressed 14 unaddressed	67-15 = 52	4.5%
Macarthur	3 addressed 2 unaddressed	3 addressed 14 unaddressed	62-74 =-12	-0.3%

* ALP mail minus Liberal mail: addressed=20 unaddressed=1 # to ALP

While the limited methodology and scope of the research outlined immediately above does not allow for any strong conclusions about the electoral efficacy of direct mail, it does suggest avenues for further research into a relatively unexplored aspect of political communication. The significance of the above analysis for this thesis rests in the potential for marginalised and critical political elements to utilise a web of supporters to engage local portions of the citizen-audience in deliberation, by generating addressed direct mail on domestic computers and distributing it to the appropriate addresses by hand. The effects of this process would be to produce local (for example electorate-wide) rhetorical exchanges relatively cheaply.

Conclusion

The above analysis reveals how the traditional form of Aristotelian political rhetoric has been subsumed into a broader form which might be described as electronic, audio-visual and post-industrial but perhaps most comprehensively as "post-modern". The post-modern form of political rhetoric still produces speeches, but it also creates, adapts and multiplies phrases, lines and arguments to produce campaigns that are meta-narratives of words, images and events designed to persuade the citizen-audience of currently existing representative democracy through rhetorical exchanges which are firmly based in the Aristotelian categories.

Rhetoric, now as then, is based on discovering "the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits."⁸⁴ The means of communication have changed

Schlackman, R and Douglas, J "Attack Mail: The Silent Killer" *Campaigns and Elections* July 1995 p25ff

⁸⁴ Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* 1355b

and the speed and complexity of newer forms of communication have produced the potential for new forms of "invention" to communicate messages effectively. However, these new forms of communication do not bring political deliberation to an end. As Jean-Francois Lyotard recognises, any attempt at a "grand narrative" that brings politics to a conclusion is doomed to failure because the citizen-audience cannot avoid producing new narratives which are constantly legitimated then undermined by their "own linguistic practice and communicational interaction."⁸⁵

There is no doubt that the campaign techniques discussed above are currently used predominantly by major political parties in highly controlled ways that limit the quantity and quality of democratic deliberation in electoral processes. However the hegemonic use of these techniques implies that the opportunity exists for inversion, by the development of a radical rhetorical practice. This practice is based on improving access to the deliberation that surrounds existing electoral processes and by increasing the transparency of those processes and the mass media itself, which may then open both to marginalised and critical groups. So the "discourse of disempowerment" produced by the political campaign "industry" suggests a nascent "discourse of empowerment" which might be created by the citizen-audience.

Some of the means to this discourse of empowerment have been discussed in this and the preceding two chapters and there is now the opportunity to summarise them in a systematic way with reference to the criteria for democratic deliberation discussed in Chapter Three.

Access to the political debate around election campaigns is, in the first instance, available through a variety of mundane techniques such as personal contact, street stalls, street advertising, community meetings, local newspapers, direct mail and other "grassroots" communications. In themselves, the communications and exchanges produced by these techniques can quickly disappear into the mass of material produced by the major parties but their effectiveness may be maximised where 1) they are interwoven into processes of coalition-building and "grassroots" networking and 2) they are "invented" with regard to the contemporary enthymemic categories of image, emotion and message.

Two issues are of particular significance to the adaptation of campaign technologies and techniques for strategic use by marginalised and critical elements of the citizenry: 1) recent developments in the telecommunications and computer industries are rapidly

⁸⁵ Lyotard, JF *The Postmodern Condition* Manchester University Press Manchester 1984 p41

decreasing the costs of techniques pioneered by political campaigners; and 2) the possibilities inherent in the political campaign's creative, pro-active approach to media management where the point is not to respond to the news but to make it. Despite the professionalisation of the political campaign industry, the skills to utilise the new technologies and pro-active techniques which that industry has developed are increasingly available to the citizen-audience relatively cheaply, and, as is suggested in the next chapter, the opportunity to acquire these skills should be part of the general education system in all democracies.

As was seen in Chapters Five and Six, the campaigns of major political parties do not themselves produce a high degree of transparency but the continued use of campaign techniques has led to discussion of them in the media, which are always in search of new content. The "worm" that was superimposed over the debates between Keating and Hewson, despite its propensity to "close" those debates, also revealed an approximation of a campaign instrument in use. It is also interesting to consider the contribution the media are making to increasing the transparency of political campaigns and their own operations through books, documentaries and analytical programs such as ABC-TV's *Mediawatch* as well as through more general products of popular culture such as movies and even television situation comedies.⁸⁶ Beyond the media's own contribution, the citizen-audience's autonomous, hermeneutic capabilities cannot be underestimated as they watch programs "more astutely than they are given credit for"⁸⁷ and analyse them with their own informal processes.

The political campaigns discussed above reveal only limited opportunities for feedback, particularly when compared with the open forum of Athenian democracy. Qualitative and quantitative research offers some readings of the "mood" of the electorate but those readings are limited in scope both with regard to the number of citizens involved and the ways in which questions are framed. Of more relevance to the construction of authentic processes of deliberation are the use of mass surveys with open-ended questions to establish a more thorough-going rhetorical exchange between campaigns and the citizen-audience. Further, the processes of coalition-building and grassroots networking deployed by the ALP in the 1993 Australian Federal election point to the potential for the development of a mass-based deliberative system as a means to provide feedback on

⁸⁶ some recent examples: book - Morris, Dick *Behind the Oval Office: Winning the Presidency in the Nineties* Random House New York 1996; documentary - Pennebaker, DA *The War Room* (video recording) 1993; movie - Underwood, Ron *Speechless* (video recording) 1994; TV sit com - *Spin City* (video recording).

⁸⁷ Hartley *Popular Reality* p72

policy formation and delivery. Areas of the mass media such as letters to the editor remain as useful tools for the delivery of feedback on political issues and there is potential for similar processes to be extended into the programming of electronic media.

With reference to issues of coordination, the effectiveness of election campaigns in producing results must be balanced against their inability to produce fine-grained results that accurately reflect the wishes of the electorate. The distance between decision-makers and the citizen-audience remains an abiding problem of coordination for currently existing representative democracy. This is reproduced in the cynicism towards democracy that was canvassed in Chapter One. The need for orderly, harmonious and well coordinated decisions must be balanced against the need for the citizen-audience to be involved in deliberative processes in order to ensure that they can deliver the informed consent that provides democracy with its practical legitimacy. Where that deliberation occurs most significantly in the mass media, then effective coordination requires an ease of access to those deliberative processes by the citizen-audience utilising the rhetorical techniques discussed above.

In summary, this chapter points to the deliberative potential inherent in the electoral processes of currently existing representative democracy and to the structural and institutional barriers to the realisation of that potential. Improving the quality and quantity of democratic deliberation available through elections depends to a great extent on better demotic appreciation and utilisation of the rhetorical techniques used in election campaigns. This is not to say that elections offer the only opportunity for democratic deliberation: the on-going debate between political parties, the lobbying of interest groups, grassroots community debate and the quotidian discussions of everyday life all contribute to deliberative processes. Nevertheless, while the notion of the "permanent campaign" has not yet become "the political ideology of our age"⁸⁸, its combination of image making and strategic calculation has become the key set of techniques in politics generally. In order for citizens to participate in the deliberation that is currently offered by democracy, they need to be able to understand and use these techniques. Further, by acknowledging the Aristotelian basis of these techniques, this thesis would seek to hasten their return to their Aristotelian purpose of assisting democratic deliberation by opening up the possibilities of authentic debate via contending deployments of persuasion in pursuit of efficacious collective decisions. As will be seen in the following chapter, this return is premised on the transformation of the citizen-audience into "citizens of the media"⁸⁹, as members of the citizen-audience

⁸⁸ Blumenthal *The Permanent Campaign* p7

⁸⁹ Hartley *Popular Reality* p57-76

develop an ethic that precludes the vestiges of passivity attached to the idea of audience and remake themselves as "media-active" citizens.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION Deliberative Democracy and Citizens of the Media

For unless the democratic movement makes people better - more intelligent, conscientious and humane - it is not worth support.

Joseph Furphy¹

Outline

The coercive potential inherent in the operations of the political campaign industry highlights the limitations of the two-party system of representative democracy but, in rethinking and remaking democracy, the techniques and technologies offered by campaign processes suggest some means by which currently existing representative democracy may be transformed. This transformation rests on citizens asserting their centrality to the democratic process which in turn requires the re-establishment of the link between politics as a method to produce social cohesion and ethics as a method for establishing and exercising autonomy, a link that was seen, in the consideration of Aristotle's work in Chapter 4, to be made through citizens' application of rhetoric to issues of social debate. To produce a participatory and deliberative democracy in mass society, the citizen-audience must transform themselves into citizens of the global media with the requisite rhetorical skills and ethical attributes to utilise the opportunities provided by the rapidly developing mass media to create new forms of discussion and debate and new forms of political organisation.

Rethinking Democracy

The preceding chapters have sketched out the uneasy relationship between democracy and the techniques and technologies of contemporary political practice. Liberal democracy may now be seen as the ruling ideology in many nation states but its practice through political parties and media corporations has left a huge gap between the citizenry and the exercise of political power. This forces a return to a key question for this thesis - how can democracy confront the ambivalence and cynicism this gap

¹ Furphy, Joseph Letter to Miles Franklin quoted in Franklin, Miles *Joseph Furphy: the legend of the man and his book* Sydney 1944 p121

produces? While the answer involves citizens exercising their autonomy and participating in the production of social cohesion by engaging in deliberative processes, the insight captured in this response merely points to the practical problems that arise in theoretical attempts to move citizens to the centre of contemporary democratic processes given the complex nature of mass society and the entrenched interests unwilling to decrease their own political power.

The role of those entrenched interests in producing citizens cannot be underestimated. The commodification of the processes of personal development have been described by Habermas as "the colonization of the life-world"² and Alex Carey points out that the common man's "most intimate conceptions of himself... have been subject to skilled manipulation and construction in the interests of corporate efficiency and profit."³ Chris Palmer shows that flexibility required to operate the post-industrial information economy precludes traditional notions of autonomy:

What is prescribed, what indeed is produced by a society that produces psyches as well as things, is the free-floating individual, the subjectless subject, the person whose ego is permeable... able to decouple from a relationship, a job or a political position with proper flexibility.⁴

Similarly, while the legitimacy of democratic states resides formally and symbolically in the citizens' participation in the production of social cohesion, the mass nature of society means that the citizens' opportunities for participation have been practically limited, particularly, given Mill's view of the press as the key deliberative forum in representative democracy, by constrained media access. The relationship between citizens and the production of social cohesion is effectively limited to the rare choice between parties and competing managerial elites which has only a passing relevance to the actual conduct of human life. The effect of increasing irrelevance of elections is that the very institution designed to ensure the power of the citizenry over the government now operates to exclude them from the process: the promise of democratic empowerment has become the means to the citizens' disempowerment.

How can democracy be made to work? How can it be re-tooled to allow for democratic control despite the entrenched interests that oppose such a move? As was seen in Chapter One, democracy does not naturally occupy any privileged position in the hierarchy of governmental systems. It just happens to be an effective mechanism for

² Habermas, Jurgen *The Theory of Communicative Action II: Lifeworld and System* Beacon Boston 1987

³ Carey *Taking the Risk out of Democracy* p11

⁴ Palmer, Christopher "'A Scanner Darkly' and Postmodernism" *Arena* no 92 Spring 1990 p99

reconciling individual and social needs, for maintaining popular support while allowing adaptation to developing conditions. It has always contained internal contradictions, but this does not mean that it is fatally flawed or impossible to realise. The challenge for democrats has always been to accommodate these contradictions and to use them to rebuild the mechanism. There is one important sense where the attempt to realise democracy is the point of democracy itself. Despite the problems and contradictions inherent in democracy, no alternative appears likely to attract mass support or offer a better, fairer or more effective form of government. The process of better realising democracy can never stop because the alternatives - tyranny and oligarchy - can never produce the mix of freedom and equality that underwrite the experience of human dignity which democracy promises.

What then can this thesis offer to the process of rethinking democracy? Chapter Two redrew the dichotomy between representative and participatory models of democracy as a continuum and identified the participatory potential inherent in representative elections. In Chapter Three it was seen that legitimate democracy arises from the public deliberation of autonomous citizens as they create a level of social cohesion by reconciling individual and collective interests. Succeeding chapters drew out the inherent tensions between the communicative rationality of deliberative forms of democracy and the practicalities of power politics, at first with regard to the Aristotelian account of the Athenian model and then with regard to contemporary electoral politics.

It is apparent from the discussion in Chapters Five through to Seven that none of these accounts of contemporary democratic politics exhibits the levels of communicative rationality to which deliberative democracy aspires and that the technologies and techniques of electoral campaigns are often used in ways that tend to close debate rather than extend it. Yet, if democracy is understood not as a set of ideals but as an ongoing process, then there is potential for the contradictions between reason and power to be appreciated in the same way as those between autonomy and cohesion were in Chapter Two: as another facet of the dynamism that drives the democratic mechanism which simultaneously produces and reproduces democracy itself.

The corollary of this point is that these contradictions cannot be worked out only at the level of theory (though theory does have much to offer towards their resolution) but also in the practice of reasoned agreement among free and equal citizens. Thus democracy can only reinvigorate itself by increasing transparency over and access to deliberative processes as they currently exist and taking practical control of deliberation's democratic elements: participation and free speech. It was seen in Chapters

Five, Six and Seven that the techniques and technologies of electoral politics hold out some potential to be turned to the purposes of democratic deliberation when they are used to pursue authentic debate by advancing persuasive arguments that engage with and contest the communications of entrenched interests. The challenge for democrats is to extend and reinvent those techniques and technologies beyond the existing electoral environment in order to challenge the constraints of currently existing representative democracy and to create new democratic forms that can accommodate changing social conditions such as post-industrial working arrangements and the imperatives of globalisation.

This practical challenge is premised, in mass societies where key processes of deliberation occur in the mass media, on the theoretical transformation of the citizen-audience to "citizens of the media"⁵ as foreshadowed in Chapter Three. In that chapter, it was apparent that there was more work to be done with Hartley's concept of "citizens of the media" in order to extend it from a recognition of the interpretive capabilities of the citizen-audience, as vital as they are as a basis of autonomy. "Citizens of the media" can expand their role to include the power to create greater deliberative participation in democracy by the increasing demotic use of the mass media as a locus of debate. This expansion requires the acquisition of the rhetorical skills to intervene in the "media game", for example through the gaps provided by the media's commercial, competitive nature and by building public spheres for autonomous deliberation. But further, given the commodification of personal development addressed earlier in this chapter, "citizens of the media" also need to acquire the ethical attributes required to make responsible and effective use of those rhetorical skills as they transform currently existing representative institutions by producing new deliberative and participatory practices. While Chapters Four through Seven have dealt predominantly with the practicalities of rhetorical skill, it is now apparent that the citizen-audience's transformation to "media-active" citizens of the media requires a return to Aristotle to appreciate the continuing role of rhetoric as the conduit between politics and ethics.

Ethics and Politics

As was seen in Chapter Four, Aristotle's ethical and political positions both seek the same end, "the good for man"⁶ - and it was suggested there that rhetoric is the art of the practical reason which assists the citizen to bind ethics and politics together by

⁵ Hartley *Popular Reality* p57-76

⁶ Aristotle *Ethics* p27

providing the means to produce compelling arguments for virtue to become a political reality and for politics to be made virtuous. The practices of Athenian citizenship which informed the mode of life in which Aristotle's work was produced have passed, but the impetus to integrate ethics and politics remains a significant force in contemporary moral and political philosophy as questions are raised about "how values can and ought to be embodied institutionally".⁷

The inability of current institutions to produce a practical result from such simple ideals as progressive taxation and egalitarian social services leads Robert Goodin to call for theorists to "shift attention... from values to mechanisms for implementing them".⁸ This thesis has already rehearsed an analogous shift in Chapter Two and again in the section above, where democracy was described not as a set of ideals informing a set of institutions, but rather as a method by which institutions argue about ideals and thus as the mechanism by which citizens realise their collectivity. The point of these shifts is not to put the final focus on institutions or mechanisms. These are only useful to the extent they are used by citizens, and to put democracy to use, citizens require not only technical expertise but also the ethical discipline to utilise that technical expertise to manage conflict and produce collective action through participation.

Minson has begun the work of identifying "what in general an ethics of participation might consist" by ignoring what he describes as "romantic" ideals and "treating the big wide contemporary governance as a circumstantial reality which makes its own ethical demands upon us."⁹ In developing Michel Foucault's notion of ethics as a "technology of the self" which assists us "to create ourselves as works of art"¹⁰, Minson discerns "mundane ethical abilities of a disciplinary and rhetorical character" as central to an ethics of participation based in "traditional ethico-technical connotations pertaining to moral upbringing, everyday coping and, above all, comportment".¹¹

Minson rejects "the romantic fantasy of politics as an interminable beautiful conversation" in favour of a more prosaic account of political deliberation as "negotiation".¹² To pursue negotiations, he suggests, the citizen requires a "plurality of

⁷ Goodin, Robert E "The contribution of political science" in Goodin & Pettit *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* p157

⁸ *ibid* p176

⁹ Minson "Ascetics and the demands of participation" p1-2

¹⁰ Foucault, Michel quoted in Rabinow, Paul (ed) *The Foucault Reader* Penguin London 1987 p350

¹¹ Minson "Ascetics and the demands of participation" p2-4

¹² *ibid* p11

ethoses" - in turn critical and tolerant. The comportment needed for tolerant and respectful participation is addressed in some detail: the dependability required to produce a quorum, adherence to standing orders, self-management of boredom and frustration, treating fellow participants fairly and facial control to mask impatience.¹³ Minson also points out that participation includes sustaining one's involvement by summoning up the required "moral energy" to attend meetings, and he concludes that "participation makes a more intense disciplinary call on our time, bodily demeanours, moral-rhetorical intelligence, passions and energies than active citizenship curricula allow for."¹⁴

But to extend the framework of Minson's "mundane abilities", citizens of the media need more than just the ethical commitment to attend meetings, they also require the ethical commitment to use the media for deliberative purposes and that means not only that they must surmount their passivity as citizen-audience but also that they must be ready to "project" themselves into the media. Just as a crucial part of citizenship in ancient Greece was to summon the courage to overcome "stage-fright" in order to speak in the Assembly, contemporary citizens of the media need to draw on the moral energy and intense discipline to which Minson alludes in order to present their arguments in the media. This requires a return to two of the issues addressed in Chapter Seven: the creation of character/image as key rhetorical work and the possibilities inherent in the political campaign's creative, pro-active approach to media management. The ethical responsibilities of the citizen of the media extend to intervening in the media not only to respond to the news but also to create and promote the image required to make the news. The aesthetic work involved in constructing an image (or media subject that may not even be "tied" to the self¹⁵) requires not only the moral energy to animate the persona so constructed but also the ethical discrimination to avoid the subversion of the persona into celebrity while keeping focussed on the deliberative work that prompted the construction of the persona in the first place.

Thus this thesis returns to the pedagogical facet of rhetoric discussed in Chapter One and the crucial role of ethical education discussed with reference to Aristotle in Chapter Four. As Aristotle noted, theory by itself is "unable to push the many in the direction of lofty principle"¹⁶; rather the young must learn what is good and desirable through

¹³ *ibid* 12-13

¹⁴ *ibid* p18-19

¹⁵ Motion, Judy "Technologising the self: the art of public relations" *Australian Journal of Communications* vol 24 no 2 1997 p7

¹⁶ Aristotle *Ethics* p310

habit and education so they are both amenable to persuasion and able to persuade in order to practice "the art of politics".¹⁷ It was noted in Chapters Two and Three that while a number of theorists emphasise the vital role of education in developing a participatory citizenship, there is little emphasis on teaching the media skills required to participate in the pre-eminent contemporary deliberative forum. The following section places the notion of citizen of the media in the context of the recent developments in citizenship theory before drawing together the technical skills and ethical responsibilities inherent in the notion.

Citizens of the Global Media

Marshall's account of citizenship as incorporating civil, political and, most particularly, social rights to state provided welfare¹⁸ has come under intense attack over the last fifteen years both from advocates of the free market who claim that it has undermined economic activity and produced social breakdown¹⁹ and critics from the left who claim that its failure to ensure democratic participation in the delivery of welfare services has enfeebled rather than empowered citizens²⁰. The idea that the welfare policies of the post-war period are inefficient and wasteful has gained broad support across the political spectrum and has been used as the rationale for radical, "neo-liberal" state economic intervention to assist the emerging "global" economy. It is the perceived globalisation of commerce, and the increasing recognition given to information as an economic resource in that economy, that prompts this thesis to pay particular attention to the relationship between communication policy and welfare policy.²¹ If the focus of political power is shifting beyond the nation-state, then it is incumbent on democrats to devise models to ensure democratic control of that political power.

Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson are however sceptical about the extent and significance of the economic globalisation process, suggesting that "the present highly internationalized economy is not unprecedented" and rather than a genuinely global economy "trade, investment and financial flows are concentrated in the Triad of Europe,

¹⁷ *ibid* p315

¹⁸ Marshall *Class, Citizenship and Social Development* p65-122

¹⁹ see for example Gilder, George "The collapse of the American family" *The Public Interest* vol 89 1987 p20-25

²⁰ Alcock, Peter "Why citizenship and welfare rights offer new hope for new welfare in Britain" *Critical Social Policy* vol 26 1989 p32-43

²¹ Murdock, Graham & Golding, Peter "Information poverty and political inequality" *Journal of Communication* vol 39 no 3 (1989) 180-195

Japan and North America".²² This notwithstanding, the advent of satellite broadcasting and computer mediated communication does continue the process that began with cinema, radio and television, what John Frow describes as "the globalization of the commodity form which is expressed in a fully internationalized, interdependent and interlocking market."²³ This process is produced by flows of information, typically, though not exclusively, from a few media production centres (Hollywood, New York and London) to the rest of the world and it links together previously encapsulated, homogenous cultural niches into a transnational culture.²⁴ However, this global culture is not necessarily a universal hegemonic force because, as Tony Spybey says:

in order to exist globally or, to put it more accurately, be reproduced globally, [media] must impact on particularistic cultural influences [and in doing so] there is no guarantee that it will remain under the control of its originator nor that it will be reproduced exactly as created.²⁵

When, Spybey argues, the increase in transnational information flows is combined with the declining role of the nation-state as the final determinant of financial, political and social issues (superseded to a significant extent by international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) then the space is cleared for the emergence of the "world citizen... encouraged by normative influences to regard particularistic institutions as secondary".²⁶ While for Marshall citizenship was the product of national history, the tendency towards a transnational economy suggests the opportunity for a new account of citizenship as the product of global history. In this context, the globalising effects of the mass media give rise to the possibility of citizens of the global media, giving their own subversive readings to Hollywood and CNN and developing a political perspective informed by international media events such as those organised by Greenpeace²⁷.

The breadth of activities which might be integrated into the practical and ethical education of the citizen of the global media is now becoming apparent. The pursuit of democratic deliberation in the emerging global society requires a creative approach that extends beyond the election campaign in order to produce the universal access to the

²² Hirst, Paul & Thompson, Grahame *Globalization in Question* Polity Cambridge 1996 p2

²³ Frow, John "Cultural markets and the shape of culture" in Jacka, E (ed) *Continental Shift* Local Consumption Press Sydney 1992 p9

²⁴ Featherstone, M (ed) *Global Culture* Sage London 1990 p6

²⁵ Spybey, Tony *Globalization and World Society* Polity Cambridge 1996 p114

²⁶ *ibid* p61-66

²⁷ *ibid* 146-147

authentic exchange of ideas and opinions on which authentic deliberation rests. The renewal of rhetoric in the complexity of mass, global society presupposes

- 1) a grasp of how media technology reproduces messages globally,
- 2) an ability to formulate messages with a view to engaging the global audience and
- 3) an ethical commitment to participate in a broad-ranging media process to take part in on-going argument, debate and deliberation rather than merely reproduce standard media roles of expert and celebrity.

To these ends citizenship education must include both a practical media component which schools students in the strategies, techniques and technologies of the media campaign and an ethical component which teaches the moral responsibilities inherent in the production of rhetorical exchanges which open new arguments and new relations between citizens as participants in the exercise of a world-wide democratic mechanism.

It was seen in Chapter Three that despite institutional and commercial channelling of the notion of free speech, it still remains central to the operation of democracy in so far as it is the means to argue for broad access to the processes of deliberation and a high degree of transparency so that all participants understand the content and import of the deliberative process. Where everyone has the same opportunity to sway the debate, then all are equally bound by the decision and equally committed to its implementation, at least until they have the opportunity to review the decision. Retooling the discipline of rhetoric and teaching it universally is a means to confronting the cynicism about the democratic process by ensuring that all citizens are involved in the processes of producing democracy. But to overcome the entrenched interests that seek to limit the functioning of free speech requires a final element in the armoury of the citizen of the global media: the practical and ethical skill to create and manage one's participation in democratic deliberation by building on the opportunities offered by the media from the local to the global.

Democratic Deliberation through the Media

As was seen in Chapters Two and Three, the present two-party system of representative democracy has reached the limits of its effectiveness in contemporary mass society. The size and complexity of the electorate cannot be encapsulated by

simple dichotomies. As the major parties strive to mould themselves to appeal not so much to their traditional supporters but to the middle ground whose support they require to form a government, they are constantly moving closer together, converging on policy while remaining adversarial mostly at the level of personality. One result is an alienated and cynical electorate who see themselves too far from political debate to make a difference even if they were involved. Another, and converse, result is that "voter discontent is opening an opportunity for a new political force".²⁸ A growing potential exists for groups outside the traditional political parties to intervene successfully in the electoral process.

Elim Papadakis and Clive Bean point to ways in which established political institutions restrict access by minor parties and independents and question whether they have "set a framework for politics that is appropriate for meeting the challenges that lie ahead."²⁹ Jeremy Richardson, by way of contrast, points to "the changing market for representation and participation" as interest groups become better organised and respond to the segmentation and differentiation in society:

In such a market, political parties and interest organisations perform different and increasingly specialised functions... [and] the decline in the market share of parties may be as much a sign of vitality as depoliticisation.³⁰

Ian Marsh goes even further, suggesting the "two-party" regime is incapable of dealing with the integration of complex interests as the political agenda is increasingly dominated by the pursuit of international economic competitiveness. This complexity, he argues "can be reconciled at a new substantive level only in a new participatory context."³¹ Marsh points to the key roles of the mass media and electoral contests in producing the "political learning" that precedes the participation required to confront the structure of power.³²

Utilising the representative electoral process and the emerging forms of mass media to reintegrate the demotic into contemporary democracy is a difficult and complex program

²⁸ Persinos, John F "Third Party Rising" *Campaigns and Elections* September 1995 p20

²⁹ Papadakis, Elim & Bean, Clive "Independents and Minor Parties: The Electoral System" *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1995) vol 30 Special Issue - Party Systems p109

³⁰ Richardson, Jeremy "Interest Groups and Representation" *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1995) vol 30 Special Issue - Party Systems p61

³¹ Marsh, Ian "Political learning disabilities of the two-party regime" *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1995) vol 30 Special Issue - Party Systems p40

³² *ibid* p41-44; see also Marsh, Ian *Beyond the Two-Party System* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1995 p335-355

but the present system does offer some positive aspects. The current nation-based systems of representative democracy, even with the lack of full representation which they entail, do offer a relatively peaceful means to produce political change and can act as a spur to coherent and responsive policy making. National democracies have participated in transnational politics for half a century to some positive effect.

Further, the mass participation in elections provides important opportunities for the collective review of policy: it is the only opportunity for the citizens to hold governments accountable and even, occasionally, to set new directions. In Australia, the electoral success of independents and minor parties (who in 1992 held the balance of power in eleven of the country's fifteen legislatures³³) indicate a willingness of the electorate to deploy their votes strategically. Electors are becoming "sophisticated (or perverse, depending on your perspective) tactical voters."³⁴ They appear increasingly to be looking for alternatives to the major parties as a string of successful, or at least influential, insurgent campaigns indicate: Ross Perot's 1992 campaign for the U.S. Presidency (which attracted 19% of the vote); campaigns by NSW independents in 1988 and 1991 which gave them control of the state lower house from 1991-1995; the Tasmanian Greens' campaign in 1989 which saw them holding the balance of power in the state Parliament; independent Phil Cleary's campaigns for the Australian federal seat of Wills in 1992 and 1993 and; independent Angus King's gubernatorial campaign for Maine in 1994.³⁵

A number of recent theorists have pointed out the opportunities for subversive, deliberative use of the mass media and have made the connection to new forms of citizenship. Peter Dahlgren, for example synthesises four elements he discerns in the contemporary social configuration ("crisis of the state, audience segmentation, the new movements and the available communication technologies") to elicit "the contours of historically new conditions for the public sphere, a new nexus to set in contrast to the dominant one of the corporate state and its major media."³⁶ McKenzie Wark goes so far as to argue that emergent media forms invite subversion because "the speed of new communications vectors themselves produce feedback loops in the global information

³³ *ibid* p108

³⁴ *ibid* p131

³⁵ Beiler, David "The New Populism's Maine Man" *Campaign and Elections* May 1995 p20-23

³⁶ Dahlgren, Peter "Introduction" in Dahlgren & Sparks *Communication and Citizenship* p14

environment which can become so rapid and unpredictable that they breach the hegemonic forms of policy response and media management."³⁷

However, before turning to the opportunities provided by the newest forms of communication technology, it is useful to consider the access provided by some older forms of mass communication to alternative points of entry to the mass media. Local, free newspapers are read by a significant proportion of recipients and often seek stories relevant to their locality and the interests of their readers.³⁸

Talkback radio offers simple and relatively unmediated access to the mainstream media. Norma Verwey gives a detailed account of the history, impact and political dimensions of talk-back radio that recognises its potential: in the emergence of talk-back radio in the 1970s and 1980s "the general public, and especially housewives, had found a new, and perhaps for the first time, permanent voice. And what a political and potentially important voice it could become."³⁹ While many talk-back programs on commercial radio are presently produced to appeal to an older, conservative audience and therefore resist broad-ranging debate, the potential these programs offer for mass deliberation is apparent on public and community radio.

Jane Shattuc suggests that television "talk" shows (such as those hosted by Oprah Winfrey and Rikki Lake) provide extensive deliberative opportunities both in terms of the breadth of subjects discussed and the amount of time dedicated to each discussion.⁴⁰ While the topics of these programs may initially appear banal and the debate they engender perfunctory, Shattuc argues that they approach in some depth the political and ethical issues that are of significant interest to the women who predominantly constitute their audiences.

As the electronic media diversify into new formats prompted by the advent of satellite and cable television delivery offering interactive services to concisely-defined audiences, the power of the evening news and the morning broadsheet will decline and new points

³⁷ Wark, McKenzie "To the vector the spoils" in Jacka *Continental Shift* p145

³⁸ For an account of a campaign that avoided the mainstream media by systematically connecting with a large number of local papers see Bayley, Edwin *Joe McCarthy and the Press* Pantheon Books New York 1981

³⁹ Verwey, Norma Ellen *Radio Call-ins and Covert Politics* Avebury Aldershot 1990 pxi; see also Stewart, Morgan "Pump up the volume" *Campaigns and Elections* October/November 1993 p22-26

⁴⁰ Shattuc, Jane *The Talking Cure: TV talk shows and women* Routledge London 1997

of entry into the media will appear.⁴¹ Further interesting possibilities are raised by the use of the Internet, the first major technological advance since the telephone that actually invites reciprocity. Jon Katz argues that with its multiplicity of "speakers" and "listeners" and its equality of view point, the Internet would appear to offer the opportunity for the increasingly freer flow of information and decidedly deeper levels of deliberation⁴². Some would point to the democratic possibilities inherent in the Internet's ability to tabulate views which could become the means of achieving large scale participatory democracy⁴³. Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen argue that the emerging information economy will so blur the flow of power that just as the artist presently communicates to a diffuse audience, technical adaptation will allow the same diffuse audience to communicate with governments so "the 'leader' becomes the recording surface for the will of the people."⁴⁴

Sandy Kyrish however, evaluates the grand promises made on behalf of the Internet against the strikingly similar but now failed promises made about cable television in the United States in the 1970s (that it would be universally accessible and increase the level of democratic debate) and remains sceptical that commercial interests would allow the Internet to develop as the means to greater democratic deliberation.⁴⁵ While the Internet is an open system with a goal of universal access there are distinct possibilities for its demotic use, but aside from the practical problems of ensuring access to the required equipment by the population of the globe (let alone the literacy required to effectively participate via this means), the rapid commercialisation of the space along with the potential to record, analyse and systematically respond to all information transmitted on the net raises the possibility that it may quickly become open to even more coercive and invasive manipulation than older forms of media. While new communications technologies are no panacea for universal democratic deliberation, they are already playing a part in extending the opportunities for democratic deliberation by providing 1) access to debates for a multitude of voices that could never be heard through existing

⁴¹ Labiola, Michael "Campaigning on cable" *Campaigns and Elections* August 1993 p34-35; also Crichton "The mediasaurus" p56-59

⁴² Katz, Jon "The Age of Paine" *Wired* 3.05 May 1995 p154ff

⁴³ see for example Abramson, Jeffrey B et al *The Electronic Commonwealth* Basic Books New York 1990, also Williams, Fred & Pavlik JP (eds) *The People's Right to Know - Media, Democracy and the Information Highway* LEA Hillsdale 1994 and Jones, Stephen (ed) *Cybersociety* Sage Thousand Oaks 1995

⁴⁴ Taylor, Mark C & Saarinen, Esa *Imagologies* Routledge London 1994 pTelepolitics7

⁴⁵ Kyrish, Sandy "Here comes the revolution - again" *Media Information Australia* no 74 November 1994 p4-14

mainstream, broadcast media and also 2) a greater quantity of available information that increases the level of transparency over political debate generally.

As was seen in Chapter Three and again above, there is potential for marginalised and critical voices to intervene in the processes of democratic deliberation by utilising the gaps in mass media process produced by its methods of operations and by building their own media processes. For marginalised and critical political forces to intervene in the media processes to produce democratic deliberation, they need to apprehend the functions of contemporary rhetorical practices, typified by the practices of the election campaign but with much broader application in campaigning generally. By appreciating the nature of these rhetorical practices citizens can understand the techniques and technologies arrayed against them by entrenched forces and they can also adapt these practices to their own beliefs, styles and budgets. One interesting possibility is raised by Stanley Cohen's and Stuart Hall's work on "moral panic" - the situation where the mass media "feed" off each other to produce stories of growing intensity (and often increasingly lurid detail) about some real or imagined issue that reflects on the "morality" of society.⁴⁶ While moral panics have traditionally been prompted by entrenched and conservative interests (clergymen and police), the potential is now apparent for marginalised and critical groups to generate their own moral panics through the media as a means of campaigning on issues of importance to them.⁴⁷

Another ancillary lesson that can be derived from consideration of political campaigning is the need to integrate media interventions with effective grass roots organisation so that the campaign can pursue deliberative processes into the community and the everyday lives of citizens. The aim, as Bob Hodge and Gunther Kress note in their analysis of Ken Livingstone's campaigns for Greater London Council, is "to deploy a variety of alternative modes of communication to create a strong alternative, oppositional community."⁴⁸

One useful example of the use of campaign techniques to pursue debates both within and far beyond the electoral context is supplied by the Tasmanian Greens and their allies in The Wilderness Society who have long appreciated the importance of making their case clearly and succinctly in the media both to build a grassroots organisation and

⁴⁶ Cohen, Stanley *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* Paladin St Albans 1973; Hall *Policing the Crisis*

⁴⁷ Stockwell, Stephen "Panic at the Port" *Media International Australia* no 85 November 1997 p56-61

⁴⁸ Hodge & Kress *Social Semiotics* p160-161

to pursue their arguments with the wider community. The Tasmanian Greens have built a number of campaigns on environmental issues and pursued them in a variety of media at local, national and international levels. Typical of their systematic approach to contemporary rhetorical technique is their practice of providing broadcast standard video of protests in remote locations to broadcast television outlets. As Guy Barnett, a critic of the Tasmanian Greens, points out: they argue

with pictures and images rather than words and figures. They appeal to the hearts and to the emotion... Their determination, imagination and ruthlessness have enabled them to tap concerns held by a substantial number.⁴⁹

This critique ignores the rational basis of the arguments of environmentalists but it does capture the pro-active manner in which the Tasmanian Greens have utilised media opportunities to pursue a broad-ranging process of deliberation.

Another useful example of extra-electoral campaigning which has utilised a broad range of media management techniques against entrenched forces to open new areas for deliberative consideration is offered by the case of the "McLibel Two". These two poor vegetarians wrote and published a small pamphlet critical of the environmental, health, industrial relations and culinary practices of the McDonald hamburger chain. McDonald's responded by initiating a libel action against the authors of the pamphlet who fought the case both in the courts and, more significantly, in the mass media and on the internet where they used the opportunity to bring international deliberative consideration to the conduct of international corporations. After ten years of debate in the courts and the press, McDonald's eventually won the court case but not before they made a number of damaging admissions and endured adverse findings by the courts against the corporation's treatment of animals and young workers. In McDonald's own terms, they lost the public relations battle.⁵⁰

While these two examples, and others offered by Hartley⁵¹, indicate the possibilities for marginalised and critical voices to utilise the emerging global information economy to extend the opportunities for deliberation, the shift from what Posters terms the "first media age" of centralised broadcast to the "second media age" of interactive communication⁵² does not of itself produce a necessary theoretical shift to a more

⁴⁹ Barnett "The Green Lobby's Strategy and Tactics" p9

⁵⁰ Higgins, Ean "Big Mac pays high price for win over small fries" *Weekend Australian* 21 June 1997 p17

⁵¹ For example the work of the Asian Forum of Environmental Journalists Hartley *Popular Reality* p249-251

⁵² Posters *The Second Media Age*

participatory politics. The problems of ensuring access and limiting hegemonic control mentioned above point to the dimensions of the theoretical, and practical, difficulties confronting the possibility of a system of global deliberation. What the emerging global information economy does offer is the chance for citizens to intervene as the continuing process of change in commerce, government and media occurs in order to harness the breaks and irregularities in power such change produces and to subvert new forms of media and power before hegemonic control is established over them. Thus it can be seen that the deliberative potential of the global media rests in the willingness and ability of people to claim global citizenship in order to pursue new debates designed to extend the political responsibilities of national governments, international corporations and forms of power that are not yet apparent.

Democracy and Rhetoric

It may be concluded that the distance between the professionalisation that typifies two party machine politics and the everyday life of the citizens is creating opportunities for the entry into representative politics of different political viewpoints. These opportunities may be pursued to maximum democratic effect by the creative utilisation of the media, both established and emerging, to expand existing deliberative occasions and establish new ones.

The concern is that new political forces critical of the major parties and with developed media skills may seek the support of marginalised and critical groups in the community while pursuing regressive policies. But the tendency to authoritarian and oligarchic resolution of the complex problems produced by mass society can only be resisted by a multiplicity of individual and small-scale interventions in the political process. In this context it is encouraging that some see the path of Australian politics: "away from the stabilities of party government towards more open and representative networks of policy making."⁵³

Democracy can never be an end in itself. At its best it is the means to a better, fairer and more humane life for the whole society. But society is not a constant and by the time discussion and debate has achieved even the smallest democratic reform, new problems have arisen and new challenges present themselves. To confront this task which will never be completed, there is only the power of human reason communicated through

⁵³ Uhr, John "Conclusion" *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1995) vol 30 Special Issue - Party Systems p164

language and the power of human desire to refuse solipsism on one hand and domination on the other in order to live a good life together.

The point of this thesis lies in its attempt to relocate political rhetoric in democratic theory and practice as both a technical and ethical discipline. Rhetoric is the study of the interrelationship between reason and desire as it is expressed in human language and for democracy to be an effective mechanism to reconcile conflict in a way that retains the active consent of most citizens, then those citizens must be able to be authentically involved in the deliberative processes that precede decision making and that involvement requires rhetorical skills.

To create greater deliberative participation in existing representative institutions and to recreate democracy itself by extending the possibilities for deliberative participation beyond representative institutions and into new areas of debate, citizens must remake political rhetoric as both a technical and ethical discipline based in turning the media to democratic purposes.

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