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Rhetorical rationality in presidential politics

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San Jose State University, 1992

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RHETORICAL RATIONALITY IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Robert Steven Blanton

December, 1992

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

RHETORICAL RATIONALITY IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

by Robert Steven Blanton

This thesis analyzes rhetorical rationality in the context of modern American Presidential elections. Criticism of the modern Presidential election process is first reviewed, and then is traced to the schism of thought between Plato and Aristotle. This thesis attempts to establish rhetorical rationality primarily, though not exclusively, through a tool of analysis deemed the "mega-speech." This concept holds that a general election campaign for the Presidency may be conducted as if it were a giant speech.

Viewing a campaign as a giant speech provides a frame-work for examining Presidential campaigns, and assists in determining which candidate made the best case to the electorate. The 1988 Presidential election is the basis of inquiry for this thesis. The general election campaigns of Michael Dukakis and George Bush are examined.

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Chapter I

Introduction

As shall be demonstrated in this study, America's Presidential election process is often maligned by critics and scholars alike. The 1988 election provoked strident criticism of the media, the candidates and the public. Many contemporary societal critics such as Neil Postman, Michael Kinsley and Charles Gordon appear concerned about the American public's ability to make a reasoned, rational decision. Reviewing criticism of the Presidential election process with regard to 1988, one begins to see that the majority of concern is focused on one of four broad areas: 1) the influence of campaign officials or "handlers" in Presidential campaigning; 2) negative campaigning's impact on Presidential campaigns; 3) the impact of television news programming on Presidential campaigns; and, finally, 4) voter incompetence.

Statement of the Problem: Overview of Campaign Criticism

This thesis attempts to analyze the above concerns. The Presidential campaign of 1988 was chosen as a base year because it was perhaps the most widely-criticized campaign in recent memory, providing a rich source of commentary from which to choose. The intellectual roots of modern commentators who profess concern over the public's abilities are then traced to Plato, who voiced similar concerns in his day. An attempt to answer Plato is then made through an examination of the ideas of Aristotle, and those modern commentators who appear to adhere to his position. This thesis attempts to establish that rhetorical rationality was present in the 1988 Presidential campaign despite widespread criticism which chides the campaign for, among other things, its lack of depth. Rhetorical rationality is established primarily, though not exclusively, through a notion which contributes to the uniqueness of this study: the

mega-speech. This idea holds that a well-run general election campaign for the Presidency of the United States may be viewed as a giant speech. The roles of the candidate (speaker) and citizen (audience member) in a campaign shall also be examined. Examples from campaigns other than 1988 will be used only for illustrative purposes.

Perhaps it was the stage-managed use of news programming, the compression of complicated positions into fifteen-second sound bites and visual arguments -- which do not yield a conclusion but instead invite viewers to make their own conclusions -- that led William Schneider of The American Enterprise Institute, in a Washington Post article, to dub the Bush Campaign as "disgraceful."¹ The crux of such commentary often seemed to be that the Bush campaign staff -- his handlers -- made use of innovative and perhaps ethically questionable campaign techniques which the average voter was supposedly incapable of detecting or countering.

Some of these critiques centered around the seemingly trivial and irrelevant nature of the issues discussed in the campaign. For example, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis was attacked by then Vice-President George Bush for his supposed lack of patriotism because of Dukakis' veto of a bill which would have required Massachusetts school children to begin their day with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance.² The patriotism issue provoked strong comments. Other critiques attacked the ethical appropriateness of the Bush campaign's tactics, especially the use of Willie Horton to dramatize Dukakis' stance on crime. Horton escaped from a Massachusetts furlough program for convicted felons, found his way to Maryland, and then raped a woman while there. Critics argued that Bush not only misrepresented Dukakis' position, but also assailed the then Vice-President for invoking racial prejudice, since Horton is black.³

This injection of race into the campaign was seen by some as not only divisive but manipulative as well, since it supposedly was meant to arouse latent racial fears in some segments of the electorate.⁴ Bush also was criticized for other aspects of the visually oriented campaign he chose to run. In attempts to draw attention to Dukakis'

supposed lack of patriotism, Bush staged an elaborate tour of an American flag factory, led mass recitations of the pledge of allegiance, and often gave speeches before dozens of American flags, all done with the probability that some of these images would appear on television. Commenting on the telegenic nature of the Bush Campaign in Newsweek, Peter Goldman and Tom Mathews observed that: "His [Bush's] public appearances were choreographed as carefully as Ronald Reagan's by the same dance masters. His settings were chosen to flatter him on television. . . ." ⁵ Through staged events performed on cue before television cameras, Bush could make charges against his opponent visually, which often could make rebuttals difficult. More importantly, however, the visual manner in which Bush conducted his campaign allowed him to remind voters of his opponent's unpopular stances night after night on televised news shows; and because the evidence was visual, it seemed all the more compelling, and many of the more damning conclusions occurred in viewers' minds. In part because of how issues such as the pledge of allegiance and Willie Horton took center stage that year, Time magazine dubbed 1988 "The Year of the Handlers." ⁶ Critiques that focus on the role of handlers often argue that politicians are not held more accountable because of their staff's skill at manipulating the media and the electorate.

Some commentators attacked the media for falling into the handlers' trap, permitting themselves to be used as a mechanism for the gathering and retransmission of campaign-generated nonsense. A broader, more systemic view of the media leads to a theory of media social responsibility that would curtail the influence of unethical politicians and their staffs. Within the position of media social responsibility is the view that the media have a duty to perform in a democracy. To keep the citizenry informed, to provide a forum for honest, open intellectual exchange, to nurture individuals into citizens in the fuller sense of the word are all the proper duties of the media in a democracy, adherents to this school of thought would argue. In speaking of this tendency, Terence Qualter noted that: "Democratic theorists have attempted to set up the mass media as the fourth estate, the impartial arbiters of the people's rights." ⁷ This line of thought sees clear-cut duties for the media to perform, and indicts them on those occasions when they fail to do so. ⁸ Much of this type of criticism seems to center on the duty to be a safeguard. Those who hold this view

argue that when a candidate oversteps the bounds of fair campaigning, it is the job of the media to hold candidates accountable.

The reply to this argument is that the media, particularly the electronic media, have never claimed to be anything other than profit-making institutions, and at any rate, the reality is that modifications on a scale large enough to accommodate the Platonists would entail wholesale changes in the existing system, some of which may have to be imposed through coercive means which are, of course, antithetical to democracy. Furthermore, were such impositions made, there would still be the problem of attracting viewers. And as Qualter points out, the public has shown little interest in being "nurtured" in the fashion suggested.⁹

Critics also assailed the media in 1988 for devoting too much attention to the personalities of the candidates. It is often argued that time is extremely limited in television news, which is the main source of news for most Americans, and that attention devoted to the personality traits of the candidates is excessive when compared to coverage of the complexities they must face if elected to the Presidency. Hence, time devoted to personalities takes away from time spent on substantive issues.

There is a sense in this particular type of criticism that the media, especially television, are limited in the measure of depth that can be brought to a given subject, and perhaps actually hinder the search for the truth. Columnist Charles Gordon has referred to television as "the lazy American's way of keeping in touch with political issues."¹⁰ Political consultant Doug Bailey appears to agree. Bailey says there is an inherent flaw in the medium which impedes logical thinking.¹¹ Arguments about the failures of the media and for that matter arguments about the failure of the political process are frequently intertwined with protestations about the abilities of the electorate. Critics who subscribe to the belief that the media provide inadequate analysis often do so out of a professed concern for the general public. Those critics may see the general public as unable to comprehend the complexities of the political world around them. Also, through the claims of groups such as The Markle Commission, one often sees a sense of growing alarm at the course self-government is

taking.¹² Critiques of this nature often display a distrust for the concept of self-government.

The Markle Commission, a panel charged with analyzing media and the electorate, chaired by Robert M. O'Neal, president of the University of Virginia, concluded after studying the 1988 election that both the media and the electorate were not doing their parts. The Markle Commission indicted campaign advertising of 1988 as encouraging a dispirited electorate.¹³

Finally, much of the commentary which declares the political process to be flawed often has as an undercurrent the theme of voter incompetence that seemingly runs along the following lines: since America is a democracy, any ill must be the fault of the people. Though other critiques were often made at the surface level, such as placing blame upon the media or politicians, much of the criticism eventually devolved upon the American citizenry. The thrust of this line of thought is that if citizens were somehow more responsible, they would hold the media and politicians more accountable.

In addition to being assailed for its naivete, the electorate was also attacked for allowing politicians to abuse the system in the first place. Sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, members of the general public were accused of ignorance.¹⁴ If the public were somehow more attentive and understood its role, it was often argued by groups such as the Markle Commission, the citizens could hold politicians with questionable ethics and tainted media practices in check, and then American democracy would not be in the state of ill-health it is today. One sees similar charges leveled in other democracies and in other times. Since these charges are broadly based, they serve as a stinging indictment, not of any one society, but of democracy in general. Though attacks on democracy are rarely stated explicitly today, they would appear to be the logical extension of attacks on the voting public, since an essential tenet of democracy is citizen participation.

The Platonic and Aristotelian Positions

Perhaps criticism of the 1988 campaign is all a part of an eternal debate about rationality in a democracy, a debate which is really about the advisability of self-government: a debate between Plato and his most able pupil, Aristotle. Plato believed that democracy was a poor form of government. He thought that in all questions there was an ultimate truth, and that the masses were incapable of finding it. A Philosopher-king who devoted his life to knowledge and thought should rule. In evaluating Plato's position on democracy, I. F. Stone concluded: ". . . the Socratic and the Platonic viewpoints are frustrating and calculated to undermine men's faith in their ability to govern themselves."¹⁵ Conversely, Stone saw the Aristotelian view as "illuminating and encouraging."¹⁶

Contrasting Plato and Aristotle, it can be seen that Aristotle believed that people were generally able to run their own affairs. Though Aristotle recognized the potential for abuse in rhetoric, he thought that the public was generally capable of governing itself, that the truth was inherently more persuasive than a lie, and that if a lie prevailed it was the fault of the orator who let it do so. For example, after losing in the New Hampshire primary, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas accused then Vice-President George Bush of lying about his (Dole's) record.¹⁷ According to Aristotle's reasoning, those who voted for Bush are not to blame for the injury to Dole and to the system, but Dole is to blame because he should have been able to expose his opponent's charges as false. Aristotle thought the truth was inherently persuasive. It is not the result alone that matters, because people of intelligence will often disagree. What matters is rather the means a system follows to achieve its ends. So long the opportunity existed for free and equal exchange between opposing positions, Aristotle thought that the public was capable of grasping the larger questions and making a rational choice. It is, in short, the candidate (speaker) who must bear responsibility for his or her campaign. If the message is unclear, can the listener be blamed for not following? If unfairly attacked, is it not the speaker's responsibility to diffuse that attack?

The Platonic and Aristotelian positions offer differing points of view, and will be major themes of this study. Though it is not cast in terms of Plato and Aristotle, for many scholars and critics this schism is as relevant as it ever was. Indeed, the 1988 Presidential election provides an excellent example of these concepts. George Bush's campaign was widely denounced in the media as "sleazy." Bush, it was said, pandered to the emotions of the crowd by emphasizing such elements as patriotism (in the case of his visit to a flag factory), and racially-motivated appeals to fear (in the case of the infamous Willie Horton television advertisement). Critics who adhered to Plato's view took such evidence as proof that the American public is incapable of rational decision-making because, far from penalizing Bush, the American public rewarded him with election. Aristotelians would contend that the failure (if there was one) lay with Dukakis, who should have exposed Bush's supposed moral shortcomings for what they were. It has been said that the function of the critic is to judge between choices.¹⁸ If this indeed is the function of a critic, then the public should be held blameless. The public does not necessarily become somehow less able because it opts for a candidate (in this case, Bush) who supposedly used unethical or inappropriate material in his campaign. If the critics who decried Bush were correct, then it should have been easy to derail him and expose any moral shortcomings in his tactics. Dukakis did not. An alternative explanation to viewing the public as inept is that Dukakis was the less able candidate for failing to effectively point out the shortcomings of the Bush campaign. If the Governor could not counter Bush's supposed shortcomings, then this Democrat's campaign did not provide a positive model for the type of job Dukakis would do in office. Aristotelians would further point out that the public should not be criticized for choosing a candidate who employed negative campaigning since both candidates engaged in negative campaigning.

In surveying the works of Plato, Stone decided that: "The unspoken premise of the Socratic [and hence Platonic] assault on oratory was disdain for the common people of Athens."¹⁹ It is the claim of this thesis that much of the modern criticism of the American campaign process is rooted in Plato's teachings, and that a parallel exists between criticism of ancient Athenian democracy and contemporary American democracy. In both cases, their respective critics argued that elements of democracy

were injurious to the public welfare. In short it is claimed in both eras that rhetorical tools could be used by hucksters to mislead the populace.

Thousands of years ago, Athenians jammed public forums to listen to opposing speakers debate the issues of the day. In today's era, citizens rely on television to bring information that they need to make informed judgments. Television coverage now mediates the clash between proponents of differing views, but because it relies on individual speakers to present arguments (even capsulized arguments), the tools of rhetoric still come into play. Aristotelians would point out that both live speeches and television coverage can be used for good or ill. Unscrupulous speakers have existed in ancient times just as they do today, just as they always will. The Aristotelians would further argue that what protects us best as a society from those with low ethics is not some all-powerful Philosopher-king but individuals well-schooled in the verbal arts who serve as opponents, and who hold each other to the highest possible ethical standards.

Scope and Organization of the Study

There is an organic analogy present and functioning in the American system of electing Presidents. Presidential campaigns can be seen as one giant or mega-speech during the general election. This observation makes Presidential campaigns of further interest to rhetoricians. If proven correct, the idea of the mega-speech not only shows that rhetorical tools devised thousands of years ago are still in practice, but provides an additional point of validation for the study of rhetoric. More importantly, through the use of the mega-speech concept and the use of the Aristotelian framework designed for the analysis of communicative events, an important new tool for analysis of the democratic process may be gained. Thus, from the standpoint of the classical rhetorician, the mega-speech and the quasi-rhetorical criticism surrounding the presidential election process present an intriguing question for study. This study seeks to demonstrate the existence of the mega-speech and its importance in the current mode of campaigning. As a positive example of the mega-speech concept, the Bush campaign will be examined. The Bush organization conducted its campaign in a tightly-organized manner, as if the campaign were a giant speech lasting from August

to November. Their mega-speech had an introduction, a conclusion, and central main points which functioned as the campaign's heart. Ed Rollins, who has held high level positions in three presidential campaigns including the 1988 Bush campaign, confirmed the importance of presenting an organized, coherent message over a short time period on the PBS special Presidential Campaigning by saying, "We have a ten week plan (for electing Republicans to the White House)."20

This study consists of six chapters. While this first chapter sets out the problem, Chapter Two is a review of available literature. Critiques of the 1988 campaign have been further divided into several areas to provide a more convenient and comprehensible treatment of the areas under discussion. Wherever possible, criticism that is believed to be representative of the Platonic view has been presented first, counterbalanced with criticism believed to be representative of the modern adherents to Aristotle. After the literature review, this study will ground the comments of the Platonists and Aristotelians in a historical context.

Chapter Three establishes the intellectual antecedents of the criticism in Chapter Two, and explores the divisions of thought between Plato and Aristotle still further. This is done primarily through an examination of the works of each, and through an attempt to place historical context around the events which may have contributed to the shaping of their thought. Plato and Aristotle each saw a relationship between democracy and rhetoric, and their positions are still being debated today. When Plato worries, for example, about the public's alleged susceptibility to manipulation because of the "tricks" of rhetoric, it must be remembered that rhetoric is the primary means of discussion in an election. Since the public as a whole decides the fate of the nation, it can be seen that the connection between rhetoric and democracy is direct and strong. The underpinning of much of the Platonic criticism appears to be directed against the advisability of democracy itself, so Chapter Three also attempts to draw from the underlying systemic criticism of democracy present in Platonic critiques. What this criticism seems to be saying on a deeper level is that democracy is not a rational way to govern a people. Rationality will be further examined through contrasting Plato's

views with Aristotle's on the nature of rhetorical proof and democratic decision-making.

Chapter Three also provides a working understanding of rationality. It is acknowledged that no one author has a monopoly on a controversial concept such as rationality. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis concepts from Aristotle and his modern adherents provide a stronger conceptual framework for the examination of rationality and its relation to the Platonic critiques of democracy than if a rationality construct was built solely for this study. In essence, this understanding holds that the means employed in a process rather than the ends achieved through that process are of primary importance. Politics is a process of making value judgments, so disputes over these judgment are inevitable. This study's conception of rationality, then, is not based upon a course of an action an audience takes, but upon the means used by the speakers who attempt to gain the audience's assent. In examining rationality, the roles of speaker and audience will also be explored. Then the concept of the mega-speech will be further developed. Cicero's conception of speech construction will help further ground the notion of the mega-speech. Cicero held that a speech should be broken into seven parts: the exordium, the narrative, the partition, the confirmation, the refutation, the digression, and the peroration. This model offers clearly defined roles for Presidential candidates.

The exploration of the mega-speech and rationality will continue in the succeeding chapters. Chapter Four examines the campaign of George Bush. Chapter Five explores the campaign of Michael Dukakis. In both cases an attempt is made to place an historical context around each campaign. The Presidential general election campaign of 1988 will then be reviewed from the perspective of each candidate, focusing on several key events. Chapter Four provides the most detailed analysis, because the Bush campaign provides the best illustration of the mega-speech concept. However, Chapter Five carefully examines the Dukakis campaign. In the case of both campaigns, the analysis will proceed from an Aristotelian perspective involving an in-depth examination of the speech situation with particular attention given to audience, speaker and context.

Chapter Six concludes this study. This chapter draws together the information and analysis of previous chapters and attempts to clearly establish the relationship between the mega-speech concept and the democratic system. If the mega-speech concept is correct, then general rhetorical principles are still valid as applied to political discourse, and their study can be of value in relation to the analysis and practice of the American political system.

¹ "In War of Negative Ads, Bush May Have The Edge," The Washington Post, 14 October 1988, p. E 14.

² Peter Goldman and Tom Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 308.

³ The Washington Post, 28 October 1988, p. A 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Peter Goldman and Tom Mathews, "Waving the Bloody Shirt," Newsweek, November 21, 1988, p. 118.

⁶ Walter Shapiro, "It's The Year Of The Handlers," Time, October 3, 1988, p. 18.

⁷ Terence H. Qualter, Opinion Control In The Democracies (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 230.

⁸ Ibid. , p. 239-241.

⁹ Ibid. , p. 241.

¹⁰ Charles Gordon, "With Lazy Voters, Who Needs Issues?" Macleans, November 7, 1988, p. 58.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² San Jose Mercury News, 6 May 1990, p. A 21.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael Kinsley, "Democracy Can Goof," Time, November 14, 1988, p. 100.

¹⁵ I.F. Stone, The Trial Of Socrates (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 94.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 94.

¹⁸ Marie K. Hochmuth, ed. , A History and Criticism of American Public Address (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. , 1955, vol. III), p. 4.

¹⁹ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, p. 92.

²⁰ PBS's "Presidential Campaigning," 17 March 1992.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The literature included in this chapter addresses both the 1988 Presidential campaign and the Presidential campaigns of previous years. Although this study deals primarily with the 1988 campaign, criticism of other campaigns has been included to illustrate that neither the persuasive strategies practiced in the 1988 campaign, nor the criticisms leveled against those practices, were unique. Narrowing the areas of criticism into manageable units and then grounding each of them in previous research appears to be the course of action best suited to the subject.

Accordingly, four areas of criticism have been identified for closer review: 1) the influence of campaign officials or "handlers" in Presidential campaigning; 2) negative campaigning's impact on Presidential campaigns; 3) the impact of television news programming on Presidential campaigns; and finally, 4) voter incompetence.

Political handlers, in addition to drawing attacks for the negative campaigning they allegedly promote, are also assailed for the perceived influence they hold in a campaign. Those who object to the influence of political handlers in campaigns often seem to believe that their use is a relatively new occurrence. At the heart of objections to the reach of political handlers is the argument that they foster intellectual dishonesty. Upon examination, it shall be shown that handlers' involvement and the alleged abuses are both well-established features of American Presidential campaigning. The section that follows on negative campaigning deals with the perceived consequences of using negative messages directed at one's opponent. According to the critics examined, these consequences are manifested primarily in the dispiriting effect negative messages have on the electorate. Again, although it is sometimes assumed that

negative campaigning is a relatively recent occurrence and that its use is injurious to the democratic process, an historical examination of negative campaigning will show it to be a well-established practice which can provide an alternative view to a given candidate's own self-portrait.

The section on the impact of television on the American Presidential election process explores the question of whether television has worsened the American political process, as is often assumed by some. The contrasting view presented here is not that television has bettered the process, but that it has never claimed the role its critics assigned to it (that of public educator), and that it does live up to its own standards, if not those of others. The final section of this chapter deals with the abilities of the electorate. The oft-stated view that the public is incompetent is examined first. In this section, social commentators make their case for voter ineptitude by citing contemporary events, warning of the danger signs in certain tendencies displayed by the general public, and asserting their belief that the American voter is not competent to make decisions regarding the future course of the nation. In contrast, scholarly opinion is presented which takes these criticisms into account, but reaches contradictory conclusions about the above assertions. Finally, it shall be shown that the criticisms of American democracy are not as specific to current circumstance as their authors suppose, but instead may represent systemic criticisms of democracy itself.

An attempt has been made to establish a dialogue between commentators who hold differing points of view. What could be termed the Platonic view is first established by those who carry his intellectual torch. A counter view is then presented in the same manner with what has been termed the Aristotelian perspective. Further, the literature review includes commentary from contemporary popular journals as well as the more traditional scholarly sources. The material from popular sources assists in illustrating the widespread and persistent nature of some critiques.

The Impact of Handlers

A frequent criticism of the 1988 campaign concerned the control that individuals other than the candidate exerted over the campaign process. In general this group is known as "handlers." Handlers include managers, speech writers, pollsters, and others. It is not so much the involvement of handlers that critics find objectionable, but how they impact campaigns. The techniques employed by handlers, some have argued, have made the process become too rigid. Everything in a campaign has become scripted, the complaint goes. A tightly controlled campaign leaves less room for spontaneous, and presumably, a more revealing discussion of issues. The election process has come not so much to resemble a campaign as a stage play. Commenting on the effect the top Republican handler, campaign manager James A. Baker III, had on Bush, Business Week noticed that:

Under Baker, spontaneity has given way to artful political choreography. The Vice-President now reads faithfully from his script, limits press access, and picks campaign back-drops chosen for maximum television impact. As a result, Bush appears to have successfully reinvented himself as a focused, forceful campaigner.¹

The absence of give-and-take in a campaign often means that journalists and their audiences are less able to judge how a candidate might react to an unexpected situation. The unprepared-for question, the offhand remark, the unforeseen situation can all provide additional information about how a candidate might react to situations beyond his or her control. Scripted messages provide the campaign's official perspective. Spontaneous situations provide an opportunity to gauge the character of potential office holders. Classic and modern rhetorical theory hold that a demonstration of solid character is important in establishing the needed credibility for a persuasive effort. And some critics, such as James David Barber, author of The Presidential Character, would argue that character may be the most important aspect in deciding which candidate to vote for. The isolation of Presidential candidates from members of the media so as to avoid revealing moments was not unique to 1988. Writing of the 1968 election Joe McGinniss concluded, in The Selling of the President, that the effect of handlers was far-reaching, and he assumed that this was a relatively new state of affairs which had grown up concurrently with the rise of the mass media. Jamieson

disputes his findings, pointing out that even in 1968 the author's conclusion that handlers were a new phenomenon was inaccurate:

Both because the Nixon media people were the first to expose themselves so openly to scrutiny, and because the reporter himself was so unfamiliar with the inner workings of American campaigns, the book, The Selling of the President, tended to create the impression that what the author had found in the Nixon campaign was new to American politics or unique to the campaign he examined. Neither was the case.²

The undertone of much of the criticism of handlers, as well as much of the criticism of campaigns in general, implies that a relatively new phenomenon is shaping American politics. Further implicit in the criticism of handlers seems to be the notion that there is something deceitful or unethical in the practice of their trade. Walter Lippmann had little tolerance for those who spoke the words of others in pretense that they were their own:

... anyone who knows what he is doing can say what he is doing, and anyone who knows what he thinks can say what he thinks. Those who cannot speak for themselves are, with very rare exceptions, not very sure of what they are doing and of what they mean. The sooner they are found out the better.³

Lippmann was not alone in his suspicion of those who employed others to do their work. Television journalist Eric Sevareid observed the trend as well, and pointed to what was an odd duality of political life. The ghost-writer's craft was generally viewed with suspicion, yet it is no secret that the Washington elite employ others who are presumably more eloquent than they are to give form to their thoughts. Sevareid saw the connection between speech writers and politicians, and claimed that the connection is an unhealthy one:

We admit there are a lot of ghost writers [sic] in Washington, and we claim that is one reason government has become less articulate, its leaders less able to move and excite the American people. We don't understand government leaders who are too busy to write their own speeches, for a man's own words are the man's own self. He wouldn't dare use a false face or false name: it is equally fraudulent to use false words.⁴

In pointing out that handlers, such as speech writers, have been employed in campaigns for a long period, Jamieson observes that: "Ghostwriters [sic] helped Andrew Jackson convert his vigorous but illiterate thoughts into respectable prose."⁵ However, unease of the type expressed by Lippmann and Severeid appears to permeate modern criticism. Their unease may be accompanied by the belief that those who surround a candidate do battle with each other to determine the course of a campaign, and that the candidate makes relatively few decisions. To some extent this may be true. Jamieson contends that struggles between handlers for the direction a campaign will take are the inevitable result of dividing the speaker's traditional responsibilities among several people:

The increasing presence of such struggles signals a change from the time of Demosthenes, Cicero, and even Lincoln and Churchill. In the past, responsibility for discovering (*inventio*), structuring (*dispositio*), and expressing argument in apt language (*elocutio*) resided more certainly with the speaker than it now does.⁶

Critics such as Postman display unease about the reach of handlers, and perhaps their unease is prompted by their belief that the average person is incapable and ill-prepared to detect the deceit of media managers. V.O. Key, in The Responsible Electorate, argued that those who voiced concerns about the public's supposed inability to deal with hucksters were lost in a mythic past that never really existed:

... there are those who contend that, because of the development of tricks for the manipulation of the masses, practices of the political leadership in the management of voters have moved far toward the conversion of election campaigns into obscene parodies of the models set up by democratic idealists. They point to the good old days when politicians were deep thinkers, eloquent orators, and farsighted statesmen. Such estimates of the course of change in social institutions must be regarded with reserve. They may be only manifestations of the inverted optimism of aged and melancholy men who, estopped from hope for the future, see in the past a satisfaction of their yearning for greatness in our political life.⁷

One of Postman's objections relates to the use of visual symbols, or what Postman has called "conversation with pictures." Postman argues that the use of such symbols is harmful to the system. Observers such as W. Lance Bennett argue that a campaign must accomplish certain well-defined objectives in order to be successful. Here

Bennett refers to the use of symbols through ritual. Familiar rituals may help a populace identify its leaders as individuals who face concerns similar to those faced by average people. Handlers often include symbolism in their campaigns. For example, in the 1984 campaign film, Morning In America, Ronald Reagan was shown riding a white horse. Critics such as Postman characterize such symbols as distractions. Other examples of the use of symbolism may be seen in everyday American political life, which might include throwing out the first pitch at a baseball game, cutting ribbons and the like. Commonplace ceremonial activities such as these have been performed for so long by so many candidates that they have become a part of the political landscape. It is expected that successful candidates will participate in these activities. What this may illustrate is that campaigns are often driven by independent external pressures. Since it is expected that a candidate must do certain things, a candidate does them. In some respects this type of behavior amounts to a self-perpetuating ritual. Bennett explains how rituals come to be developed:

A ritual is established properly when the actors are able to communicate through their substantive discourse: a) that they are doing some familiar social activity, b) that they are doing it in a routine or predictable fashion, c) that the participants and observers therefore, can respond properly to the situation by assuming familiar roles, and d) that the ensuing behaviors in the situation can be understood best through the use of particular categories of interpretation.⁸

In Bennett's view, symbolism is useful when presenting favorable images of one candidate, or unfavorable views of another candidate. Through the use of symbols the impact of positive and negative messages can be heightened. Conversely, Postman disapproves of the use of symbols as political conversation.

Symbols may take many forms, but in Presidential politics using symbols amounts to making an argument with pictures, exactly what arouses Postman's suspicion. For example, as the fall campaign began to pick up momentum, Bush wanted to make the argument that Dukakis had a poor environmental record. Rather than simply making accusations or releasing staff reports, Bush chose instead to attack Dukakis during a news conference held on a boat in Boston Harbor. Boston Harbor was one of the dirtiest waterways in the country. By holding his news conference there, Bush was able to get

videotape of the polluted water broadcast on the evening news shows and for later use in television commercials, making an effective Dukakis rebuttal difficult. Another even more powerful use of symbols was exhibited by the Bush campaign when controversy over the pledge of allegiance arose. As Governor, Dukakis vetoed a bill that would have required school children to start their day with the pledge of allegiance. Bush highlighted Dukakis' stance by working the pledge into his speeches, and held many events standing in front of American flags. The issue reached such a fever pitch that, for voters who disagreed with the Dukakis stance, simply seeing Bush standing in front of the flag may have been enough to recall the issue.

Because of their condensed nature, visual symbols often do not tell a full story. Referring to his refusal to sign a no-tax-increase pledge in a televised debate during the 1988 Presidential primaries, Senator Robert Dole argued that his position had been misrepresented. But in speaking of Dole's refusal to sign the pledge, Jamieson argues that the symbolism was too difficult to overcome: ". . . voters' recollection of this action made it more difficult to sympathize with Dole's claim that the ad distorted his campaign." ⁹

Concerns about alleged distortions in political discourse often relate to the influence of handlers on campaigns. Perhaps concerns about political handlers come not only from a general distrust of non-candidates running a campaign, but also from a recognition that these unelected individuals can have a very real effect on a campaign and, assuming that the campaign is successful, on the government. Former Presidential aide Hamilton Jordan realized the impact that others could have on his President: "The battles over a President's words are really struggles over the heart and soul of his Presidency. . . ." ¹⁰ According to Jordan, this is because the words a President speaks bind him or her to a given course of action or policy. Jamieson also understands the importance of a leader's words, and takes an audience-centered approach in reaching her conclusion:

An audience that accepts a speaker's interpretation of the history of a question, grants the definitions offered, weighs the alternatives and with the speaker finds them wanting, sees the problem in memorable dramatized human terms, and then

reaches the speaker's conclusion, is a person likely to retain a commitment to that position. ¹¹

Also, a President's message can excite an audience to action, or confuse and obfuscate an issue. In speculating on how handlers' inventions -- "sound bites" -- may have affected the electorate, Jamieson dismisses the notion of a public that cannot decide what it wants: "The much-discussed volatility of public opinion may be, in part, a by-product of politicians' reliance on granulated forms of communication." ¹²

Another and perhaps more visible impact of handlers is the attention they receive from the media. Just as one could argue that stories about the personalities of the candidates detract from substantive issues, one could make an even stronger argument about handlers and their tactics. One explanation for the concern critics express over stories relating to the influence of handlers is their perception that the influence of handlers is a relatively new phenomenon in American politics. Another explanation might be that more attention has recently been focused on them. In commenting on the prominent role handlers enjoyed, the following observation was made about the 1988 campaign by James K. Glassman in The New Republic: "The issue was the campaign itself -- the people who directed it and wrote its speeches, the way it was reported, its tactics. It was a pretty empty campaign. . . ." ¹³

To some observers this tendency to focus on handlers and their functions is taken as further evidence of the impact that handlers have over the course of a campaign. Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers observed that: "Journalists on the campaign trail spend much time discussing the merits of campaign managers, on whom they are dependent for much of their information." ¹⁴ Since most reporters must file stories daily, their access to information is limited to the handlers themselves or to what the handlers see fit to release. Consequently political reporting sometimes centers on the handlers and their tactics rather than issues.

While tactics may be of great interest to political insiders, they often appear to be of little importance to the average person. The increasing tendency to comment on policy matters that affect the course of the campaign, rather than those which may

affect the course of the nation, drew the following observation: "The sad truth is that campaign coverage is a burnt out genre; the old forms are there, but none of the magic."¹⁵ The "old forms" mentioned refers to a detailed review of tactics in the race. This was a fresh approach when Theodore White broke ground with his The Making Of The President 1960. White took his readers inside the campaign, providing a sense of drama and intrigue, something which had not been done before. Now the press often fixates on tactics, and since time is a finite element in television news, the space given to tactics comes at the expense of issues. Though earlier critics viewed handlers with apprehension, today's commentators in some cases evidently view them with admiration. Jamieson remarks on the image transformation speech writers have undergone by examining the language used to describe their trade:

Formerly cast as whores, speech writers are more often being seen as handmaidens. "Not long ago," observed historian Ernest May in 1953, "topical indexes contained the reference: 'Ghostwriting - see Forgery'; now the searcher is referred instead to authorship; 'Collaboration.'" ¹⁶

Negative Campaigning

Media critics, however, still argue for a more responsible media to address the real issues facing the electorate. Some critics indict handlers for designing and television for focusing on negative, attack-oriented messages to the exclusion of issue-based discussion. Adherents to this position point out that the media seem to give inordinate attention to negative messages. The result, according to William Domhoff, is that campaigns quickly leave the high ground and devolve into something which serves little purpose. Domhoff speaks to this trend in campaigning, noting that: ". . . more often than not, the electoral contests, especially in general elections, boils down to image building and name-calling contests between two ambitious people who are very eager to hold the same elected position." ¹⁷

The campaign of 1988 was also criticized because of its highly negative nature. In September of that year, Business Week saw few redeeming qualities and chided the candidates for avoiding substantive issues: "Unwilling or unable to propose solutions to such painful and intractable problems as the budget deficit and the swelling underclass,

Bush and Dukakis have become mired in a cycle of name calling and flag waving."¹⁸ Further, in the same article a Republican consultant, Adam Goodman, complained: "This is already one of the dirtiest, least consequential, most issueless campaigns I've seen."¹⁹ As if to support Goodman, Roger Ailes, media consultant to the Bush campaign, decided that the press is only interested in two things: mistakes and attacks. Since his candidates didn't make mistakes because of the tight control he preferred to have around them, that only left attacks. Besides, Ailes believed it was easier to drive up the opponent's negatives rather than build up his own candidate on merit alone.²⁰

Ailes' philosophy epitomizes what many critics find distasteful. Attention to critiques such as Goodman's might cause one to conclude that criticism of the 1988 campaign was particularly intense. Other critics, however, have been making similar charges for years: "It had not been what one would call an uplifting campaign for the highest office in the land. The political horizon had been cluttered with superficial matters," opined Jules Whitcover on the 1976 Presidential election.²¹ What is most interesting is that Whitcover addressed the perceived shortcomings of the 1976 campaign. However, reading the content of the above quotation, one could mistake it for criticism of the 1988 campaign. The accuracy of Whitcover's observation aside, his criticism points out the fact that arguments about the supposed devolution of the American Presidential election system (such as Goodman's above) are recurring and often lack an historical grounding.

Negative campaigning was decried in 1988, and without a sense of historical context one could build a very credible case for 1988 being unusual in the fierceness of the attacks from both candidates. In fact, however, defining one's opponent negatively is not unusual. Jamieson provides a historical backdrop to Presidential campaigns, arguing that negative campaigning is the rule of electioneering in the Presidential process rather than the exception:

What an historical analysis reveals, however, is that from the country's first contested election, strategists have offered voters advertising that venerated their candidate and vilified his opponents. If one side did not offer the public a cultivated image of its candidate, the other side's caricatures would shape a voter's decision.²²

Historically speaking, then, the campaign of 1988 may not have been as dirty as Goodman alleges when compared to past elections. One could argue that television has actually moderated the tone of campaigns. Jamieson concluded that this was so because: "Unfair attacks are most likely to be found in print form. . . ." ²³ Unfair attacks are more likely to be printed because they are less likely to be seen by those who could check their accuracy or know of distortions. Television, according to this school of thought and contrary to widespread opinion, actually tends to be a moderating factor. Television represents a general distribution market, while print attacks can be targeted to very specific groups. Jamieson believes television's vast and diverse audience actually amounts to a check against the most scurrilous attacks: "There is some degree of self-restraint in political advertising. Producers and candidates fear the sort of backlash that can occur when an ad attacks unfairly."²⁴ It is for that reason that Jamieson also points out that fringe groups are more likely to use the print medium than the airwaves. In this way they can appeal to limited groups that share their ideology, while minimizing the risk of a backlash. Jamieson goes on to describe some of the harsher ads that major parties have never aired out of fear of going too far:

Among the ads that never aired are: a Democratic ad from 1964 showing Ku Klux Klansmen, quoting from a Klan speech, and asking why the Klan endorsed Goldwater, and a 1972 Democratic ad [sic] showing a Vietnamese mother running down the road holding a napalmed dead infant with Henry Kissinger's voice-over saying the U.S. restricted bombing to the battle area. ²⁵

Further, Jamieson concludes that television ads must agree with societal norms in order to gain credence. Anything that falls outside of the latitude of acceptance of the listener could harm a candidate rather than help. In designing negative messages, campaigns must also be certain that the attacks they initiate are relevant, and that the underlying facts that support negative messages are not only likely to be known and understood by the voters, but also accepted as accurate. When then-Presidential candidate Richard Gephardt attempted to capitalize on what he saw as the generally negative image of "tax-and-spend liberals" in the 1988 Democratic primaries, the result was not what he had hoped for. Jamieson provides some insight as to why, and illustrates what happens when voters perceive a message to be inaccurate or unfair:

... in 1988, New Hampshire voters rejected a Gephardt commercial attacking neighboring Governor Michael Dukakis as one of the biggest tax raisers in Massachusetts history. Because they are part of the Boston media market, New Hampshire voters knew that Dukakis had cut taxes five times in four years and raised them only once.²⁶

Gephardt's experience illustrates that candidates may not be able to take as many liberties with the truth as had been previously believed, at least on television. Jamieson also makes other conclusions in her study that run counter to conventional wisdom. According to Jamieson: "Ads are constrained as well by the need to take their cue from the national agenda of issues and themes."²⁷ In order to have an impact upon voters, candidates in their advertising must address issues that are salient at that time. Which issues are stressed naturally varies to some extent according to the state of the country at the time. Jamieson illustrates both the need for timeliness and salience by discussing the impact that the Watergate and Iran-Contra scandals had on the national agendas:

In 1976, the first post Watergate election, advertising had to focus on "trustworthiness" because it was widely perceived that the honesty of a Presidential candidate and his commitment to constitutional government were on the line. In the primaries of 1988, candidates stressed their management abilities in an attempt to establish that they would not succumb to the decision-making style that invited Reagan's Iran-Contra scandal.²⁸

In addition to being factually accurate, timely and salient, campaigns need to be selective in the number and type of issues presented. In practice, this means that good campaigns must be organized and methodical in their presentation of issues. A campaign may run the risk of obfuscating its central theme by presenting too many issues at once. Jamieson opines that because of limited television time, unity of message is of prime importance. She also points out that the competition for television time actually pressures campaign strategists to eliminate unscrupulous advertisements: "Duplicious ads are also minimized by the need of campaigners to synchronize the images they put in ads, news and debates. The advertising image must be a credible extension, not a contravention, of the image of the candidate captured elsewhere."²⁹ Candidates and their managers should therefore attempt to present a unified image, which means that choices must be made over which advertisements to

run. Hence the number of topics that can be discussed becomes more limited. Furthermore, as suggested by Gephardt's attack on Dukakis, the image a candidate presents must ring true. Otherwise, potential voters might reject it. Jamieson demonstrates the power that perceived truth can have in her analysis of Senator Robert Dole's refusal to sign the aforementioned no-tax-increase pledge:

In 1988 Robert Dole fell victim to an ad for Bush whose message was given credibility by Dole's refusal to sign a no-tax-increase pledge thrust upon him by former Delaware Governor Pete DuPont in a debate before the New Hampshire primary. Dole said he wanted to read the pledge first. The image of Dole refusing to sign made plausible the last minute attack ad in which an announcer claimed that Dole had been straddling the tax increase issue.³⁰

The considerations enunciated by Jamieson provide a functional set of constraints that limit the type, scope and number of messages effective candidates will air. Jamieson's considerations amount to a system of checks which help to guard against abuse. These considerations (the need to be salient, timely, relevant and accurate) are audience-centered considerations and, according to Jamieson, those who ignore them do so at their own peril. Jamieson's considerations give a nod to rhetorical theory which tells us that, among other things, effective persuasive messages must take into account the disposition of the audience.

Though the checks against abuse discussed in this section have become a part of the democratic framework, and may prevent serious abuses in televised campaigning, they go for naught if a candidate fails to force his opponent to abide by them. If the speaker ignores his obligations to hold his opponent to issues and to argue ethically, then that speaker, it would seem, cannot in fairness blame the audience. Michael Dukakis asserted that George Bush was running a dirty campaign. Yet, as will be seen in later chapters, Dukakis either maintained a silence in the face of Bush's attacks, or employed similar tactics to refute them, thus moving from the high ground.

The Impact of Television News Programming on Presidential Campaigns

Television's impact on the political process has been broad and deep, so deep that the print media even attempt to infuse elements of the style of television news shows into their own coverage of events. An examination of U.S.A. Today provides an example. Some of the most frequently-voiced criticisms of television might fairly be applied to that newspaper. Its emphasis is generally on eye-pleasing images which are accompanied by brief textual accounts that often serve as captions for the pictures. The front page of the January 24-26, 1992 edition contains eleven color photographs and illustrations.³¹ Granted, the front page may not be representative of the entire paper, but it does display a tendency to rely on images to convey ideas. U.S.A. Today also provides in print form an example of the allegedly shallow coverage of television. On the front page in the same issue is advice to President Bush on what the article calls Bush's, ". . . oh so important State of the Union speech."³² The article appears in a color highlighted box in the lower right hand corner of the paper, contains only about four and one half column inches of text, and gives advice for Bush on how to appear sincere on television. Just as television is accused of focusing on non-substantive issues, this article could be subjected to exactly that same criticism. Why not talk about the the challenges confronting the country rather than offer advice on presentation skills? Further, just as television is chided for its presumed lack of depth, the same critique could be made here: the State of the Union address would seem to merit more than four and one half inches of space. Other newspapers may have modified their formats as well, but U.S.A. Today is the best example. Some critics would argue that in the process of adopting a television style format newspapers such as U.S.A. Today have not contributed to rational discourse concerning the political process.

An increasingly common position holds that far from contributing to the rational selection of leadership, the inclusion of television as it is used in Presidential campaigns confuses the public and obfuscates issues. On balance, those who adhere to the belief that television muddles the issue might argue that American society is actually worse off because of the medium's effect. Some critics conclude that

television's format has the effect of rendering those who watch it less able to make well-reasoned judgments. Social critic Postman, in Amusing Ourselves To Death, argues that television's abandonment of reason has trivialized American politics: "I should go so far as to say that embedded in the surrealistic frame of a television news show is a theory of anti-communication, featuring a type of discourse that abandons logic, reason, sequence and rules of contradiction." 33

According to Postman, this is because ". . . on television, discourse is conducted largely through visual imagery, which is to say television gives us conversation in images, not words." 34 The basis of much of Postman's criticism is that television misleads the electorate and encourages poor habits among the citizenry. Critics such as Postman see an inherent shortcoming in the medium of television. Even the press sees problems with how Presidential elections are covered, and much of this criticism is leveled at television as well. The harshest attacks on television often come from articles in the print medium. After following the 1988 campaign, many print journalists concluded that not only was television to blame for the campaign's failings, but agreed that television had inherent limitations that were harmful to democratic institutions. Time magazine correspondent Walter Shapiro pointed out what he saw as structural flaw in television: "Television -- and the short attention span it fosters -- may be a primary cause of the nation's political malaise. Even with the best of intentions, TV news all too rarely transcends daily snippets [sound bites] of candidates hurling invective at each other." 35

Other critics agree with Shapiro that television may have inherent flaws that hurt the electorate but cite differing reasons. Domhoff advances the notion that television appears to be too focused on personalities. As he sees it, the emphasis in television news is on individual character traits. According to Domhoff, this has the effect of distracting viewers from substantive issues: "In a system where policy preferences become blurred, the emphasis on the images of individual candidates becomes very great. Individual personalities become more important than the policies of the parties. This tendency has been increased somewhat with the rise of the mass media, in particular television. . . ." 36

There are those who see an unrealized potential in the medium of television. They seek to modify or "improve" the coverage that television gives to Presidential elections, so that it can fulfill its presumed purpose as an instrument of mass education. The Markle Commission concluded after studying the 1988 election that both the media and the electorate were not doing their parts. Its members agreed with Domhoff that television news covers election tactics and personalities to the near exclusion of substance. The Markle Commission also indicted campaign advertising as encouraging a "cynical, passive, and uninformed electorate."³⁷ Their recommendations for correcting the "problem" are somewhat typical of those advanced by others who see television as eroding the democratic process. As a corrective they propose that Presidential candidates be required to agree to four debates as a condition of accepting federal campaign funds. They argue that Congress should "request" more broadcast time for political programming, and recommend that the legislative branch direct the F.C.C. " . . . to call upon the networks regularly to offer public service air time during Presidential campaigns to educate the electorate."³⁸ Some members felt broadcasters should be required to provide such services. Within the view expressed by the Markle Commission is the belief that the media have duties to perform in a democracy.

Terrence Qualter expresses a rebuttal to those critics who attack the role of television in a democracy. Qualter thinks that television has been cast by its critics into the role of public educator, a role the industry neither wanted nor accepted. The television industry sees itself in a different light, Qualter argues, primarily as a profit-making venture. When the industry does not perform as its critics expect, it is attacked for diverging from the role of public educator that the critics alone assigned to it. Qualter explains the media's viewpoint: "They unashamedly accept the role they have assigned to themselves -- the providers of entertainment, relaxation and popular information, as profit-making endeavors. In the context of a liberal capitalist society, it is not an immoral aim, nor is it a dishonest one for those who have never claimed to be doing anything else."³⁹ Qualter believes that media critics lack understanding of the role of the media, and concludes: "Condemning television for presenting an artificial,

imaginary world is like condemning a stage magician for offering illusions. Democratic theorists find it difficult to adjust to this reality." 40

The media's "proper" role aside, it is still popular to argue for more socially responsible media which curtail or abandon the entertainment aspect of their programming in favor of providing important information and solid analysis. Qualter addresses those who call for a more responsible media by questioning the utility of such action, and points out that the public may not want the "benefit" that the critics offer. He sees the assault on media which fail to perform as expected as "irrelevant" because:

Those who demand a socially responsible media, providing extensive public information, seldom face up to the reality that the public has shown little interest in receiving any such service. For most, politics is of marginal concern, and surveys show that people quickly become bored with too much information. 41

Television has played an increasingly important role in every Presidential campaign since its introduction, and especially since 1960. 42 The election of 1988 was no exception. Critics and scholars such as Postman have raised questions about the media for failing to provide what they consider to be adequate coverage, in terms of both quantity and quality. Qualter and others point out, however, that judging the media by a standard it never accepted seems an unsatisfactory, and ultimately futile, way of effecting change.

Voter Incompetence

Much of the criticism of television for shallow coverage of issues, and the styles of political hucksterism it allegedly fosters, appears to have its underpinning in a mistrust of the voting public. In this view, it is not the fault of politicians for lying but of the people for letting them get away with it; it is not the fault of the media for producing irrelevancies because these are what the people want. Accordingly, handlers are viewed as suspect because the people are not equipped to detect manipulation. Those who profess concern for the health of the republic often do so because of the ignorance and apathy they see in the American voter. They see the declining percentage of voters

who exercise their franchise as evidence of the ill health of American democracy. Among recent Presidential elections, 1960 serves as the high-water mark for voter turnout in terms of percentage of voter participation among the eligible electorate. Declining voter turnout is taken at least in part by some observers as an indication of the continuing deterioration of the American system. Declining voter turnout, among other things, led the Markle Commission to conclude after studying the 1988 election: "American voters today do not seem to understand their rightful place in democracy."⁴³

The public's lack of understanding, according to some critics, stems from ignorance and apathy. Charles Gordon, a Canadian columnist, places the blame squarely on the American public: "The American phenomenon this year [1988] is the lazy voter."⁴⁴ Gordon argues that 1988 represented a collective failure of the people. His thesis is that it is the job of the people to force the candidates to discuss the major challenges facing the country. This line of thought places almost all the burden for good governance and inspiring campaigns on the people. Gordon chastises the public for allowing such trivial issues as candidate likability to become relevant to the campaign, saying disdainfully: "This passes for an issue in American politics."⁴⁵

Gordon's argument, like others preceding it in this chapter, deals with television. Gordon theorizes that the American public has become overly dependent on television for its information, but he allows television to escape any further blame by returning responsibility to the voting public. In essence he says the media cannot be held accountable since they are only giving the public what it wants. Gordon continues: "Television is the lazy American's way of keeping in touch with political issues."⁴⁶ He also asserts: "The evidence of the Presidential campaign indicates that Americans have ceased to care much about the more complicated issues -- trade, aid, and the environment,"⁴⁷ Political consultant Doug Bailey supports Gordon's position. Bailey asserts that television has made Americans overconfident, and sees an inherent flaw in the medium which impedes logical thinking. Bailey believes that television: "has made most Americans increasingly confident that, even with little knowledge, they know enough to make decisions on significant issues."⁴⁸ Furthermore, according to Bailey, "The emotional and personal nature of television has created a generation of Americans

confident that their judgment on issues is good enough upon which to base their votes."⁴⁹

Gordon's assessments are based on the premise that declining voter turnout equates to an uncaring populace. Citing a New York Times poll that found that only nineteen percent of Americans based their vote for President on how the candidate stands on issues, Gordon goes on to mention that forty-five percent of Americans usually vote in a Presidential election. He then extrapolates from these figures to assert that only nine percent of the adult American public cares about issues.

Gordon's positions and the Markle Commission's recommendations are illustrative of critics who subscribe to classical democratic theory. This view holds that every member of the electorate should be a rational actor, seeking information, curious about the issues, motivated by principle, and aware of the political world around him or her. Adherents of this belief become frustrated when reality fails to follow theory. In assessing theory against real world performance, Bernard C. Hennessey concluded that these "were unrealistic norms at odds with observed citizen participation."⁵⁰ Qualter decided that this theory "has long been abandoned, and the assault on it is irrelevant."⁵¹

Yet there are those who embrace some form of classical democratic theory, and actually attempt to prove its validity as an illustration that the public is in fact rational. V.O. Key argued that the volatility in American politics serves as evidence, not of an overtly democratic process, but of an electorate that is aware of the world around them and moved by self-interest. Key saw the American political process as a constant building and breaking apart of coalitions which support or oppose those in power. Key's work drew the following comment from Arthur Maass, which is counter to a great deal of political criticism:

The major conclusions to be drawn from Key's findings are first, that political man is rational, and second, that the political institutions that he has developed, at least those for the election of the President, are rational too. . . . Furthermore, he finds that even where group attitudes are present, voters' individual policy preferences are important too.⁵²

Key's analysis, and that of a few others cited in this chapter, represents a minority view: that the Presidential election system may not be perfect but is basically healthy. While the tone of other critics implies or states outright a distrust of the average person, Key's position expresses confidence in the America's people and institutions, and raises the possibility that explanations not favored by many social critics may account for deficiencies. The Responsible Electorate, Key's last book, represents a departure from the views of a great majority of social critics. Key recognized his work was heretical to some, and said of his efforts: "The perverse and unorthodox argument of this little book, is that voters are not fools."⁵³ Key's position, that voters are intelligent, prompted Arthur Maass to give context to Key's findings in the book's forward:

Such an argument [that voters are not fools] is unorthodox because some social scientists, using data and analytical techniques similar to Key's have for years been teaching us something different Key finds that the electorate are neither strait-jacketed by social detriment nor moved by subconscious urges triggered by devilishly skillful propagandists. The portrait that emerges is rather that of an electorate moved by concern about central and relevant questions of public policy, of governmental performance, and of executive personality.⁵⁴

In a variation of the rational actor theory, Key found that the general public will take action on issues which directly affect them as individuals. As evidence of the power of salient issues, Key cites the successful development of policies and candidates in opposition to those of majority party. For such candidates and policies to be successful, they must forge coalitions and unite large segments of the populace behind a given course of action. Domhoff concurs:

. . . enough room for maneuver exists within the . . . processes for opponents of the power elite to develop policies and candidates that bring a significant portion of the population into conflict with a unified power elite. It is these types of conflicts. . . which remind us that domination does not mean total control and does not go unchallenged.⁵⁵

Key views the party system as an asset, and views the electorate in general as composed of people moved by concern not only for their own personal interests, but importantly, for the welfare of the nation as a whole. Key draws his conclusions by

examining the establishment and the breaking apart of coalitions. He examines the behavior patterns of the electorate and categorizes them into three groups: standpatters, switchers and new voters. New voters are persons who vote for the first time or after a long absence. Switchers are those who show little allegiance to either of the political parties. Finally, standpatters are those who strongly identify with one of the major parties as confirmed by their voting record over time. Key concludes that voters make choices based upon an examination of available information, and then act accordingly. In other words, they behave as rational actors:

To an astonishing degree (that is a degree astonishing to persons with experience in the analysis of polling data) voters in their movements to and fro across party lines and from inactive to active voting status behaved as persons who made choices congruent with their policy preferences.⁵⁶

As further evidence of the relatively orderly nature of the American political process, Domhoff also points to the political party system in America as an instrument of stability and a measure of rationality in Presidential politics: "Candidate selection at the national level takes place through a party system that is the oldest and most stable in the world. . . ." ⁵⁷ Domhoff appears to see the party system as an asset in this regard, because a party system implies at least some citizen participation.

Raymond Bauer examines not only voting patterns, but other obligations that the voting-age public may have, and attempts to square them with the rational actor theory. He believes the democratic process is often presented in a sanitized, theoretical way which ignores human nature and the complexities of life. According to Bauer, there is an overemphasis on democratic theory. Bauer believes the flaw may be in the theory, not in the failure to adhere to it.⁵⁸

Much of the criticism discussed in this chapter deals with the perceived inadequacies of the voting public. Whether stated explicitly, or implicitly through critiques of media, handlers and negative campaigning, social critics frequently argue that the public is ultimately responsible. Critics who assail the American electorate often ignore the responsibilities of the candidate or the possibility that a given candidate is simply out of step with the electorate he or she seeks to serve. Postman

and Gordon typify critics who see only problems and are all too eager to blame the populace for failing to meet classical democratic expectations. By way of contrast, what types of insights might be gained if a rhetorical perspective were applied to Presidential campaigning ?

Rhetorical theory has long taught us that a skilled speaker endeavors to ascertain as much information about an audience as possible. Key reached similar conclusions:

The voice of the people is an echo. The output of the echo chamber bears an inevitable and invariable relation to the input. As candidates and parties clamor for attention and vie for popular support, the people's verdict can be no more than a selective reflection from among the alternatives and outlooks presented to them. Even the most discriminating popular judgment can reflect only ambiguity, uncertainty, or even foolishness if those are the qualities of the input into the echo chamber. 59

Key's perspective on candidate responsibility raises an interesting point of view that is seldom explored by other critics. Key broaches the notion that responsibility for a poor campaign may rest with the candidate's rhetorical aptitude for designing a strong message and for rebutting attacks. In Key's view it is the candidate who bears ultimate responsibility for the message of the campaign. If one candidate fails to hold another accountable for perceived misstatements, Key might ask, is this the fault of the public? Or, more literally, if voters can choose only between inadequate candidates, can they be blamed for making an inadequate choice? Previously in this chapter, Kathleen Hall Jamieson alluded to the fact that politicians of this era generally lack any real grounding in rhetoric.

Three of the areas of criticism reviewed in this chapter -- the perceived shortcomings of television, the perceived shortcomings of handlers, and the perceived shortcomings of negative campaigning -- in some way relate to the fourth area of criticism, perceived voter incompetence. As has been demonstrated, in one way or another in each of these areas, blame is ultimately returned to the electorate. However, there is another dynamic at work in each of these criticisms, all of which relate to how American democracy is functioning today. Many of the criticisms applied to democracy and rhetoric in ancient times by Plato are also applied in similar fashion

by today's critics to contemporary American Presidential politics. In responding to Plato, Aristotle provided the intellectual justification to challenge Plato's assumptions, and also a rebuttal to modern critiques based on Plato's notions. The ideas of both philosophers have so affected modern views of rhetoric, democracy and rationality that a deeper analysis of the relevant contributions of both seems not only warranted but necessary. That analysis is undertaken in Chapter Three.

¹ Richard Fly, Howard Gleckman, Douglas Harbrecht, and Lee Walczak, "The Candidates Come Out Slinging," Business Week, September 19, 1988, p. 30.

² Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Packaging The Presidency (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.vii.

³ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Eloquence In An Electronic Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 206.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. , p. 204.

⁷ V.O. Key, The Responsible Electorate (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 6-7.

⁸ W. Lance Bennett, "The Ritualistic And Pragmatic Bases Of Political Campaign Discourse," The Quarterly Journal of Speech 63 (October 1977) : 222.

⁹ Jamieson, Packaging The Presidency, p.vii.

¹⁰ Jamieson, Eloquence In An Electronic Age, p. 206.

¹¹ Ibid. , p. 13.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ James K. Glassman, "The Solipsistic Campaign," The New Republic, December 12, 1988, p. 46.

¹⁴ Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, ed., The Hidden Election, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) p. 94.

¹⁵ Walter Shapiro, "Why It Was So Sour," Time, November 14, 1988, p. 21.

¹⁶ Jamieson, Eloquence In An Electronic Age, p. 205.

¹⁷ William Domhoff, Who Rules America Now? (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice - Hall, 1983), p. 151.

¹⁸ Fly, Gleckman, Harbrecht, and Walczak, "The Candidates Come Out Slinging," p. 29.

¹⁹ Ibid.

- 20 Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 299.
- 21 Domhoff, Who Rules America Now?, p. 151.
- 22 Jamieson, Packaging The Presidency, p.xx.
- 23 Ibid. , p. xxii.
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- 31 U.S.A. Today, January 24-26, 1992. p. 1.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves To Death: Public Discourse In The Age Of Show Business (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 105.
- 34 Ibid. , p. 7.
- 35 Shapiro "Why It Was So Sour," p. 18.
- 36 Domhoff, Who Rules America Now?, p. 121.
- 37 San Jose Mercury News, p. A 21.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Qualter, Opinion Control In The Democracies, p. 241.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid. , p. 243.
- 42 Theodore White, America In Search Of Itself: The Making Of The President 1956-1980 (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 165.

- 43 San Jose Mercury News, p. A 21.
- 44 Gordon, "With Lazy Voters, Who Needs Issues?," p. 58.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Qualter, Opinion Control In The Democracies, p. 231.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Key, The Responsible Electorate, p. viii.
- 53 Ibid. , p.vii.
- 54 Ibid. , p.vii.
- 55 Domhoff, Who Rules America Now?, p. 151.
- 56 Key, The Responsible Electorate, p. 44.
- 57 Domhoff, Who Rules America Now?, p. 208.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Key, The Responsible Electorate, pp. 2-3.

Chapter III

Two Views Of Rationality

Although many contemporary scholars and critics assail the modern electoral system from what might be called a Platonic vantage point, they appear unaware at times of the influence Plato has had in the shaping of their thoughts. A basic suspicion of democratic institutions is central to Plato's perspective, and though modern critics do not always challenge the public's intelligence directly, they do, as has been discussed, advance other arguments which attack the public's ability to govern at different levels, such as the notion that the public is responsible for the candidates' selection of irrelevant issues.

The type of critique which returns all of the responsibility for good governance to the public attacks the underpinnings of democracy itself. Platonic critiques of democracy seem in one way or another to argue that democracy is an irrational system. If the people, this line of thought goes, are somehow incapable or irrational and are charged with selecting the nation's leaders, then the system itself must also be flawed and irrational.

The Platonic Viewpoint

The threads of Platonic analysis can be seen in the political writings of most Western cultures, including modern America. Orderly, logical, absolute and perfect answers to complex problems are what many would term rational. That which falls outside this definition is deemed to be irrational.

For many of society's contemporary social critics, the modern political system is neither orderly nor logical. Postman, in Amusing Ourselves to Death, asserts that to choose Presidents based on the perception voters gather from television is irrational. Since most Americans arguably receive the majority of their information through the visual medium of television, Postman's criticisms strike at the heart of television-dependent American democracy. As if to prove that television is inadequate, Postman goes on to attack the tendency of television news to reduce complicated issues into nuggets of information which exclude perspective and insight, and ultimately distorts issues. Postman follows his "distortion" line of thought to further assert that, in the words of Aldous Huxley, our society has become a collection of " 'Great Abbreviators,' meaning that none of us has the wit to know the whole truth. . . ." ¹ What Postman's comment indicates is the extent to which the Platonic fixation on the absolute is still influential. Postman himself lauds Plato, and draws his intellectual lineage closer to him. Postman sees a relationship between his views and those of Plato, and speaks of the detrimental, visual nature of television. In so doing, he relates one of Plato's concerns about the democratic process:

... you will find an argument here that presumes a clearer grasp of the matter than many that have come before. Its value, such as it is, resides in the directness of its perspective, which has its origins in observations made 2300 years ago by Plato. It is an argument that fixes its attention on the forms of human conversation, and postulates that how we are obliged to conduct such conversations will have the strongest possible influence on what ideas we can conveniently express. And what ideas that are convenient to express inevitably become the important content of a culture. ²

It was Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, who articulated the case against democracy and rhetoric centuries ago. Plato knew that democracy and rhetoric were inseparably linked. Democracy relies upon freedom of speech so that issues may be discussed and debated. The discipline of rhetoric provided advice to citizens so as to enhance their effectiveness in discussions and debates in the democratic context. Rhetoric allows for pathos, or emotion, and since Plato thought that the average person was governed by passion, he saw great potential for the abuse of rhetorical skills, and he concluded that democracy was an irrational and doomed form of government because of the people's gullibility. He saw rhetoric as a flatterer's art because he perceived

that by heaping praise upon one's audience, one could obtain practically anything, since most common people were vain, childish and easily led. In many of the Socratic dialogues, Socrates often shows disdain for both rhetoric and democracy. Rhetoric, in Socrates' view, was aimed at persuading what he saw as the dull-eyed herd of a populace with flattery. Rhetoric, according to Socrates, was a tool that may be used to the great harm of the state by leading the "herd" improperly. Socrates tied rhetoric to tragedy in The Gorgias, and his opinion is capsulized by the following passage in which he asserted that tragic poetry was: "a kind of rhetoric addressed to such a public as is compounded of children and women and men and slaves as well as free; an art that we do not quite approve of, since we call it a flattering one." Democratic rhetoricians, he decided: "like the poets are set on gratifying the citizens. . . sacrificing the common weal to their own personal interests"; and they act towards "these assemblies as to children." ³

There are some similarities and some differences between the society and institutions of ancient Athens and those of modern America. Since democracy was relatively new, the frame of reference of most Athenians included oligarchy and monarchy as well, and the definition of democracy then was quite different. The Socratic position was monarchical or oligarchical, favoring decision-making by the few or the all knowing one as opposed to the many. It was presumed that an informed all-knowing decision maker was preferable to decision making by the uninformed many.

We also see that modern critics are concerned with the people's susceptibility to flattery. This expression of concern gains almost universal concurrence when critics turn their attention to the impact of television. Critics complain that the emphasis of the medium is on presentation and packaging. According to Plato, rhetoric hindered the rational pursuit of truth, because it was a flatterer's art form. Rhetoric asks us not to think but to accept, and because of an inherent flaw, it is argued, rhetoric favors those with strong presentation skills.

Rhetoric in ancient Athens was directed at the relatively large audiences of assemblies and law courts. To Plato's way of thinking, rhetoric was the vehicle by

which the "common weal" was sacrificed; the assemblies were treated like children; a guilty man could be made to seem innocent or vice-versa, and because of rhetoric's potential for abuse, the wrong leaders could be chosen. Plato thought that the people would "[promote] to honor anyone who professes to be the people's friend."⁴ In modern society, concerns similar or identical to those voiced about ancient politicians are expressed frequently today with regard to modern politicians. The findings of the Markle Commission cited in Chapters One and Two are an illustration. The Commission is afraid the public is too gullible to guard against hucksters who would sacrifice the public condition for their own betterment. Further, since The Markle Commission is afraid television propagates a trivial and irrational discourse, the commission sees messages aimed at the public's lowest common denominator.

Plato was in search of absolute truth and was suspicious of those who, in his view, settled for less. Statements by those who seek to educate the public for its own good remind us that good is a relative term. Further, in order to educate, one must hold a position of higher status than one's pupils. This places modern critics in the gratifying position of being elevated above most others - a position enjoyed by Plato and Socrates as well. Some of today's critics, in fact, display some of the same anti-democratic tendencies exhibited by Plato. Terrence Qualter drew similar conclusions, and detected a longing for a stronger hand by some who seek to "improve" democracy: "There are always those democrats who look enviously at the apparently successful mind control in the dictatorships, and suggest that the democracies will fail unless they copy those methods. They prefer the certainty of a fixed, protective, assertive ideology."⁵

Plato's perspective may provide that "protective" ideology. Plato examined five forms of government in The Republic. Among these was democracy, which he concluded was irrational and could only lead to ill consequences. Democracy, Plato thought, would end in tyranny because the people would indulge too deeply in the freedoms of the democratic state, falling victim to or selecting a despot of their own free will. Using the tools of rhetoric, a despot would appear as a protector. Knowing of the people's vanity, the despot would curry favor by heaping praise upon the crowd and by making

extravagant promises, knowing of the crowd's greed. The despot would excite anger, fear, and other base emotions by attacking his opponent, be these attacks warranted or not. Plato's argument suggests that the gullible crowd, like helpless children, would turn to the despot. The despot then would further use the tools of rhetoric to usurp the democratic freedoms he had promised to uphold.⁶

In examining Plato's early life, we gain perspective on his views towards rhetoric, and his distrust of "the crowd," and hence of democracy. We are also able to place some context around his works, which can produce added meaning and insight. Though little can be known with certainty, we may make inferences from the language and events in the Socratic dialogues. In The Republic, Socrates laments the onset of old age, remarking that he does not know what to expect since he has yet to travel that road.⁷ From this it can be deduced that he is somewhere near the age of sixty, at which time Athenian males began to be considered elders. We also know that Socrates was born circa 470 B.C.⁸ A reasonable assumption would put Socrates somewhere between the ages of fifty and sixty.

Plato's two older brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, are also characters in the dialogue. They are still young men, but have already distinguished themselves at the battle of Megara, which the ancient historian Thucydides reckons to have occurred in the year 424 B.C.⁹ They are at home. They are not at war, nor are they even on watch to head a war off. Athens, then, was likely at peace. These factors taken together indicate that the probable time in which this dialogue would have had to occurred was about the time of the peace of Nicias in 421 B.C., which ended the Archidamian war.¹⁰

The fact that the dialogue occurred at this time is significant because Athens emerged as far and away the least damaged of the belligerent states. She was left with the bulk of her empire intact, her wealth preserved, a predominant position in the new order of neighboring states, and a victor's euphoria. She would have been awash in victory, and basking in the afterglow of a favorable peace. Indeed, it is likely she would have been at the very zenith of her imperial grandeur. When viewed in this

context, suppositions in The Republic about the relative merits of democracy take on a different meaning. Furthermore, if this assessment is correct, Plato would have been between five and seven years of age at the time this conversation was to have taken place. He was incapable of writing the dialogue at this time, and if it actually did occur, he had to have heard about it second hand. With retransmission of information, there is the potential for distortion, and as Key reminds us, there is a tendency to idealize one's own past. At the time this dialogue was to have occurred, Plato was at perhaps the most impressionable stage of life, and may well have been shaped by the above-mentioned victor's euphoria, as well as attendant suppositions about the inadequacy of democracy because of his family's position.

Plato was the product of a privileged class; his childhood helps to explain many of his later positions on the incompetence of "the crowd." Born into a wealthy, influential and respected family, it must have been natural for the young Plato to take note of the world around him, and to observe how others reacted to those of his position. To the young Plato deference to authority may have appeared to be the natural order. Plato's family, on both sides, but particularly his father's, was one of the most distinguished in Athens. His father, Ariston, is said to have traced his lineage back to the God Poseidon.¹¹ In this context the origin of the Platonic Philosopher King takes on a entirely different meaning. Whether Plato accepted his father's view of divine ancestry, or rejected it as a pretentious fantasy, the effect it may have had may still have been formative in nature. Since Plato's early years were spent in an autocratic, prestige-oriented family structure, the overriding message he may have received is that of the effectiveness of firm guidance and order. The connection to divinity could only serve to legitimize this position. It may also help to explain his fondness for absolute answers. In God's absence, what better source for an absolute answer could there be than a descendant of God?

Perictione, Plato's mother, also likely contributed to Plato's view of the world. What Perictione lacked in divine connections she apparently atoned for with earthly ones. Perictione had, respectively, as her cousin and brother Critias and Charmides. Both men played leading roles in the oligarchic terror of 404 B.C.¹² It is likely they

also influenced Plato. Plato's relatives may have served as another example of elitist leadership, and thus revealed a family tendency towards absolutism.

Both Critas and Charimides were old friends of Socrates, and through them it is likely that Plato knew his teacher from earliest childhood.¹³ Socrates' influence on Plato was likely magnified by early and continued exposure, and Socrates' execution under a democratic government must not only have been painful, but may have also helped to confirm Plato's suspicions about democracy. Plato's respect and affection for his old teacher is evident throughout the dialogues, particularly so in the dialogue which dealt most directly with Socrates death, The Apology, and also Phaedo and Crito. Because Socrates left no written record, one is dependent on others, primarily Plato, for an understanding of him. For all these reasons, and for educational purposes, Plato may have been tempted to vest more thoughts into Socrates than Socrates would have claimed as his own. Thus, it is in this context that we will view Plato, and his works on government including The Republic.

In retelling his stories, Plato had a message he was trying to impart. In all his dialogues Plato made his characters the embodiment of human virtues, vices, and prevalent viewpoints. Typically, a given character establishes a position which is then refuted by Socrates. In his dialogues dealing with democracy, Plato would allow his characters to express a position in support of democratic ideals before Socrates advanced what is presumably Plato's position and showed the "inherent" weaknesses of self-government.

The Republic is perhaps Plato's best known work, and it is here that one could see the elitist influences upon him most clearly in his vision of the ideal state. Plato, in fact, drew several versions of a mythic utopia, and in all but one, he advanced some form of monarchy as the basis for the ideal state.¹⁴ His predisposition towards absolutism is well-established. Indeed, in the Politicus it is an absolute monarchy that Plato espouses.¹⁵ In The Republic he prefers rule by several, or one, Philosopher-king(s). Socrates makes the case for a state governed by philosophers,

and in so doing voices the Platonic preference for order and a distrust for common people:

Until the philosophers are kings or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside cities will never have rest from their evils -- no, nor the human race, as I believe, and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. ¹⁶

Socrates not only makes the case for a state governed by philosophers, but reveals something of Plato's condescension for those who differ from him. Socrates speaks to what he sees as flaws in the current democratic system. He asserts that he is earnestly concerned both for the welfare of the state and of the people. Ostensibly, it is the welfare of the people that most concerns Socrates. What begins to be revealed, however, is the extent to which the citizenry is distrusted. Socrates, in the preceding passage, suggests that non-philosophers should be proscribed from holding office in his state, and where necessary should be removed from office. The use of coercive means, including force, is implied. Of course, the argument would go, the use of force would all be for the establishment of the ideal state, and would better the people's condition. One could also see the value that Plato placed on training in philosophy. The implication is that people without such training present too great a risk to the successful running of the state. Most people would not have the ability to run the government, and since they cannot run it, have no expert knowledge of it, an extension of that argument would be that most people do not have the ability even to select governmental leaders.

In other works, such as The Laws, Plato advocates tight restraints on citizens' activities, again indicative of his distrust of the views of the common citizen. ¹⁷ Citizen rule is to be feared and individual citizens distrusted to such an extent that a panel of overseers, a Nocturnal Council, is to be established to suppress dissent, and "help" citizens reach the correct views. Travel abroad was also to be restricted to prevent "contamination" by other cultures. In Plato's view, then, to a remarkable degree people are seen as incapable of rational thought, and measures must therefore

be adopted to protect them from themselves. It is made clear in The Republic that people are vain and susceptible to flattery, and that candidates can exploit these weakness to their advantage. Hence, the system is flawed. The citizenry will select officeholders not on merit, but on how well they play to the people's biases. In other dialogues Plato views the public as a herd.

In Timaeus and Critas Plato conceived of a Golden Age of humanity where the Gods tended their herds of humans as humans later tended their herds of cattle.¹⁸ The idea of the public as herd extends still further. I.F. Stone, in The Trial of Socrates, notes that Socrates' messages may have been interpreted differently by his various disciples on several points, but they all agreed that democracy was a poor form of government because the people were incapable of governing:

They [Socrates' followers] all rejected the polis [the concept of a self governing city in which all citizens played a part]. They all saw the human community not as a self governing body of citizens with equal rights but as a herd that required a shepherd or king. They all treated democracy with condescension or contempt.¹⁹

Plato saw other ill consequences of democracy, which he warned of in The Republic. He thought that common people were overwhelmed with problems in a democracy, and that democracy injured them further: ". . . for in the first place freedom creates rather more drones in the democratic than there were in the oligarchical state."²⁰ He believed also that people would turn away from government because they cannot understand it, and what is not understood becomes frustrating. In taking this position, Plato indicated that the people would choose, through action or inaction, a dictatorial regime, not the Philosopher-King, but a more base and vile kind of ruler. Today's critics, typified by the members of the Markle Commission, often raise similar concerns.

Plato's associations, his education, the tenor of his times, and his own personal background led to his predilection against democratic government. The privileges he was accorded as a member of a rarefied social elite helped to shape his views. Plato eventually learned to hate and fear "the crowd." At one point in The Republic Socrates

laments that the "drones" that democracy produced would "feed" off the upper classes.²¹ Plato may have convinced himself that his notions about the ideal state were conceived with the best of intentions for the common person, but the history of countries such as the U.S.S.R. or Nazi Germany argues against placing one or even a few individuals at the top of society with absolute power. Plato's privileged upbringing cocooned him into a world where he did not deal with the real problems of people, and instead dealt more with the theoretical ones. In evaluating the relative merits of monarchical and democratic government, Niccolo Machiavelli sided with the masses of democracy over the more absolutist rule of princes. After surveying the various forms of government on the Italian peninsula up to and including his own time, Machiavelli concluded that in practically every case, ". . . more virtue will be found in the populace than in the prince."²²

Modern Platonic social critics, such as the Markle Commission, often issue pronouncements that betray a distrust of common people. Like Plato before them, many modern social critics worry about the people's ability to effectively make choices on the governance of the country. Some of today's critics, however, take a different approach. While acknowledging that problems may exist, they are more sanguine about the people's abilities. It would seem that these critics are closer to Aristotle's position.

The Aristotelian Viewpoint

In Aristotle's view, a human being is a "political animal" - - a social animal with the need to interact with others who can only fully realize his or her potential as a human being as a member of the "political association."²³ Overall, the citizens of a democracy, he thought, were able to choose their own leaders, manage their own affairs, and make rational decisions regarding the state. He saw within rhetoric a predilection for truth, and within people a predilection for discerning truth. Simply put, Aristotle believed that the truth was inherently more persuasive than a lie, and that if a lie prevailed, the opposing speaker, not the audience, must accept the responsibility for not exposing the lie: ". . . because things that are true and things

that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly." 24

Aristotle, then, concluded that the truth was inherently more persuasive than a lie. Further, this being the case, if a lie prevailed, it was not the fault of the audience which believed it, but of the opposing speaker for not presenting his or her case effectively. To Aristotle, rational decision-making in a political setting seemed to require no special training, although decision-making could, of course, be improved through the study of rhetoric. Most people were born with sufficient reasoning to determine the best case presented to them. He concludes by reiterating, "... things that are true and things that are better are by their nature, are practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in." 25

Aristotle's view of democracy and the general populace's ability to make rational decisions differs markedly from those held by many modern social critics. As we saw in Chapter Two, some fear that citizens will fall victim to the tricks of handlers. On the whole, critics such as Postman, Gordon, and the members of the Markle Commission are in agreement with Plato, and in general opposition to Aristotle. In the remainder of this chapter, Aristotle's views and their formation will first be explored, integrating modern social critiques along the way. Then rationality shall be discussed and a framework advanced for further analysis in Chapters Four and Five.

That Aristotle embraced democracy to the extent he did seems surprising when one considers the influence of Plato. When Aristotle came to study at Plato's side in the Academy, he was a boy of seventeen. But no longer was Plato the same man who wrote The Republic. Rather, Plato himself had entered old age. He now seemed more concerned with the search for beauty and truth. Aristotle may have learned this concept -- the search for truth -- so well that he felt comfortable in questioning what his teacher taught him. One should remember also that Aristotle spent twenty years at the Academy. During such a long period of time change is inevitable in the dynamics of any relationship. But one constant seems to be Aristotle's affection for the master of

the Academy; he did not leave that institution until after Plato's death. As a boy beginning a course of study, Aristotle may well have felt in awe of Plato. As Aristotle learned what Plato had to offer, as his own thought processes matured, and as Aristotle developed confidence in his own work, surely an element of change entered into the relationship with his teacher. He may have arrived as a student of Plato's, but he grew into his equal. Perhaps Aristotle's view of the world was colored by his own experience, too.

Aristotle also brought a different set of skills, and a different background, to the teacher-student relationship than his own teacher, Plato, had brought to Socrates, although there were some similarities. Aristotle, too, had a well-connected father; he was court physician to Philip of Macedon. Aristotle was thus exposed to absolutist thought as well. However, some scholars have speculated that his father's vocation played an important part in Aristotle's intellectual development. Aristotle may have developed a more empirical frame of reference through the connection with his father's perspective as a physician.

However his background may have influenced him, Aristotle's view of rhetoric is generally favorable. He did not think that those who governed should be required to be philosophers, nor did he feel government to be beyond the scope of the average person. Aristotle dealt with probabilities, with how he observed the world to work, not certainty. Aristotle had no single model of the "best" society, as did Plato. I.F. Stone describes Aristotle's approach to logic, and notes that Aristotle did not require a sanitized, perfect world in which to work:

In systematizing logic for the first time, and inventing the syllogism as its principal instrument, Aristotle distinguished two forms of the syllogism, the dialectical and the rhetorical. Both begin with propositions believed to be true; the dialectical with those believed to be necessarily and always true, the rhetorical with propositions believed to be probably, though not always true. . . The distinction arises not from the capacities of learned dialectics and those of ordinary men, but from the nature of the material the latter must deal with in their assemblies and law courts.²⁶

The crux of the issue is that everyday problems of "average" citizens require practical answers, answers which must be based on probability. When administering justice in a court of law, jurists must consider the testimony of many witnesses whose accounts of the same event often differ drastically. Legislators must sort through conflicting evidence and write laws which apply to the future, where nothing can be known with certainty. We deliberate not on what is certain, but on what is uncertain.

Aristotle in fact attempts to answer Plato's objections to rhetoric throughout much of his work. In the first sentence of The Rhetoric, Aristotle defines rhetoric as the "counterpart" of dialectic.²⁷ It is revealing to note that the word Aristotle originally used for counterpart is antistrophes, a term he borrowed from the realm of theater. In Greek theater a chorus would sing the strophe on one side of the stage, and then the same chorus would move to the opposite side and sing the antistrophe in the same meter.²⁸ Aristotle goes on to say that neither rhetoric nor dialectic is a definite science.²⁹ The implication is that they both fall into the category we loosely call "the arts." The arts are imperfect and are governed not by hard and fast laws, but by general principles which leave room for human creativity and expression. In placing dialectic together with rhetoric Aristotle not only puts the two on an equal basis, but further, he points to the uncertainty inherent in both. In dialectic, it is true, we reason from certainty, or more accurately, what we believe to be certain. In politics it is rare that we are able to find much real use for dialectical reasoning since so little in the political realm is certain. In contrasting Aristotle's views with those of Plato and Socrates, Stone found the Platonic/Socratic position wanting because of its insistence on perfection:

Where Socrates was constantly searching for absolute certainty in the shape of perfect definitions - and never finding them - and where Plato abandoned the real world for a celestial stratosphere of unchangeable Ideas or forms, Aristotle approached the problem of knowledge from a point of view close to what we call common sense.³⁰

This study has been drawing analogies between the societies of ancient Athens, and modern America. For example, we have pointed out a general distrust displayed by many of today's critics regarding the people's ability to govern; this distrust denotes a

Platonic point of view. We have also demonstrated that the views of Aristotle still find adherents among the likes of critics such as Qualter and Key, who believe that the people are generally able to fulfill the duties that democracy demands.

Indeed, we hear echoes of the Platonic works throughout much of the modern dialogue on politics. We are told that modern politicians pander to the crowd, that modern campaigns discourage honest intellectual thought, and that indeed may have become incapable of conveying such thought. Behind such commentary is a basic distrust of the general public. These critics do not appear to believe that the average person is concerned enough, or capable enough, to make sense of the world as seen on television. Many of these same criticisms were leveled at rhetoric by Plato and Socrates. Also, we are told that the masses cannot detect slick manipulation. Similar charges were also made in ancient Athens. If today's critics are to argue that politicians and their handlers may use their skills to the detriment of the system, they would do well to remember that this charge too was made in ancient times, and that Aristotle's rebuttal was that: "And if it is to be objected that one who uses such power of speech unjustly might do great harm, that is a charge which may be made in common against all good things. . . ." ³¹ Aristotle placed emphasis on the speaker's duties, not on the listener's shortcomings:

There are, then, these three means of effecting persuasion. The man who is in command of them must it is clear, be able (1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and (3) to understand the emotions - that is to name them and describe them to know their causes and the way in which they are excited. ³²

Aristotle, then, places prime importance on reasoning. He tells us that effective persuasion should be grounded in solid arguments because of the audience's capacity to reason. If a presentation is well-reasoned, the audience will recognize this and grant the speaker higher credibility than if it were not. Dialectic makes reasoning the only element of importance in rational decision-making. Dialectic ignores -- even decries -- emotion as a part of the reasoning process, and thus further diverges from rhetoric on the place of emotion in argument. From a rhetorical perspective, the speaker must make certain inferences about the audience so that he or she may appeal to those

emotions which are required by the situation. The speaker must know human emotions and be able to appeal to them when appropriate. Again, the modern political process was assailed for the use of emotional proofs in the 1988 election.

Aristotle recognizes that we are emotional as well as logical beings and thus arises the need to make emotional appeals. Aristotle saw in common people what he referred to as a kind of practical wisdom or prudence. In The Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle described the kind of prudence that is used in deliberating the questions which we face every day. Prudence is not a science, says Aristotle, for one only deliberates on things that are uncertain. Prudence is not an art, for, as Aristotle pointed out, if a mistake is made in art, it may still be judged to be great. Rather prudence is simply a virtue, and implies the ability to survey a given situation in its entirety, making the best judgment that can be made based on probabilities. Aristotle saw prudence as being linked to political science. He understood that emotional appeals were made and thought that so long as those appeals were temperate, and in keeping with the nature of the issue, they were legitimate. Further, Aristotle knew that people would act to protect their own interests, and believed that this was all to the good since, in his view, most issues could not be completely separated from the realm of politics.³³ Aristotle too sees the potential for abuse, but again does not blame the audience. Instead, where abuses occur, he places responsibility not only on the speaker who utters falsity or incites emotions demagogically, but also on the speaker's opponent, who must see both sides of the question and be ready if the opposing speaker attempts to behave unethically. To Aristotle the need to refute one's opponent is another reason for understanding the human emotions which surround issues. According to Aristotle:

We must be able to employ persuasion, just as strict reasoning can be employed on opposite sides of a question, not in order that we may in practice employ it in both ways (for we must not make people believe what is wrong), but in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that if another man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute him.³⁴

Modern scholars also make a case for the inclusion of emotion in political discourse. Wayne Booth, in Modern Dogma And The Rhetoric of Assent, discusses the advantages of a rhetorical and hence Aristotelian method. As a way of analyzing the reasons given

to an audience by speakers who seek to persuade, Booth advocates the use of warrants -- substantive and emotional proofs. Of necessity, these are value terms and require some explanation to be made appropriate to modern contexts. The first of the substantive proofs is relevance. The reasons given must be time-appropriate. That is, they must deal with the current concerns of the voting public. Further, they must be of intrinsic importance to the voters. Second is demonstration of value. This does not mean the value of the reason given. Rather, it refers to the ethical values of the speaker. Booth calls it "the character or personal integrity of the speaker" -- ethos.³⁵ Third is sincerity. Here Booth is referring to the level of sincerity or good will that the speaker demonstrates towards the audience.

Though one could argue that both ethics and sincerity have emotional components, Booth next discusses emotional proofs, and asserts that these are not incompatible with reason. He is referring to moral issues: actions one should take because they are morally right. Booth appears to believe that emotional proofs should be used when there is no clearly superior choice that emerges from reason alone. Emotional proofs should also be consistent with societal norms.

Today's Platonists appear to ignore the emotional side of human beings. Referring back to the previous chapter, one recalls critics such as Gordon who are derisive in tone about the American public for concern over character. Through Aristotle and Booth one sees that character has always been, and properly should be, an important consideration for voters. Character is important to the speaker, for the audience will grant higher credibility if good character is perceived. Perhaps unaware of the place of emotion in political discourse, modern Platonists often assail the present system as nonsensical and contradictory to logic.

As Postman did earlier, today's critics often point to what they perceive to be a problem in modern society, such as low voter turnout, but they make few practical suggestions for its solution. Suggestions which are made are often unworkable or require us to abandon some part of the democratic framework. Qualter found their claim suspect: "Many who pay lip service to the idea of free speech, upholding it as a

cherished value, seem in practice to conceive of it as their right to inveigh against their opponents, but not as their opponent's right to attack them." 36

Aristotle believed that Plato's position was impractical. Further, his faith in the "average" citizen was high. Early in The Ethics and in The Politics, he tells us that human beings generally have the intelligence to understand arguments and issues. He asserts that people have enough civic virtue and logic to govern themselves. As his evidence, Aristotle cites the development of the polis. If it were true that people were stupid, then civilization could not have developed to that point. Aristotle may have been one of the original democrats. His position goes right to the center of self-government. If citizens are treated as a stupid, dull mass incapable of running their own lives, then that society is not a democracy. Plato does not seek to improve democracy; he seeks to overturn it. Those who carry his intellectual torch, and purport to use the foundation of his beliefs as a critique of the current system, seem oblivious to this fact. And because Plato meant to discredit and displace, not refine and advance, self-government, critiques of democracy based on his notions are finally as helpful as his quest to discover ultimate truth; it is an intriguing journey, but it leads us nowhere.

The Case For A Rhetorical Rather Than A Dialectical Analysis Of Democracy

The duality of perspectives articulated by Plato and Aristotle arises from two very different views of human understanding and rational decision making. The positions of these two philosophers have helped to shape scientific and social research for centuries. Much recent social criticism, such as Postman's and Gordon's, has been built on Plato's constructs, and perhaps inappropriately so. Granted, for some Platonism may have been an unconscious basis of inquiry, but nevertheless, it still has colored the outcome. Platonists have for centuries judged rhetoric and democracy according to the standards of dialectic and absolutism. This unfortunate tendency has negatively distorted perspectives on both rhetoric and democracy. Those critics who have a Platonic orientation and wonder if America has a rational public, in practice, have answered the question before it was asked. Plato's notions are not appropriate to the

democratic context for several reasons. Booth speaks to the impracticality of the Platonic position, yet simultaneously underscores its widespread nature by pointing out its current use. Booth concluded that the Platonic preference for certainty is interwoven into much of today's criticism, and:

... has saddled us with standards of truth under which no man can live. Even the recent philosophers whom I use as witness for part of my case are still, many of them seeking a certainty that would be of no use to our practical discourse even if it were to be found.³⁷

Booth argues that what is needed is a "rhetoric of reasons." By this he means that the speaker with the best supported case deserves the assent of the audience. Such a rhetoric fundamentally differs from the Platonic view in many ways, but perhaps most importantly, it means that the burden on the audience is only to recognize the truth, rather than to detect falsity by their own effort. In the language of debate, speakers must make a "prima facie" case. Prima facie refers to the speaker's duty to present a case that makes sense when it is first heard. In the context of presidential elections, if one speaker fails in his duty to make a prima facie case, one cannot fairly blame the audience for failing to vote for that speaker.

A "rhetoric of reasons" approach places stress not on the ends, but the means. In advancing his position, Booth points out that there will always be disagreement over the ends in politics because politics is about making value judgments. This being the case, one should then focus on the means - - the reasons given to the audience to gain their assent. Modern criticism sometimes displays a tendency to attack the ends. This most notably occurs when Platonic critics lament low voter turnout. Focusing on the ends and not the means is in keeping with the Platonic vision of what is rational.

Human society, of course, cannot be broken down into simple equations which provide clear-cut answers; hence Plato's consternation when social "equations" did not balance. Aristotle was empirical and taxonomic; hence his belief that people would not have emerged from caves to form a self-governing city state had they been irrational.

Stephen Toulmin, in his book Human Understanding, discusses the different methodologies of Plato and Aristotle, and their affect on outcomes:

In forming his conception of "true knowledge" as the product of science -- i.e. in deciding what a completed theory of nature would have to be like -- each of the two philosophers committed himself also to a corresponding conception of true knowing as the activity of science -- i.e. to an account of what was involved in coming to understand Nature. In basing their respective theories on different types of explanatory concept, or ideal form, they presupposed equally different modes of understanding.³⁸

Democracy's promise is not certainty but the opportunity for involvement. Because of the opportunity for mass participation, it is left to the candidates to make the best, most convincing case that can be made for a given course of action. Rhetoric and democracy, then, are inseparable. The two concepts have been intertwined for thousands of years. Plato himself saw the link, for as has been demonstrated, his distrust of democracy grew from a belief that common people were easily misled by the excesses of rhetoric. As Qualter pointed out, democratic theorists sometimes bemoan the state of modern politics, still clinging to an ideal vision of democracy, a vision, oddly enough, that finds its inspiration in Plato's absolutist thoughts. One cannot hope for a fair analysis of democracy when that analysis is based on the antithetical notion of absolutism.

Western theorists may have knowingly or unknowingly adopted Plato's ideas as their intellectual root. In practice, however, the West has adopted the notions of Aristotle. A central precept of a democratic form of government is freedom of speech. This precept provides tacit recognition of the value of rhetorical skill. As in old Athens, rhetoric is still a central part of democracy. Though the practice of rhetoric may have changed, its principles remain valid, and their continued use helps to provide a justification for an Aristotelian analysis of rhetorical communication in the 1988 Presidential election. In building this study around Aristotle's concepts of rhetoric, it is hoped that another view of modern social systems will be advanced which may help to change how the democratic process is evaluated. As a tool to further analysis the idea of the mega-speech will be employed.

Methodology: The Mega-Speech

The mega-speech is drawn from Cicero's conception of speech organization. Cicero, Roman statesman and rhetorician, had the practical and theoretical base of experience necessary to formulate advice for those concerned with political rhetoric. The idea of the mega-speech, once again, is the notion that the general election campaign for the Presidency provides each candidate with the opportunity to present a macro-speech to the voters of this country in an attempt to gain their assent. Although the campaign is spread out over time and distance, modern technology has produced a speech situation where most voters can observe the campaign on television. Rarely are speeches seen by a television audience in their entirety. They appear instead as visual snippets or maxims, epigrams and capsulized phrases designed to convey a candidate's stand on a given issue. Over time, in the course of a campaign, a candidate may convey his or her position in this way on a spectrum of issues. One may also establish ethos and other elements of the traditional speech that Aristotle outlined, but only over the course of a campaign.

The surrounding context for the speech act has changed in another important way. In Aristotle's time, proficiency in speech was considered essential to the pursuit of politics. Though Aristotle did not formulate his system with solely political speeches in mind, he did develop it in this atmosphere. Further, the modern definition of citizenship is much more inclusive, America's population far larger, and America's territory more expansive than that of ancient Athens. All these factors have combined to make it a practical impossibility for all those who might desire to be present at a given speech to actually attend. This was not the case in old Athens. If there was interest in attending a speech, generally the opportunity was present. Our modern society compensates for this shortcoming vis-a-vis Athens by making information about speech acts available on a more or less equal basis. Changes in circumstances surrounding the speech act does not mean that the old method for critiquing it now is inappropriate. Rather, the method could be even more valuable once these changes are taken into account.

Television's practice of presenting information in a largely capsulized format places an even higher degree of importance on organization, and the Ciceronian method provides a corresponding framework. Seeing a presidential campaign as a giant speech underscores the importance of the audience. *Prima facie*, common sense and rationality may be determined by ascertaining which candidate made the best case (the best speech), and by whether the audience supported the best speech or not. Cicero's pattern of speech development also provides a model for political discourse. Cicero mentions seven stages of speech development, which are described in detail below. As to methodology, each candidate's campaign will be examined how the campaign did or did not meet the steps that Cicero outlined; then it can be determined whether the audience chose the best speech or not, and thus whether or not listeners acted rationally.

Cicero discussed the parts of a speech and what each part should contain. These parts are: the exordium, the narrative, the partition, the confirmation, the refutation, the digression, and the peroration. Cicero's description of the first division is that, "An exordium is a passage which brings the mind of the auditor into a proper condition to receive the rest of the speech."³⁹ A strong exordium, then, would get the attention of the members of the audience and put them in the proper frame of mind to be receptive to the speaker's case. Several types of speeches exist, and if one follows Cicero's advice, one should construct the exordium based on the type of speech one selects. Of the types discussed by Cicero, the ambiguous case seems most appropriate to presidential campaigning. This is not because there is something inherently confusing about political dialogue, although Cicero does mention that one use of the ambiguous exordium is for cases where the point of decision is in doubt. Rather, it is Cicero's second explanation of the ambiguous exordium that seems most appropriate. According to Cicero, this type of exordium is preferable when, "... the case is partly honorable and partly discreditable so that it engenders both good will and ill-will."⁴⁰

Next to come is the narrative. As with the exordium, Cicero describes several types of narrative, each dependent upon circumstances peculiar to the case. The most appropriate to this study would appear to be those categories of narrative that deal either with issues or personalities. As to issues, there are two types of narrative

relevant to this examination. One Cicero called *historia*, which was comprised of accounts of true occurrences which had grown distant in the minds of the auditors. The second of these narratives as relates to issues is *argumentum*. This is a fictional but plausible account of a thing. Most directly relevant to this study is the type of narrative which relates to people. Cicero said that this type of narrative "is of a sort that in it can be seen not only in events but also the conversation and mental attitude of the characters." 41

The next part of speech, according to Cicero, is the partition. The partition has as its purpose the illumination and clarification of the speech. In the partition the speaker seeks to accomplish at least one of two goals, depending upon the case. In one type of partition the speaker grants the points which are agreed to by both disputants, thus dispensing with them and highlighting the main areas of contention. In the second form of partition the speaker previews in a clear and direct way the areas which will be discussed. Cicero says, "This leads the auditor to hold definite points in his mind, and to understand that when these have been discussed the speech will be over." 42

As to the confirmation, this is the part of the speech that may be of the most importance. According to Cicero, "Confirmation or proof is the part of the oration which by marshaling arguments lends credit, authority, and support to our case." 43 The confirmation, then, is the center of the speech in which supporting arguments and evidence are presented. The type of confirmation a speaker should use again depends upon the objective of the address. The confirmation may contain well-reasoned arguments based upon issues at hand; it may contain formally structured syllogistic devices. It may also refer to people, and here Cicero describes many factors which he considers it fair to examine. Among these are: the manner of life in which one was reared and now lives; what teachers one has had, both as to academics and as to the art of living; what one's occupation is; how one manages his or her own personal affairs; how one has reared his or her children; one's physical and emotional state; one's interests away from work; one's achievements; one's accidents; and things one has said.

Next in Cicero's configuration comes the refutation. The refutation is the part of the speech where a speaker deals with his opponent's arguments. The refutation may be viewed as a type of counter-confirmation in which the speaker uses essentially the same guidelines as he did in the building of the confirmation, except that they are applied to weaken his opponent's case instead of strengthening his own.

Though not actually a part of the peroration, the digression comes just before it, and is very brief. The digression does not deal with any issue under discussion, but instead concerns itself with the speaker or the speaker's opponent. Most commonly, the digression is for heaping praise upon one's self or blame upon one's opponent. Cicero generally advised against its use, recommending instead that praise and blame should be interwoven in the other parts of the speech.

Finally, there is the peroration. This is the part of the speech which concludes the above portions and, according to Cicero, has three parts. These consist of the summation, the excitation of ill-will for one's opponent, and the engenderment of pity or sympathy for oneself. According to Cicero, the summation may be accomplished in one of two ways:

Therefore it will be proper at times to sum up in the manner in which the majority of speakers employ, because it is easy, i.e. to touch on each single point and so to run briefly over all the arguments. At times, however, it is well to take the harder course and state the topics which you have set out in the partition and promised to discuss, and to recall to mind the lines of reasoning by which you have proved each point.⁴⁴

By handling the summation in this manner, Cicero advises that both boredom and suspicion may be avoided. The speaker should then incite enmity towards his opponent by using some of the same devices he used in the confirmation. This may be done by showing that an opponent has run afoul of the laws of God, society, or the community. It may be done as well by a reexamination of the personal life of an opponent as relates to the subject at hand. At the end of the peroration the speaker should arouse the pity or sympathy of the audience.

Cicero's conception of how a speech ought to be organized provides a helpful framework for the analysis and evaluation of modern presidential campaigns. The mega-speech invites analysis by means of the Aristotelian criteria of common sense rationality as implemented by a *prima facie* case in the Ciceronean framework. Rhetoricians may also be reminded that modern conceptions of speech organization bear a striking resemblance to a well-run presidential campaign, as will be shown in the following chapters. For the purposes of this study, the mega-speech should be viewed as beginning with a candidate's acceptance speech and ending with the election eve address.

- ¹ Postman, Amusing Ourselves To Death, p. 6.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, p. 91.
- ⁴ Scott Buchanan, ed. , "The Republic," The Portable Plato (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 607.
- ⁵ Qualter, Opinion Control In The Democracies, p. 235.
- ⁶ Buchanan, ed. , The Portable Plato, p. 587-613.
- ⁷ Ibid., pp. 282-286.
- ⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, 1963 ed., s.v. "Socrates."
- ⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, 1963 ed., s.v. "Plato."
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, p. 14.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Buchanan, ed. , The Portable Plato, p. 492.
- ¹⁷ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, pp. 128-29.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Buchanan, ed., "The Republic," The Portable Plato, p. 616.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Niccollo Machiavelli, The Discourses, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1987).
- ²³ Aristotle, The Politics, trans. Thomas Alan Sanders, (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 53.

²⁴ Aristotle, The Rhetoric And Poetics Of Aristotle, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, 1984), p. 22.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁶ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, pp. 93-94.

²⁷ Aristotle, The Rhetoric And Poetics Of Aristotle, p. 19.

²⁸ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, p. 93.

²⁹ Aristotle, The Rhetoric And Poetics Of Aristotle, p. 22.

³⁰ Stone, The Trial Of Socrates, p. 93.

³¹ Aristotle, The Rhetoric And Poetics Of Aristotle, p. 23.

³² Ibid., p. 25.

³³ Aristotle, The Ethics Of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics, trans. J.A.K. Thomson (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 209-214.

³⁴ Aristotle, The Rhetoric And Poetics Of Aristotle, p. 23.

³⁵ Wayne Booth, Modern Dogma And The Rhetoric Of Assent (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), p.xii

³⁶ Qualter, Opinion Control In The Democracies, p. 240.

³⁷ Booth, Modern Dogma And The Rhetoric Of Assent, p.xii.

³⁸ Stephen Toulmin, Human Understanding (Princeton, New Jersey: University Press, 1972), p. 4.

³⁹ Cicero, De Inventione. De Optimo Genere. Oratorum Topica, trans. H.M. Hubbell (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.41.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.41.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁴² Ibid., p. 69.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Chapter IV

The Mega-Speech of George Bush

Pre-Exordium: Campaign History

When James A. Baker III, assumed command of the Bush election team, he was faced with a set of seemingly insurmountable challenges. George Bush was sure to win the Republican party nomination for the Presidency. After an initial setback in Iowa, Bush had overwhelmed his nearest rival, Senator Robert Dole, in New Hampshire, watched his other pursuers falter, and had coasted to a string of easy victories until at last his party's nomination was won. Those, however, were the primaries, and Baker was concerned with the general election.

George Bush had won his party's nomination for the Presidency in 1988 in large part due to the experience and the name recognition he had built up in eight years as the country's Vice-President. As he prepared the acceptance speech for his party's nomination to the nation's highest office he did so with these assets firmly placed in the public mind. Others had enjoyed these same assets, however, and none had come directly to the presidency through election for more than one hundred fifty years. Not since Martin Van Buren in 1836 had a sitting Vice-President ascended to the Presidency through election.¹ Although exposure and experience may be gained by a Vice-President, so too can enemies. Because of Bush's proximity to Ronald Reagan, his situation may have been even more difficult. Many people found it impossible to dislike the genial Reagan, so instead they focused their anger and resentments for policy choices on Bush. As the time for his acceptance speech approached, Bush had developed one of the most strongly negative public impressions of anyone seeking the Presidency since modern polling began.² However, despite his negative rating, Bush still had

higher name recognition than his opponent. Though Bush's problems were extreme, they were not unique to him, nor to anyone who has held the office of Vice-President.

Almost all candidates accepting the offer of the Vice-Presidency alter their views on certain issues to accommodate the head of the ticket. This in itself usually disappoints adherents to the candidate's original positions. Throughout his or her tenure in office, the Vice-President may often disagree with the President, but has no real alternative. He or she is accountable for the President's decisions, but has no authority to shape them. Hence, should the Vice-President seek the Presidency, he or she must defend policies with which he or she may actually disagree. Bush was no exception. Eight years earlier at the Republican convention in Detroit he made his compromises. Now he was not conservative enough for the right, and moderates saw him as a betrayer of the center.

Whether it is the office or the men who have held it, most Vice-Presidents have no shortage of enemies. Even before taking office, Vice-Presidents make enemies. The Vice-Presidential nominee is often used as the "point person" during the campaign. Instead of the Presidential nominee dirtying his hands with attacks on his opponent, it is left to the Vice-Presidential candidate to attack the opposition. In this way the Presidential candidate can advance positive programs, and appear to be more "Presidential." Bush was no exception to this general tendency; he had made his quota of enemies because of the constraints of his office. In addition, some regard the Vice-Presidency as a target of ridicule and its occupant as a classic sycophant.

Beyond the problems common to all who hold the office, every Vice-President carries problems that are unique. In the summer of 1988 George Bush suffered from his involvement (perceived or real) in the Iran-Contra scandal. In late 1986, word broke that members of the National Security Council had sold arms to Iran as an overture toward improved relations, and with the hope that the Iranians would intercede to free Americans being held hostage in the Middle East. The profits from the arms sales were then used to replace funds cut off by Congress to finance aid to insurgent forces in Nicaragua known as the Contras. The Iran-Contra scandal brought

to light a host of extra-legal and illegal activities in which Bush found himself embroiled. Vice-President Bush was a member of the National Security Council, and thus by presumption was thought to be aware of the Iran-Contra initiative. He steadfastly maintained he had no prior knowledge of the incident and was innocent of any wrong-doing in the whole affair. An independent commission set up to investigate the matter, the Tower panel, appeared to agree with him. However, lingering public doubts still remained. The issue had received a great deal of attention, and Bush had tried to lay it to rest for months prior to the convention, but the issue would not go away. Senator Robert Dole, Bush's chief rival for the Republican nomination, had raised Iran-Contra in the primaries, and Dukakis and the other Democrats had tried to make it into a Republican albatross through repeated mention of it at the Democratic convention.

As the time for Bush's acceptance speech approached, the Democrats began to hammer at Bush's own Vice-Presidential selection, Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana. Before Quayle or any Vice-Presidential candidate can have the chance to demonstrate his or her talents in office, he or she must help the party win with a demonstration of campaigning abilities. Bush had done this for Ronald Reagan in 1980, but already there was growing controversy about Bush' selection for the Vice-Presidency. Immediately Quayle had been tagged as a "lightweight" by Democrats and members of the press.³ In addition to a whisper campaign about Quayle's marital fidelity, even more serious allegations were surfacing about his service in the Indiana National Guard during the Vietnam War. These allegations revolved around the question of whether Quayle used family connections to avoid active duty in Vietnam.⁴ In a televised interview on Meet The Press prior to Quayle's selection, Richard Nixon had warned that a Vice-Presidential selection could hurt, but not help the ticket.⁵ Nixon's comment speaks to the belief that people do not vote for number two, the possible exception being those in the Vice-Presidential nominee's home state. Nixon's comment also addressees the potentially disastrous effect that scandal attached to a Vice-Presidential nominee can have on a campaign. Nixon survived his own scare shortly after General Eisenhower named him as his running mate. Accusations were made that Nixon had improperly accepted and used campaign funds. Nixon was able to

extricate himself with an unprecedented and emotional television appeal that became remembered as "The Checkers Speech." Nixon was retained on the ticket and saw his party win in November, but he was the exception. Senator Thomas Eagleton and Representative Geraldine Ferraro were the rule. The former was forced off the ticket in the 1972 race when it was revealed that he had undergone electroshock therapy, while the latter had seen her party suffer a crushing defeat in 1984 after public attention was diverted from her party's message to her husband's financial dealings. These four Vice-Presidential controversies share a common thread. They are not about substantive issues but intangible character-related issues, and therefore serve as a testament to the power that character issues have traditionally held, though critics such as Gordon dispute their relevance.

Despite the liabilities of the Iran-Contra issue and the growing controversy over Quayle, Bush also was known to have assets as a politician. The 1988 campaign was Michael Dukakis' first attempt at national office, as was also the case with most of his key staff. Bush, however, had been Vice-President for eight years, seen two national campaigns, and been involved in national politics for over twenty years. This year marked his second full swing through the primary process (he had run for President in 1980 before Ronald Reagan chose him as his Vice-President). His father, Prescott Bush, had been a U.S. Senator. George Bush had, for most of his life, been acquainted with the American political process. Literally, Bush had grown up around politics.

Aware of the long odds against Bush, Baker was at first reluctant to take up the campaign, thinking it unwinnable.⁶ Baker had the experience to support his opinion. Baker had been running national campaigns since 1976, and almost overcame Jimmy Carter's huge lead that year, despite Ford's denial during the Presidential debates, that Poland was under Russian domination, and the residue of ill will towards Republicans due to Watergate. In 1980 Baker began with Bush, but when Governor Reagan became the apparent victor early in the primaries, he moved to heal the rift between the two men. Bush was later chosen as the Vice-Presidential candidate, and Baker took key roles in both the campaign and the administration.

Putting aside his apprehensions, Baker set about to devise a strategy that would capture the White House. In so doing he conceived of tactics that many considered to be a degeneration of the process, a new low point in political campaigns. Baker relied upon his own extensive experience in government and numerous Presidential campaigns to formulate his strategy. He also sought to include others whose depth of experience in campaigns was as strong or stronger than his. What was produced was not unconventional and falls under classical rhetorical norms.

Whether he intended to do so or not, Baker designed a campaign which was to function as a giant or mega-speech. As shall be demonstrated, the campaign Baker constructed included the divisions of a complete speech including an introduction, main points and conclusion. Baker's campaign followed the advice Aristotle gave early in The Rhetoric by observing the available means of persuasion.⁷

As will be shown, the Republican convention and Bush's acceptance speech fulfill the exordium, narrative, and partition functions in Cicero's schema; the next phase, which is the general election proper, fulfills the confirmation and refutation aspects noted by Cicero. Finally, Bush's election eve address can be seen as the digression and peroration of the mega-speech. However, first the introductory phases of the mega-speech -- the exordium, narration, and partition -- will be examined.

Exordium, Narrative & Partition

The mega-speech began just before Bush took the stage at the 1988 Republican convention. Actor Charlton Heston narrated an introductory video which ensured that the audience knew about Bush's personal qualifications for office. Heston was not introduced, but he has achieved enough exposure as an actor that it is likely that his voice was recognized by many. The lack of announcement of the recognizable Heston may have served as a kind of attention-getter, building suspense and causing the audience to pay closer attention as they attempted to identify the voice. Heston mentioned that Bush had held several appointive offices in the Nixon and Ford Administrations before serving as Reagan's Vice-President, including U.N. Ambassador,

Director of the C.I.A., envoy to China and Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Heston also sought to humanize Bush by pointing out that Bush had raised several children (though he had lost one in her infancy) and many grandchildren. The fact that Bush had lost one of his children perhaps let the audience see that Bush understood human suffering and ran counter to the idea that he was an isolated patrician who didn't understand the problems of real people. In Booth's terms, this helped to demonstrate Bush's sincerity. Grainy film of a young Navy pilot named George Bush being pulled from the waters of the Pacific after he had been shot down in World War II also was shown. These images spoke to Bush's bravery: his character. Heston further recited Bush's many accomplishments in politics, which spoke to his experience and helped prepare Bush's audience to receive him and his message in context. Heston thus conveyed the essential information and provided something of an endorsement to those who recognized his voice. Therefore, his introduction accomplished the exordium aspect of the classical configuration described by Cicero when this event is viewed from the the mega perspective. Judging by the reaction of the audience, it would appear that the video got and focused the attention of the audience and simultaneously helped to establish Bush as a man of courage, skill and compassion. The video also helped to fulfill the narrative function since it dealt with events that either were not known or were in the distant memory of the audience.

Bush then took the stage and presented his acceptance speech. The speech served primarily as a partition for the upcoming campaign, introducing points to be elaborated on later and providing a framework for the entire campaign. In terms of the mega-speech concept, a good acceptance speech should catch the attention of the audience, establish the credibility and ethos of the speaker, and preview significant topics to be discussed in the campaign. As can be seen, the Bush acceptance speech meets all of these requirements, especially if the Heston video is included.

Bush dealt first with those issues that were surely in the mind of the audience, those concerns mentioned above which confront every Vice-President, and also those unique to Bush as an individual. He spoke of his loyalty to Ronald Reagan. This accomplished several things. First, it reestablished his connection to a popular

President, but most importantly, it provided an unspoken explanation for his role in the Iran-Contra Affair. Being a loyal individual, Bush would unswervingly support his President no matter what the personal cost may have been. Bush's early stress on loyalty provided an explanation for his support of Reagan in other areas also.

For those who disagreed with the policies of the Reagan administration, Bush made a veiled overture. To those moderates who had been dismayed by the Vice-President's seemingly total conversion to conservatism he sent a message saying: "But now you must see me for what I am. . . ." ⁸ Bush was signaling his intention to be his own person. At least to some degree, he was also furthering the narration aspect of his mega-speech. The narration, once again, is that part of the speech that reveals something of the nature of the speaker. Bush extended the narrative function by explaining that because he was a quiet man he heard the voices that others did not hear.

Bush then began his partition by emphasizing the differences between himself and his opponent:

And what it all comes down to is this: my opponent's view of the world sees a long slow decline for our country, an inevitable fall mandated by impersonal historical forces. But America is not in decline. America is a rising nation. He sees America as another pleasant country on the U.N. roll call, somewhere between Albania and Zimbabwe. And I see America as the leader, a unique nation with a special role in the world. . . Our work is not done; our force is not spent. . . don't let 'em fool ya. ⁹

Bush attempted to buttress the idea that his opponent was out of touch by stating his own respect for common sense, implying that Dukakis did not respect common sense. Bush established a base from which he could later work by building a perception that liberals do not live in the everyday world that most others do, and consequently prefer complex (and often unworkable) solutions to simple problems. It became a major Bush campaign goal to paint Dukakis as an out-of-touch liberal.

Bush also tried to address a perceived weakness: the party's position concerning women and minorities. Bush said that women had benefited the most from the recovery, filling two out of three jobs created and helping to create many thousands

more. Bush had a special message for the women of America: "You know better than anyone that equality begins with economic empowerment. You're gaining economic power, and I'm not going to let them take it away from you." ¹⁰ Bush also spoke to racial minorities, acknowledging that not everyone had benefited from the recovery, and promised to be more inclusive when creating 30 million jobs over the next eight years. Bush then sought to use the enthymeme. The enthymeme is a rhetorical device that works primarily in the mind of the listener. Greed, he said, should not be the order of the day; prosperity had to have purpose, Bush said, and he foresaw "a kinder, gentler nation." ¹¹ Bush didn't have to say that he planned to sand off the rough edges of Reagan's conservative America, but most who were watching got the idea.

Aside from the enthymeme Bush also employed another rhetorical device, repetition, to try to address another potential weakness. Bush used "I'm not going to let them take it away from you" four times in describing his position on various issues, including international security and the domestic economy. ¹² By returning to the "I'm not going to let them take it away from you" line, Bush not only was able to employ repetition but he also reestablished an "us versus them" theme, perhaps in the knowledge that the Democrats usually try to do the same thing along class lines. The Republicans could thus turn the class argument it on its side and steal some of their opponent's populist thunder. Bush began to flesh out other issues that were to come: his support for the death penalty, and his opposition to gun control. Bush also did not lose the opportunity to express his belief in the validity of the pledge of allegiance. In so doing he performed the other aspect of the partition segment of his mega-speech by previewing his main ideas. What was by itself the center of his acceptance address -- the discussion of various issues -- became the partition of the mega-speech as they were introduced early and elaborated upon later in the campaign. Focusing on domestic concerns, Bush raised the issue of crime and punishment. He proclaimed support for the death penalty, and used the example of a drug dealer responsible for a policeman's murder. This particular example not only served to highlight conflict, but also previewed an issue that Bush returned to in the campaign proper. He further proclaimed his general support for the death penalty under certain circumstances and contrasted his view with Dukakis' by asking and answering the following rhetorical

question: "Should society be allowed to impose the death penalty on those who commit crimes of extortionary cruelty and violence? My opponent says no -- but I say yes." Here Bush appealed to the majority of Americans who support the death penalty. He also attacked Dukakis for furloughing convicted murderers, another specific instance of a preview. Bush asked and answered another rhetorical question about gun control: "And should free men and women have the right to own a gun to protect their home? My opponent says no -- but I say yes." ¹³

Bush further previewed two more points that were to become integral to his campaign. First, he spoke of his concern for the environment, saying: "... I'm going to stop ocean dumping. Our beaches should not be garbage dumps, our harbors should not be cesspools." As shall be seen, later in the campaign Bush toured Boston harbor to highlight his opponent's environmental shortcomings. Then, in closing, Bush not only reaffirmed his own patriotism but also signaled his intention to make an issue of Dukakis' veto of a bill which would have required Massachusetts school children to begin their day with the pledge of allegiance. Bush asked his convention hall audience to join him in the pledge, which all of them had recited at the beginning of thousands of school days: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all." ¹⁴

Even before the tumultuous cheers of the delegates subsided, commentators were praising Bush's efforts. His speech was well-received by those present and also by the media. The New York Times called it "rousing." ¹⁵ Goldman and Matthews said that it was. Further, the two evidently saw Bush's efforts as the consummate establishment of ethos at the onset of the campaign proper:

[It was] a masterwork -- the creation of an instant mythic persona for a man who had got through two decades of public life without one. His predecessors at the podium had had to be provided with positive words to say about him. His own speech filled in the blanks; at the wave of a wand, or more accurately, at the tap-tap of keyboard, he had become a man of hitherto unrealized style, size, strength, wit, grit and compassion. . . the single most brilliant speech of his [Bush's] career. ¹⁶

Viewing the acceptance address from the mega-speech perspective, it can be seen that one of Bush's goals was to enhance his ethos for the campaign. It had been crucial to Bush to give a good showing. Behind in the polls, and with the growing controversy over Dan Quayle, a poor performance could have doomed Bush's chances from the outset. Under difficult circumstances the speech helped Bush to accomplish exactly what he needed to accomplish. It reestablished his link with a popular sitting President and at the same time gave Bush room to maneuver away from the less popular aspects of the Reagan presidency. He established positive ethos and outlined what was to come in his campaign.

If the acceptance speech is viewed as the introduction to the mega-speech, it can be seen that Bush is not only previewing his main ideas but also dealing early on with potential weaknesses in his case. When a speaker presents a persuasive speech, Cicero advises that it is appropriate to acknowledge that other points of view exist; preconceived views which may be blocking acceptance of the speakers' views should be dealt with first.¹⁷ Just what is appropriate is determined by audience analysis. Appropriate issues to address were established through the use of polls and focus groups, and as has been shown, polls and focus groups have played an integral part in many campaigns including Bush's. Bush discovered that he needed to deal with certain topics. Even if some voters had not been treated unfairly during the economic recovery, many may have believed that others were. Bush dealt with possible trouble spots in the introduction of his mega-speech to remove them from his listeners' minds, just as Cicero advised. Bush was then free to deal with the issues he felt most comfortable.

Having dealt with his most obvious weaknesses, Bush had the luxury of setting the agenda. Almost without exception for the rest of the campaign, he imposed the topics which would be discussed rather than letting his opponent do so. If indeed Bush had been forced by his opponent to focus on issues such as economic advancement of minorities, the progress of women, or several other areas that could be viewed as weaknesses for Republicans, it is quite possible that the outcome would have been different. However, he was not forced to do so. Bush left the Republican convention having accomplished the

exordium and narrative with the help of Charlton Heston's video, and having performed the partition himself, Bush was well-positioned to move to the next phases of the mega-speech.

Confirmation & Refutation

With the introduction concluded, Bush was now free to concentrate on developing the issues -- or points of confirmation -- he highlighted in his acceptance speech. One of the first was Dukakis' overall political leanings, which the Bush team concluded would be portrayed as decidedly to the left. While Bush did not specifically label Dukakis as a liberal during his acceptance speech, he did go to great pains to point to Dukakis' support of positions that are traditionally associated with liberal politics. For example, Dukakis' opposition to the death penalty, his support for gun control, and his resistance to compulsory recitation of the pledge of allegiance all are stances that conform with the popular conception of liberal politics.

Bush set about to use the liberal charge immediately after the convention. Bush did not use "liberal" as a descriptive term to relate his opponent's views. Rather, it was a pejorative. Even Bush's demeanor indicated his distaste for his opponent and his positions. Conrad McBride noticed Bush's non-verbal communication, and saw the connection Bush was trying to draw:

Certainly, when he [Bush] uses the term liberal, the quality of his voice and the shaping of his mouth makes it come out as epithet . . . He's not using the word in an objective, indiscriminate manner or unimpassioned manner. He is saying when you are liberal, you have spots or some kind of leprosy. ¹⁸

Bush even went beyond using the term "liberal" pejoratively. Being a liberal would have to mean more. Bush pollster Robert Teeter knew as much and said so. Referring to Dukakis, Teeter observed that: "Just tagging him as a liberal alone wouldn't work. You had to define him a little bit. . . My phrase used internally and then outside, was that he was outside the mainstream of American values. . . ." ¹⁹ In fact Bush had been stating explicitly that Dukakis was a liberal for some time before the convention. On

June 9, 1988, Bush used the liberal tag for the first time charging that Dukakis represented "... old style 60's liberalism from Harvard Yard's boutique."²⁰ With this type of charge Bush was not only able to call his opponent a liberal, but also to define what liberal meant. From "old style 60's liberalism" can be drawn the notion that Dukakis was advocating failed, outmoded ideas, and from "Harvard Yard's boutique" comes the allusion to an elitist ivory tower dilettante, furthering the notion that Dukakis was out of touch. It was a line of attack Bush pursued for much of the campaign. Bush chose issues that were not only calculated to portray his opponent as being to the left of center, but also to demonstrate that liberalism was undesirable.

Bush made the word "liberal" into an accusation and then supported his claim by using specific examples from Dukakis' record (which Bush had either mentioned or alluded to in his acceptance speech) to define what "liberal" meant. The points which were mentioned in the acceptance speech began to be elaborated upon in the campaign proper and represent the point where the confirmation began to come into play. Most of the other issues that Bush raised portrayed Dukakis as an out-of-touch liberal. Bush began to talk about Dukakis' stance on the death penalty, on crime, on the pledge of allegiance and on the environment. With the exception of the environment, the rest of the charges helped to reinforce the idea that Dukakis was excessively liberal. The tactic of hitting Dukakis with charge after charge which defined Dukakis' left-leaning sympathies and was labeled the "values agenda" by campaign staffers.²¹ The "values agenda" not only proved points in the confirmation, but also illustrated Bush's adherence to one of Booth's criteria. By attacking Dukakis' values, Bush was able to demonstrate his own simultaneously, for if he disapproved of Dukakis' values, the unstated message was that Bush's values were different. The Gallup Poll, in a post-election survey, found that the Bush strategy had been effective. Fifty percent of those who voted for Bush listed Dukakis, liberalism as an important consideration.²²

As a further demonstration of his opponent's values, Bush sought to tie Dukakis to the liberal American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU defends the friendless and the unpopular, chiefly on First Amendment grounds. While this is admirable in the absolute, it also ties the group to its unpopular wards. The Vice-President said his opponent was

"a card-carrying member of the ACLU." ²³ Subtle distinctions vanished from the campaign and, according to Newsweek, Bush successfully tied his opponent to some of the most vile elements of society through Dukakis' membership in the ACLU: "... in Bush's hands ACLU became a four-letter word and Dukakis a friend of atheists, criminals and child pornography." ²⁴ The use of the phrase "card-carrying" did more than place Dukakis in an unpopular group; it was an associative device. Clearly, "card-carrying" recalled images of card-carrying communists from the 1930's through the 1950's. For those who might wonder if Bush was engaging in McCarthy-like tactics, Bush was able to reply that he was not because he was only quoting Dukakis, thus making the phrase even more damning. Dukakis had described himself as a card-carrying member of the ACLU during an address before that group. What made this caricature even more troublesome for Dukakis was that it was being used to push him to the left of most voters' latitude of acceptance, and since "card-carrying" was his own phrase, Dukakis could not unsay it.

In order to see the importance of the phrase "card-carrying," all that must be done is to turn the tables and imagine that Dukakis is trying to prove that Bush is a conservative. Further, suppose that Bush had called himself "... a card-carrying member of the NRA." Membership in the National Rifle Association might be indicative of Bush's sympathies, as membership in the ACLU might be of Dukakis'. However, when applied to a conservative organization, the phrase "card-carrying" lacks the dramatic, damning ring it carries when applied to a left-wing group. This is because the phrase had its genesis to the left of center, and was used to describe members of the Communist Party, an extreme and sometimes conspiratorial left-wing group. When applied to other left-wing organizations, "card-carrying" has a powerful semantic history. It simply has more emotive power when applied to left-of-center groups. Subliminally, Dukakis' use of "card-carrying" says that he is familiar with the terminology, and thinks it appropriate to use it to describe himself.

Beyond the flap about the ACLU, there is the issue of whether it was fair at all to paint a candidate as a liberal. McBride makes the point that using "liberal" in a negative way is inflammatory to liberals, but not necessarily out of bounds: "If you're

a liberal, of course you don't like people making these flamboyant charges [about what it means to be a liberal], but for liberals to charge that Bush is doing something unusual is incorrect."²⁵ Republican strategist Craig Fuller is more direct on this subject, pointing out that if political philosophy is of interest to the public, it should be fair game, and that it is unrealistic to expect candidates to refrain from referring to their opponent's philosophy if it is to their advantage, "If you know that the greatest weakness of Dukakis is that he appears to be a liberal to the general public, it would be requiring an altruism almost inconsistent with human nature to not exploit that issue."²⁶

In the elections of 1972 and 1984, the Democrats had run candidates who were perceived as being very liberal. George McGovern and Walter Mondale both lost by huge margins. Perhaps one can more easily see how the phrase "out of the mainstream" could take on such powerful connotations. Bush's strategists, cognizant of this fact, set about to portray Dukakis, in the words of Newsweek, as a "wet and dangerous liberal."²⁷ In this way Republicans were able to portray Dukakis as unacceptable to the left and to tie him to other unpopular Presidential nominees of the Democrats.

Moving to the refutation, Bush assaulted Dukakis' record on the environment. Attacking Dukakis for his allegedly poor record on the environment would seem to run counter to Bush's strategy of depicting Dukakis as excessively liberal. Issues concerning the environment traditionally have been the domain of liberal Democrats. In the main, however, this was an assault on Dukakis' competence, not his ideology. What clearly seems to make Bush's environmental attacks a point of refutation was Dukakis' assertion during his acceptance speech that: "This election is not about ideology. It's about competence."²⁹ Dukakis went on to predict that when he was President: "We're going to have an Environmental Protection Agency that is more interested in stopping pollution than protecting polluters."²⁸ In raising a traditionally liberal issue, Dukakis was also making a veiled charge that Reagan, and by extension Bush, had plundered and mismanaged the environment. In so charging Bush, Dukakis had, without speaking her name, raised the ghost of Rita Lavelle, the former head of the

Environmental Protection Agency. He also asserted that the the E.P.A. Superfund was mismanaged.

Though he did not defend the E.P.A.'s record, Bush countered on the campaign trail by attacking Dukakis and his competence by staging an August press conference in Dukakis' home port of Boston Harbor, one of the nation's dirtiest waterways. Bush had mentioned the importance of cleaning America's waterways in his acceptance speech and went so far as to specifically mention harbors. To highlight his opponent's record on the environment, he traveled to Boston Harbor. Amidst the filth in the harbor, Bush lambasted Dukakis' environmental record. The pictures that were presented on the news that evening showed raw sewage and chemical effluents choking the harbor, and shortly afterwards, the Bush people put together a hard-hitting commercial which aired nationwide. It not only showed the sludge in the harbor, but also dead fish and waterfowl and a decaying sign which warned humans not to swim there. The message presumably came across loud and clear: not only was Dukakis a liberal, but he was an incompetent liberal as well. The crux of the environmental attack was to try to show that maybe Dukakis wasn't a model of competence after all.

Working on the issues of the refutation early not only put Dukakis on the defensive, but allowed Bush to focus on his confirmation. He stayed there for most of the remainder of the campaign. One of the most important parts of the confirmation, which was introduced in the acceptance speech, was that of crime. Dukakis' opposition to the death penalty left an opening for him to be depicted as "soft on crime." What the Bush campaign lacked was a way to dramatize the Democrat's stand, as they did with Boston Harbor. This was presented to them early on. Before the general election campaign had even begun, Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee, hoping to find an issue for April's New York primary, had asked Dukakis in a televised debate about weekend passes for convicted criminals. Dukakis' response was uncomfortable, and in the end he conceded that the Massachusetts prisoner furlough program had been canceled. "That's the first time I paid attention", said Jim Pinkerton, Director of Research for the Bush campaign. "I thought to myself 'This is incredible' . . . It totally fell into our lap." 30

Grouping Dukakis together with Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale and George McGovern, Bush blasted the Massachusetts Governor for his plan to furlough murderers from jail. The Reader's Digest ran an article in its July issue called "Getting Away With Murder." The magazine not only described in morbid detail the crimes of the furlough program's most notorious participant, Willie Horton, but also Dukakis' reticence to cancel the program. Not only was Horton in a Massachusetts jail for murder, but while out on furlough, he terrorized a Maryland couple, binding and slashing Cliff Barnes and raping his fiance. Among other things, The Reader's Digest article points out that Dukakis pocket-vetoed legislation which would have eliminated furloughs for first-degree murderers, and that Dukakis had commuted the sentences of twenty-eight felons convicted of first-degree murder. Dukakis altered the program only after much public outcry, but the article pointed out that, Dukakis still "wanted some alternative sentencing program to help him commute the sentences of first-degree murderers."³¹ It didn't take Republicans long to know that they had struck gold.

Lee Atwater, the Bush campaign manager, decided to take July 4th off. He spent the day in Luray, Virginia, and coincidentally sat next to a group of motorcycle riders at a diner who were discussing The Reader's Digest article. From their conversation Atwater realized the potential impact the issue had and later recalled:

It was obvious the issue had a life of its own. I kept talking to them about other things. There was zero interest in the Presidential race. But the Willie Horton thing kept sustained interest for 45 minutes. . . . He (Pinkerton) is the one who pointed it out to me . . . [He said] The more people who know who Willie Horton is, the better off we'll be.³²

Atwater evidently agreed with Pinkerton. Soon after his conversation with the motorcycle riders, Atwater began talking about hitting the furlough issue so hard that people would think Willie Horton was Dukakis' running mate. The issue was kept at the center of the debate from June to November. No other single negative issue so dominated the campaign and so harmed Dukakis.³³ The Gallup Poll reported that thirty seven percent of Bush's voters considered the furlough issue instrumental in their decision as to who to support.³⁴

As with the labeling tactic that Dukakis was a liberal, some thought the use of Willie Horton an unfair representation. Jesse Jackson, among others, attacked Bush for invoking subliminal racial fears. Time magazine reported that: "Bush's handlers tapped into the rich lode of white fear and resentment of blacks that the GOP staked out more than 20 years ago, when the party of Lincoln recast itself as the embodiment of white backlash."³⁵ However, the Bush campaign took precautions to avoid racial overtones. Though the use of Horton's mug shot in a campaign television commercial was discussed, it was rejected. Instead a still slide was used with a black background and bold white letters which proclaimed: "Horton Received 10 Weekend Passes From Prison."³⁶ Another powerful television advertisement depicting a prison fence with a revolving door was also used. The film was shot in slow motion, and made devastating use of black and white, with menacing music overlaid on the sound track. The end of the commercial left viewers with the impression that Dukakis had furloughed a horde of dangerous felons who would be pounding into living rooms across America.

Bush gained more support on the law and order issue from law enforcement groups. The endorsement of Bush by the Massachusetts Police Officers' Association, and the manner in which it was accepted, helped to dramatize the perception that Dukakis was an unrealistic liberal outside of the mainstream. Dukakis was against the death penalty even for those convicted of killing police officers, a position which was not popular with law enforcement organizations. Bush took their endorsement surrounded by uniformed officers, and again created a compelling visual effect for the evening television news.

Another point of confirmation was the pledge of allegiance, which was also introduced in the acceptance speech. Republican strategist Stuart Spencer thought this issue would be worth 150 electoral votes alone because of the patriotic passions the pledge issue provoked in the South. Bush had raised the issue of patriotism in his acceptance speech, and then dramatically closed the presentation with a recitation of the pledge. He often led audiences in the pledge at most of his rallies during his whistle stop speeches, and would make his case to the voters standing in front of a sea of

American flags before whirring cameras. Even if the press didn't mention the issue every night on the evening news, Bush was able to get his visuals across. Whatever thirty-second clip of Bush was chosen for broadcast, American flags would have to be in it. Bush would stand on a platform, making his statement, and behind him in the frame of the camera was an sea of American flags. Visually, it was enough to remind viewers of the issue all over again. Bush stayed with the patriotism issue from the time he closed the convention with the pledge until late September, when he visited a flag factory while Dukakis was making a substantive speech on health care. Bush began to back away from the pledge issue when he got poor reviews that evening on the network news shows, which called him to task for wrapping himself in the flag. The use of the flag became an issue in campaign '88 because Dukakis vetoed his state's pledge of allegiance bill. By giving his campaign speeches with American flags as a backdrop, Bush was able to remind his audience of Dukakis' opposition to the pledge. Further, network editors could not cut this symbolism out as they might a verbal reference to the pledge.

The Digression & Peroration

In a half-hour televised broadcast, Bush presented what might be called the digression and peroration for his campaign. On the eve of the election, voters could expect to hear a recapitulation of events in the campaign and what candidate Bush would do as President Bush. Popular sentiment seemed to be against the flood of negative messages that had come from both sides, and there is always a need to address economic issues. Bush's late poll data gave him a scare because of the perceived negativity of the campaign, and one senior campaign official who spoke to The New York Times on the condition of anonymity said that the turn away from Bush close to election day became so pronounced that it was possible for Bush to lose the election.³⁷

The public was evidently disenchanted with the negativity of the campaign. Bush needed to remind viewers of the major themes in his campaign without reminding them of its negativity. "What it all comes down to," said Bush, "Is which set of values will keep America's future bright -- and who you trust to stick to those values."³⁸ Bush's

question, " Which set of values will keep America's future bright -- and who you trust to stick to those values ?" was simultaneously able to remind voters that he was the one who had stressed the issues of excessive liberalism, crime, patriotism and the environment without overtly attacking Dukakis again. Bush briefly touched on the issues of peace and prosperity, pointing out that the nation had enjoyed six years of sustained economic growth and eight years of peace under the Reagan-Bush Administration.

Aware of the groundswell against the negative tone of the campaign, Bush also did his best to take the bite out of his early slashing criticisms of Dukakis: "I respect my opponent. I admire his devotion to family, and I appreciate his decision to enter public service, what Teddy Roosevelt called 'the arena'," said Bush.³⁹ Although Cicero said that one should praise oneself and heap blame on one's opponents in the digression, Bush's tactic may perhaps be considered a digression. Under circumstances where Bush's own polls showed the voters' disgust with negativity, Bush gave mild praise to his opponent, the content of which was did not undermine the issues he had stressed in the campaign. Perhaps in this instance praise of one's opponent also could be seen as a form of digression. This accomplished, Bush returned to touching on issues he had dealt with throughout his campaign.

Bush more certainly fulfilled the digression by going to great pains to separate himself philosophically from Dukakis. Again Bush could paint himself as the one in touch with mainstream America. Bush continued his election eve broadcast by sharply drawing distinctions between himself and Dukakis: "I do believe we are guided by fundamentally different philosophies. . . a great divide, an honest difference of opinion on which approach will lead America into the 90's stronger and more secure than ever."⁴⁰ By using phrases such as "great divide," Bush could emphasize differences between himself and Dukakis. By using the term "honest difference of opinion" Bush sought to minimize the intensity of his attacks on his opponent.

The digression accomplished, Bush set about to remind voters of the issues that were discussed in the campaign in concrete terms, issues such as crime, the

environment and patriotism. In so doing, Bush fulfilled the peroration aspect of the mega-speech. Bush not only spoke about what had transpired in the campaign, but showed snippets from some of the more devastating commercials his campaign ran, such as the revolving door on the prison gate, and the filth-choked Boston Harbor. The New York Times said of Bush's recapitulation of events that:

The broadcast was in many ways a collection of the greatest hits of the Bush campaign, including footage from some of his more effective television commercials. It began with a heroic account of Mr. Bush's service in World War II [seen in Heston's video at the Republican Convention], included a segment from the Vice-President's much-acclaimed speech before the Republican National Convention in August and used the testimonials from Massachusetts police officers who endorsed Mr. Bush.⁴¹

The Republicans captured the Presidency in 1988 with a tightly-run campaign that resembled a well-organized speech. If Bush's charges were sometimes exaggerated, it was left to Dukakis to point that out, and he never effectively did. The Republican Convention foreshadowed what was to come, and helped Bush to overcome a deficit of seventeen points in the opinion polls. Heston's video fulfilled the exordium and narrative aspects of the mega-speech by getting and holding the audience's attention. Video material itself may serve as an attention device, but by withholding the announcement of who was narrating the video, suspense was also used. Clearly the Heston video also serves as a narrative historia. Accounts of Bush's heroic exploits in World War II and other key events in Bush's life helped to flesh out Bush for the national audience.

Bush conformed to the other Ciceronian speech divisions as well. He had told Dukakis and the nation exactly what subjects he intended to focus on in the introduction of his mega-speech (the acceptance speech). First, Bush effectively disposed of potential weakness such as his party's position with women and minorities, and then he previewed the points he would hit in the campaign: reinforcing Dukakis' supposedly excessive liberalism, his shortcomings on the environment, his record on crime, and his alleged lack of patriotism. In the campaign proper, Bush used Dukakis' allegedly poor environmental performance as a point of refutation, and the last two -- crime and patriotism -- functioned as independent points of confirmation.

Bush satisfied the digression and peroration parts of the mega-speech in his election eve message. Bush attempted to ease audience's consternation at the negative tone of the campaign, and underscored differences between himself and Dukakis in his election eve message, thus performing the digression. He then restated the major themes of his campaign, and in so doing satisfied the requirements of the peroration. Throughout the campaign Bush used rhetorical devices such as the enthymeme to drive home his points. He implied in his acceptance speech audience that he served loyally at Reagan's side, and that he would set his own course as President. Synecdoche was used when the Bush team chose the single incident of Willie Horton's rampage to stand for Dukakis' position on crime and punishment, and Dukakis' veto of a pledge of allegiance bill to illustrate Dukakis' feelings for the country. Together the Willie Horton example and the pledge of allegiance issue were used to portray Dukakis in total as an out-of-touch and dangerous liberal. The Republicans had sought to portray Dukakis as a soulless technocrat, an incompetent liberal who was out of touch with the real world. In The Quest for the Presidency, Goldman and Matthews describe the surprise Bush and his staff felt about Dukakis' continued lack of response to their attacks, "The flaccidity of the opposition was a source of continuing amazement."⁴²

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, 1963 ed., s.v. "Martin Van Buren."

² Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p., 334.

³ Ibid., p. 318.

⁴ Ibid., p. 319.

⁵ NBC, "Meet The Press." 17 April 1988.

⁶ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p., 308.

⁷ Aristotle, The Rhetoric And Poetics Of Aristotle, p. 24.

⁸ New York Times, 19 August 1988, p. A 14.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ New York Times, 19 August 1988, p. 1.

¹⁶ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p., 328.

¹⁷ Cicero, De Inventione. De Optimo Genere. Oratorum Topica, p. 49.

¹⁸ Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph, (Colorado) 25 October 1988, p. D 8.

¹⁹ Washington Post, 28 October 1988, p. A 3.

²⁰ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p 94.

²¹ Ibid. , p. 356.

22 "Bush Campaign Strategy Built Broad Voter Coalition," The Gallup Report, no. 278, November 1988, p. 25.

23 Goldman and Mathews "The Ice Man Cometh," Newsweek, November 21, 1988, p. 113.

24 Ibid.

25 Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph, 25 October 1988, p. D 8.

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27 Ibid.

28 New York Times, 20 July 1988, p. A 10.

29 Ibid.

30 Washington Post, 28 October 1988, p. A 3.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p., 359.

34 "Bush Campaign Strategy Built Broad Voter Coalition," The Gallup Report, p. 25.

35 Jack E. White, "Bush's Most Valuable Player," Time, November 14, 1988, p. 20.

36 Ibid.

37 New York Times, 8 November 1988, p. A 1, A 19.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

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41 Ibid.

42 Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 178.

Chapter V

The Mega-Speech of Michael Dukakis

Pre-Exordium: Campaign History

For Democrats, 1988 might well be remembered as the year of the disintegrating front runner. The initial presumed front runner, Senator Gary Hart of Colorado, saw his campaign evaporate virtually overnight. Hart, who had a reputation in Washington inner circles for needless risk-taking, seemed ready to coast to certain victory. In the spring of 1987 Hart's polls showed him with a thirty-one point lead over his nearest rival, Jesse Jackson.¹ However, soon after Hart announced his candidacy in April of 1987, The Miami Herald ran a front page expose' on Hart's supposed sexual escapades with model and soap opera bit player Donna Rice, and Hart was driven from the race. The rest of the candidates had to jostle for the front runner's position long before they were ready.

Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware began to emerge as a legitimate contender, but concerns about his alleged shallowness had hung over him in some circles for years. These preexisting fears were apparently confirmed in August of 1987 when it was discovered that Biden, in delivering campaign speeches, had plagiarized not only the works of Robert Kennedy, but also those of British Labor party leader Neil Kinnock. The revelation of plagiarism unleashed a flood of stories which seemed to further feed doubts concerning Biden's fitness. Reports surfaced that Biden had inflated his college and law school records, conveniently omitting an "F" he received in law school for plagiarizing a brief. Biden, too, was forced from the race.²

The revelations about Biden had come from Dukakis' campaign manager, John Sasso. Sasso sent videotapes of the appropriate Kennedy and Kinnock speeches to The New York Times, NBC News, and Iowa's Des Moines Register. In its article on Biden's plagiarism, The De Moines Register mentioned that the information on the Senator had been fed to them by a staffer from another campaign. To quiet the storm, Sasso left the Dukakis campaign, creating a vacuum that was never completely filled. Sasso was one of the few individuals who could speak with Dukakis on an intimate level, and he had begun to work out a grand strategy on national issues that he felt could get Dukakis to the White House. When Sasso resigned, it prompted the following comment from Dukakis, who spoke not about Sasso's technical skills, but assessed his loss in personal terms: "People say I lost a friend. It's worse than that -- I lost a brother."³ As his message fell flat, his staffers in desperation asked what new ideas he could offer voters. He replied: "You tell me."⁴

Susan Estrich, the new Dukakis manager, brought in outside consultants and was able to find some issues on which Dukakis could focus, such as homelessness and U.S. policy in Central America. It may have been largely Estrich's organizational skill, and a willingness by Dukakis to engage in negative campaigning against his fellow Democrats during the primary season that put him ahead of the pack. However, Michael Dukakis, the son of Greek immigrants, won his party's nomination for the Presidency of the United States chiefly by touting his managerial style, painting himself as a competent manager, a no-nonsense administrator who was just what America needed after eight years of the stylish but allegedly substanceless Ronald Reagan. Further, Dukakis prepared to launch his general election campaign for the Presidency at the peak of his career. He was in the midst of his second consecutive term as Governor of Massachusetts. Prior to his current tenure as the state's chief executive, Dukakis had overcome in 1982 what he viewed as a public death, his loss of the governorship in 1978 as he sought re-election. All told, he had been, for ten years, on two different watches, Governor of a state with a relatively robust economy. Dukakis had also served in his state's legislature prior to his years as Governor. But the 1988 campaign represented Michael Dukakis' first run at national office, and national politics also was new to most of his key staff.

At first, however, highly-placed Democrats were not so much concerned with Dukakis' lack of experience as with what they viewed as a serious and pervasive problem which faced the campaign. Many felt that the perceived ideology of the party, and perhaps that of the nominee himself, could work to the disadvantage of the party. Democrats have long been considered as the more liberal of the two major parties in the United States. But for many people "liberal" has become, rightly or wrongly, a term associated with unpopular policies of past administrations. There are, of course, moderate and conservative Democrats, yet the heart of the party is still what many would term liberal. This is especially true when its candidates are contrasted with the Republican nominees. Because of these perceptions, the Democrats' Presidential candidate could either run on the liberal label and try to shape public perception into something more advantageous, or attempt to avoid the problem altogether. It would appear that the latter option was chosen.

"They have to do that," explained Craig Smith, Director of the Freedom of Expression Foundation, in speaking of the Democrats.⁵ Smith served as a speech writer for President Ford in the 1976 campaign and was Oregon Senator Bob Packwood's campaign manager in 1980. Further, Smith worked with the 1988 Republican Vice-Presidential candidate's team, and is currently a Professor of Communication Studies at Long Beach State University "Because their party is made up of so many diverse groups, they have to speak in generalities. The minute they get to specifics they start losing pieces of their coalition," Smith continued.⁶

Maneuvering to obfuscate the party's position on sensitive issues had begun even before Dukakis accepted his party's nomination. The Democrat's platform for 1988 was so general that the New York Times was prompted to make the following assessment: "The 5000 word document, filled with generalizations, stands in striking contrast to those of years past, which have tended to be book length compilations of specific promises."⁷ According to the Times, this was so because, "No one wanted to give the Republicans an easy target."⁸

Dukakis was confronted with other problems that required consideration as the date of his acceptance speech drew near. As the convention approached, Jesse Jackson was demanding an unprecedented role for himself in the fall campaign. Dukakis, fearful of alienating Southern whites, strove to keep Jackson in the background. Yet, mindful of the importance of black voters, Dukakis was forced to make many concessions to his defeated opponent. For all his trouble Dukakis got negative stories in the press about how he had alienated Jackson needlessly over petty squabbles.⁹

Despite problems over concretely identifying their governing philosophy while simultaneously holding together a fractious coalition, Democrats had some distinct political assets. As the Reagan-Bush era drew to a close, Dukakis and his fellow Democrats could attack the Republicans over administration officials receipt of felony indictments, insider trading scandals on Wall Street, the collapse of the savings and loan industry - and the fact that many thrift officials personally had profited from their institutions financial dealings. Further, Attorney General Edwin Meese had been accused of having tampered with defense contracting procedures to benefit the Wed Tech Corporation. George Bush himself arguably had a deeper involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal than had been revealed. All of these issues possibly could have been worked together as if part of a larger whole. Particularly to those that felt economically disadvantaged, arguments about the unfairness of a system and an administration that allows a select few to make hundreds of millions of dollars in illegal profits may seem salient indeed. Without making judgments on guilt or innocence, there was ample ammunition to attack the Reagan-Bush administration from a political perspective. Dukakis had prepared to emphasize his record as a tough, competent administrator. There was also the possibility to use what was being called the "fairness issue," the perception that the economic recovery of the 1980's benefited some more than others, and had virtually excluded women and minorities. Together, all of these issues had the potential for being grouped into attacks with a unified theme. On the whole, Dukakis' positives seemed to far out-weigh his negatives as Dukakis approached the Democrats' convention knowing that the party's nomination would be his.¹⁰ Basking in the euphoria of primary victories, Dukakis' entourage believed the

general election was theirs to lose.¹¹ The evidence seemed to bear them out. Dukakis enjoyed a fourteen to twenty point lead in the polls.¹²

It had been eight years since a Democrat had served in the White House. Further, Dukakis lead in the polls suggested that the country was ready for change. A President must make decisions, and this frequently means that someone or some group will be slighted to the benefit of another. Resentments towards a sitting President often fester during his tenure in office. A longing for something different emerges. Because of this tendency, prospective nominees of the party out of power rarely lack for ammunition. In 1988, as he prepared his acceptance speech, Michael Dukakis was in a position to exploit the pitfalls of his opponent's incumbency.

Exordium, Narrative & Partition

Dukakis' exordium and, to some extent, his narrative appear to have been performed by Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, who introduced Dukakis to the convention crowd just prior to Dukakis acceptance speech. Clinton focused attention on the Democratic nominee by highlighting Dukakis' strengths as a legislator, an executive and as an individual. Heston's video fulfilled the exordium and narrative aspects of Bush's mega-speech more cleanly than Clinton's speech because Dukakis appeared to stress exordium and narrative in his own remarks, which followed Clinton's, thus duplicating Clinton's efforts. Further, Clinton's was hampered by his own ineffective delivery. Clinton did not sense the restive nature of his convention hall audience, and continued to speak far over his time limit, speaking well of Dukakis until the delegates booed him off the stage. If the delegates' reaction was representative of the country at large, then one may infer that any potential good that Clinton's introduction may have done Dukakis was to some degree negated by his verbose and ineffective presentation.

To a large degree, Dukakis seemed to avoid issues and instead focused on the exordium phases of his address and on establishing ethos in his speech. Cicero called this tactic the "tedious" exordium, and said that a tedious exordium should be avoided at all costs. Cicero described a tedious exordium as: ". . . one spun out beyond all need

with a superabundance of words or ideas." ¹³ Focusing on the exordium and narrative meant that Dukakis had less time for developing the key ideas of his campaign in the partition. Dukakis opened his address by speaking of his relative, actress Olympia Dukakis, and thanking her for the introduction she gave him at the Academy Awards ceremonies when she raised her Oscar and pronounced the campaign underway. Next he drew an analogy between a presidential race and a marathon. He spoke of the American dream and how he knew of it first hand. His father and mother were immigrants, he explained. Dukakis then moved to an "us against them" theme briefly, saying, "And, my friends if anyone tells you that the American dream belongs to a privileged few and not to all of us, you tell them that the Reagan era is over." ¹⁴ Dukakis also mentioned in passing the national debt, U.S. involvement in Central America, and briefly spoke about America's drug problem before asserting that, "... this election is not about ideology, it's about competence."¹⁵ Dukakis and his advisors perhaps knew that being considered a liberal was unpopular at the moment, and attempted to focus the race away from his ideological leanings to a more favorable area. Reagan had been criticized in the Tower Report for his hands-off management style, and, by stressing competence, Dukakis could indict the Reagan-Bush Administration as incompetent. Dukakis also stressed the theme of honesty in government, saying, "We're going to have a justice department that understands the word 'justice'." ¹⁶ Again it is likely that he was aware of evidence that many Americans were troubled by a perceived lack of ethical direction in high administration officials and captains of commerce. To some extent this might be seen as a partition because Dukakis did return to this issue in the general campaign, but only in a limited way.

The candidate spoke at length about the value of community involvement, appealing to those who may have participated in past Democratic endeavors, and those who were prepared to serve their country. He gave several examples of how everyone is enriched by community involvement. As with Bush, Dukakis may have discussed this issue to demonstrate his concern for the average person, and this may have helped blunt the perception that he was a "big-government liberal." He related several instances in which individuals had stepped forward to make a difference in the lives of others. He spoke also of the need to make holding office a higher calling, and praised

Jesse Jackson and his family, thus extending an olive branch to Jackson and making a rather obvious appeal for support to the nation's black community.

Dukakis ended his acceptance speech with a pledge as well. This pledge was from the time of ancient Athens. It was a pledge which hearkened to his own Greek heritage, an appeal to the seat of ancient democracy. It was aimed squarely at the abuse and corruption he saw in the Reagan-Bush Administration. Dukakis attempted to lead his audience by inference, and in so doing it was perhaps Dukakis' sole use of the enthymeme. Said Dukakis:

We will never bring disgrace to this our country by any act of dishonesty or of cowardice. We will fight for the ideals of this, our country. We will revere and obey the law. We will strive to quicken our sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways we will transmit this country greater, stronger, prouder and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.¹⁷

Clearly Dukakis was drawing attention to the abuse he saw in the Reagan administration. With the Iran-Contra and various other scandals Dukakis had considerable reason to imply that laws were broken, and that Administration officials had brought disgrace upon their country. Further, with a mounting national debt there was reason to assert that the Reagan-Bush Administration had adopted a "spend now, pay later" philosophy. Indeed, Dukakis made that very point earlier in his address. On the whole, however, there were very few real issues he introduced and supported in his address. Rather, Dukakis seemed to prefer to concentrate on building ethos with his audience. This would appear to be in keeping with the strategy which led the Democrats to adopt a platform that was full of generalities out of a fear that Republicans would attack them as being too liberal.

Although it was received favorably at the time, in retrospect the Dukakis speech can be seen as having provided little of the foundation needed to build a coherent campaign around. A preview of important points in the single most significant speech of the early campaign would help to orient the audience. The partition function of Dukakis mega-speech appears to have been virtually ignored. Hence, he lost the chance

to foreshadow issues and develop themes that potential voters could begin to consider when he chose to focus on the exordium rather the partition. Also lost was the opportunity to build a framework from which the campaign could operate. The absence of underlying themes would later contribute to the overall appearance of chaos that surrounded the Dukakis campaign. Where the Bush campaign accomplished the exordium, narrative, and partition aspects of the mega-speech at the Republican National Convention, Dukakis' acceptance speech accomplished only the exordium and narrative historia steps at the Democratic National Convention. If the poor audience reaction to Clinton is any gauge, the Democrats were less effective than their Republican counter parts in the exordium and narration.

The acceptance speech is one of the best opportunities for a candidate to focus campaign discourse on his or her ideas. The acceptance speech has perhaps the largest audience viewing a full speech by one speaker at any point in the entire campaign. Without an effective partition in the acceptance speech, a speaker would have to regain the attention of the audience at a later point in the campaign to introduce his or her ideas. Dukakis would suffer from failing to introduce the central themes of his campaign.

Refutation & Confirmation

The campaign proper began promisingly enough on the strength of Dukakis' well-received acceptance speech, but quickly things fell apart for him after he left the convention. For virtually the rest of the campaign Dukakis became mired in fending off attacks from the Bush campaign. In the terminology of the mega-speech, Dukakis became locked in the refutation phase of his address. Very few independent points of confirmation were advanced in the course of his campaign. Indeed, Dukakis kept trying to refute Bush's attacks even through his (Dukakis') election eve address, which instead should have spoke to the digression and peroration steps of the mega-speech.

After Bush left his convention, one of the first charges he made was that Dukakis was a liberal. Dukakis appeared stunned by the accusation, and his response -- or lack

of one -- may have confirmed the suspicion in the minds of many voters that he was a dangerous liberal in moderate clothing. Dukakis waited months to develop a firm response to the ideological gauntlet thrown down by Bush. First, Dukakis appeared to deny his liberalism, then he appeared to be embarrassed by it, and all the while he conveyed the impression that what he really wanted was for the issue to go away. This was at best a wishful fantasy in the absence of a positive program, in the absence of changing the focus of the debate in a meaningful way, such as discussing the issues with which Bush was uncomfortable. Only in the waning days of the campaign, when most analysts were saying that his once insurmountable lead had slipped away and that he had little hope of defeating Bush, Dukakis admitted to the surprise of absolutely no one that the charge was true. He was a liberal, a liberal like Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was proud to be a liberal. Interestingly, after Dukakis admitted he was a liberal his standing in the polls actually began to improve.¹⁸ Finally, the issue of Dukakis' liberalism was laid to rest, but it was too little too late. Listeners to his confession must have wondered why, if Dukakis was so proud to be a liberal, he had been ashamed to say so? And if this charge were true after all, perhaps the others were as well.

On the issue of his liberalism, Dukakis appeared to camouflage his political leanings in the exordium phase of his address by asserting that: "This election is not about ideology. It's about competence." Dukakis later went on to assert that the race for the Presidency was, "... not about meaningless labels. Its about American values."¹⁹ The very fact that Dukakis tried to avoid an ideological label early in the campaign may have allowed Republican strategists to infer that this was a sensitive area for the Democrats, as though they were trying hide something. Perhaps a fear of not wanting the Republicans to have an easy target led the Democrats to a lack of ideological definition of their candidate, a gap which was filled by Dukakis' opponent. When faced with this assault, as with many others throughout the course of the campaign, Dukakis' response was ill-timed, unfocused, and ineffective. A late or missing response to Bush's attacks became a feature of the Dukakis campaign.

Against some of the charges Bush made, a minimal response would have been enough. For example, in the revolving-door prison commercial, Dukakis never effectively pointed out that the 268 convicts mentioned in the Bush commercial had escaped over a ten-year period, and that the "many" still at large actually translated into three. Dukakis could have wrought devastating damage to the Bush campaign with judicious use of this simple revelation. Although true in the technical sense, Bush's charges dramatically overstated the case, and calling this fact to voters' attention would have undermined Republican credibility on this position, and psychologically on many others.

The goal of almost all of the Republican charges -- but especially with those concerning crime -- was to depict Dukakis as lacking in common sense and being unacceptably to the left of the voting public. In the second presidential debate, Dukakis appeared aloof and overly analytical. The very first question went to Dukakis. CNN correspondent Bernard Shaw asked Dukakis if his opposition to the death penalty would change if Dukakis' wife, Kitty, were raped and murdered. Dukakis was the epitome of cool detachment. His response fit perfectly with the image that the Bush team had so carefully crafted for him: that of a Northeastern liberal who knew more about some ideal perfect world than the real one in which everyone else lived. Later, speaking on Dukakis' performance in the debate, Republican strategist Roger Ailes could barely contain his glee, and made the following observation:

It really reinforces this idea that he's lived in a Harvard Ivory Tower, looking at computer models on recidivism rather than understanding the terror of a crazy person attacking someone. It's like a guy from outer space who walks and talks like us, but doesn't feel the same way we feel. ²⁰

Though turning the tables on Bush with regard to the crime issue would likely have helped blunt the perception of Dukakis as an "out-of-touch-liberal," the problem for Dukakis remained that the central facts of the Horton issue could not be denied. Dukakis did support the program, Horton was furloughed, and Horton committed heinous crimes while on furlough. If being soft on crime was such an unfair charge, why was it so difficult to dispel? For one thing, Dukakis contributed to his own problems in other

ways. He did not try to refute the message, but the messenger. He damned the tactics of his opponent, and hinted that the Presidential election process itself had become flawed. Again, Dukakis resorted to a sort of legalistic response.

As with the issue of crime, Dukakis' responses to other charges in the campaign not only failed to help him, but tended to reinforce the perceptions that Bush sought to create. When Dukakis was attacked for his stance on the pledge of allegiance, he offered only a legalistic defense, arguing that it was unconstitutional to force school children to recite the pledge. In the words of Goldman and Matthews, Dukakis had a way of " . . . fighting fire with paper."²¹ Bush had tried to present his opponent as someone who was detached, even out of touch. Couple this with a reaction that seems to ignore the emotional aspect of patriotism, and Dukakis helped Bush to make his point. For most of the campaign, Bush led mass recitations of the pledge at his rallies, thus keeping the issue in the forefront. Only when Dukakis got angry enough in October to call on Bush to stop hiding behind the flag, was the issue put to rest. Only when Dukakis began to act viscerally -- out of his character as defined by Bush -- did Dukakis begin to make headway.

Nowhere was Dukakis' lack of refutation -- or his inappropriate refutation-- more striking and indicative than his handling of the Boston Harbor issue. Dukakis was told almost a week in advance of Bush's impending trip to Boston Harbor. Numerous options were discussed in Dukakis' inner circle about what to do. The Governor could put together an advertisement showing what the Reagan-Bush Administration had done to the environment in eight years. The Governor could arrive at the harbor, confront Bush and show the press around. The Governor could hire a plane to tow a banner over the harbor while Bush and the press were there. In the end nothing happened. Somehow it was even forgotten that Dukakis' attempts to clean the Harbor had been hampered by the Reagan administration.²²

For whatever the reason, as the campaign progressed, the charges Bush kept leveling were still going unrefuted. Further, Dukakis' own internal organization made it difficult to answer any attack. Dukakis had assembled a strong team drawn from many

areas; some were from within and others from outside of the realm of politics. These individuals had much to contribute, but a clear organizational framework was missing for most of the campaign. Cumbersome and unwieldy, the group proved unable to respond to the attacks of opponents let alone map out a coherent strategy which would have developed points of confirmation.

Dukakis' inadequate partition in his acceptance speech made it necessary to develop issues for the confirmation in the heat of the campaign, rendering solid internal organization all the more crucial. However, until September, there was no single person with authority over what advertising would be produced and over when it would be aired. Consequently, the campaign lurched from theme to theme. First, there was a self-congratulatory ad showing a smiling Dukakis accepting his party's nomination for the highest office in the land. Then there was a self-congratulatory ad showing a smiling Dukakis as a warm and loving father. Though admittedly a biased source, Janet Mullins, who deployed the Bush advertising to local stations, was sharply critical of the Dukakis efforts: "It's been erratic, unfocused, borderline amateurish, a waste of money. If I were Dukakis I would not be happy with that particular part of my campaign. It just hasn't done anything to help him." 23

Next came the "Packaged Candidate" piece, in which Dukakis tried to depict George Bush as an invention of his handlers. Focusing attention on Bush's handlers removed Dukakis from a substantive dialogue on issues, and made the campaign appear to be a contest between handlers. Turning an opponent's glibness into a disadvantage might have worked with the smooth, polished ex-actor Ronald Reagan (although it is doubtful), but it is difficult to see how this sort of ad could find currency with the voters when applied to George Bush. Stiff and uncomfortable in front of the cameras in a manner reminiscent of Ed Sullivan, but in a vulnerable human sort of way, Bush may have appeared to millions of Americans as typifying how they believe they would have acted if they were the candidate. In sum, lack of cohesion in the Dukakis campaign was almost total. This confusion prevented the campaign from developing issues which would have served as points of confirmation in the campaign.

True, Dukakis tried to make Dan Quayle an issue throughout the campaign. Perhaps the Quayle issue, directed at the junior level of the Bush Campaign, came as close to a confirmation as the Democrats developed in 1988. After Quayle stumbled in the Vice Presidential Debate, Democrats again picked up the theme of Quayle's alleged unfitness for office, as they had done during the Republican convention. In answering a question about his qualifications for office, Quayle stated that he had approximately the same length of experience as Jack Kennedy had when he became President. Senator Lloyd Bentson, Dukakis running mate, retorted by stating that Quayle was no Jack Kennedy. The line froze Quayle momentarily while Dukakis' partisans present in the studio audience hooted their uproarious approval. The Kennedy exchange was continued and shown on televised commercials. Another televised spot against Quayle depicted fictional Republican strategists worrying that the controversy over Quayle had grown to unmanageable proportions. Though Dukakis did attempt to make a sustained issue out of Quayle's supposed unfitness for office, the issue was not something an entire campaign could be built around, and may have hurt Dukakis too by absorbing time he could have used developing his own program.

The Quayle issue could not be termed a successful one for Dukakis. The voters seemed to understand that while Quayle might one day be President, either Bush or Dukakis certainly would be, and citizens preferred to worry about them, according to Smith.²⁴ The Democrats built commercials around Quayle's selection, raised the issue at every available opportunity and tried to demonstrate Quayle's unfitness for the Presidency. "Quayle may have been damaged . . . but he took Dukakis with him," Smith concluded of this strategy.²⁵ Even though Quayle was unquestionably hurt by Dukakis' broadsides, the exchanges had the effect of pitting Dukakis against the Republicans' number two man, and the tone of the Democrats' assault was bitter and personal, making complaints about Republican tactics sound hollow.

The focus on issues in the Dukakis campaign kept shifting. From August to the end of October, dozens of other scripts were written but never produced. Goldman and Mathews saw this lack of organizational direction and the chaos it inspired as

attributable to Dukakis: "The campaign was a litter of unused themes and unproduced scripts that had offended his [Dukakis'] unpredictable tastes."²⁶ Some scripts were produced but never aired. Themes, when there were themes, changed more quickly than viewers could keep up with them. Dukakis' personal lack of command contributed to the confusion as concepts that had initially been rejected found their way back into the campaign in desperation. An aide who suggested the signature phrase "Strong Leadership to Revitalize America" found Dukakis less than enthusiastic. "Revitalize, sounds like a building to me," said Dukakis to an aide.²⁷ One of Dukakis' lieutenants suggested the signature phrase, "The Best Is Yet To Come." His memo was returned full of grammatical corrections and the notation, "Lousy writing MSD" (Michael S. Dukakis).²⁸ Only after all seemed lost did the campaign adopt the phrase as its slogan. Another aide, Tubby Harrison, tried to get Dukakis to take a tough populist stand on trade and supported his positions with arguments. "No, no, you're giving me analysis. That's not my long suit -- give me the message," replied Dukakis.²⁹

To make things worse, the campaign manager for the Democrats had the same lack of patience as did the candidate. Goldman and Matthews described Dukakis manager Susan Estrich, as "volatile and profane." Both Estrich and Dukakis were characterized as, "... two stubborn souls who did not listen or tolerate argument well."³⁰ Estrich did not have the history with Dukakis that her predecessor John Sasso did. Sasso, it will be recalled, had been forced into exile when it was revealed that he had leaked information to the press about Joe Biden's plagiarism; but it was Sasso who could speak to the Governor as few others could. While Estrich was technically competent, Sasso had the vision to map out a coherent strategy that could bring victory. As a sullen Dukakis watched his campaign disintegrate, he moved to bring Sasso back into the fold. Things were so disorganized that Sasso had almost immediately wished that he had stayed out: "It's worse than I thought," he said. "If I had known last week what I know now, I'm not sure I'd have done this," said Sasso upon his return, in a meeting with his lieutenants.³¹ Even in bringing someone with the needed vision to the campaign, however, Dukakis' indecisiveness hurt him. He failed to designate either Sasso or Estrich as the one in charge, and petty turf battles were the inevitable result. In the

face of the Governor's personality quirks and campaign infighting, it was difficult to answer the Republican charges.

Dukakis' own persona seemed to work against him in an other ways as well. Once he finally became committed to a given course of action, he seemed totally committed to it. Dukakis radiated an aura of obstinacy and intractability. During his stints as Governor, Dukakis was renowned for providing in-depth analyses to legislative opponents who, upon consideration, still opted for another course of action. Dukakis would then lean back in his chair and say in measured tones: "Let me explain it again."³² Dukakis' demeanor conveyed the impression that the only reason to oppose his policies was a lack of understanding of their value, and he apparently discounted the possibility that others may hold legitimate reasons of their own for pursuing other alternatives. His demeanor seemed to be that of one who is cold and austere. During the primaries there was further talk of his intractability, his obstinacy, his failure to see things from a perspective other than the one he was accustomed to. Dukakis, it was felt by many, lacked passion and had no feeling for the everyday problems people face. To some observers he seemed to view politics as a purely intellectual exercise. No less a national figure than Richard Nixon had made the point that "poets" make the best politicians. Nixon was referring to the ability to inspire, which he saw as essential for a politician. Jesse Jackson, in Nixon's estimation, was a poet: Michael Dukakis was a "word processor."³³

Stu Spencer, a high Republican campaign official who worked on the campaign from Quayle's corner, saw Dukakis as an "out-of-touch-liberal." Spencer realized that Dukakis' inexperience in national politics and personality quirks would hamper the development of a credible campaign by the Democrats. Spencer felt he also knew how to exploit Dukakis' weaknesses. According to The Quest For The Presidency, Spencer dismissed Dukakis in almost brutal terms as a:

... mean little prick from Harvard ... a wise-ass rookie who didn't know what it was like flying around with a hundred Sam Donaldsons baying in the back of the plane. You had to get him, show him up for what he really was. You had to put the knife to his

throat and hold it there for sixty days. If he breaks, Spencer mused, you win. If he doesn't, you lose -- it was as simple as that.³⁴

Dukakis remained frozen in the refutation phase of his mega-speech for much of the general election campaign. As has been demonstrated, his refutation was confused and disorganized, and Dukakis' confirmation was practically non-existent. Democrats had certain opportunities to exploit issues but did not take advantage of them. Iran-Contra and other scandals, which occurred during the Republican Administration, for instance, provided the Democrats with ample ammunition to fire at their Republican opponents. But Dukakis' single attempt to make scandal a campaign issue came just prior to the Republican Convention in mid-August when he said that the Reagan-Bush administration was like a fish: it rotted from the head down. Inexplicably, the issue of scandal was then dropped in the campaign.

Digression & Peroration

As did George Bush, Dukakis also ran an election eve broadcast that summed up his campaign: however, Dukakis was still on the defensive on election eve. Much of his election eve message tried to answer criticisms that were directed at him by Bush: "People have been watching furlough ads playing politics with human tragedy. This is not a campaign about furloughs and flag factories. This is a campaign about the future of America."³⁵ Dukakis' summation of his opponent's arguments does not seem to achieve the traditional functions of a conclusion, even though Dukakis' attempted to lay blame on Bush (as Cicero advises for the digression) for a campaign that was perceived as bitter and issueless. Nor is he particularly successful in arousing sympathy for himself.

In a limited way, Dukakis did include a partition in his final preelection broadcast. Dukakis spent an inordinate period of time defending himself from Bush's attacks, and in the process he touched on most of the major issues. In the sense that Dukakis reviewed the campaign here, he performed a partition. However, properly speaking, the partition should review the points in one's own speech. Dukakis, on election eve, may

have simply reminded voters of Bush's most effective arguments. Dukakis attempted to personalize his message by having average people recite their complaints to him. However, this recitation tactic forced Dukakis into a corner by making him answer charges. Noticing the defensive tone of the presentation, The New York Times observed: "The Dukakis broadcast was built around answering the judgments offered of him on tape by voters."³⁶ Dukakis had appeared to include only one major theme in his campaign, that of Dan Quayle's fitness for office, and his election eve message touched on that as well. In this final message to voters before election day, Dukakis included a very limited partition and an ineffective digression.

In sum, the Democratic candidate ran a disorganized, empty, issueless campaign, one that was out of step with the times. Moreover, Dukakis tried to convince voters that he was not a liberal. His timing contributed to his problems in the sense that he reacted (often too late) to the charges of the Bush campaign rather than setting out a plan of his own to explain why he should be elected. Perhaps Dukakis' failure to act decisively arose from his own internal dissonance over his inability for much of the campaign to say what he wanted to say-- that he was a liberal who supported liberal positions. Perhaps Bush and his staff painted Dukakis in harsher colors than he deserved to be portrayed. But in such circumstances, one returns to Roger Ailes' maxim that charges must contain at least a grain of truth in order to stick, and one is also reminded that it is the obligation of the one who is attacked to respond. Speaking on this point, Goldman and Matthews said:

It [The Bush attack] worked in part because Dukakis and his people, in their disbelief, let it happen. The candidate and the campaign had fallen into an Alexandrian torpor after the last of the primaries; there were no new states to conquer, and while they got up for the convention, no one knew what to do next. Instead, for a dangerous time, they basked in their own radiance; they had built a better space ship, not realizing that, as Ira Jackson put it, the O-rings were bound to rupture.³⁷

One may argue about the relevance of some of the Republican charges, but in the main they were about issues. To be sure, the in-depth intellectual discussions that many critics so desired were not present. But Bush did talk about smaller issues which he used to represent Dukakis' stand on larger issues. The view that Dukakis was above

the fray in some regard or that he tried to remain pure by not attacking Bush simply is not borne out by events. In fact, the nature of the Democrats' attack on Dan Quayle took quite a polemic tone as well.

As has been demonstrated, Bush had a well-developed strategy. He had issues, themes, and motivations established and ready. Except for his vague promise of good jobs and competent government, Dukakis did not. "It was notorious in Dukakis' circle that he needed a plan -- a tight, clear political Baedeker -- setting out the next stations on his journey, explaining why they were important and telling him how to get there in his methodical left - foot- right foot way," concluded Goldman and Matthews.³⁸ There were issues to be employed, but Dukakis did not explore them until it was too late. This lack of focus on the part of the candidate led to a confused and demoralized campaign.

President Bush's victory over Michael Dukakis is a case of the better mega-speech triumphing over the inferior one. While Bush had an effective narrative historia in the Heston video, Governor Clinton, who attempted to perform Dukakis' narrative historia, was booed off the stage. In his acceptance speech, Bush highlighted areas of disagreement between himself and his opponent, and concisely foreshadowed the main issues of his campaign in his partition: crime, the environment, and patriotism. In his convention address Dukakis briefly touched on issues, but during the campaign proper, virtually dropped everything he said. Bush dealt with his perceived weaknesses early, and then put the focus on Dukakis. Dukakis remained on the defensive for much of the campaign. Finally, in his election eve broadcast, Bush took the edge off the harsh tone of his campaign in his digression, and reviewed the key points of his campaign in his partition on election eve. Dukakis attempted to arouse indignation towards Bush, but restated Bush's case for him. Because Dukakis had so little independent material in the campaign proper, his peroration consisted of little more than attempting to raise doubts about Quayle. The better mega-speech won.

- 1 Goldman and Mathews, "Fatal Attraction," Newsweek, 21 November 1988, p. 47.
- 2 Goldman and Mathews, "Little Big Men," Newsweek, 21 November 1988, p. 54.
- 3 Ibid., p. 55.
- 4 Ibid., p. 47.
- 5 Interview with Dr. Craig Smith, Long Beach California, 30 September 1989.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 The New York Times, p. A1.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Goldman and Mathews "Last Minute Scuffles," Newsweek, 21 November 1988, p. 83.
- 10 Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 163.
- 11 Ibid., p. 374.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Cicero, De Inventione. De Optimo Genere. Oratorum Topica, p. 53.
- 14 New York Times, 19 July 1988, p. A 10.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Goldman and Mathews "Anatomy Of A Victory," Newsweek, 21 November 1988, p. 15.
- 19 New York Times, 20 July 1988, p. A 10.
- 20 Washington Post, 28 October 1988, p. A 3.
- 21 Goldman and Mathews "The Ice Man Cometh," Newsweek, p. 113.

- ²² Ibid., p. 337.
- ²³ New York Times, 19 October 1988, p. A 31.
- ²⁴ Interview with Dr. Craig Smith, Long Beach California, 30 September 1989.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 336.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 335.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 345.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ NBC, "Meet The Press." 17 April 1988.
- ³⁴ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 354.
- ³⁵ Washington Post, 28 October 1988, p. A 3.
- ³⁶ New York Times, 8 November 1988, p. A 1.
- ³⁷ Goldman and Mathews, The Quest For The Presidency: The 1988 Campaign, p. 334.
- ³⁸ Ibid.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

Cicero advised speakers to follow a specific pattern in the development of their message which would contribute to the rational presentation of their ideas. In this present study, Cicero's format has been adapted to a larger speech context and termed the mega-speech. In the previous chapters it was demonstrated that the Bush campaign largely mirrored this pattern and thus Bush infused a sense of structure and discursive rationality into his campaign. By comparison, Dukakis did not run an orderly campaign. In the Aristotelian-Ciceronian framework, Bush should have won the election because he made the better case.

The mega-speech contains several distinct steps which were outlined by Cicero. The steps of the mega-speech include the following: the exordium, in which one gets the attention of the audience; the narrative, in which one recalls to the minds of listeners true occurrences which build one's credibility; the partition, in which one previews the main ideas he or she will discuss in the campaign; the confirmation, in which one advances his or her case independent of what one's opponent may say; the refutation, in which one deals with arguments raised by his or her opponent; the digression, in which one arouses feelings favorable to one's self or against one's opponent; and the peroration, in which one reviews what was said in the body of the presentation. To reiterate, the mega-speech provides a framework for candidates and critics alike to gauge the rational presentation of a campaign.

It is the contention of this study that in each of the Ciceronean divisions, Bush presented the better case. The Heston video effectively fulfilled the functions of the exordium by focusing attention on Bush, and of the narrative *historia* by recounting

past events which spoke to Bush's strength of character and his qualifications for the Presidency. By contrast, Dukakis' exordium and narrative historia were performed so poorly by Bill Clinton that he was booed off the stage. Instead of presenting a clear effective partition, as Bush did in his acceptance speech, Dukakis largely duplicated Clinton's efforts by focusing on exordium and narrative remarks in his address. In the campaign proper, Bush implicitly heeded Cicero's advice and dealt with potential weaknesses by presenting his refutation early. Bush then moved to the points of his confirmation. Dukakis became mired in a weak and ineffective refutation and never quite got to his confirmation. Though Dukakis did mount a sustained attack on Dan Quayle, he did not foreshadow it in his partition. Bush managed to soften the negative tone of the campaign in his election eve address by praising Dukakis as an individual, but simultaneously heaped blame upon Dukakis for having questionable values, thus fulfilling the digression aspect of the mega-speech. Bush also performed a peroration by reviewing the key points in the campaign. Dukakis was still frozen in his refutation during his election eve message, attempting to address the issues Bush had raised in the campaign.

By acknowledging that candidates must mind specific functions in a general election race for the Presidency, criticism of our system can become more objective. The mega-speech framework forces candidates to take responsibility for their own campaigns, and allows for examination of how well, or even whether, a candidate fulfills his or her tasks. As has been done here, the mega-speeches of both the major candidates may be set side by side in order to gauge which candidate made the best presentation. If the public acts in a responsible, rational fashion, people should choose the better case, as can hopefully be seen they did in 1988. Attention may then be focused on areas where our system could be improved. For example, instead of damning the public for permitting George Bush to get away with shallow campaigning, critics might call on Dukakis to give a stronger showing.

Though some did make this case, many indicted Bush as well, and, as has been discussed, there is also a tendency among critics to blame the the general public. Thus, the division of thought articulated by Plato and Aristotle centuries ago is still present.

Plato feared that the general public was easily misled, and that low-minded demagogues would take advantage of them. Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that people were generally capable of rational thought and behavior. He felt that it was not the obligation of the audience to recognize falsity by their own efforts, but simply to distinguish between truth and falsity after evaluating the cases of each speaker. Following this line of thought, the Bush campaign may not have been above reproach in 1988, but it was the obligation of Dukakis to point out Bush's shortcomings.

Bush would also appear to have come the closest to satisfying the proofs that Wayne Booth conceived of and that were also discussed in Chapter Three. The first of these proofs is relevance. The reasons given must be salient to the audience. That is, they must deal with the current concerns of the voting public. Further, the reasons must be of intrinsic importance to the voters. In reviewing the issues that Bush chose, as reported in the post-election summary of the Gallup Poll, one could conclude that he either selected issues that were salient to the voters, or made his issues salient in the course of the campaign. Thirty-seven percent of Bush's voters identified the prison furlough issue as a "very important" factor in deciding who to vote for, and similarly thirty-nine percent labeled the pledge of allegiance as "very important" as well. ¹

By contrast, the two strongest issues for Dukakis were the Reagan Administration's dealings with Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega and Bush's role in the Iran-Contra affair. Respectively, fifty-six percent and fifty-one percent of Dukakis' voters rated these issues as "very important." ² These numbers may illustrate a missed opportunity for Dukakis. Both these events had been reported in the news media in the months prior to the Iowa caucuses, but Dukakis virtually dropped both issues in the campaign. Had he vigorously pursued these issues, perhaps Dukakis could have reminded other potential voters of them and won their support.

Second, according to Booth, a speaker must be able to display his or her values to prospective voters. Much of the Republican strategy would appear to have embraced this point. Bush used what he referred to as his "values agenda" throughout the campaign. This strategy allowed Bush to present his values to the voters and assisted

him in defining Dukakis' values through determining what "liberal" meant by selectively highlighting Dukakis' stance on key issues. In so doing, Bush used the rhetorical device of synecdoche, using a part of Dukakis' record to stand for the whole. When one recalls Dukakis' claim that his campaign would avoid labels in favor of values, one wonders how Dukakis failed to identify his values more precisely. Bush's use of the term "liberal" was a clear use of labeling. Dukakis allowed Bush, first, to define what a liberal was, and then to assign a host of negative images to the term. When Dukakis began to offer his own counter-definition towards the end of the campaign, his standing in the polls began to improve. Dukakis, perhaps, could have offered his own label earlier or tried to label Bush as a "corrupt conservative."

The third of Booth's proofs is sincerity, not just the speaker's sincerity, but how he or she demonstrates or fails to demonstrate his or her level of sincerity. Sincerity may be the most difficult component of the emotional proofs to demonstrate. Sincerity is also perhaps the most subjective of the terms Booth offered. Although Dukakis arguably was more effective in establishing sincerity than in establishing relevance and values, it would still appear that Bush more firmly established his sincerity than did Dukakis. In the introductory video played before Bush's acceptance speech, Charlton Heston described Bush's service in World War II, making particular note of the fact that Bush was the youngest fighter pilot in the Pacific theater, and that he was shot down in combat. Further, Heston mentioned the loss of Bush's daughter, and Bush himself spoke in the video of the pain he felt at the loss. Bush also offered some mild praise of his opponent in his election-eve message. Bush also repeatedly used the "I'm not going to let them take it away from you" theme in his acceptance speech and in the campaign. These actions conveyed a concern for the audience, a willingness to sacrifice, and personal experience with grief, which displayed an empathic connection with others who suffer.

Dukakis also attempted to establish his sincerity in his acceptance speech and at various points in the campaign, but with less emphasis than Bush. Dukakis expressed concern for the American people and closed his speech with an ancient oath from the Greek city-state of Athens which promised to transfer the state to the nation's next

generation in good repair. Dukakis was thus able to demonstrate concern for America's youth. The colloquy of Bush and Dukakis proved to be particularly telling. To demonstrate sincerity on the flag issue, Bush demonstrated his support for the flag early by reciting the pledge of allegiance in his acceptance speech and, further in the campaign, Bush often appeared relaxed and confident with the flag as a backdrop. Here Bush diverted attention from his need to demonstrate his sincerity by calling Dukakis' sincerity into question. To the extent that Dukakis did not answer back, Bush was successful. Dukakis did eventually question Bush's sincerity on the pledge issue by discussing more substantive issues and directly challenging Bush's motivations. Even with minimal responses, Dukakis was able to damage Bush's credibility so effectively on the pledge matter that Bush dropped it as a campaign issue. Dukakis was not as successful in other areas. Dukakis let Bush go unchallenged on issues involving crime and the environment and, hence, Bush may have seemed more sincere in those areas. Bush came closest to meeting Booth's criteria in at least two of three areas, and perhaps, though less clearly, in the third as well. It would also appear that Bush more clearly met another of the measures for rhetorical rationality discussed earlier in this study.

Returning to the previously-discussed analogy between Presidential politics and academic debate, Dukakis not only failed to make an adequate *prima facie* case, but failed to meet the burden of rejoinder. Dukakis did not adequately establish his case in the acceptance speech, either failing to foreshadow the issues he intended to address in the campaign or dropping the issues he did discuss in the acceptance speech once he reached the campaign proper. The burden of rejoinder refers to one's obligation to respond to the attacks of one's opponents. As hopefully has been demonstrated, Michael Dukakis failed to meet that burden. Bush repeatedly leveled charges to which Dukakis failed to adequately respond. Bush attacked Dukakis as being soft on crime, a poor environmentalist, and by implication, Bush also questioned Dukakis' patriotism.

In 1988, Bush also made substantial use of emotional proofs. The most obvious example of the use of emotional proofs in campaign '88 is perhaps the visual arguments made by the Bush campaign. For example, regarding the pledge of allegiance issue,

whether Bush mentioned the pledge issue or not, he frequently orchestrated his campaign activities so that an American flag was conspicuously noticeable in the frame of the camera. Bush also utilized visual arguments on the environment and crime. The footage from Bush's visit to Boston Harbor illustrated as words could not the filthy state of the harbor. A commercial placing a revolving door on the gate of a prison dramatically illustrated the argument that Bush wished to make about Dukakis' laxity with felons. In contrast, Dukakis attempted to make few visual arguments and appeared ineffective at best with the ones he did make. In the infamous tank ride, Dukakis' effort to demonstrate his military credentials had the opposite result he intended, and a commercial depicting Republican strategists fretting over the flap with Dan Quayle lacked the dramatic visual impact that pictures of Boston Harbor and Willie Horton's prison "home" had.

By rhetorical measures, Bush ran a stronger campaign than did his opponent. If Bush used dishonest, unethical or manipulative tactics, it should have been easy to make him pay a price for it. If Bush was trying to paint Dukakis as something other than he was, all Dukakis had to do was step away from the assigned role. However, far from attempting to demonstrate how inaccurate this portrait was, Dukakis actually helped Bush fill in the rough edges. Dukakis ceded the initiative to Bush early, and never regained it. Dukakis could have regained the initiative by talking about issues (points of confirmation), but for most of the campaign he did not, apparently because he felt he could not. For instance, his own squeamishness at being called a liberal led him to run away from his true beliefs.

In the end, it is left to the candidate to make his best case. If one's opponent is unfair, unscrupulous or dishonest, it should be easy to call him to task. For failure to do so, there can be but two explanations: 1) the opponent was not unfair, unscrupulous, or dishonest; or 2) an adequate case was not made. In indicting one's opponent for unethical behavior without demonstrating guilt, one is really chastising one's opponent for misleading a public that does not know better. To blame those who cannot see the wisdom of one's position has something of the pathos of a heavily-favored prize fighter, who upon being knocked out, blames the judges.

Platonic critics often appear to overlook the responsibilities of the candidates, preferring instead to focus on the public's responsibilities. For all of the criticism that has been leveled at those who participated in campaign '88, and of democracy in general, critics and scholars have not been able to adequately support the oft-made assertion that democracy is an irrational system. More often, vague feelings of the critic are presented as if they were indisputable facts. After reviewing commentary about the societal implications of the Presidential election of 1988, one is left with the impression that there was something -- well -- evil about the contest. To be sure, this was implied often enough, but repetition does not constitute proof. In 1988, the voters of America chose the Presidential candidate who made the best and most rational case for his election.

¹ "Bush Campaign Strategy Built Broad Voter Coalition," The Gallup Report, p. 25.

² Ibid.

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