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The conservative conversation

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THE CONSERVATIVE CONVERSATION

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

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The conservative movement is defined by its ideology as well as its rhetoric. Richard Weaver's conversion to the Right offers an opportunity to define conservatism and conservative rhetoric through his hierarchy of argumentation, and his examination of Plato's *Phaedrus* allows an examination of the speaker's nature and the nature of rhetoric. Glenn Beck, one of today's most controversial conservative representatives, also deserves examination for his ideology and rhetoric. Both Richard Weaver and Glenn Beck bear scrutiny as influential members of the conservative movement and the role their rhetoric has in the conservative conversation today.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this degree to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who saved me through his redeeming grace, and I, though wholly undeserving, live in grateful acceptance of his forgiveness, his salvation, and his love. I also dedicate this degree to my parents, Robert and Suzanne Hall, and my grandmother, Carolyn Manry. Without their love and support and stubborn genes, I would not have been able to finish.

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 1:27, 30, 31.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: TWO PROPHETS

Long after wars are ended, elections are decided, and heroes die, the rhetoric involved in such occasions lives on to reveal the values and ideologies of those central characters and the population they represented at a pivotal point in human history. Conservative ideology has woven its way through American and British history and remains unchanging in its core principles; while the voices, who have carried on the conservative conversation, echo through time, fading with one generation and reappearing with the next. Certainly those politicians elected into office deserve notice and examination. Yet even more certainly do those political voices we, as an electorate, listen to most often require examination—many times those being the voices of political activists, professors with a political platform, or a favorite news journalist or social commentator. We could consider them prophets of the age, lamenting the past, angry over the present, and always diviners of the uncertain future.

Richard Weaver, who remains an influential character in the field of rhetoric and politics, is reminiscent of the Old Testament prophet, Nehemiah, rallying the people to rebuild the walls around the Holy City, to stop liberalism, progressivism, communism, and socialism from invading America. Time reveals that Weaver was a prophet whose words were attended and heeded after he was gone and whose influence was tangible during the Reagan Revolution. Yet, in decades following the Reagan Revolution, the conservative conversation seemed to evanesce.

Today a new conservative conversation has started. Glenn Beck, evocative of the New Testament prophet, John the Baptist, dressed in camel skin and eating locust and honey, cries out in the wilderness of mainstream America for her people to repent; and, most assuredly, some individuals would enjoy nothing more than to have Beck's head served to them on a silver platter. Weaver has been analyzed for his political conservatism, Southern Agrarianism, rhetorical theorems, and Platonic idealism. Beck is not an academic, in the traditional sense, but is noted as a cultural critic and conservative political commentator whose logical argumentation is at times trivialized due to his eccentric performances and outspoken opinions. It would be faulty to compare Richard Weaver and Glenn Beck to each other. They are part of different generations of thought and experience. Yet, both do share some strong commonalities. And more important than the prophets are their words—the conservative conversation they carry.

Richard Weaver classifies rhetoric in two broad categories: liberal and conservative. One may be considered relative and situational; the other idealistic and foundational. Both typify the nature of argumentation used in today's political arena. Weaver believes that in order to understand one's political philosophy, one must consider the type of argument he or she uses most prevalently. Within these two broad categories of liberal and conservative rhetoric, he identifies four distinct types of arguments—arguments from definition, similitude or analogy, consequence, and circumstance—which he places in a distinct ethical order. Furthermore, in his interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus,* Richard Weaver examines three particular types of discourse presented in the embodiments of the non-lover, evil lover, and noble lover and contends language affects man in three ways: moving him towards what is good, what is evil, or failing to cause him to move at all. Discourse, then, may be used to determine motivation and character of an individual. This is especially telling within the murky realm of politics ripe with politicians

and political activists shouting heresy on their opponents. Party lines have long been established in America's political arena. The two major political parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party; and minor third parties include the Libertarian Party, the Green Party, and the Constitution Party along with scores of others. More recently, Americans appear willing to abandon their political parties in favor of supporting candidates whose expressed ideology, political philosophy, and voting track record align more closely with their own belief systems, as evidenced by the outbreak of the Tea Party movement. This movement along with the resurgence of political activism, especially among the conservative conglomerate, has been greatly influenced by the political activist Glenn Beck.

Richard Weaver provides a rich analysis of rhetoric and conservatism. His conversion to the political right offers an opportunity to define conservatism as a political movement and as an ideology. His examination of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* and its reflection of the speaker's nature and intrinsic impetus allows a careful consideration of the rhetoric and type of argumentation used by one of today's loudest, conservative representatives, Glenn Beck. I believe a re-examination of Weaver is necessary, and his hierarchy of argumentation deserves examination as a possible way to determine a speaker's ideology through his or her rhetoric. Finally, I believe that Richard Weaver and Glenn Beck bear scrutiny as influential members of the conservative movement and for the role their rhetoric has in the conservative conversation of today.

CHAPTER II

RHETORIC'S ROLE

Rhetoric plays a cultural role, specifically in the realm of politics. American culture today dictates different rhetorical expectations for their political leaders and their political activists. Many would laud politicians who examined situations and argued their positions without passion or prejudice. Perhaps, the electorate would feel this better demonstrates an understanding of truth or at its very least, a holistic approach to whatever matter is at hand. This idea is furthered by calls for bipartisanship among Senate and House members to decide a matter through an unbiased compromise. Such a position would be, in effect, the dialectician's role. Such a rational approach would seem more favorable for an outcome that would benefit the whole of American society and not pockets of partisanship. On the other hand, from our favored political activists, we expect nothing less than an emotionally charged rhetoric, pervasive and aimed wholly at us, the audience. We anticipate facts will be manipulated to support opinions and conclusions to be couched with presuppositions.

More truthful would be a happy marriage between the dialectic and rhetoric. Richard Weaver writes, "States and societies cannot be secure unless there is in their public expression a partnership of dialectic and rhetoric" (*Visions of Order* 56). Thus, the abstract reasoning involved with the dialectic would be tempered by the sympathetic treatment of rhetoric.

Weaver uses the trial of Socrates for his evidence and argues that Socrates condemns himself by chiefly arguing as the dialectician. Of the dialectical method in which Socrates defended himself, Weaver writes, "The very rationality of it suggests some lack of organic feeling. It has about it something of the look of a trap or a tick, and one can imagine hearers not very sympathetic to the accused" (*Visions of Order* 61). Although Socrates did not depend wholly on the dialectic, he used it prevalently enough to encourage further enmity with his audience and accusers. Weaver determines, "The issue comes to a focus on this: Socrates professed to be a teacher of virtue, but his method of teaching it did not commend itself to all people" (*Visions of Order* 61). Unlike the dialectic, the nature of rhetoric is meant to persuade a person towards a determined end. Weaver writes, "Rhetoric begins with the assumption that man is born into history. If he is to be moved, the arguments addressed to him must have historicity as well as logicality" (*Visions of Order* 63). To argue the place of rhetoric, Weaver uses Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in which rhetoric is seen as "a counterpart of dialectic" (*Visions of Order* 63). The dialectic attempts to find the syllogism and induction in argumentation while rhetoric examines persuasion through enthymemes and examples. Rhetoric, then, using examples, reveals a shared experience in which the audience participates. In addition, rhetoric, through the enthymeme, allows the rhetorician to enter "into a solidarity with the audience by tacitly agreeing with one of its perceptions of reality. This step of course enables him to pass on to his conclusion" (*Visions of Order* 64). Weaver concludes that society cannot depend wholly on the dialectic; it needs rhetoric. He argues men are not content to just know but must act, and it is this action that relies on rhetoric and its direction.

Weaver writes, “Rhetoric speaks to man in his whole being and out of his whole past and with reference to values which only a human being can intuit” (*Visions of Order* 71). Therefore, rhetoric is necessary, and since rhetoric moves men to act, the nature of rhetoric itself begs a closer examination.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF RHETORIC: PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

Rhetoric is not merely a tool of manipulation or a learned art; rather, it is an idea. Richard Weaver utilizes Plato's *Phaedrus* to define the nature of Rhetoric. In *The Phaedrus and the Nature of Rhetoric*, he argues that Plato's *Phaedrus* should not be restricted to its literal interpretation of love; in fact, Socrates warns against a literal reading in the beginning of the dialogue. Thus, Weaver carefully examines the Socratic dialogue, studying its subject both implicitly and explicitly and its allegorical transformations as an argument defining "the nature of rhetoric" (*The Ethics* 4). At the beginning of the dialogue, Phaedrus relates to Socrates a discourse he has heard by Lysias. He repeats the discourse to Socrates in which the question remains whether or not to grant favors to lovers or non-lovers. Phaedrus logically concludes that people are more likely to favor their lovers but would be smarter to favor non-lovers. Although some may dismiss this as hardly worth examination, Weaver believes that Plato is establishing his major thesis. Weaver writes, "Beneath the surface of repartee and mock seriousness, he is asking whether we ought to prefer a neuter form of speech to the kind which is ever getting us aroused over things and provoking an expense of spirit" (*The Ethics* 5). The difficulty with language is that it is a responsibility in its chosen use and resulting consequence.

According to Weaver, language affects humanity in three ways: moving them towards what is good, what is evil, or failing to move at all, and Plato's non-lover, evil lover, and noble lover are in fact incarnations of three types of effectual discourse.

Lysias' non-lover speech reveals a selfish yet constant character. The non-lover acts with careful calculation, never neglecting nor sacrificing himself/herself for any moment of passion. With nothing to regret and all actions prudent, he/she is able to demonstrate objectivity which is a strength. Non-lovers are more prevalent than lovers and avoid threats to their social standing when conversing as opposed to lovers talking with their lovers. They are not jealous characters and able to repay favors; therefore, they are ideal to be offered favors, as opposed to the lovers. Weaver characterizes the non-lover as the dialectic, using objective, rational, and neutral language. The constancy of the non-lover deems him/her superior because of prudence, objectivity, ability to avoid public censorship, in addition to a lack of jealously for associates. The typical discourse of the non-lover is objective and without passion. This individual offers information to be taken scientifically, literally, and truthfully because he/she is not provoked by manipulative desires. The non-lover's language does not excite anger or passion within a crowd. The speech is factual, business-like and prevalent. It is a utility of speech; whereas, persuasive rhetoric is crafted to the occasion. In fact, it is the lack of individuality of symbolism that makes this discourse common and negative. It is a safe discourse, never arousing ire or contention. Rhetorical style will create identity, and it will draw the attention of the public. The neuter discourse of the non-lover draws no attention except "those who expect a scientific solution to human problems" (*The Ethics* 9). Lysias' speech seems to prefer this type of relationship, but Socrates is displeased with the speech.

Socrates begins a second speech about the lover as an exploiter, in effect, the evil lover. Since love is not rational but consuming, it will cause the lover to manipulate the individual of his/her affections into whatever gives him/her the most pleasure. This individual will make the lover inferior to himself/herself, intellectually and emotionally and will be jealous of anything that steals the lover's affections which, in this speech, is property. The evil lover will make the lover believe he/she has some independence, some will, some equal power, but in reality the evil lover remains in total control. Weaver argues that base rhetoric is the discourse that directs toward evil. It is exploitive and oppositional to anything that it feels threatens its will. The base rhetorician is dependent on the ignorance and apathy of the beloved. The base rhetorician hides anything that might allow the lover independent thought and appeases him/her with things that satisfy temporal desires. The evil lover permits only circumstance and absconds all alternatives. Weaver writes that base rhetoric appears in journalism and politics.

The lovers are only subservient and kept passive.

> What he [evil lover] does therefore is dress up one alternative in all cheap finery of immediate hopes and fears, knowing that if he can thus prevent a masculine exercise of imagination and will, he can have his way. By discussing only one side of an issue, by mentioning cause without consequence or consequence without cause, acts without agents, or agents without agency, he often successfully blocks definition and cause-and-effect reasoning. In this way his choices are arrayed in such meretricious images that one can quickly infer the juvenile mind which they would attract. Of course the base rhetorician today, with his vastly augmented power of propagation, has means of deluding which no ancient rhetor in forum or market place could have imagined (Weaver *The Ethics* 12).

Socrates ends his speech feeling he has done a disservice to love by attacking it, and therefore, makes another speech, this time regarding the noble lover. The noble lover is divine, creative, and inspired. Weaver notes, "his is a generous state which confers blessings to the ignoring of self" (*The Ethics* 13). Unlike the evil lover who is manipulative, the noble lover "has mastered the conflict within his own soul by conquering appetite and fixing his attention upon the intelligible and the divine, he conceives an exalted attitude towards the beloved" (*The Ethics* 13). The noble lover loves his/her lover for who the lover is including the individual's faults and for who the lover might be in betterment. For the sake of the beloved, the noble lover willingly sacrifices any selfish desire. There is no jealousy, but rather, an inclination to see the beloved created towards the perfection of being. Unlike the evil lover who is exploitive, the noble lover is creative.

Weaver argues "rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for" (*The Ethics* 25).

Yet, rhetoric is both truth and its presentation. Therefore, the dialectic according to Weaver, which is "the method of investigation whose object is the establishment of truth about doubtful propositions" is a necessary part of the nature of rhetoric (*The Ethics* 15). Dialectical inquiry allows for evaluation of positive terms in the rhetoric of questions of policy. According to Weaver, policy is a "term of motion" (*The Ethics* 17). Socrates, in referencing the myth of the charioteer, argues that every soul is moving and that which is moving is immortal; therefore, the soul is immortal. Weaver writes, "terms of tendency—goodness, justice, divinity, and the like—are terms of motion and therefore may be said to comport with the soul's essence" (*The Ethics* 17). How the soul perceives such terms is dependent on its education. A soul will perceive good that which is good if it has been rightly affected, and it will perceive evil what is evil. The soul's definitions of terms will also reflect the true nature of things, both good and evil. Weaver contends "what Plato has prepared us to see is that the virtuous rhetorician, who is a lover of truth, has a soul of such movement that its dialectical perceptions are consonant with those of a divine mind" (*The Ethics* 17). The dialectic is, then, a part of rhetoric, but it is limited by the presence of dubious terms. Weaver argues the rhetorician must move from the logical to the analogical. One must use analogy to bring his/her audience towards a resemblance of the ideal. This, then, makes the rhetorician a noble lover, using both the dialectic and analogical, to lead his/her beloved to what is good. Weaver notes that the *Phaedrus* begins with a dialectical speech of the non-lover and the evil lover, as love is disputed. Socrates then re-defines love, using the analogy of the charioteer to make this newly defined love appeasing. Weaver writes, "The

complete man, then is the 'lover' added to the scientist; the rhetorician to the dialectician" (*The Ethics* 21).

An examination of the nature of rhetoric reveals, as both an audience and electors in American political culture, we should seek politicians and political activists whose discourse reveals them to be both a dialectician and rhetorician. Weaver notes, "We have no sooner uttered words than we have given impulse to other people to look at the world, or some small part of it, in our way. Thus, caught in a great web of inter-communication and inter-influence, we speak as rhetoricians affecting one another for good or ill" (*In Defense* 369-70). All humans speak as rhetoricians, and Americans listen to and vote for rhetoricians who they hope have their best interest at heart. Yet, it is within the murky realm of politics that more and more Americans seem dissatisfied with their choice of political representative—a bit of irony since they elected them to that office. This dissatisfaction is exemplified by the recent and largely conservative Tea Party movement. On both sides of the political aisles, yet more prominently within the conservative movement, there seems to remain a chasm between an individual's expressed ideology and the action he or she takes. This is reflected both in the personal belief system purported by conservative voters who then elect candidates into office whose voting track records do not reflect the same belief system as their voters and in the conservative political candidates themselves who profess one ideology and reveal a wholly different one once in office. Thus far, we have regarded rhetoric's cultural role, the necessity for an individual to be both a dialectician and rhetorician, and the use of rhetoric as a determining factor in identifying an individual's motivation and character—at least to a certain degree—whether they are a noble or evil lover. To understand the nebulous and perhaps nefarious game of politics, it is important to consider two questions: what has been the conservative conversation through history and what is it now?

To begin the discussion, we should consider the two most prominent ideologies affecting the American political sphere—liberalism and conservatism—and more specifically how Richard Weaver defines them.

CHAPTER IV

WEAVER'S LIBERALISM AND CONSERVATISM

Terminology changes with the ebb and flow of time. In a lecture delivered at Holy Name College in Washington D.C., on October 15, 1960, Weaver focuses on two particular terms: "conservatism" and "liberalism." First, he notes that those who ascribe themselves as conservatives are many times questioned about what it is they are willing to conserve. Weaver contends "the answer is an obvious one: the conservative wishes to conserve man—the human being" (*In Defense* 483). However, he argues, the implications of such an answer are not as obvious. Weaver writes, "When one says that he wishes to conserve man, he signifies, for one thing, that he knows what man is. That is to say, he believes that man has an essential being, a definable nature, and a proper end" (*In Defense* 483). According to Weaver, then, conservatives believe that humans have a distinctive destiny and are most contented when they are pursuing that destiny within the laws of their defined nature. Weaver writes that in addition, the conservative believes "there are forces which tend to confuse him about the reality of his being, voices which tell him that he has no nature except what is exhibited historically from day to day, and there are theories which deny the idea of a destiny" (*In Defense* 483). The conservative is in a constant battle to conserve that which could be lost. Weaver notes "his is an activist program," and this is the "germ of the movement of the 'new conservatism' in this country" (*In Defense* 484).

Second, he notes the word "liberalism," which he argues "as employed in politics and journalism today means almost precisely the opposite of what it did a century ago" (*In Defense* 484*).* According to Weaver, liberalism by today's definition is different than the nineteenth century acceptance of that term, which represented the belief that the individual and society are best left alone from government interference. Previously, it advocated liberty and individualism in the form of letting a person independently succeed or fail. Weaver argues, "On grounds of reason, politics and ethics, it preached the rule of 'let alone'" (*In Defense* 484). Weaver offers an example of John Stuart Mill's essay "On Liberty" as a definition of nineteenth century liberalism. Mill believed the individual could do many things more improved than the government, and even though the government could perhaps do some things better, it was more beneficial to the individual to learn and grow by his/her own attempt. In addition, there was an inherent danger in allowing government expansion because individual liberty could be compromised. Weaver argues a more current definition of liberalism would be in fact a reverse of the previous one. He contends liberals believe in increasing the size of government for the purpose of the individual's good, and they also support state or government control of education and ownership of things private with a centralization of power in order to increase the common welfare. Weaver, in comparing conservatism and liberalism in the matter of religion, argues liberalism originates from a worldview which sees humanity as the center of all things. The result of this is raising humanity to a level of divinity. Weaver writes, "If he [man] is the only source of direction in the universe, and the only source of value, then his will is the supreme will, and there cannot be any ground for criticizing it or impeding it" (*In Defense* 487).Weaver asserts current liberalism finds its origin in secularism, romantic theories of human nature, transcendentalism, disbelief in revealed truth, scientism, and evolutionism.

Liberals have a cosmological view of humans as they evolve continually into whatever it is they are expected to be. This view deifies the individual. Weaver notes, "The wishes of man are the last court of appeal and nothing that he wants to do can really be repudiated" (*In Defense* 488). Humanity's secular security—food, clothing, and shelter needs—becomes the most important issue which could theoretically be solved by a strong central government. A logical progression from the individual to the world one can manipulate is to the state, and the most efficient state or government would be one that is efficient without a dispersal of power. Thus, for the common good of all, individual privileges and rights may be sacrificed for the possibility of reaching the evolving utopia created by humanity, for humanity.

In contrast, conservatism begins with a view of humanity as created beings. Something was before them and something will be after them and something is greater than they. Conservatives believe that an individual is unique in one's dualistic nature, and for this reason, subject to limitations. They believe reality has a structure that is unalterable and independent of their own will and desires, and there is a certain body of knowledge that is valid and does not change with time. They also believe history is an important educator. Weaver writes, "For the conservative, man is a creature destined to be free—even at his own peril. He needs a certain range of liberty in order to be himself—a being who derives his dignity from the very fact that he must make precarious decisions" (*In Defense* 489). Part of this dignity, Weaver argues, is found in an individual's right to own private property in which one can make choices and realize one's abilities. Weaver writes "Man is a body, a mind and a soul, prone to error but capable of glory" (*In Defense* 493).

Essentially, conservatives wish to conserve Western civilization and the American contribution to it. Weaver argues this position most eloquently.

> We are the heirs of a civilization that goes back three thousand years. The gift of the Hebrews and the Christians for religion, the genius of the Greeks for art and philosophy, the genius of the Romans in law and government—all of these are in our antecedents. With many later additions and increases in insight, these have given us the support of a belief in transcendental reality, a tradition of free inquiry in the constitution of nature and of man, and a system of representative government which, when it is rightly used can hold off all forms of despotism. These things we have from the Old World. To them the New World has added perhaps a new and practical concept of the brotherhood of man. Not a mass society, not an artificial leveling, but a concept of regard for the individual and a welcome for native ability regardless of where it appears (*In Defense* 500).

Weaver offers necessary definitions of liberalism and conservatism to demonstrate his view of the nature of both ideologies. Liberalism, in few respects, has remained a constant ideology; whereas, conservatism has been constant in its fundamentality. According to Dinesh D'Souza, liberalism has dramatically changed within the last century. The 1930's FDR revolution demonstrated a belief that "to give citizens true liberty, the government should insure them against deprivation, against the loss of a job, against calamitous illness, and against impoverished old age" (*Letters* 3). This change resulted in greater government control and provision for its citizens. He further argues that the 1960's ushered in another liberal revolution that clamored for "a new ethic that would be based not on external authority but on the sovereignty of the inner self" (*Letters* 4).

With Rousseau as its "great prophet," the movement called for "the idea of being 'true to yourself'" (D'Souza *Letters 4)*. D'Souza argues this created a new liberal morality. Conservatism has experienced less change. Although some may argue today's conservatism reflects a neo-conservatism—a brash band of ultra-right wing, anti-feminist, anti-gay, anti-immigration, and anti-abortion conservatives—conservatism's ideology at its core remains unchanged; thus, Weaver's definition of conservative ideology remains an accurate one. Therefore, an examination into conservatism—its origin and place in America and its core principles—is a necessary digression. Yet, first it is essential to consider who Richard Weaver is, as a man, as a rhetor, and as a conservative.

CHAPTER V

WEAVER'S CONVERSION

In order to understand Weaver's particular view of conservatism, it is necessary to first understand his conversion to the political right. After graduating from the University of Kentucky in 1932, Richard Weaver served as secretary for Norman Thomas's Socialist Party of America. Young writes that the first pull to the political right began after Weaver joined the American Socialist Party. He notes, "Looking back on that act with a perspective gained with the passage of two decades, he [Weaver] felt that becoming an active socialist was the first step toward his ultimate disillusionment with it and all leftist movements, indeed with garden-variety politics of any kind—right, center, or left" (Young 70). After two years entangled with the political left, Weaver realized he related more with the Southern Agrarians with whom he had become familiar during his graduate work at Vanderbilt University. Agrarianism had begun as an informal gathering of students and faculty from Vanderbilt University who discussed philosophical matters. The Agrarian movement had been preceded by the Fugitives, who focused primarily on poetry. The original members of the Fugitives were Donald Davidson, James Marshall Frank, Sidney Matron Hirsch, Stanley Johnson, John Crowe Ransom, Alec B. Stevenson, and Allen Tate.

Initially, the Fugitives studied and created poetry which did not center on the South. However, southern ideas were soon evident in the writings of Ransom, Tate, and Davidson who would, after a split of the group, eventually evolve the Fugitives into Agrarians during the 1930's. Poetry, philosophy, and politics coalesced into the Fugitive-Agrarian movement. Young contends Weaver's conversion "secondarily involved a change in ideas and was primarily motivated by his personal aversion to socialists and by his affinity for the Agrarians" (72). Weaver taught at Texas A&M University during the late 30's and in 1939, realized "that the 'clichés of liberalism' had become 'meaningless' to him" (Nash 53). This realization led him to begin his education anew with a comprehensive study of the American Civil War, and as Nash writes, "This study of Southern history was for Weaver a road to the Right" (Nash 54).

In the 1920's, the Fugitive-Agrarian movement "presented during the next fifteen years one of the few effective challenges to a monolithic culture of unredeemed materialism" (Weaver *The Southern* 6).Weaver identifies the Vanderbilt Agrarians in his essay *Agrarians in Exile* by first describing what they were not. They were not men, such as the New South men, who considered antebellum civilization antiquated, incorrect, and impractical. They were also not men who used their Southern heritage to manipulate their social standing. Weaver writes, "the Vanderbilt Agrarians cannot be grouped with the uncritical eulogists of ante-bellum culture…In their writing, for example there was a stringency quite foreign to the nostalgic temper, and it could be said that on the whole they practiced an untraditional defense of their tradition" (*The Southern* 30). The group formed as a result of the South's slow induction to full partnership with the North unifying the county once again. World War I provided many young Southerners the opportunity to serve and travel far from their native land, and The Rhodes Scholarship Trust enabled many to study abroad. These men found in European society, a society reminiscent of

their own—traditional, natural, and holistic. The lost boys of the South realized "it was the North and not the South which represented an aberration from a historic culture, and which therefore had to assume the burden of proof. It appeared broadly true, as one of them was later to remark, that the notorious conservatism of the South was but the European character of its institutions" (Weaver *The Southern* 31). They returned home ready to examine their Southern heritage which had long been criticized and marginalized. According to Edward Shapiro, "Throughout the 1920's Northern journalists and social scientists pictured the South as a land of bigoted clergy, degraded sharecroppers and Ku Klux Klan supporters" (75). The traits the Southern Agrarians defended were the agrarianism, conservatism, and religiousness of the South. Many of the Agrarians expressed their wanderings and findings through the medium of poetry. For Weaver, this commencement was significant. He writes, "The composition of poetry is evidence that for him values have a reality, and that he is capable of emotion upon the subject of value" and elsewhere "The practice of poetry amounts in effect to a confession of faith in immanent reality, which is the gravest of all commitments" (*The Southern* 33). The Agrarians struggled but soon began publishing influential texts, first in poetry then in the form of other works. Shapiro writes that the Agrarian's "counterattack was directed at H.L. Mencken… and reached a climax in 1935 over an article Mencken published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* mocking the Agrarians" (76). John Crowe Ransom's *God Without Thunder* was an indication that tradition would be defended and upheld but not in a traditional manner. The manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*, argued for stability against the North's theory of progress and nihilism. These men felt their heritage had withstood battle for more than one hundred years, but these were "men who sensed that in dialectical and rhetorical power they were at least the equals of the attackers" (Weaver *The Southern* 15). This provided them a personal challenge to which they rose to meet the occasion.

Ultimately, Weaver felt the Agrarians were exiled for their stand, finding no home in the changing South and maligned in the North. Weaver notes:

> The Agrarian intellectualized himself enough to make a case for agrarian living. In doing so, he was ceasing to be native. He had not many people at home to talk to. His philosophical doctrines were as far above the average Southern farmer as the empyrean; and though he could argue, he could hardly talk with the New South men of factories and counting houses, for this was the opposition (*The Southern* 40-1).

Weaver viewed the Southern Agrarians as prophets, not accepted in their own country. He understood what the Agrarians had attempted to do to bring their community to correct reason. Included in this reasoning was the belief in Being. Weaver writes, "Man requires some conception of the absolute to maintain his humanity" and furthermore "unquestionably their theory of human nature made the Agrarians odious in certain quarters. In its implication the theory demands of man an atonement" (*The Southern* 48). Young notes, "With their heavy emphasis on poetry, they had taught him [Weaver] an undeniable and deeper truth understood by those who take a sacramental view of the world: Being human and exercising one's humanity fully make belief in God a necessity" (76). Weaver's sympathies with the Vanderbilt Agrarians and specific components of Southern culture such as feudalism, chivalry, the southern gentlemen, and the religiousness of the South convinced him to become a Southern Agrarian. Many of these concepts are explicated in his book *Ideas Have Consequences*, which is recognized as the foundation for the modern American conservative movement. It is important, then, to consider those concepts that led to Weaver's eventual conversion to conservatism.

Weaver strongly believed in hierarchy—hierarchy in arguments and in society. Weaver notes, "Distinctions in society, however invidious they can be made to appear by doctrinaires, are what gives richness, variety, and freedom to the life of a people" (*The Southern* 187). Weaver argues societal hierarchy is in a battle against equalitarianism, and his arguments betray a realization of the inherent danger of the juxtaposition of oppositional philosophies. Weaver writes, "If society is something which can be understood, it must have structure; if it has structure, it must have hierarchy" (*Ideas* 35). Weaver notes the consumer "has the power to destroy utterly that metaphysical structure supporting hierarchy" (*Ideas* 37). According to Weaver, in the past, society had distinctions of vocation: the king, the priest, the soldier, the poet, and the peasant. Now, with an underlying theory of Romanticism, individuals are more concerned with "wanting than to deserving," and Weaver argues, "this is the grand solution of socialism, which is the offspring of bourgeois capitalism" (*Ideas* 37). Socialism, he contends, is in actuality a middle class concept since the poor must work hard to survive, and the rich must work hard to defend themselves. The middle class, "loving comfort, risking little, terrified by the thought of change, its aim is to establish a materialistic civilization which will banish threats to its complacency" (*Ideas* 38*).* Weaver presumes if this social order is deconstructed, humanity is left in confusion and society in chaos and chains. He laments, "How much of the frustration of the modern world proceeds from starting with the assumption that all are equal, finding that this cannot be so, and then having to realize that one can no longer fall back on the bond of fraternity!" (*Ideas* 42). Weaver argues fraternity, unlike equalitarianism, necessitates humanity work towards a common end. This particular consequence of feudalism appealed to Weaver, and he saw demonstrations of fraternity in the Old South. The danger Weaver distinguished was the high price to be paid for the false identity of equality. To necessitate the creation of a truly

equalitarian society, a dictator must usurp the authority and instill regimentation among the masses. To instill economic equality, Weaver writes, "Nothing but a despotism could enforce anything so unrealistic, and this explains why modern governments dedicated to this program have become, under one guise and another, despotic" (*Ideas* 44-45). Centralization reveals the mass populace united under one such leader, but decentralization allows for individuals to rise and succeed in a natural hierarchy. No political system but a form of socialism remains to deliver equalitarianism. It should be noted here that although Weaver lauded southern feudalism for its stability and inherent hierarchy, he did not condone slavery. He conceded that there were problems with the South's hierarchy—namely slavery and the attitude it instilled in slave owners. Weaver viewed slavery as a moral evil and in fact a historical flaw in the South. Young writes,

> While leaving no doubt to anyone who reads him that he felt that slavery was a great and unacceptable evil, Weaver knew that it would 'seem anomalous that a slaveholding society like the South should be presented as ethically superior. Yet the endeavor to grade men by their moral and intellectual worth may suggest a more sensitive conscience than proscription of individual differences' (79).

Weaver believed in the South as the ideal, what it should have been or could possibly be. He did not confuse the ideal with the actual reality of the South, replete with its moral evil of slavery and prejudice. According to Young, "It is a fact that the Agrarians assumed that whites should exercise political authority over blacks in the South. Taken at face value, this would seem to be simply nothing more than racism" (48). As evidenced by Weaver's careful focus on the South and slavery in his writings "The Theory of Race" and "The Negroes in Transition," Weaver had

no desire to reestablish the old southern tradition, but what he argued was "a careful study of that culture could give us hints on how we might salvage our own" (Young 100).

In addition to hierarchy and fraternity produced by southern feudalism are the concepts of chivalry and the gentleman. The hero, Weaver argues, fights for ideals, ideals in which one believes and for which one is willing to sacrifice one's life. The careful restraint with which an individual conducts oneself is a consequence of one's reason and belief in transcendence. Connected to the hero ideal is the code of chivalry, which is in effect, a code of self-discipline and restraint. Weaver notes, "Chivalry as it was understood in Europe from the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the sixteenth century was a body of forms and sentiments of paramount influence in determining the civilization of the middle ages" (*The Southern* 160). Chivalry enables the distinction of forms. Weaver contends "on the one hand is sentimentality, with its emotion lavished upon the trivial and the absurd; on the other is brutality, which can make no distinctions in the application of its violence" (*Ideas* 33). Without distinction, there is only brutality. He argues, "The refusal to see distinction between babe and adult, between the sexes, between combatant and noncombatant—distinctions which lay at the core of chivalry—the determination to weld all into a formless unit of mass and weight—this is the destruction of society through brutality" (*Ideas* 33). Weaver argues Europeans recognized the chivalric knights as a ruling caste and many respected them for their defense of order and right. The proliferation of the myths surrounding King Arthur and his knights of the round table reveal the deep-rooted sentiment of a people who recognized the need for justice and order against brute man. According to Weaver, "Chivalry, like certain other European institutions, came over a seedling, but having struck root in the lush American soil, achieved an indigenous growth, modified, sometimes grotesquely, by the rudeness of the new environment" (*The Southern* 161).

Therefore, the self-restraint of the hero guided by chivalric code, which encourages distinction of forms and station, secures the partial balance needed for hierarchy and fraternity.

What helps complete the balance is the educated individual firmly rooted in ideals. Weaver argues the gentleman remains the last remnant of the "philosophic doctor" of the Middle Ages, who "stood at the center of things because he had mastered principles" (*Ideas* 53). The gentleman possesses "a sense of restraint, and a willingness to abide by the tradition" (Weaver *The Southern* 141). The gentleman is representative of those who have studied in large part the liberal arts and humanities and whose education is expansive enough to permit a broad view of society. Yet, most importantly, the gentleman remains an idealist—one who practices "a code of self-restraint" and who is "a man of sentiment, who refused to put matters on a basis of materialism and self-aggrandizement," but Weaver laments the gentleman has "lost sight of the spiritual origin of self-discipline" (*Ideas* 54). It is the belief in the ideal that Weaver so strongly praises in the qualities of the gentleman, and he believed the American South had esteemed the ideal, shown particularly in its emphasis of rhetoric and law.

Education of the gentleman in both rhetoric and law requires a careful consideration of language, language which Weaver believes has a "divine element" (*Ideas* 148). In quoting John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," he notes "knowledge of the prime reality comes to man through the word; the word is a sort of deliverance from the shifting world of appearances" (Weaver *Ideas* 149). Also, Weaver refers to the metaphysical dream repeatedly in his writings, in the belief of the other, something higher than man and something before man. Weaver recognizes part of the religiousness of the old South was due to the recognition of the necessity for a body of knowledge, a belief system that did not alter with changing circumstance and situation. Some things are learned; others are

discovered through science and nature; but some are revealed by God. With changing nature and sentiment, an unalterable God is even more significant. Weaver writes, "It is therefore imperative in the eyes of older religionists that man have for guidance in this life a body of knowledge to which the 'facts' of natural discovery are either subordinate or irrelevant. This body is the 'rock of ages,' firm in the vast sea of human passion and error" (*The Southern* 142). Weaver argues for universal truths and piety, which he defines as "the acknowledgement, the submissiveness of the will, and the general respect for order, natural and institutional" (*The* 135). The American South held tightly to its religion and to its adherence to tradition and beliefs in such ideals such as honor, justice, and truth. Perhaps, this is what appealed to Weaver most strongly.

At the core of Weaver's Southern Agrarianism was his belief that "the Old South had not been spiritually obliterated" (Nash 54). A good reason for this was the fact that the South believed the North had cheated. The chivalric character of many Southerners believed their Yankee counterparts to be in an equal class. There was a code to be followed in the battle being won. Yet, the North had not fought a gentleman's war; it had not fought honorably; and it had won by default. The South did not forget the debasement, nor did they forgive those "damn Yankees." In the years following The Civil War, the South may have been reconstructed in all but spirit because its spirit had maintained its unique culture. The South remained unregenerate even after losing a four year war. Weaver notes that later, when the North's pulpits began questioning divinity and using their services as meeting halls for political protests, the South was not inclined to follow. Likewise, when science became greater than God, and man and progress savior, the South adhered to its old time religion.

Weaver writes, "The traditional mind of the South, although it recognized in science a fascinating technology, refused to become absorbed in it to the extent of making it either a philosophy of life or a religion. It thus clung to its inherited religious humanism" (*The Southern* 145).Weaver argues the South was the last non-materialist civilization. Industrialism had proven to be anti-establishment and anti-traditional, and it did eventually come to the South. Southerners were then faced with a choice. They could, perhaps, control the never ending aims of industrialism without becoming a total modern industrialized society, or they could "hope to preserve its regional culture…by tenacious resistance against being absorbed into an alien way of life" (Weaver *The Southern* 19). According to Weaver, the Agrarians stood "for an agrarian economy as respectable and salutary; for a way of life that exalts leisure and contemplation over money-making and success; for a culture of manners and distinction" (*The Southern* 18). Although, industrialism could produce and distribute wealth, it also eliminated leisure, which allowed artistic creation and reflection. It was also "at war with nature and nature's rhythms and worshipping the gospel of progress" (Young 46). Progress was never ending and all consuming whose final goal was nebulous. Young writes regarding the South, "The refusal to be regenerated by the gospel of progress, the unhurried way of doing things, and not seeing nature as something to conquer were lessons that all of America desperately needed" (46). It was the stability created by an Agrarian society that was appealing when contrasted with the fluctuating character of industrialism, and it was the reflection of humanity and not man as a machine mass producing materialism that was noble.

The South's religiousness is reflected in its literature. Indeed, Southern literature occupied a significant place in Weaver's heart and was quickly winning hearts and minds throughout the nation. The Transcendentalist romantics and the realists' schools of writing had

presented man in various characters. The first school revealed man as naturally good and transcendent with a conditional providence, completely irresponsible for evil. The latter school portrayed man as simply a pawn in a cruel world contorted by circumstances and again, irresponsible for evil. The contemporary Southern school of literature presented man as a special creature, struggling with the mystery of circumstances beyond his control, battling his dualistic nature of good and evil to fulfill a glorious destiny. Weaver writes, "In asking myself why I find such spontaneous pleasure in reading Southern literature, I am always brought back to this matter of frankness—the frankness with which complexity is faced…Through it [frankness] the Southern writers deal with something that the modern world seems increasingly prone to deny: the presence of tragedy in life" (*The Southern* 71). The Southern writer believed in the good and evil of humanity and an individual's ability to choose a path of nobility or a path of debasement. In addition, the Southern writers had been educated in tragedy, watching the destruction and decay of their existence. The characters developed in their literature, then, are developed fully, created from personal observation, historical context, and lodged in a traditional belief system; they are members of a deep-rooted culture created by writers, who are also members of this culture. Weaver contends "This means that the attitudes and behavior of those characters are going to have from the beginning a certain complexity reflecting the hierarchy of values under which the characters have been nursed" (*The Southern* 60). Their characters were passionate and created to feel, and thus, they were created in true humanity. They were presented with choices, which resulted in consequences for which they were required to pay. According to Weaver, they revealed "man is born to suffer, to endure passion, and to find redemption, if he finds it, through effort and struggle. To be born into history is to be born with an inescapable mandate; one must act, for even inaction is a kind of action. And if one believes in a moral order in the universe, all

action is liable to accounting" (*The Southern* 64).The South was producing an "influential picture of man," and this literature gave Weaver hope (Weaver *The Southern* 51). He notes, "the South, which has spent so many years as America's stepchild, is proving to have the gift which may save the household from destruction" (*The Southern* 73).

The Agrarians believed certain virtues did not expire with the breath of man but lived across generations with each generation responsible for conserving and cultivating those virtues. Young writes, "The antebellum South's attenuated feudalism, code of chivalry, concept of the gentleman, and older religiousness were vital not just for themselves alone but for what lay behind them" (101). Weaver was not focused on traditionalism but rather truths found in tradition, in this case the tradition of the South. Weaver "did not believe it could or ought to be replicated in twentieth-century America, but that its essence was timeless, which was another way of saying it was true" (Young 101).

Thus, Richard Weaver, the Southern Agrarian, understanding the rise and fall of the South, watched America rising and descending without constraint and without virtue. His foundational book, *Ideas have Consequences,* revealed the disbanding of the West as it fell slowly beyond reformation. Yet, he did not end without hope. Weaver prescribed reformation in the form of a strong defense of private property, a purification of language, and a pious attitude towards humanity, nature, and history—a reflection of his conservative ideals. A careful study of the conservative movement reveals the sparks fanned by the pages of this book soon joined others to create a notable movement towards the right. George Nash writes, "The frequently outraged response to it suggests its true significance: probably more than any other book in the early postwar years, *Ideas Have Consequences* starkly revealed the chasm dividing the intellectual Right and Left" (Nash 60). These core principles—alluded to and referenced in *Ideas*

Have Consequences—ideologically or conceptually bound these individuals together and are the basis for the conservative movement, deserving definition and examination; thus, a brief digression to provide context and historicity. It is important to consider the similarities between Southern Agrarianism and conservatism. After all, it was Agrarianism that led Weaver to the right, and his particular definition of conservatism can never be wholly separated from his first partnership with the Southern Agrarians. Fred Douglass Young, in his biography of Weaver, writes "his careful study in the mind of the Confederate South, however, did emphatically leave him with the settled conviction that the twentieth century's crisis of spirit could be treated by rediscovering timeless verities known and practiced below the Mason-Dixon line in the last century" (2). These timeless verities are found echoed in conservative ideology. It was during Richard Weaver's lifetime that the contemporary conservative movement was cultivated and mobilized. Thus far, the Weaverian perspective of Southern Agrarianism and conservatism has been noted. Yet, it is important to understand conservatism as a political and ideological movement, separate from Agrarianism and separate from Weaver himself. Therefore, a brief digression into the history of the political movement.

Political movements originate and are held together by ideas, some common and popular, others radical and less prominent. These ideas, in turn, are propagated among individuals who collectivize into an influential faction.

Russell Kirk, who is the author of *The Conservative Mind,* the text many consider gave American conservatives a cohesive identity, and who was a contemporary of Richard Weaver, writes,

> An idea is an immutable spiritual truth communicated to man through the faculty of intuition: the dogmas of religious faith, the principles of morals, the rules of mathematics, and the laws of pure science are apprehended through the intuition (varying in its strength from one man to another), and by no other means can this knowledge be obtained. Ideas are beyond the grasp of the mere Understanding. And Ideas, well or badly apprehended, rule the world. (*The Conservative Mind* 117).

No one can argue rhetoric's role in the creation of political movements, in how "well" or "badly" ideas are communicated. Indeed, in a time of great technological advancement and ease of communication, movements are still either tenuously or tenaciously held together by the rhetoric that defines their commonalities and the characters of their leaders. Small words, comprised into sentences, identify ideas and define sweeping ideals that direct the course of history.

Historical flickers of conservative light filtered through the darkened days of fading monarchies and regimes of despotism and countering revolutions, but a cohesive reflection of conservative ideals and principles and the resulting political action did not occur until the introduction of Edmund Burke, who is considered the founder of conservatism. Indeed Burke was influenced by Hooker, Locke, and Montesquieu, whose arguments led him to believe that the British constitution was worth conserving as a system that recognized order, liberty, and division of power. Russell Kirk writes, "To Burke's analysis of revolutionary theories, philosophical conservatism owes its being" (*The Conservative Mind* 21). Burke lived in an era of radical ideas and sweeping revolutionary change. The Age of Reason introduced Voltaire,

Diderot, Condorcet, Paine, Turgot, Rousseau, Godwin, and others to both governments and the public. Burke's own conservative philosophy was a response to three different schools: the *philosophes* and rationalism, Rousseau and sentimentalism, and Bentham and utilitarianism. According to Russell Kirk, Burke argued against the Age of Reason because it was an Age of Ignorance. Burke held to a belief in Divine Providence, and those enlightened men of the age who believed solely in almighty man's rational mind and who dismissed supernatural direction, he viewed as grossly fallible. Burke writes, "We have obligations to mankind at large, which are not in consequence of any special voluntary pact. They arise from the relation of man to man, and the relation of man to God, which relations are not a matter of choice" (qtd. in *The Conservative Mind* 27). Burke faced the dilemma of explaining in an Age of Reason the basis for authority. Kirk writes, "Burke answered that Providence had taught humanity, through thousands of years' experience and meditation, a collective wisdom: tradition, tempered by expedience. A man should be governed in his necessary decisions by a decent respect for the customs of mankind; and he should apply that custom or principle to his particular circumstances by a cautious expediency" (*The Conservative Mind* 33). Furthermore, Kirk notes:

> Principle is right reason expressed in permanent form; abstraction is its corruption. Expedience is wise application of general knowledge to particular circumstances; opportunism is its degradation. One arrives at principle through comprehension of nature and history, looked upon as manifestations of Divine purpose; one acquires prudence by patient observation and cautious investigation, and it becomes 'the director, the regulator, the standard' of all virtues. Expedience implements principle, but never supplants principle. For principle is our expression of cognizance of Providential purpose. (*The Conservative Mind* 35-6).

Edmund Burke strongly believed men did not have a right to alter laws to their whimsy, since human laws were a reflection of a superior law of moral justice. In addition, he believed the only true equality found among men was a moral equality in which God would judge both the dead and the living. Man's natural rights, then, included equal justice under the law, security of property, and an orderly society. This is not unlike Weaver's Agrarian view in equality and natural hierarchy. Weaver argues society must be allowed to form itself in its natural hierarchy, and to do this, all men and women have equality, recognized as fallen individuals, as citizens with natural rights, as a people given an equal beginning point of freedom to rise and succeed or fail. What Agrarianism did not believe in was redistribution of wealth for economic equality and equality of station within vocation. Kirk writes, "Real harmony with the natural law is attained through adapting society to the model which eternal nature, physical and spiritual, sets before us—not by demanding radical alteration upon fantastic rules of social primitivism. We are part of an eternal natural order which holds all things in their places" (*The Conservative Mind* 56). Thus, Edmund Burke championed liberty and justice which he knew existed in careful balance, and he championed liberty for both Englishmen and Americans. Kirk summarizes Burke's philosophical conservatism as a "…reverence for the divine origin of social disposition; reliance upon tradition and prejudice for public and private guidance; conviction that men are equal in the sight of God, but equal only so; devotion to personal freedom and private property; opposition to doctrinaire alteration" (*The Conservative Mind* 15). Burke lobbied for British conservatism under these conservative ideals, which most certainly found their way across the Atlantic.

American conservatism came most prevalently and consistently in the person of John Adams, who according to Kirk, believed "that freedom can be achieved and retained only by sober men who take humanity as it is, not as humanity should be" (*The Conservative Mind* 62).

Within the burgeoning of America as an independent nation, the first political faction to rise in organization echoing some conservative ideas was The Federalist Party to which Adams belonged. The Federalists faced many opponents, such as Jefferson and Madison and their republicanism. The Federalists were more favored in the towns and by those with industrial concerns; whereas, the Anti-Federalists, who were against centralization of government, appealed to those with agrarian sympathies. Kirk writes, "Adams scorned to buy a little popularity with a little discretion, and through his boldness he shattered his own career, but his candor helped to save American from the worst consequences of two radical illusions: the perfectibility of man and the merit of the unitary state" (*The Conservative Mind* 75). Adams dogmatically held a belief in a balance of political power. Even though The Federalist Party dissolved, tenants of Federalistic conservatism found their way among disheartened members of Jefferson's party, and Kirk argues "…the conservative essence of Federalism has endured down to modern America" (*The Conservative Mind* 98). Many great conservative voices in the years following the founding of America are worthy of study, including John Randolph and John C. Calhoun, who created a lasting mark on the conservative pages of history with their southern conservatism. Characteristics of Randolph and Calhoun's Southern conservative tradition include the partiality for careful, natural change; fondness for agricultural life; disdain for industrialization; and strong individualism and independence. Randolph argued against arbitrary change to the law. Kirk writes, "For him [Randolph], prescriptive right, common law, and custom afford the real guarantees of justice and liberty" (*The Conservative Mind* 137). Randolph championed states' rights, and Kirk identifies him as having a conservatism of localism. John C. Calhoun, greatly influenced by Randolph, argued the aim of conservative principles should be to conserve "freedom and order and the quiet old ways men love" (*The Conservative Mind* 150).

Both statesmen are noted for their understanding that conservatism is more than an economic policy, state policy, or a policy against sudden change, and for the rhetorical beauty of their eloquent defenses of their positions.

The conservative conversation continued within the American political sphere. It was not until the aftermath of World War II that the contemporary conservative movement gained its "activist force," and this, in large part, is due to the literature written by self-proclaimed conservatives and others who argued in agreement with the basic tenets of conservatism. According to Nash, in 1945, there was no articulate conservative intellectual movement in the United States. He argues there were, instead, pockets of resistance from those who believed the American government was directing America down a faulty course. First, he notes, there were libertarians, who rejected the growing power of the state, affecting private enterprise. Second, Nash writes,

> Concurrently and independently, a second school of thought was emerging: the 'new conservatism' or 'traditionalism' of such men as Richard Weaver, Peter Viereck, Russell Kirk, and Robert Nisbet. Shocked by totalitarianism, total war, and the development of secular, rootless, mass society during the 1930's and 1940's, the 'new conservatives' urged a return to traditional religions and ethical absolutes and a rejection of the 'relativism' which had allegedly corroded Western values and produced an intolerable vacuum that was filled by demonic ideologies. (xx).

Of the conservative movement that was fostering, Nash writes, "An intellectual movement in a narrow sense it certainly was, yet one whose objective was not simply to understand the world but to change it, restore it, preserve it" (xvii). The second school of new conservatism brought with it, unique perspectives and ideas. There was a common antipathy for liberalism and

communism, but the need was present to unite the separate factions of conservative thought. Young argues Weaver was not a political conservative, although he concedes Weaver was his own unique brand of conservative. Although it is true that Weaver was not a political activist in the force of the term, he was an influential articulator and consolidator of the conservative movement through is lectures and writings.

In order to recognize the progression of the conservative conversation in America and to avoid the uncertainty with Weaver's branding of a conservatism, what follows is a brief identification of those basic principles of conservatism by the "new conservative" school of thought. As for its history, conservatism has a strong genealogy of principle and tradition. Kirk notes, "A conservative is not, by definition, a selfish or a stupid person; instead, he is a person who believes there is something in our life worth saving" (*The Essence* 1). He further notes, "Any informed conservative is reluctant to condense profound and intricate intellectual systems to a few pretentious phrases; he prefers to leave that technique to the enthusiasm of radicals…As a working premise, nevertheless, one can observe here that the essence of social conservatism is preservation of the ancient moral traditions of humanity" (*The Conservative Mind* 7). These moral traditions are not abstractions foreign in practical affairs, but rather enduring truths that preside over fluctuating circumstance and changing society. These moral traditions of conservatism may be divided into six foundational principles.

According to Kirk, the first principle is the, "belief that a divine intent rules society as well as conscience, forging an eternal chain of right and duty which links great and obscure, living and dead" (*The Conservative Mind* 7). A traditional conservative view is that humanity is not perfectible by man's own power or will. In fact, societal ills and political problems are a consequence of religious and moral issues. Kirk argues conservatism recognizes divine justice

meted by a God whose divinity is perfect and whose law is just. This recognition allows men to execute justice and law with eyes open to the true nature of fallen man and his proclivity towards evil or that which is morally reprehensible. If men and women remain imperfect, then it is reasonable to conclude political governments made of men and women will also be far from perfect. Conservatism does not believe that a utopian ideal is practical or even possible. Kirk writes, "We can hope to make our world tolerable, but we cannot make it perfect. When progress is achieved, it is through prudent recognition of the limitations of human nature" (*The Essence* 2). This first principle also reveals the connection between idea, action, and consequence. Decisions rooted in one's beliefs have direct effect on every next generation, and immediate circumstance does not nullify the necessity of considering the rolling implications of decisions. Kirk writes, "We have a moral debt to our ancestors, who bestowed upon us our civilization, and a moral obligation to the generations who will come after us. This debt is ordained of God. We have no right, therefore, to tamper impudently with human nature or with the delicate fabric or our civil social order" (*The Essence* 2). Humanity stands as actors on the stage in this great drama of history only for a short act and scene, yet each performance shapes forever the next curtain rising. Thus, beginning with such an admission in God, human nature, and moral obligation, conservatism allows man to maintain a holistic perspective of himself and the effects of his decisions recognizing an enduring moral order.

Kirk defines the second principle of conservatism as the, "affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life, as distinguished from the narrowing uniformity and equalitarianism and utilitarian aims of most radical systems" (*The Conservative Mind* 8). Conservatism recognizes the immutability of certain convictions and the need for a traditional continuance of such convictions, but it also realizes the need to apply those convictions to

changing time and circumstance. Kirk argues, "they [conservatives] think society is a spiritual reality, possessing an eternal life but a delicate constitution: it cannot be scrapped and recast as if it were a machine" (*The Conservative Mind* 7). Conservatives believe that the past provides wisdom and moral tradition that government and individuals should carefully consider and adhere. Tradition is significant because it preserves social order which is necessary because man is untrustworthy if unchecked. It is through this careful consideration of tradition and morals that worthy change is tried and embraced. It is perhaps because of this principle that conservatives are perceived as the party of drudgery, unwilling for innovation and invention. It is because of this careful attitude toward change, the party has been preserved and molded over the years.

Kirk states the third principle as a, "conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes" (*The Conservative Mind* 8). Kirk writes, "civilized society requires that all men and women have equal rights before the law, but that equality should not extend to equality of condition: that is, society is a great partnership, in which all have equal rights—but not to equal things" (*The Essence* 2). Conservatives argue true equality is not found among men except in their fallen nature, but blind justice within the law does provide citizens equality of rights. Society has always aligned itself into structured tiers and castes. Some men are born wealthy; some men generate wealth; some men are born and die in material poverty. Intellectual superiority is recognized by degrees and titles, and political systems engender political leaders and those subservient. Conservatism argues man is not equal in anything except his inclination towards selfish abasement, and therefore labors within social hierarchy. Kirk writes, "The just society requires sound leadership, different rewards for different abilities, and a sense of respect and duty" (*The Essence* 2). Kirk also notes Edmund Burke feared the ambiguous moniker of "the people." Without education, without land, without duty or obligation, the masses ruling in

England would result much as it did in France—starvation and beheadings. Edmund Burke believed in powers balanced and in representation of localities. The natural order of society reveals itself in its many layers. Leveling such an order would require an absolute force, absolute indoctrination, and absolute destitution. Thus, Kirk's fourth principle of conservatism, "the persuasion that property and freedom are inseparably connected, and that economic leveling is not economic progress" ties closely with the third (*The Conservative Mind* 8). The pages of history are occupied with wars waged for sovereign right of property. America offers a unique opportunity for individuals, regardless of social class or rank, to become the rulers of their own property and by consequence, to rise and fall by their own merit. Conservatives also value property because they believe it represents an individual's defense against an all powerful government.

Kirk argues conservatism's fifth and sixth tenants are, "Faith in prescription and distrust of 'sophisters and calculators'" and " recognition that change and reform are not identical, and that innovation is a devouring conflagration more often than it is a torch of progress" (*The Conservative Mind* 8). Prescription allows individuals to recognize that decision should be made based on precedent. Private judgment endangers many decisions since humanity is but a following of those who came before the present. Kirk argues individuals should use prescriptive wisdom. In addition, Kirk argues individuals should maintain a balance between their reason and their emotion. Conservatism recognizes the importance of the knowledge of man's nature and the constraints of tradition. Man guided solely by his emotions will forever be longing for change. Kirk notes "change and reform, conservatives are convinced, are not identical: moral and political innovation can be destructive as well as beneficial; and if innovation is undertaken in a spirit of presumption and enthusiasm, probably it will be disastrous" (*The Essence* 3).

Conservatism encourages a careful study of changing society, the ideas and movements that slowly move history, and then vigilant change, ever considering the imminence of their curtain call and the following of the next act and scene.

Directly following the Second World War, only scattered voices proclaiming and advocating conservative ideals rose to the forefront; however, these voices soon gained momentum and an audience, and a political movement was consolidated and activated. The conservative movement grew as people, who shared a common antipathy for socialism and liberalism, joined forces primarily through the medium of journals and literature even as the United States government's expansion and the communist movement abroad widened. The "new conservatives" were no longer lone voices in the wilderness, but a sizable body of thought and activism, and they recognized the necessity of communicating with a populace saturated with liberal ideology and materialism even though, they believed, much of that populace did adhere ideologically to conservative principles.

CHAPTER VI

WEAVER'S CONSERVATIVE AUDIENCE

Richard Weaver, as an influential voice of the "new conservatives," faced a unique problem. After all, how does one manage a persuasive discourse with those in polar opposition? If the speaker's value system holistically differs from that of his or her audience, then there is little chance for the speaker to win his or her case. If the very definition of value laden words such as *freedom, right,* and *truth* changes between speaker and audience, little hope for effective or even clear communication exists. John Bliese writes, "Rhetorical theories, from classical to contemporary, are based on the proposition that a rhetor obtains leverage for persuasion by establishing and building on some common ground with the audience" (313). Aristotle refers to this as the enthymeme, which allows the audience to accept the basic argument of the orator. Without obtaining some commonality or identification with the audience, the speaker has encountered an insurmountable hurdle. Weaver recognized the difficulty a speaker would have with a converse audience. In fact, his solution was rather simple: speak to those who are like-minded, those who will listen. Ignoring those whose relativist philosophies had secured them far from the political right and forgetting those whose proclivities leaned towards one position or the other depending on whatever materialistic gain they might reach, Weaver spoke to the remnant, those minds and hearts which held to similar agreement by belief in the existence of ultimate truths and lives lived by adherence to ideals.

In fact, he believed an appeal to the middle would deteriorate a conservative argument. Weaver writes, "but even if you seek them out, there is danger that in appealing to those in the middle we will weaken our case" (Weaver *In Defense of Tradition* 508). He felt an appeal to the middle would ultimately result in concessions and by consequence appear like a lack of faith in the conservative philosophy. He claims, "I believe rather that our case can be most advantageously addressed to our own side" (Weaver *In Defense of Tradition* 508). Yet, who exactly was on the conservative side? Weaver argues one must determine who is friend and who is foe. He notes a conversation begun with a man on the street will more than likely reveal that he is friend and not foe. Weaver states, "I have given reasons for believing that in the present and pending contests the greater part of the people are our friends" (*In Defense* 499). His given reasons have to do with a common reverence for hallowed American rights. Weaver relates that he contemplated what Americans would be most willing to fight for and to defend. He clarifies this by defining the word "fight," writing, "I mean to work for, sacrifice for, defend as things they have no intention of ever giving up" (*In Defense* 497). Weaver determined a list of three: religious practice, career and work choice, and individual privacy including private property. These three rights, Weaver contends, the majority of Americans believe and hold dear. Weaver notes "a fair number of conservative articles and pamphlets which come to my attention appear to shoot too high or to one side. They have not defined the valuable targets" (*In Defense* 503). The valuable targets had been ignored with a focus on weak arguments, faulty assumptions, and needless attacks on unimportant things. Weaver believes an argument should address valuable targets such as "fundamentals on which it is hard to disagree" (*In Defense* 503). Fundamentals are, for example, the belief in freedom and rights. Weaver notes an argument with the opposition or with one who may believe he or she is a member of the opposition can be arbitrated with a

clear determination of these terms. So too should the conservative argument begin with a clear foundational argument of fundamentals. Weaver writes, "We have got to say in language that goes to the root of things why we believe that liberty is better than captivity to the state, why private property is basically a good thing, why it is best to reward intelligence and effort. Anything less will mean failure in the forensic argument" (*In Defense* 510). During Weaver's lifetime, the conservative audience was the majority of Americans, and the conservative argument was dependent on convincing the American majority of its common ideals. As for Weaver himself, Richard Johannesen argues that "Weaver's primary audience was conservative intellectuals, both South and North, both in the academy and out" (3). Weaver, then, did not attempt to explain his value system or defend his belief in transcendental truth or temper his language so as to aggregate a more solid majority; he spoke to who he believed was the silent majority, "'waiting for someone to speak their piece'" (Johannesen 4). And if that silent majority could recognize that indeed it was a majority, not single persons alienated but a mass of people unified by common identity, then there could, indeed, be an influential movement. That recognition of likeness depended in large part on the rhetoric of those individuals willing to speak their piece. Bliese writes, "The one recommendation for conservatives which he [Weaver] consistently and continually advocated is the argument from genus or definition" (317). Weaver believed conservatism had failed largely in part because of its failed attempt to argue from circumstance.

CHAPTER VII

WEAVER'S HIERARCHY OF ARGUMENTATION

Roger Giles writes, "A practitioner's method, or rhetoric, then, is more revealing than overt claims about ideological preference" (129). Fred Young notes, "How a speaker or writer chooses to express himself, Weaver believed, was critical to understanding that speaker or writer's values" (37). Weaver believed arguments from definition and analogy, both the most ethical in his argument hierarchy, exemplified true conservative ideology; while, arguments from consequence and circumstance revealed the pragmatic and relativist nature of liberal ideology. He writes, "But the reasoner reveals his philosophical position by the source of argument which appears most often in his major premise because the major premise tells us how he is thinking about the world" (*The Ethics* 55). The reasoner's worldview is revealed through one's use of argument—whether genus and analogy or consequence and circumstance—as the major premise of one's argument, thus characterizing one as an ideological liberal or conservative. He also notes, "The general importance of this is that major premises, in addition to their logical function as part of a deductive argument, are expressive of values, and a characteristic major premise characterizes the user" (*The Ethics* 55-6). According to Weaver, by this estimation, Edmund Burke, who is considered a political conservative, would be an ideological liberal; however, this seems incongruent with Burke's political reputation as a staunch conservative.

Weaver analyzes arguments of both Edmund Burke and Abraham Lincoln in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* exemplifying arguments of circumstance and definition, indicative of liberal and conservative ideology.

Weaver created an ethical hierarchy of argumentation in which he distinguishes four types of arguments: argument from definition or genus, argument from similitude or analogy, argument from consequence, and argument from circumstance. An examination follows of two of the four types of argument: definition and circumstance. Giles writes, "to him the most ethical form is the argument from definition, based as it is on the assumption that ideals should guide our thoughts and actions" (130). Weaver writes of the argument from definition in *The Ethics of Rhetoric:*

> [It] includes all arguments from the nature of the thing. Whether the genus is an already recognized convention, or whether it is defined at the moment by the orator, or whether it is left to be inferred from the aggregate of its species, the argument has a single postulate. The postulate is that there exist classes which are determinate and therefore predicable. (86).

In the recognized syllogism concluding Socrates' mortality, "the class of mortal beings is invoked as a predicable. Whatever is a member of the class will accordingly have the class attributes" (*The Ethics* 86). If one accepts the nature of man as mortal, then the implication is that all men will one day die. However, in order to argue from genus, one must accept that things have natures. Weaver surmises, "Now it follows that those who habitually argue from genus are in their personal philosophy idealist. To them the idea of genus is a reflection of existence" (*The Ethics* 56).

He writes in his rhetoric handbook, "Time taken to define is seldom wasted…and in many situations it will make the difference between success and failure in communication" (*A Rhetoric* 19). Weaver believed that conservatism, especially under the leadership of Abraham Lincoln, gained power and position largely because Lincoln argued from definition.

Lincoln returned his argument to the nature of the thing being discussed, and once he and his audience had agreed on a definition, his argument left little room for the opposition. Lincoln's starting point for many of his arguments began with what he believed was a realistic view of human nature, a belief that man was irrevocably fallen. Weaver notes, "[Lincoln] viewed human nature as a constant, by which one could determine policy without much fear of surprise" (*The Ethics* 90). Weaver believes this view of man allowed Lincoln a greater perspective than most. He notes Lincoln's early dependency on his determination regarding man's nature. In 1838, when addressing the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield on a topic concerning political institutions, Lincoln argued man had a human nature which was inherently evil and desirous of distinction, and no political dogma could withstand men who hungered for distinction. Lincoln predicted American citizens would hold their personal ambition to a level higher than their political institutions. Another example noted is Lincoln's speech given during Martin Van Buren's presidency. Lincoln spoke against federal funds being deposited into five regional subtreasuries as opposed to into a National Bank. Weaver writes, "His reasoning was that if public funds are placed in the custody of subtreasurers, the duty and the personal interest of the custodians may conflict" (*The Ethics* 88). Lincoln based his case on his belief of the inherent self-distinction seeking and inevitability of the fallibility of human nature.

Hence, Weaver contends, "Lincoln's theory of human nature was completely unsentimental; it was the creation of one who had taken many buffetings and who, from early bitterness and later indifference, never affiliated with any religious denomination" (*The Ethics* 90). Lincoln took every argument and referred it to his central belief in the constancy of human nature. Weaver notes this is what made Lincoln "ideally equipped to deal with the great issue of slavery" (*The Ethics* 90). When many other political leaders argued with history and law, Lincoln "looked—as it was his habit already to do—to the center; that is to the definition of man" (*The Ethics 91).* In 1854, Lincoln gave a speech in Peoria, Illinois, in which he proceeded to argue the definition of a man, forcing his audience to concede the Negro, free or slave, was indeed a man. Weaver notes, "All of the arguments that the pro-slavery group was able to muster broke against the stubborn fact, which Lincoln persistently thrust in their way, that the negro was somehow and in some degree a man" (*The Ethics* 91). In Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, he used eight arguments of definition in which he defined the natures of government, contract, the American Union, office of the chief magistrate, majority rule, and the people's sovereignty (*The Ethics* 97-9). The arguments defined and thereby necessitated agreement concerning the recognized principles of government. Lincoln's consistent use of the argument of definition revealed his definite position and his comprehensive perspective. When speaking at the Republican State Convention in 1858, he addressed the possibility of America remaining half free and half slave by quickly asserting, "'A house divided against itself cannot stand…it will become all one thing or all the other'" (qtd. in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* 106). Although this appears to be an argument of circumstance, Weaver notes Lincoln "came to repudiate…those people who try by relativistic interpretations and other sophistries to evade the force of some basic principles" (*The Ethics* 105).

Lincoln perceived some arguments established on principle required a "Yes" or "No" position, and he was anything but patronizingly tolerant. Weaver writes Lincoln's position "was a definite insistence upon the right, with no regard for latitude and longitude in moral questions" (*The Ethics* 106). Lincoln did not believe in a middle ground in regard to slavery. Many believed it to be morally wrong, and Lincoln, himself, realized sustaining it was logically implausible. Perhaps, Lincoln's position towards slavery was due in large part to his perspective of America as a nation, of the government's role, and of man as a citizen and an individual. Weaver argues "To define is to assume perspective that is the method of definition…Definition must see the thing in relation to other things, as that relation is expressible through substance, magnitude, kind, cause, effect, and other particularities" (*The Ethics* 108). This perspective allowed Lincoln to consider the past and the future, and not to be focused and entangled entirely with the present, regardless of the most pressing circumstance. It is this quality, present throughout his Presidency during the most divisive times in American history, which allows Lincoln to be remembered by many from both North and South as a great American President. Weaver writes, "…Lincoln proved his greatness through his habit of transcending and defining his objects" (*The Ethics* 108). Weaver considers Lincoln a sturdy conservative not only because of his foundational beliefs but also because of his rhetorical methodology. Weaver defines a true conservative as "…one who sees the universe as a paradigm of essences, of which the phenomenology of the world is a sort of continuing approximation…he sees it as a set of definitions which are struggling to get themselves defined in a real world" (*The Ethics* 112). As a contrast to Lincoln, another prominent conservative Weaver notes is Edmund Burke, who, he writes, argued largely from circumstance and not definition.

An argument from circumstance is an argument made in direct response to current situations. Weaver argues "Circumstance belongs to the order of causal relations, but it is the least perceptive, or one might say the least philosophical of the topics" (*A Rhetoric and Handbook* 141). According to Weaver, this type of argument reveals vulnerability as it demonstrates an individual's inability to understand relationship and context in light of an overriding fact. The circumstance surrounding the case determines the decision, and it overshadows the connection of a cause and effect relationship.

Weaver cautions, "Such an argument savors of urgency rather than of perspicacity; and it seems to be preferred by those who are easily impressed by existing tangibles" (*The Ethics* 57). Weaver argues Burke's method of argument belied his professed conservative ideals. Weaver writes, "It is perfectly true that many of his observations upon society have a conservative basis; but if one studies the kind of argument which Burke regularly employed when at grips with concrete policies, one discovers a strong addiction to the argument from circumstance" (*The Ethics* 58). The argument from circumstance, Weaver believed, was philosophically liberal.

In, perhaps, Burke's most well-known speech to the House of Commons on March 22, 1775, he advocates reconciliation with the American colonies. Weaver argues his speech was not about rights or definitions, but it was wholly an argument from circumstance: "its burden is a plea to conciliate the colonies because they are waxing great" (*The Ethics* 62). Burke presents several alternatives to the British Parliament. First, he argues the spirit of the colonies could be made submissive to the Crown; however, the circumstances to do so would be drastic. Second, the colonies could be criminally prosecuted, but individual prosecution would prove difficult. The third alternative he offered was to simply comply with the colonists due to the circumstances presented. Those circumstances lay in the natural spirit of liberty found in the American

colonists, the assets of territorial resources available to Crown, and the rapidly growing population. Weaver notes "Burke declares, 'The question is, not whether the spirit deserves praise or blame, but—what, in the name of God, shall we do with it?'" to which Weaver writes, "The question then is not what is right or wrong, or what accords with our idea of justice or our scheme of duty; it is, how can we meet this circumstance?" (qtd. in *The Ethics* 65). Burke's argument led him to advocate a middle ground to be maintained between the Crown and the Colonies. Weaver argues, "Burke's case was that by concession to circumstance they could be retained in some form, and this would be a victory for policy" (*The Ethics* 65). In addition, he cites several speeches made by Burke regarding the problem of Irish Catholics, Fox's East India Bill, and his position on the French Revolution—all of which demonstrate arguments grounded in circumstance. Burke judged the principle by the circumstance, thus seemingly unwilling to identify any absolutes. The nature of an argument of circumstance is that one lacks clears understanding of foundational principles; therefore, an individual is forced, when some grievous circumstance warrants it, to act rashly or act on precedent. The consequences to such action are either perilous or ineffective because precedent, too, must be eventually defined. Thus, Weaver concludes Burke's consistency in using argument from circumstances reveals a liberal ideology.

Weaver's argument has far reaching implications. One of which is that a political party, whose foundation is built on circumstance, will be unable to last beyond the circumstance itself. This is, perhaps, what concerned Weaver most strongly. Burke, the father of conservatism, demonstrated a liberal ideology through his rhetoric, but even if one concluded Weaver was incorrect in his assumption, that Burke was indeed an ideological conservative, one must note the waning of conservatism in American politics. If one must pick an exemplar conservative, Weaver argues Lincoln is a better example of conservatism, ideologically and rhetorically.

Weaver, speaking of the political parties in his lifetime, contends the republicans' "series of defeats comes from a failure to see that there is an intellectually defensible position on the right. They persist with the argument from circumstance, which never wins any major issues, and sometimes…they are left without the circumstance" (*The Ethics* 82). Young notes, "If they [political leaders] stressed only present circumstances, long-range perspective was lost. Thus, it was critically important that party leaders, like Lincoln, had the fortitude to define. Those who demonstrated that kind of courage were properly using noble rhetoric" (145). Another implication is that a speaker's use of argument can be a measure of his or her ideology. This is not to say that just because one uses an argument from circumstance, one is a liberal; or if one uses an argument from definition, one is a conservative. But an argument's major premise and repeated use of one argument or another does much to reveal a speaker's worldview—his view of man, his understanding of order and forms, and his adherence to ideals and principles. It is this reference to ideology that demonstrates conservatism or liberalism.

Weaver places the argument of definition first in his hierarchy of argumentation revealing his belief in the moral superiority of a definitional argument. Weaver explains his ethical hierarchy:

> My personal reply would be that he [the speaker] is making the highest order of appeal when he is basing his case on definition or the nature of the thing. I confess that this goes back to a very primitive metaphysics, which holds that the highest reality is being, not becoming. It is a quasi-religious metaphysics, if you will, because it ascribes to the highest reality qualities of stasis, immutability, eternal perdurance—qualities that in Western civilization are usually expressed in language of theism. That which is perfect does not change; that which has to change is less perfect. Therefore if it is possible to

> determine unchanging essences or qualities and to speak in terms of these, one is appealing to what is most real in doing so. From another point of view, this is but getting people to see what is most permanent in existence, or what transcends the world of change and accident. The realm of essence is the realm above the flux of phenomena, and definitions are of essences and genera. (*In Defense* 361).

Weaver believed "that things have a being, that they show a certain definable essence which we can grasp though the intellect" (*Visions of Order* 24*).* If, as noted by Socrates in the *Phaedrus,* a soul's definition of terms reflects the true nature of things, defining and perceiving what is both good and evil, then arguing from definition erases dubious terms, thus respecting the audience, and moving towards the ideal.

It is this move towards the ideal which reflects Weaver's Platonic leanings. Weaver writes, "If the real progress of man is toward knowledge of ideal truth, it follows that this is an appeal to his highest capacity—his capacity to apprehend what exists absolutely" (*In Defense* 361). It can also be argued that one may manipulate a definitional argument for base purposes. During the time his *Ideas Have Consequences* was published, Weaver notes the rhetorical difficulty conservatism faced, primarily in persuading its audience. Relativism was the dominant philosophy of the time, and liberalism had set the "god term[s]" of the age (*The Ethics* 212). Weaver notes the word *progress* as a "god term." He writes, "it would be difficult to think of any type of person or of any institution which could not be recommended to the public through the enhancing power of this word" (*The Ethics* 212). He observes the progressive leader, the progressive community, progressive technology, and progressive education. As Bliese writes, "The ultimate terms in his day were all provided by the liberal enemy, and the conservatives' value structure rejected the terms the typical audience held sacred" (316). Conservatives faced a

unique task of redefining or revealing the faulty definition or use of such terms. This further reveals why Weaver considered the argument from definition not only the most ethical in his hierarchy but also the most efficacious and demonstrative of conservatism. In *Visions of Order*, Weaver writes,

> It is the object of this writing to bring a rhetoric along with a proof to show that the present course of our culture is not occasion for complacency but for criticism and for possible reconstruction. This requires meeting a rhetoric derived from circumstances with one based more on definition and causal analysis. (6).

As for manipulative forms of the argument of definition, Weaver cautions, "the student of rhetoric must realize that in the contemporary world he is confronted not only by evil practitioners, but also…by men who are conditioned by the evil created by others…Perhaps the best that any of us can do is to hold a dialectic with himself to see what the wider circumferences of his terms of persuasion are" (*The Ethics* 232*).* Weaver believed in the moral superiority of a definitional argument, and he believed in its efficacy.

In addition to the necessity for conservatives to argue from definition, Weaver believed all cultures were in need of an individual, willing to examine and diagnose problems within the culture. This individual would not simply be a critic but "be a kind of doctor of culture" (*Visions of Order* 7). One must maintain a level of objectivity that presents itself when one is separated from a culture to some extent. As a member, one maintains cultural knowledge, but as an outsider, one is able to view the culture as an entity. Weaver writes, "From his mixed position he probably can recognize the hostile or disruptive forces. Like the doctor again, he cannot make the object of his attention live, but he can combat those things which would keep it from living" (*Visions of Order* 8).

Weaver viewed himself as the doctor of culture of his time. Young writes, "Weaver no doubt viewed himself playing that role with regard to his beloved South" (5). Broadly, he was a doctor of American culture. His writings, although criticized by some as fragmentary and disconnected, reveal his ability to diagnose the many ailments he recognized. Narrowly, he was a doctor of the culture of conservatism. He was able to prescribe a hierarchy of argumentation, which he believed would most likely revive the conservative movement.

Since Weaver's lifetime, the core principles of conservatism—belief in God, man's fallen nature, natural classes in society, right to private property, and individual freedom—have not changed. Today, however, much in culture has changed and included in this change is the conservative audience. Weaver remains influential, and like that prophet from the Old Testament, gentle rumbles of his echoing thunder linger in the distance. Within the last year, a new conservative faction has emerged, one that shares the same conservative ideals as its predecessors but one that is different in its political activism. With this emergence, a new prophet, a new cultural doctor, whose prophecies and prescriptions remain controversial, radical, and exceedingly persuasive, has come to the forefront of the conservative conversation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONSERVATIVE AUDIENCE TODAY

In 2009, a socio-political movement named after the historical Boston Tea Party of 1773, in which colonists in protest of England's Tea Act stole onto British ships and dumped tea into Boston Harbor, garnered support and swept the nation by surprise. This conglomeration of individuals most notable for raising families, working steady jobs to send their kids to college, paying taxes, and taking a week of vacation in the summer is not what one may have expected to become an influential, political movement; however, local chapters and branches have developed across America. The origin of this movement is largely attributed to CNBC newsman Rich Santelli, who on February 2009 at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, delivered an on-air verbal tirade against the federal government's economic plans for homeowners facing foreclosure. His proposal of a Chicago Tea Party in July and the creation of the Web site, OfficialChicagoTeaParty.com, quickly launched a firestorm of smaller protests, websites, and gatherings around the country (McGrath 3). According to a Fox News report by Bret Baier, a few weeks after Santelli's outburst, 4,000 people participated in a "Tea Party" protest in Cincinnati, and more than 150 tea parties were scheduled across America.

Mark Tapscott in *The San Francisco Examiner*, notes Tea Party protests have taken place in Ohio, Florida, Kentucky, Connecticut, North Carolina, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Arkansas, Arizona, Texas, New York, Washington D.C., and in other states.

Many protests are representative of a very focused and organized minority; however, this movement encompasses a majority of tax-paying Americans representing broad interests and who are less organized and less focused on any specific platform. The Tea Party movement has largely been fueled by the internet's ability to circulate information instantly. The plethora of information, easily accessible and available, "empowers a nascent majority to recognize its own existence and response far more quickly than ever before to threats to its interests" (Tapscott 2). Peter Ferrara from *The American Spectator* writes, "Because these events are highly decentralized, with no significant institutional organization or funding behind them, they represent a genuine outpouring of grassroots opinion with enormous political importance." The fact that the Tea Party movement represents a notable majority is palpable in its political influence. Early in its formation, the Tea Party's political power was evident with the Scott Brown conquest of the late Ted Kennedy's Massachusetts Senate seat. Michael Cooper of *The New York Times* writes, "the election of a man supported by the Tea Party movement also represented an unexpected reproach by many voters to President Obama after his first year in office, and struck fear into the hearts of Democratic lawmakers, who are already worried about their prospects in the midterm elections later this year" (Cooper 2). Some may argue the individuals involved in the Tea Party only protest problems they perceive with the Government while they have yet to suggest any worthwhile solutions. But Tea Partiers do not have to define policy, they just have to vote for those political candidates that do. This is precisely where the

power of this citizen movement lies. Thus, such an inclusive yet cohesive audience bears scrutiny.

Two questions should be asked concerning what the Tea Partiers believe and who are these individuals that comprise the Tea Party movement. Although the Tea Party movement began as a protest to the U.S. Government's handling of the economic crisis of the housing market, this group has since protested many of President Barack Obama's political policies and demonstrated dissatisfaction with the government overall. Jeff Zeleny of *The New York Times* writes of the Tea Party protest held on September 13, 2009, in Washington D.C.,

> On a cloudy and cool day, the demonstrators came from all corners of the country, waving American flags and handwritten signs explaining the root of their frustrations. Their anger stretched well beyond the health care legislation moving through Congress, with shouts of support for gun rights, lower taxes and a smaller government. (1).

The vast majority of Tea Party protests have demonstrated a unified front against government expansion and gross government spending. Tea Party groups also advocate a strict interpretation of the Constitution, a stand against illegal immigration, an emphasis on domestic employment, the necessity of a strong military, a firm belief in second amendment rights, and the need for a balanced national budget.

As for the Tea Party protestors themselves, Judson Berger of Fox News writes, "The movement, while nonpartisan, has largely involved conservatives—who are testing out a role long reserved for the other side of the political spectrum" (Berger 2). According to a poll taken by CBS News and *The New York Times*, released on April 14, 2010, eighteen percent of Americans identify themselves as Tea Party supporters. Demographically, thirty-six percent are from the South, twenty-five percent from the West, twenty-two percent from the Midwest, and

eighteen percent from the North. Eighty-nine percent of Tea Party supporters are white. The CBS poll also finds thirty-seven percent of Tea Party supporters are college graduates, as compared to twenty-five percent of Americans over all. Economically, fifty-six percent belong to the middle- to upper middle class and are more likely than the average American adult to attend church services regularly. A strong belief in Second Amendment rights is also evident as fifty-eight percent have a gun in the household. As to their party affiliation, the poll finds that fifty-four percent identify themselves as Republicans, forty-one percent are Independents, and five percent are Democrats. Three in four describe themselves as conservative. Although this patchwork quilt of the American populace may have some differing beliefs, it seems unified for a singular purpose—to change the current course of American government.

The popularity and the spread of the Tea Party movement may also be attributed to well-known conservative politicians and radio and television personalities promoting the protests. Former Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin and conservative talk show host Sean Hannity's support for the Tea Party movement has certainly encouraged more activism. Perhaps, the most controversial and radical Tea Party supporter may be Glenn Beck. According to the CBS and *The New York Times* poll, fifty-nine percent of Tea Partiers have a complimentary impression of the conservative radio and television talk show host. In the spring of 2009, the Tea Party Patriots was founded—a "centralized Web destination for decentralized malcontents, and the start of Glenn Beck's side gig as a social organizer, through his 9.12 Project" (McGrath 3). Beck's 9.12 Project uses the numbers nine and twelve to refer to a checklist of principles and values.

These nine principles are listed as the following:

> 1. America is Good; 2. I believe in God and He is the Center of my Life; 3. I must always try to be a more honest person than I was yesterday; 4. The family is sacred. My spouse and I are the ultimate authority, not the government; 5. If you break the law, you pay the penalty. Justice is blind and no one is above it; 6. I have the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, but there is no guarantee of equal results; 7. I work hard for what I have and I will share it with who I want to. Government cannot force me to be charitable; 8. It is not un-American for me to disagree with authority or to share my personal opinion; 9. The government works for me. I do not answer to them, they answer to me. (The 9.12 Project).

The twelve values include honesty, reverence, hope, thrift, humility, charity, sincerity, moderation, hard work, courage, personal responsibility, and gratitude. According to Ben McGrath, "Only two of the principles ('I believe in God and He is the center of my life'; 'I work hard for what I have and I will share it with who I want to. Government cannot force me to be charitable') indicated any kind of political agenda. Inclusiveness was the point" (3-4). Although McGrath claims those two principles reveal a political agenda, The 9.12 Project claims it is not a political movement.

A portion of The 9.12 Project's mission statement reads:

> This website is a place for you and other like-minded Americans looking for direction in taking back the control of our country. It is also a place to find information that will assist you in navigating the rough waters we face in the days, weeks and months ahead. We suggest that you start in your own homes. Talk to your family about the Values and Principles. Discuss the importance of what the Founders designed for America…This is a non-political movement. The 9.12 Project is designed to bring us all back to the place we were on September 12, 2001. The day after America was attacked we were not obsessed with Red States, Blue States or political parties. We were united as Americans, standing together to protect the greatest nation ever created. That same feeling – that commitment to country is what we are hoping to foster with this idea. We want to get everyone thinking like it is September 12th, 2001 again... The truth is that they don't surround us at all. We surround them. (The 9.12 Project).

Although one could argue political agendas surrounding almost all of the 9.12 principles, McGrath is correct about inclusiveness. The 9.12 Project has a wide following of individuals and reaches its audience by finding agreement on matters of virtues and principles as evidenced by the first principle "America is Good" and the second, "I believe in God and He is the Center of my Life" (The 9.12 Project). Dinesh D'Souza argues, "For many conservatives, the idea of virtue cannot be separated from the idea of God. But it is not necessary to believe in God to be a conservative. What unifies the vast majority of conservatives is the belief that there are moral standards in the universe and that living up to them is the best way to have a full and happy life" (*Letters* 6). The second principle is inclusive because it does not appeal to any denomination or

specific religion. Widely interpreted, "God" is undefined for many, and it is more of a recognition of Being, something beyond themselves, or as D'Souza notes, "moral standards in the universe" (*Letters* 6). The 9.12 Project has become a forum for individuals to connect with others sharing a similar personal ideology and is a platform of political activism. Its creator, Glenn Beck represents a continuance of the conservative conversation in America. He is the Weaverian prophet of today's generation, calling on Americans to repent. He could also be compared to Weaver's cultural doctor of today's political sphere. As such a man, he deserves a closer examination, and his rhetoric requires examination against Weaver's hierarchy of argumentation.

CHAPTER IX

GLENN BECK: THE TOWN CRIER

Glenn Beck, host of "Glenn Beck" a successful show on Fox News Channel and the third highest rated radio program in America, "The Glenn Beck Program," began his career as a radio DJ. At the age of 30, Beck struggled with alcoholism and drug addiction. He changed his lifestyle and circumstances, eventually marrying again and converting to Mormonism. From 2006 to 2008, Beck hosted a nightly television show on CNN Headline News. On January 19, 2009, Beck's talk show on the Fox News Channel debuted to over 2.4 million viewers. He has authored six consecutive New York Times Bestsellers. He has hosted live stage events, attracting over 250,000 fans, and his radio show broadcasts to over 400 stations across the country. Beck has attracted a wide range of audiences because of his anecdotal approach to topics, humor, personal narratives, and blunt interviews. His following includes a large audience of political independents and conservatives, and it would seem what has appealed to individuals and what has consequently influenced a growing faction of resistance and protest personified in the Tea Party movement is not the seemingly hyper, Attention Deficit Disorder infused radio and talk show personality but, instead, the rhetoric Beck used and the arguments made, by which he has framed his points. Though perhaps inelegant and simplistic, his rhetoric has proven to be persuasive and easily understood by his continually increasing audience of mainstream America.

However, Beck's rhetoric has often been liberally full of name calling antics. He calls political leaders, "parasites who feed off our sweat and blood" and writes "Politicians, like cockroaches, are not stupid creatures. Both have the uncanny ability to survive, consume all things living or dead" (*Glenn Beck's* 21, 50). Other terms such as "gun-grabbers," "Idiot-Friend," "bat crap," and "racist white picket fence" may have endeared him to like-minded thinkers but also have alienated him to a wider audience. Richard Weaver made no apology for appealing to the political right, and he saw no need to appeal to the political left. Beck, however, has claimed his intention is to appeal to all Americans. His rhetorical behavior reveals inconsistency between intention and execution. In the beginning of *Arguing With Idiots* Beck writes,

> By the end of this book you'll hopefully realize that while not all Democrats are idiots, there are plenty of idiots who are Democrats—along with Republicans, Libertarians, Communists, Anarchists, and members of just about every other political party you can imagine. In other words, being an idiot has nothing to do with your party affiliation, it has to do with whether you are able to look *beyond* that affiliation and follow the facts, wherever they may lead. (ix).

It would seem then, that Glenn Beck is attempting an appeal to the American populace as individuals and not as partisan electorates. A self-proclaimed conservative, Beck has a personal belief system which includes a belief in God and individual right and responsibility. His political ideology reveals a strong defense of capitalism, Second Amendment rights, the necessity of a smaller government, and a strict interpretation of the Constitution. All of these are indicative of a conservative—ideologically and politically. Beck's rhetoric—specifically his consistent form of

argumentation—should be analyzed in light of Richard Weaver's hierarchy of argumentation, specifically Weaver's argument of definition, to see whether Beck demonstrates a harmonizing of the conservative ideal as depicted by Weaver. Furthermore, we should consider Beck's agenda: if it is fame, power, and wealth—in a sense, the embodiment of the evil lover described in the *Phaedrus*—or if it is motivation as noble and self-sacrificing as the image he presents or claims to have. What follows is an examination of Beck's rhetoric, specifically his argumentation found in his book *Arguing With Idiots, An Inconvenient Book, Glenn Beck's Common Sense,* and *Broke* and a conjecture regarding his personal motivation through an examination of his book, *Glenn Beck's Common Sense* and *Broke.*

CHAPTER X

BECK'S RHETORICAL METHOD

Glenn Beck causes people to question their political identity. He advocates the disposal of political identity—the blanket self-identification of Republican and Democrat—in favor of an American identity. He writes, "Most Americans don't know what they believe, or, worse, they don't have any idea how to decide if Washington's 'solutions' are the right ones" (*Glenn Beck's* 12). Beck does not offer a checklist for determining whether one is Republican or Democrat. Instead, he sheds these dubiously defined political parties and goes back to the beginning of America, back to her history, and back to those core principals which he believes define America and by extension, Americans. Beck writes,

> Put your trust in things that are everlasting; things that won't ebb and flow with the times or change their core values based on some poll. Things like our Constitution and our Creator. The words contained in our Constitution, while written by our founding fathers, come directly from God—as do the rights they grant us. Read them. Know them. Believe in them. When everything around us is crumbling, *they* will be our only true guide. (*An Inconvenient Book* xxiii).

He also argues that within the course of American history, individuals have offered a redefinition of America and the American dream, one that is incorrect and at its core manipulative and dangerous. For example, Beck argues that "The Progressive Movement (which created the modern income tax under President Wilson) saw America as a democracy rather than what it really is: a Republic. The distinction is not subtle and our Founders were clear in the belief that a democracy always led to mob rule" (*Glenn Beck's* 40). Beck connects democracy to socialism since both begin with power allocated to the people. Thus America defined solely as a democracy allows for masses to advocate a "level playing field for the good of all" which in theory seems advantageous but in practice requires a totalitarian rule to force total equality (*Glenn Beck's* 40). Beck warns of the redefined American Republic as a democracy because of democracy's twinship with socialism. It is interesting to note here that Beck does not define an American Republic other than declaring what it is not. Beck's argument would have been much stronger had he argued that a democracy entails a majority power control. A republic, on the other hand, protects minorities and individuals as a representative type system of government limited by a written constitution. Beck does have James Best, author of several novels, journal articles, and magazine columns, present the clear distinctions between a democracy and a republic in a course offered through Beck University, part of Insider Extreme on Glenn Beck's website. However, Beck himself does not provide his own definition in *Glenn Beck's Common Sense.* In addition, Beck argues, "Progressivism has less to do with the parties and more to do with individuals who seek to redefine, reshape, and rebuild America into a country where individual liberties and personal property mean nothing if they conflict with the plans and goals of the State" (*Glenn Beck's* 63).

Beck blames progressives on the political right for "Statism and American expansion through military strength" and progressives on the political left for "Statism and expansion through transnationalist entities such as the League of Nations and then the United Nations" (*Glenn Beck's* 63-4)). He also blames progressivism for programs that limit American freedoms. He argues that the Federal Reserve System, the American government's interference in education, land conservation acts, Prohibition, and the progressive income tax all chipped away and continue to chip away at American freedoms, leading towards a "Nanny State" and "a new form of government" (*Glenn Beck's* 67). According to Beck, the danger with progressivism is that a government that provides everything to its citizens is a government that can also take everything away from its citizens.

Again, Beck does not offer his own succinct definition of a progressivism directly in his text. Dr. Ronald Pestritto, a senior fellow with the Kirby Center, Charles and Lucia Shipley Chair in the American Constitution, Associate Professor of Political Science at Hillsdale College, and author and coauthor of *American Progressivism* and *Woodrow Wilson and the Roots of Modern Liberalism,* appeared with Glenn Beck in April 2009 for a discussion concerning American Progressivism. At the request of Beck, Dr. Pestritto followed the interview with an expansion of the discussion on Beck's website located at glennbeck.com. Dr. Pestritto notes that the notable individuals who created the progressive movement included politicians such as Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt and influential men such as John Dewey and Herbert Croly, editor of *The New Republic* which became an important journal popularizing progressivism. He further argues that progressives conceive of the American government as an evolving entity, ready to change into whatever role circumstances required it to take.

He also notes that progressives were "the first generation of Americans to denounce openly our founding documents" (Pestritto 3). He cites Woodrow Wilson who criticized the preface to the Declaration of Independence and Theodore Roosevelt who ignored limits set by the Constitution. Dr. Pestritto defines progressivism as a movement whose goal is "a thorough transformation in America's principles of government" (2). The progressive transformation is one that both he and Beck condemn. Beck's reticence to offer his own definitions for key terms is telling. Perhaps, he assumes his audience shares a similar understanding of terms such as democracy and progressivism. Perhaps, he was attempting an inclusive message and so as not to offend his audience he allowed for relative definitions. Perhaps, he did not wish to damage the message by exposing the lack of credibility of the messenger. After all, who is Beck to explain history and society? Since he does utilize individuals with the "proper" credentials on his radio, television show, and even in many of his other texts, he is not ignorant of the necessity of clear definition.

Further in the text, Glenn Beck appeals to his audience: "Make no mistake, this is a fight of Us versus Them. 'Us' comprises those who believe in liberty as described in the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence. 'Them' comprises those who believe that the definition of *liberty* must evolve with the times" (*Glenn Beck's* 58-9). Beck urges Americans to cling to the founding fathers' original definition and purpose in America's inception. Another redefinition Beck exposes is that of the American dream. Although there is not one absolute definition of the American dream, for many—including Beck—it is the opportunity, the freedom, the individual right to achieve success and happiness. For some, the American dream may be a happy family, white picket fence, and annual vacation. For others, the American dream may be the chance to become CEO of a company or the chance at a college education. The American dream is about opportunity and responsibility, ethics and character.

Beck writes, “Meanwhile, our politicians, global corporations, and money-changers have redefined the American Dream” (*Glenn Beck’s* 14). He argues that the American dream presented by these individuals is one of the simple accumulation of wealth and resulting vice of greed for which they then blame the system of capitalism. He uses the housing market at an example. He argues some banks chose not to lend money and approve loans to individuals who didn’t qualify because “To them [banks], things like debt income, and character still mattered and they prudently denied unqualified borrowers” (*Glenn Beck’s* 14). Yet, because of their unwillingness to yield, they “were labeled racist, greedy, and out of touch with the new reality” (*Glenn Beck’s* 15). Thus, Beck concludes that “There are no shortcuts in achieving and living the American Dream. It takes hard work, relentless dedication to your core principles and values, and, above all patience” (*Glenn Beck’s* 15). It is these core principles and values that he believes offer a true definition of America and the American dream. Beck writes, “we must choose to live by our founding principles and rid ourselves of the poison of those who are proven to have broken the law—no one is above it” (*Glenn Beck’s* 11).

In addition, the reimaging of capitalism and the blanket vilification of the rich is another example of redefining in America. In referencing economic inequalities among Americans, Beck cites from the Declaration of Independence “that all men are created equal,” and while many would place emphasis on the word *equal,* Beck emphasizes the word *created.* He argues that “Every man is *created* equal. It’s what you do with it from there that makes the difference” (*An Inconvenient Book* 83). He does qualify his position by contending that individuals should not face unfair or biased difficulty to their attempt at economic success based on gender or race, but that income inequality should provide healthy motivation for merit and effort.

The malevolent picture of "evil rich bastards rolling in piles of cash while the poor suffer as a result of their unending greed" many times is inaccurate and not the norm (*An Inconvenient Book* 82). Beck believes Americans themselves are part of the problem, but as part of the problem they can also be part of the solution by returning to their history, by refusing to play partisan politics, by living within their means, by parenting their children and passing on a legacy, by holding their politicians accountable.

In this particular text, Beck is very careful to argue using specifically defined terminology. In each chapter of *Arguing With Idiots,* Beck carefully defines terms and argues that a clear definition is essential to a logical argument. He starts his first chapter, titled "In Defense of Capitalism: Giving the Free Market a Fair Shake" by identifying the capitalism in America to which he is referring and defining it through analogy. His side note for "Academics and Crazy People" reads "When I refer to 'capitalism' in this chapter; I'm talking about democratic capitalism—the kind America used to have" (*Arguing with Idiots 3).* Democratic capitalism is an economic system based on free-market enterprise and little or no government involvement. He contends, "The truth is that capitalism is neither good nor evil, it just is. Capitalism can't get you a job, a bigger house, or a better retirement—you have to do all of those things for yourself. But what capitalism can do is foster an environment where those with the will to succeed have a better chance of achieving their dreams" (*Arguing with Idiots* 3). He encourages a clear understanding of capitalism through his use of analogy too, providing many examples for the reader to compare and contrast the social systems.

He begins the second chapter, "The Second Amendment: Ammunition to Defend Your Rights," by noting the importance rhetoric plays in American law defining American freedoms.

He writes, “Nothing illustrates the battle between the good forces of individual liberty and the destructive, idiotic forces of collectivism better than the ongoing battle over the meaning of those 27 little words” (*Arguing With Idiots* 35). The twenty-seven words that Beck notes are those that comprise the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which reads, “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” (qtd. in *Arguing With Idiots* 35). Beck contextualizes his argument by claiming most debates surrounding the Second Amendment have less to do with guns than they have to do with arguments surrounding the growth and expansion of government, individuals’ right and responsibility, and the balance of power in America. This claim, refocusing the argument into a larger context, trivializes to a certain extent arguments focused solely on handgun control and regulation. Beck’s rhetorical strategy throughout the chapter begins with a furnished “idiot’s” argument which he counter argues. Central to his argument in defense of the Second Amendment is his careful defining of the constitutional text. He contends with an “idiot’s” argument against the second amendment who would argue that the second amendment gives gun rights to militias and not individuals by defining the term “Militia.” He notes George Mason’s definition that the militia: “‘consist of now the whole people’” (*Arguing With Idiots* 40). He cites the Supreme Court’s definition regarding the militia which is: “‘the general obligation of all adult male inhabitants to possess arms, and, with certain exceptions, to cooperate in the work of defense’” (*Arguing With Idiots* 40). He further notes James Madison who once claimed “that America had ‘a militia amounting to near half a million of citizens with arms in their hands’” (*Arguing With Idiots* 40).

Beck gives the federal law's current definition "'the militia of the United States' to include all able-bodied males from 17-45 and members of the National Guard up to age 64, but excluding those who have no intention of becoming citizens and active military personnel" (*Arguing With Idiots* 41). Finally, Glenn Beck offers his definition: "every able-bodied guy of a certain age who's not in the military is in the Militia" (*Arguing With Idiots* 41). Therefore, his argument concludes, that every American individual thus termed "guy" should be able to legally bear arms.

In the same chapter, Beck exposes the danger of a lack of clear definition in argumentation when examining arguments surrounding assault weapons. The "idiot's" argument in this instance begins with a concession "Ok, fine, the second amendment protects all normal guns, but not assault weapons" (*Arguing With Idiots* 46). Beck writes:

> The word 'assault' doesn't tell us anything, because any object used to harm another person can be designated as an 'assault' weapon. If a mugger uses a kitchen knife, baseball bat, or fireplace poker to prey on his victims, should Congress label those items as 'assault weapons' and ban them from private homes? It seems logical that if a gun is going to be banned for being an 'assault weapon,' there should be something about it that makes it particularly useful for criminals, but use*less* for lawful applications. Unfortunately, there is nothing logical about the agenda of gun-grabbers. They're focused on banning as many guns as they can, as fast as possible—common sense be damned. (*Arguing With Idiots* 47).

Although one could argue this is more of an argument about semantics, Beck points out that the lack of a clear definition of an "assault weapon" creates ambiguity, leaves second amendment rights vulnerable, and does not allow for a genuine debate on gun control regulation.

He does provide a description of an assault weapon given by the Violence Policy Center which reads, "'Defining an assault weapon—in legal terms—is not easy…it's extremely difficult to develop a legal definition that restricts the availability of assault weapons without affecting legitimate semi-automatic guns'" (*Arguing With Idiots* 50). Beck argues that an indistinct definition is purposeful, an attempt by gun control lobbyists to, in effect, limit gun ownership.

In Chapter 10 of *Arguing With Idiots* "U.S. Presidents: A Steady Progression of Progressives," Glenn Beck examines the rhetoric used by politicians and argues the need for defining terms. Beck cites Teddy Roosevelt who wrote, "'we grudge no man a fortune in civil life if it is honorably obtained and well used'" (*Arguing With Idiots 218).* Beck then argues:

> Progressives like Roosevelt would, on the surface, seem to defend capitalism, but there is almost always a big 'IF' attached to their rhetoric. In Roosevelt's case, saying that someone can make boatloads of cash IF they obtain it honorably is one thing—you can at least make the case that he meant 'lawfully'—but IF their wealth is 'well used'? What does *that* mean? And who, exactly decides the definition of 'well used,' some government board? (*Arguing With Idiots* 218).

Beck argues that vague terminology allows for more government control which takes away individual rights and freedoms. Beck urges his readers to focus on the rhetoric used by politicians. He addresses Roosevelt's statement regarding private property and public welfare. Beck writes, "Notice the language: *public welfare" (Arguing with Idiots* 219). He contends that government allows private property as long as the "greater good" does not need it; government controls business, property, money, and soon one's entire life. Perhaps melodramatic, perhaps a clarion call—regardless of which, Beck is urging his readers to note definition, note terminology, and note the subtle influencing of political rhetoric.

The final chapter, "The U.S. Constitution: Lost in Translation," in *Arguing With Idiots* reveals Beck's respect for defining terms. He takes the Constitution, its sections, articles, and amendments and defines terminology and statements alluding to events and occurrences not well known today. He also offers the logic behind the rhetorical construction of the Constitution. For example, in the Constitution, the commerce clause reads, "'To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes'" (*Arguing With Idiots* 276). Beck notes the importance of the word *among*. He writes, "It's amazing how one small word can change everything…The Constitution allows the federal government to regulate commerce *among* the states, not *within* them" (*Arguing With Idiots* 276). Beck's thorough didactic exposition of the Constitution using informal rhetoric appeals to many Americans, and his book *Arguing With Idiots* while seemingly flippant and at times comical, betrays a genuine concern about America, her people and her government. It is important to note then, that Glenn Beck, at times, defines terms and establishes accord with his audience.

Glenn Beck's latest book, *Broke,* commences with the premise that America's system of government is broken due to the broken character of its people, as evidenced by debt—on an individual and national level. His text begins with an argument of definition, defining the brokenness of America—her government and people. He ends his argument detailing a remedy, a complex solution and a beginning to a long road of recovery.

Beck establishes context by briefly examining of other countries' history of debt. He notes Rome, Greece, and Spain. Beck writes, "Studying the suicidal moves of three once-epic empires—ancient Rome, ancient Greece, and sixteenth-century Spain—reveals that our nation is responding in an all-too-familiar way that will have an all-too-familiar ending" (*Broke 12).* However, Beck argues that America has an advantage of the lens of history which allows its

citizens to realize the laws of economics pertain to them because they can see the laws of economics' ultimate consequences throughout history.

Beck continues his argument with a chapter on frugality. He defines frugality as a virtue—a virtue that many American's lack and that the government discourages. Beck reasons that the government discourages frugality because frugality allows citizens to live responsible lives, voluntarily giving charity to whomever they choose to; whereas, under the leadership of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and progressives, the government desires people's charity be given to them so they can distribute as they see fit. Beck writes that under Franklin D. Roosevelt, "charity still meant fulfilling your financial obligation to a higher power, but that higher power went from being God to being the United States government" (*Broke* 17). Beck argues that frugality cultivates freedom and continues with a chapter highlighting America's founding fathers who advocated frugality and the minimizing of national debt. Examining historical precedent, Beck notes individuals such as John Jay, the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison who argued against accruing additional national debt without paying off the current debt which was amassed due to the Revolutionary War. Beck contends, "For Jefferson, trading future financial prosperity for short-term gain was essentially theft. 'The principle of spending money to be paid by posterity under the name of funding is but swindling futurity on a large scale,' he [Jefferson] said" (*Broke* 28). Beck continues the history lesson by examining Andrew Jackson, who managed to pay off the national debt towards the end of 1834, and Abraham Lincoln who ballooned the national debt due to the Civil War.

Next, Beck writes a chapter maligning Woodrow Wilson and the progressives for their enlargement for the federal government and government programs that Beck defines as the social gospel.

Beck writes, "Progressives believed that government was a means by which they could implement the social engineering that Wilson found preferable by enacting policies designed to 'redeem' the masses" (*Broke* 52). The expansion of government also expanded the budget. Beck notes that from 1916-1919, the national debt went from $3.6 billion to $27.4 billion, this due in large part to World War I. It was then, on October 3, 1913, that the personal income tax law was signed by Wilson. Beck argues that Americans did not mind the income tax because many of them were exempt from taxation, and the purpose of the tax was to pay off the war debt. However, Beck contends in 1920, the income tax rate was increased and the role was changed. He writes, "the new goal was a new concept in America: redistribution of wealth" (*Broke* 56). Beck notes that after "Wilson's disastrous wake" there was "a modest return to America's traditional views about debt and the limited roles of government" (*Broke* 58). He also notes that although history texts declare the Progressive Era ended with Wilson, in reality, the movement was only briefly interrupted. He argues, "What progressives needed to become relevant again was something that would shock the conscience of the public, something that would prove the evils of big business, the naïveté of the Founders, and the fallacy of capitalism…what they needed was a major crisis" (*Broke* 59). This crisis was the Great Depression. Beck notes Herbert Hoover, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and John Maynard Keynes in his next chapter subtitled "The Three Horsemen of the Progressive Era." These men, Beck argues, encouraged a rejection of Adam Smith's free- market capitalism and embraced a form of socialism that expanded the federal government, increased the national debt, and created an opportunity to redefine the American government's purpose—from one of protection to provision.

Although Beck mentions Truman and Eisenhower as Presidents who endeavored to instill fiscal responsibility once again in America, he does not detail their efforts. Instead, Beck focuses

on President Johnson whom he calls a New Deal progressive who wanted to continue the efforts of FDR. Beck asserts that after World War II, American's became "spoiled" and that economic prosperity "began to be seen as their [American's] birthright instead of a dream" (*Broke* 79). Beck argues that Johnson's Great Society only resulted in many Americans expecting the government to provide their health insurance, food, housing, and education. Beck writes, "People expect government to do everything for them, and then they feel cheated when it fails to do the impossible" (*Broke* 85). Beck continues with President Nixon who he notes had some conservative characteristics but whose economic policies were similar to President Johnson. Beck writes, "By the time 1980 rolled around, the American people seemed to be lost" (*Broke* 93).

He then writes about Reagan and his "Reaganomics" which was "a plan designed to combat the slow growth and high inflation that had taken over the economy" (*Broke* 95). Beck notes that some of Reagan's policies worked, while others didn't or were never implemented. Yet, Beck argues that "the Reagan experience should prove to those of us who honestly want to solve this problem that no one person can do it alone" (*Broke* 102). Beck continues through the presidencies of George Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama and notes the massive spending policies, substantial increase of the national debt, and now massive borrowing from foreign lenders.

In Part Two of *Broke* beginning with Chapter 10, "The Truth," Beck asserts, "By now you've seen the pattern of lies, broken promises, and outright corruption that has been epidemic in America for decades…What we're debating now is something far more serious: the survival of the last free country on Earth" (*Broke* 143). Beck's words note urgency and present a warning that appeals to the individual's right of freedom. Beck also blames Americans for the dire

situation they encounter today. He argues they have allowed their government leaders to spend money without censure. Beck explains government spending, earmarks, interest on the national deficit, individual debt, and the International Monetary Fund's report which identified the United States' economy as second among other countries' advanced economies in growth.

Through charts, graphs, quotations from notable individuals, Beck concludes, "the unvarnished truth is that we owe more money than all of the economies in the world produce over an entire year combined…but now that you know the truth, you have an obligation to spread it" (*Broke* 168). Beck also blames politicians and lobbyist for their role in the financial crisis of America.

Part Three of *Broke* is titled, "The Plan." In this section, Beck outlines eight steps for Americans to begin changing the current course of the country. The first step is a focus on individual rights. He writes, "It might seem odd to start off this plan with a focus on individual rights instead of a recipe for Medicare reform or a list of specific programs that can be cut—but it's time this debate is reframed from one about numbers and esoteric policy decisions to one about individual rights and freedom" (*Broke* 217). Beck argues that commencing his plan with a defining of individual rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, is necessary because the financial crisis is a symptom of the larger disarray of America's government, values, and principles. He postulates that "to fix ourselves financially we first have to fix *ourselves*—and that means a return to the only plan that really matters: the one laid out in our Constitution" (*Broke* 218).

The second step is a focus on equality. Beck compares and contrasts progressives and founding fathers' view of equality and the Constitution. In this chapter, Beck also notes the progressives' definition of equality limits individual rights and is in fact nothing more than a dangerous rhetorical word game.

For example, Beck writes, "Promoting 'equality' implies that the opposite choice is 'inequality'—thereby invoking images of discrimination, racism, and sexism" (*Broke* 233). Beck contends Americans have equality under the law but total equality is a faulty concept since it cannot be enforced without a strong power structure or ruler. Beck asserts "We're choosing between equality and diversity…we are great not because we are equals, but because we are different" (*Broke* 233, 236). He concludes, "Maybe it's time to fight back with some word games of our own—words like *diversity, success, motivation,* and *personal achievement"* (*Broke* 245).

Beck's third step focuses on the spiritual nature of America. Beck writes, "Like individual rights and diversity, faith was a bedrock principle at our country's founding" (*Broke* 248). Beck states that the founding fathers recognized humanity's inability to be perfected and humanity's accountability to God. He writes, "A strong belief in something greater than man acts as a natural brake on unconstrained capitalism. You don't rob or scam another person because you fear both the temporary punishment of the state and the eternal punishment of your God" (*Broke* 249). Beck argues unlike the Social Gospel promoted by the government, "Real faith renews our spirit of hard work and independence. Faith restores the idea of a society based on merit and reward" (*Broke* 255). Beck ends the chapter warning that America's rejection of God could result in God's rejection of America.

Beck's step four encourages voters to hold their representatives accountable and to find ways to limit government's grown. Step five focuses on amendments to the Constitution that should be made. Beck notes, "I really don't like the idea of tinkering with our Constitution...but we do need to provide for our future security by reining in its [government's] ability to bankrupt

us" (*Broke* 276). Beck argues the need to pass a balanced-budget amendment, and a term limits amendment, a line-item veto amendment. He believes these are needed reform.

Chapter 18 is titled "Step Six: Scalpels, Hatchets and Chainsaws." In it, Beck details government funded programs that need to be abolished, limited, or privatized. He warns, "We are going to have to make extremely difficult decisions. Entitlements can't go on the way they are, but the secret to reform is not in just changing retirement ages or tax rates, it's in changing the minds of Americans; it's in convincing people that they don't need the government; that, in fact, the government will only prevent them from ever achieving their dream" (*Broke* 316-7). Beck's seventh step focuses on national defense and the greatest threat to it, which is a weak economy. He notes America's debt and responsibility to her service members, and America's fiscal responsibility within the defense budget. He writes, "…the same sort of waste, corruption, and inefficiencies that drive us nuts about welfare programs exit in, well, every program and agency the government runs. That includes the military" (*Broke* 325). He believes that close oversight of America's money is necessary to not only rein in the national debt but to ensure that foreign enemies are not using misappropriated funds to hurt American soldiers.

Finally, Beck's eighth step focuses on the tax system which he calls a "disaster" (*Broke* 333). Beck cautions,

> Ever since the Progressive Era our leaders have been fiddling with the tax code to promote 'economic equality.' By penalizing some groups and rewarding others, they are able to use the tax system as a kind of social-engineering tool. And by encouraging some behaviors and discouraging others, they are able to increase dependence on the government and decrease self-reliance. (*Broke* 336-7).

Beck encouraged a flat tax which, he argues, would eliminate all issues of complaint concerning the current tax system. Beck concludes *Broke* with encouragement. He affirms America can change and can become strong again. He writes, "History is not static. It is written by God and it is based in virtue. If we can fix ourselves, we can fix our country. If we can restore honor in our own lives, we can restore it across the entire country" (*Broke* 361). However, he cautions, Americans must choose to act. Beck's argument is based on precedent, prescription, and prophecy. He defines America's broken nature and encourages prescriptive glue for the Republic while noting the danger of indolence.

In many of his arguments, Beck demonstrates an inconsistent use of definitional arguments. Many times he identifies arguments of definition that he disagrees with but fails in explicitly producing his own definitions. When he does provide a definition, he does so with reference to the founding fathers or original historical documents. This is not a faulty methodology, but since Beck's arguments are about ambiguity, misleading terms, and redefinition in others, his own argument would be much stronger if he clearly defined his own position consistently. It is noteworthy, that Beck encourages his audience to understand original definition and context within historical record and documents such as the Constitution.

Richard Weaver's argument of definition goes beyond the simple defining of terms. It assumes that ideas not circumstance will guide decision and action. Beck would concur. He writes, "The rule of law was meant to prevent a crisis from being taken advantage of by forcing outcomes of disputes to be decided according to a strict set of principles, not subject to raw emotion, popularity, political power, or financial clout" (*Glenn Beck's* 41). Furthermore he argues, "The Progressives view the Constitution as a living organism that evolves with time and changes depending on circumstances" (*Glenn Beck's* 68). Beck berates Americans for their

dependence on Washington to solve their problems and their cries for immediate solutions. He cautions, "'Just doing something' for political expediency may imperil the causes of liberty, capitalism, inventiveness, and the progressive principle of natural selection. Instead, let's do something but let's make it *the right thing*" (*Glenn Beck's* 12). The "right thing" according to Glenn Beck is found in the rediscovery of common principles and values and in God.

Recently, Beck has been criticized by some for his change from libertarian comedic talk show host to conservative spiritual messenger. Beck's "Restoring Honor" rally held in Washington on August 28, 2010, had a physical audience from the Lincoln Memorial to the World War II Memorial was far from a political protest but rather a sort of spiritual assembly. According to the Michelle Boorstein of *The Washington Post* "In a matter of hours, Beck went from a hugely popular media figure—a Gallup poll last year listed him as the fourth-most-admired living man in the country—to a spiritual player, embracing a new and overtly religious rhetoric that made him sound like an evangelist" (2). Although Beck urges Americans to turn back to God, many conservative Christians question which God or whose God it is that Beck is referring to since Beck is a Mormon. Beck argues that the founding fathers did not advocate any one particular religion. He notes that all religions encourage selflessness in men, virtue in conduct, and godliness. He writes, "Our Founders understood the thing that we try so hard to forget today: there is far more that unites us than divides us. Virtue, honesty, and character aren't the purview of any particular congregation; they can be found in any church that has God as its foundation" (*Glenn Beck's* 98). If anything, Beck's central message is that a correct view of God, as one who is more powerful than humanity and who judges, holding individuals accountable, will render a responsible view of man and government.

Beck writes of progressives, "By substituting the 'common good' for God as the highest form of religion, they are subtly saying that your rights, freedoms, and liberties come from *government* instead of, as the Founding Fathers taught, directly from God, and that you *lend* some of those rights to government" (*Glenn Beck's* 99). Beck's message, spiritual or not, always returns to the American government and American freedoms. Like Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority of the 1980's, Beck isn not attempting to establish a church or cult but, instead, a unified majority of individuals, united by their commonalities—one of which is a belief in God, regardless of religion or denomination.

So the question remains: why does Glenn Beck with his histrionics, chalk-board history lessons, and American patriot dress up act do what does? Many argue it is all about money. A careful study of his rhetoric reveals it is emblematic of the discourse of the noble lover in Richard Weavers interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus*, and it is his rhetoric and methodology that reveals personal motivation and character.

CHAPTER XI

BECK'S RHETORICAL DISCOURSE

In the "Note from the Author" in *Glenn Beck's Common Sense*, Glenn Beck writes:

> Thomas Paine was an unremarkable man living in a remarkable time. He proved that it doesn't take celebrity, stature, or wealth to make a difference—it only takes someone willing to say the things that need to be said. Well I am no Thomas Paine—he was an extraordinary writer, a renowned motivator, and a heroic patriot—but the words that follow also need to be said, if for no other reason than to ease my own conscience. If you think it's time to put principles above parties, character above campaign promises, and Common Sense above all—then I ask you to read this book. (ix).

Beck's appeal to the American people is palpable in his entreaty. He writes because his conscience dictates he must. He withstands the criticism of those who disagree with him because he believes in something larger than himself. He believes in America. In accordance to Richard Weaver's interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus,* I would argue Glenn Beck embodies the spirit of the noble lover to some degree even though Weaver argues the rhetoric of politics and journalism is base rhetoric. Yet, Beck does not declare himself to be a politician or a journalist.

He writes, "I'm not a journalist…My goal is to digest what *actual* journalists report and give you my opinion on it, an opinion that is proudly and openly from a conservative point of view" (Beck *An Inconvenient Book* 149). What Glenn Beck is, then, is an opinionated American who has both enlivened and enraged the American populace. Richard Weaver argues the noble lover is divine, creative, and inspired. Although I dare say few would argue Glenn Beck has any form of divinity, Beck does argue his position for what he believes will be the betterment of America. Beck writes,

> To save ourselves from political and economic slavery, we must first admit what we already know: America has serious problems that transcend this economic crisis. We must also recognize and admit our critical role in helping create these problems. Finally, we must choose to live by our founding principles and rid ourselves of the poison of those [politicians] who are proven to have broken the law—no one is above it" (*Glenn Beck's* 10-11).

Unlike the evil lover who is manipulative, the noble lover, according to Weaver, "has mastered the conflict within his own soul by conquering appetite and fixing his attention on upon the intelligible and the divine, he conceives an exalted attitude towards the beloved" (*The Ethics of Rhetoric* 13). Beck's beloved is America, the ideal embodied within the American people. Weaver argues, the noble lover loves his lover for who he is including his faults and for who he might be in his betterment. For the sake of the beloved, the noble lover willingly sacrifices any selfish desire. Beck confesses, "If you're like me, you've screwed up many things in your life, but all of that is a prologue to this moment. Those experiences give us wisdom, humility, and a deep sense of the one emotion that many people try so hard to avoid: failure. But those up use who *have* failed understand that it is a necessary step in achieving success" (*Glenn Beck's* 12).

Beck is honest in his failures, his drug and alcoholism addictions, failed marriage, and failed college degree. This brutal honesty would seem to endanger his credibility, yet people respond to this sacrifice of perfect character by believing him more readily because of the declaration of his faults.

Within the noble lover, there is no jealousy, but rather, an inclination to see his beloved created towards the perfection of being. Beck writes, "Once we dedicate ourselves to that new dawn and experience a restoration of our founding principles, we can be secure in the knowledge that future generations will enjoy the same liberties and freedoms that were reserved for us" (*Glenn Beck's* 106). The perfection of being in Beck's estimation would be America firmly enacting the nine principles and twelve values that encourage individual freedom, a government serving the people and serving future generations of Americans, living virtuously, accountable lives. Another conservative commentator, Dinesh D' Souza, writes, "Our freedom and autonomy are precious commodities, and conservatives better than anyone else recognize that it is a great tragedy when they are trivialized and abused. Their mission is… to ennoble freedom by showing it the path to virtue" (*What's So Great* 160).

The evil lover by contrast will make his lover inferior to himself intellectually and emotionally, and he will be jealous of anything that steals his lover's affections. Weaver argues that the base rhetorician is dependent on the ignorance and apathy of his beloved. He hides anything that might allow his lover independent thought and appeases him with things that satisfy temporal desires. He permits only circumstance and absconds all alternatives. Unlike the evil lover, Beck discourages ignorance and argues for a re-education of the American public. In Part Three of Beck's *Broke,* after each chapter, Beck includes an "Educate Yourself" section. This section contains a list of resources, both electronic and in print form, which readers can

access to become more informed, to further their understanding, or to verify Beck's arguments. The evil lover encourages ignorance; Beck's encourages self-education. Holistically, his argument promotes careful change for future stability. Glenn Beck, then, would seem to have the character of the noble lover as defined by Weaver.

CHAPTER XII

THE TEA ROOM

When trying to imagine Richard Weaver and Glenn Beck drinking tea together, discussing today's political spectrum, one sees Weaver as polite and thoughtful; whereas, Beck is constantly interrupting and shifting in his seat. Both could be considered prophets of their respective age. Although very different, both do share some commonalities. The first is the conservative thread that weaves its way through history, part of the tapestry of time. The second, which is a part of the first, is the affirmation of memory. Weaver writes:

> Every individual's desire is that he will be seen for what he is, and what he is depends upon some present knowledge of his past. The same principle holds for societies and nations. They *are* their history, and any detraction from the latter is a detraction from their status…Cultural life depends upon the remembrance of acknowledged values, and for this reason any sign of a prejudice against memory is a signal of danger. (*Visions* 40).

Beck's constant evocation of America's founding fathers and those principles and values, which encouraged virtue at the founding of America and encourage virtue now, reveal his observance to memory. This perhaps explains the chalk board history lessons and Nathan Hale costuming. Yet, the strongest connection between these two prophets remains in their message to America.

Weaver's study of the South led him to conclude "a crisis of spirit could not be cured by humanism or socialism, or New Dealism or any other 'ism' …[his] challenge…was to work out how the best of that culture might be applied to a twentieth-century America weary of panaceas and having to fight yet another world war" (Young 102-3). Beck's study of the founding fathers and their intent for America has led him to conclude America's cultural crisis must first begin with the American as the individual. Beck writes, "The time has come for a second American Revolution…this revolution will take place in our minds and hearts. Instead of liberating us from a tyrannical monarchy, it will liberate us from our own tyrannical thinking" (*Glenn Beck's* 102). Both Beck and Weaver argue we must recognize there is a substantial problem. Weaver writes, "Hope of restoration depends upon recovery of the 'ceremony of innocence,' of that clearness of vision and knowledge of form which enable us to sense what is alien or destructive, what does not comport with our moral ambition" (*Ideas* 11). Similarily, Beck writes, "To save ourselves from political and economic slavery, we must first admit what we already know: America has serious problems that transcend economic crisis" (*Glenn Beck's* 11). Both Weaver and Beck demonstrate a necessity to appeal to ideas and principles. Young writes of Weaver, "Everyone works from first principles, he believed. If those were proper, lesser matters would take care of themselves" (9). Beck urges, "once we dedicate ourselves to that new dawn and experience a restoration of our founding principles, we can be secure in the knowledge that future generations will enjoy the same liberties and freedoms that were reserved for us" (*Glenn Beck's* 106). Both articulate that appeal to the American populace. According to Young, Weaver recognized "the possibility that perhaps those time-honored premises were being ignored owing to the lack of someone to properly articulate them" (74).

Beck writes, "Our country's circumstances are too grave and the stakes too high for us to sit silently…both parties have betrayed our founding principles and we have lost sight of the fact that the only side that matters is the one in step with the principles of the Republic" (*Glenn Beck's* 19). Both reveal urgency in their appeals, and both appeal with arguments of definition. Young writes "Weaver concluded…all learning is based on defining a thing by what one already knows. Hence language was not a barrier but rather a foundation by which one can break the fetters of the present in order to find real meaning" (122). Weaver proclaims the argument of definition is the necessary medium and indicator of conservative rhetoric; while, Beck, it could be said, just argues—but against a focus on expediency and circumstance and instead with a careful consideration of principles through defined terms.

A few observations should be noted before concluding. First, Weaver was an academic and his medium and range were in many respects holistically different from Beck. Although many of his writings were political to some degree, Weaver did not confine himself to this venue nor did he advertise himself as a political activist or commentator. Those who discover Weaver do just that—discover him. Weaver offered many lectures at various universities, but it is safe to say he did not nor is it highly probable that he will reach an audience as vast as Beck will. Beck is not an academic nor is his focus academic arguments. He is first a radio talk show host and a television talk show host. His bestselling books are consequences of his existing celebrity. Second, Weaver did not attempt to appeal to the political left or the middle. Beck, however, declares he is appealing to all, yet his methodology, though rife with conservative rhetoric, is also rampant with villainous characterizations. Although Beck may convert a few independents and some who lean towards the political middle, it is certain he will not gain an audience from the left. His credibility could, perhaps, be more thoroughly established should he consistently

utilize Weaver's hierarchy of argumentation, specifically the argument of genus, as his major premise in his discourse. Third, Beck does not solely represent the conservative electorate in America; many republicans and conservatives hold strong reservations regarding his views and his antics. What is certain is he does represent a new faction within the conservative movement. A faction that assembles, that protests, that votes, that has changed the Senate, and now the House of Representatives. It is this new movement, whether labeled the Tea Party movement, Anti-Progressive movement, or a Neo-conservative movement, that is carrying on the conservative conversation in America with Glenn Beck as its loudest spokesperson.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

America is a young nation in comparison to the rest of the world. She has not experienced monarchies or despots, anarchies or coups since declaring her independence; although, she has experienced civil war and civil strife. Still, she was not defeated or permanently sectioned into separate countries. Her national power has only increased through her short history, and the freedom she represents remains a harbinger for many and an elusive quality for those who seek her demise. However, no nation is indestructible, and America is threatened far more by implosion from within her conflicting partisanships and by her apathetic and ignorant citizenry than a threat from beyond her physical borders. For many, conservatism remains a lasting defense against all forms of tyranny and oppression, and those who carry on the conservative conversation are those who will leave a lasting mark on the historical record. While God judges all men, history is the judge and jury of all political and personal decisions both small and great.

Two prophets. One message. Richard Weaver believes conservative rhetoric, exemplified through an argument from definition or genus, reveals true ideological conservatism and shows one's understanding of the nature of a thing, its natural classes of distinction, and its predictability.

Conservative rhetoric is philosophical and based on an ideal or absolute that does not change over time but examines situations through the lens of history. This allows one to return to the beginning of the thing, and in the process, consider the implications of choice. In contrast, Weaver's designation of liberal rhetoric uses an argument of circumstance most prevalently because the argument from circumstance is not dependent on a fixed ideal or absolute, but contingent on expedient circumstances which alter with time. This type of argument may conceal possible alternatives in favor of an either/or view of cause and effect, focusing on immediacy. Richard Weaver's message is prescriptive. Political candidates and activists reveal strong dependency on both liberal and conservative rhetoric, and in the contemporary political arena, public discontent and rancor evidenced by the Tea Party movement demonstrate individuals' dissatisfaction with their political leaders. Weaver's exposition of the nature of rhetoric leaves few questions as to why in his hierarchy of arguments, he places argument from definition first and argument from circumstance last. Defining terms reveals the soul's education. Arguing from circumstance avoids terms of tendency to focus on immediacy and superficiality. Weaver's prescription of argumentation for determining the ideological leanings of a speaker, using his hierarchy of arguments and his definition of liberalism and conservatism, provides a valuable measure for the audience and the rhetorician; and Weaver's interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus*, as an exposition of discourse, can be used as a mirror for reflecting an individual's motivation and character. Glenn Beck, whose rhetoric both advocates and demonstrates his conservative ideology, prophesizes both great and terrible things for this country. Beck urges Americans to educate themselves concerning their country's heritage, to examine the founders' original writings and understand their intent and purpose for the American government. He reveals the redefinition of terms by progressives and warns of an approaching precipice. Beck admonishes

America to admit her faults, to focus on her Creator, and to fight for her freedoms—without bloodshed but with fast hold to principle and accountability. Glenn Beck represents a new conservatism that is in its core composition the same as it has always been but that is now coupled with a fierce activism, bringing hope and change to America.

Considering Richard Weaver's prescriptive message and Glenn Beck's predictive message, the conservative conversation has the potential to alter American politics, American society, and American history.

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