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Wayne Booth's Rhetoric of Pluralism

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WAYNE BOOTH'S RHETORIC OF PLURALISM

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I will be examining the arguments Wayne C. Booth put forth for Pluralism in rhetorical studies. I will show how Booth believed that ethical criticism, not only in literary criticism but in all disputation, must take place in order for us to understand each other and objective values. Booth believed that our differing opinions and arguments may not be reconcilable, but by employing "listening rhetoric", a method of paying close attention to the arguments of those who disagree with us, we can arrive at truths that are shared within a community. I juxtapose Booth with both Positivists (such as Bertrand Russell and others) and Deconstructionists (such as Jacques Derrida) and demonstrate how Booth's Pluralism was formed over time as a response to these theories.

DEDICATION

This thesis and my entire master's degree would not have been possible without the sincere patience and grace shown to me by my wife, Sylvia Gabriela Ordeman. I owe her indefinitely for her support and encouragement throughout this entire project. I would also like to thank Dr. Lyon Rathbun and my committee members for their leadership and guidance during my research and development of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT iii

DEDICATION iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS v

CHAPTER I. THE BEGINNINGS OF BOOTH'S PLURALISM 1

Plato and Protagoras 8

The Role of Aristotle in Booth's Life 12

Booth's Pluralism in Response to Modern and Postmodern Idealism 15

Conclusion 19

CHAPTER II. PLURALISM AND POSITIVISM 22

Origins of Positivism 24

The Fact/Value Split 29

Bertrand Russell 34

Richard Posner and John Carey 38

Booth Upholding Beliefs and Values 41

CHAPTER III. BOOTH'S PLURALISM DURING POSTMODERNISM 45

Deconstruction 46

Objective Truths 57

Conclusion 61

CHAPTER IV. LISTENING RHETORIC AND PLURALISM 63

The Pluralism of Isaiah Berlin 65
Listening Rhetoric 67
Relativism and Pluralism 69
Transcendent Truths 75
Examples of Pluralism 77
Conclusion 81
REFERENCES 83
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH 89

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF BOOTH'S PLURALISM

Wayne C. Booth is known for his role in the revival of rhetoric in the 20th century. He lived, taught, and wrote from the early sixties until his death in 2005. While many of his contemporaries were contributing to Modern and Postmodern theories (namely, Positivism during the Modern period and Deconstruction during the Postmodern period), Booth wrote extensively about a need for what he called "listening rhetoric" (LR) or a pursuit of understanding and pluralism. The way Booth defines Pluralism is founded on the belief that competing arguments may not be reconcilable, but if we listen (by use of LR) close enough, we may discover values and beliefs that many sides of an argument share. However, even if both sides cannot find common ground, we must practice LR because of the universal ethic of human dignity, of valuing our complex systems of ethics. Pluralism is an ethical approach to rhetoric in light of human dignity, and listening rhetoric is the foundational practice for Booth's pluralism. It calls for both sides to "join in a trusting dispute, determined to listen to the opponent's arguments, while persuading the opponent to listen in exchange. Each side attempts to *think* about the arguments presented by the other side" (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 47). While this listening takes place, he is not asking this to simply see which side "wins" the argument, but rather in hopes that both sides are seeking "a new reality, a new agreement about what is real" (47). He was convinced that LR (and not simply trying to convince the opposing argument) is the beginning of Pluralism. And Pluralism, the seeing of this "new reality", allows us to value our

disagreements and may possibly lead us to understanding beliefs that we share. This idea anchored much of Booth's writings and can be seen maturing throughout different rhetorical ideologies of the twentieth century. Pluralism can be seen in Booth's life as early as his undergraduate years, but as time passed Booth witnessed positivism and deconstruction theories diminish (either implicitly or explicitly) the importance of listening to one another's values and beliefs. The rejection of LR from these theories continued to create division and remove ethical criticism from literary and rhetorical studies, and Booth's understanding and allegiance to pluralism became more refined and pronounced in response to these theories.

The twentieth century rhetoricians, literary critics, and philosophers in question were not focused on objective moral claims. Though ethical criticism is deemed unimportant, Booth contends with these theories and argues that all rhetorical devices are full of ethical claims that influence our beliefs and values. As chapters two and three will demonstrate, Booth argues that even within the texts produced by modern and postmodern theorists, values and beliefs are interwoven and influential in our readings and thus demand our attention. Instead of ignoring these claims and assuming all value claims are merely subjective ("mere opinion"), we should weigh and judge them and hear each side of the argument to see how each competing argument can be reconciled. This was his goal, to uphold the dignity of diverse values and seek common grounds amongst opposing disputations. He believed that many times we can discover values that exists in competing arguments, even among those whom we disagree with the most, but such discovery depends upon our pursuit of understanding. Even if consensus was not possible on any grounds, "Nothing we ever work at," he wrote, "is more important than not just the drive to maintain peace with rivals but to understand them: to learn to think with them while assisting them to think with us in return." ("Confessions of An Aging, Hypocritical Ex-Missionary" 26)

This pursuit of understanding, the practice of listening rhetoric, is the foundation of his pluralism. This is the approach he employs throughout his career. To understand where this LR and his pluralism came from, we must start with his childhood.

Wayne Clayson Booth was born into a highly religious family. Every member was a devout Mormon. His community in central Utah consisted of Mormons, and he was discouraged from engaging with those not of his faith. He claims that by age fourteen he was, "what you might call an exclusivist, or a particularist, an anti-ecumenical version of Mormonism." (25). He began to challenge his faith, however, during his undergraduate years at Brigham Young University where he argued and debated with both "pious but unorthodox teachers" as well as orthodox "unforgiving" authority. As a last effort to prove devotion to his faith, at age twenty-four he became a missionary for the Latter Day Saints, still wrestling with the claims of Mormon dogma. The reason for at least some of his challenge came from a questioning of all monisms that claimed to deny the pluralistic nature of reality, but Booth could not ignore the fact that there are values and truths (ethical and moral) that are transcendent in nature. These values were foundational for Booth's character and ideology. As he writes in *My Many Selves,* "My main point is thus my daily gratitude for having been indoctrinated into the *fact* that there are serious moral limits to individualistic code breaking." (32) Booth would later hold to the teachings of these years that stressed "standards are real, not just invented" (32). It was during these years of questioning as well as encountering counter-arguments to his own religion that Booth's pluralism emerged as an alternative to this monism. "Without quite knowing it," he recounts in "Confessions of An Aging, Hypocritical Ex-Missionary", "the young man was discovering the pluralist religion that sparks my life now" (9). He defines this pluralism as "the passion for furthering multiple, always partial understandings of a world, a cosmos, a God, that/who

somehow deserves to be understood and commands that we both try to understand 'It' and live according to Its standards-even while It remains beyond any one formula" (9). Following his two years as a missionary, he moved to a missional post in Chicago where his "liberal" Missions President allowed him to enroll in night classes at the University of Chicago as a MA English student, and it would be this influential department that helped forge the pluralism Booth developed and practiced throughout his life.

The English department at the University of Chicago was known for its unique method of criticism. Booth's professors, Ronald S. Crane and Elder Olgan to name a few, were categorized as "Chicago Critics" for their unique perspectives on criticisms and methods of inquiry in literary and rhetorical analysis. In their collection of essays, *Critics and Criticism,* Crane writes that we must create an "objective criteria for interpreting the diversities and oppositions among critics" that is, a criteria that allows for understanding of all critical methods. If we seek this understanding, "critical approaches of the most diverse sorts can coexist without implying either contradiction or inconsistency" (*The Language of Criticism* 31). These approaches to literature served only as reinforcements to Booth's emerging pluralism. It was a critical theory that required listening, understanding, and seeking higher values while not dismissing the differences within the claims. "The moral," Crane goes on to say, "is surely that we ought to have...as many different critical methods as there are distinguishable major aspects in construction, appreciation, and use of literary works" (192). Booth would call R.S. Crane his "father-hero" in *My Many Selves* and would continue to refine the Chicago "neo-Aristotelian" method into a deeper form of pluralism long after leaving Chicago. "Like my teachers Ronald Crane and Richard McKeon," Booth writes, "I was pleased when students complained about my having been dogmatically committed to two authors who were obviously in flat conflict." (175) This commitment to

pluralism would reveal itself all the more when Booth published *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*. In that work, he was reacting to a student political movement that occurred at the University of Chicago. The chapters came from a series of lectures Booth gave as a plea for reconciliation between the students and the faculty.

The students had gathered for a sit-in demanding the then president of the University to rehire Marlene Dixon, a faculty professor of Sociology. The teacher was open about her Marxist ideology and had not been re-hired "for reasons kept secret!" (*Modern Dogma* 8). It wasn't very long, Booth tells us, until the original reasons of this protest (demanding the professor's rehiring) were drowned by a hundred others such as "day care centers to be provided by the university, doubling the salaries of unskilled university employees," and others. These protests reflected the anti-establishment sentiment in American culture at the end of the sixties, a period Booth recalls being named "an age of doubt, an age of skepticism, and - more recently - an age of unreason." (ix) The faculty, however, were also at fault by ignoring the students value and dismissing their dissent as "irrational". What Booth witnessed was a fierce debate in which both sides, the faculty and administration and the student body, were simply shouting at each other without any intention or consideration of the opposing view. This type of rhetoric stemmed from the immediate emotions aroused by the war in Vietnam and other injustices which played a role in the countercultural revolution. These events elevated a prevalent philosophy of the day, that of positivism. Booth saw the warrants of positivism rooted in both sides of the argument. That ideology became the characterization of Booth's Modernism.

The beliefs of Modernism and Positivism (chiefly the divide between facts and values) in academic circles would soon diminish in popularity and be replaced by "postmodern" theories. Postmodern philosophers (such as Foucault and Derrida) shifted the focus of literary criticism

and philosophy from abstract truths towards the function of language. They continued the argument that claims about moral truths and values were completely subjective. Booth found this new ideology challenged ethical pursuits and judged those pursuits as objectively irrelevant. Booth believed the deconstructionists seemed to understand the complexity and diverse nature of language, but meaning was always seen as language contingent and never existing outside of language. Deconstructionists and other Postmodernists were beginning to see meaning as a fluid construct of language. Consequently, their approach of deconstruction limited the ways criticism was practiced. It not only changed the approach to rhetoric, but also the nature and understanding of truth.

Complete subjectivists and moral relativists by definition denied the possibility of transcendent truths. Although both Positivism and Deconstruction are only unique expressions within the Modern and Postmodern cultures (respectively), most theories from these time periods proposed that moral claims are relative, either subjective to the individual or to a community of individuals. What Booth calls "Modernism" is actually a continuation of Positivism, the belief that the only truths we can/should believe are those that can be scientifically proven. But in postmodernism theories such as Deconstruction, critics questioned even those "positive" claims. These theories claimed that logic that led to such "positive" truths did not predicate language. In other words, we can't have certainty of anything because what we call facts are language based and not based on abstract truths. Truths were considered dependant upon contextual experience or referential to previous contexts. Truths were *created* to accomplish temporal tasks, not to represent a meta-lingual reality. In his article *Signature Event Context,* Jacques Derrida expresses this ideology when he writes, "Every concept...belongs to a systematic chain and constitutes in itself a system of predicates. There is no concept that is metaphysical in itself" (1490)

Subsequently, deconstructionists would take this to mean that a serious inquiry of morals was a useless search for meaning in a meaningless world.

Although one could argue Booth wrote *in order to* challenge these claims, he was really more interested in elevating the idea of Listening Rhetoric and pluralism while participating in dialogues with modern and postmodern claims. He believed that modernism and postmodernism suppressed the ethic of listening and pluralism. Pluralism requires ethical rhetorical choices, mainly of seeking to understand as much as one is seeking to be understood. Because positivists and postmodernists believed that all moral claims were relative, there was no urgency for employing an ethic of listening. Booth, as we shall see, was convinced that transcendent truths existed, and although he wasn't employing Pluralism to arrive at transcendent truths, he defends the idea that listening is an end-in-itself. LR and seeking understanding was a transcendent ethical truth that acknowledged the value human beliefs. He contended with Positivists' and Postmodernists' claims about the relativity of all moral truths because they effectively "shut out" ethical inquiry (diminishing the value of different perspectives) while Booth stressed the need to listen and adhere to competing arguments. To listen to our adversaries in effective discourse required an awareness and practice of ethics, mainly the ethic of human dignity. Whether our beliefs concerned science, or the value of academic pursuit, or religion, or anything else, it is impossible to divide our ethical nature from discourse. Suppressing our ethical nature or ignoring our core beliefs about moralities results in naming ethical discourse and critical assertions "mere opinion."

The debate on the nature of truth (whether transcendent or only subjective can be known) is anything but a new argument. The study of epistemology has been an important part of philosophy for thousands of years, but it is uniquely valuable to the study of persuasion.

Persuasion requires some foundational understanding about how knowledge is transferred and the nature of belief in particular. Booth's development of pluralism in response to positivism and deconstruction can be clarified by putting evolution of Booth's pluralism within the historical context of Plato's debate with the sophist's ideology. Some of Booth's beliefs in transcendent truth derive from arguments that Plato expresses through Socrates in opposition to the subjective truths of the sophists. But it was the sophist Protagoras who proposed a prototype of pluralism that would become foundational to Booth's own approach to rhetoric. It was an understanding that values and beliefs create irreconcilable conflicts that require us to pursue understanding and urge us to act ethically through a willingness to change our minds. Although Booth rejected the complete subjectivism that Plato accused the Sophists of employing, he believed in an idea the sophists propagated, that of pluralism. Plato was a monist who called for singularity of knowledge, while Booth claimed that there was real value in seeking to understand and clarify beliefs that appear to be irreconcilable.

Plato and Protagoras

Who Socrates really was has been subject of debate since his death. Because Socrates never wrote his own works, but was rather written about by Plato and other admirers, it is difficult to pin down his "true" beliefs about objective values and absolute truths. This "Socrates Problem" has caused much debate in philosophy. Gregory Vlastos has argued that Plato begins writing as an admirer and devotee of Socrates when he first pens *Apology* at the age of twenty-five. As Plato gets older and his ideas are more refined, Vlastos believes Plato shifts Socrates' position on certain subjects so as to align Socrates with Plato's own philosophy. As Socrates was vastly popular after his death, it is thought that Plato used his influence as a platform for his own

ideas. This "Developmentalism" helps us understand Socrates as a construct of Plato's own philosophy as it is being worked out throughout his life (Nails 1).

Through Socrates' arguments, we see Plato's position on universal values. Plato claims we live in a world of objective truths, where certain values and moral standards transcend culturally contingent contexts, and it is the philosopher's job to draw out these truths from within people (*Theaetetus).* Plato calls these objective realities the "forms". They work as sort of a mold for how all relevant applications should be fashioned. Our ideas of the perfect marriage, family, or state come from one ultimate reality in the cosmos that we as humanity must do our best to adhere to. These forms are more than man-made "ideals", but are rather truths that can be understood through the practice of philosophy. Plato's purpose was to reveal what these forms were and help others adapt their lives to living by those standards. Booth agrees with Plato that transcendent truths (forms) do in fact exist. Evidence of this can be seen in nearly all of Booth's writings. In *My Many Selves,* Booth claims that Truth, Beauty, and Goodness "go on living, not just in other creatures, but in the Whole of Things" (303). He claims these transcendent realities are *discovered* and not simply "invented". Again in *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric,* Booth calls himself one who leans on the "Platonic side" of the absolute truth argument saying that rhetoric does create some contingent realities but nonetheless can help us in the *discovery* of ultimate truths, not simply contingent realities (13).

Although Booth agrees with Plato that there are "transcendent truths," he differs from Plato in that he does not see the purpose of discourse to eliminate multiple meanings and narrow everything down to one monistic claim. "I believe in pursuing truths," he writes, "but I'm not a *dogmatic* 'truther.'"(*My Many Selves* 302) His encouragement of competing claims is rooted in rhetorical traditions that date back to Protagoras and show Booth's unique position as the middle

ground between Plato and Protagoras. Plato spent several works (especially those on rhetoric) criticizing sophists like Protagoras for being complete relativists, but Booth sees value in the kind of proto-pluralism that Protagoras seems to encourage even as Booth accepted Plato's belief in transcendent truths. This valuing of both schools of thought is a demonstration of Booth's pluralism.

Protagoras is credited with coining the phrase, "man is the measure of all things," but equally as influential as this proponent for relativism is Protagoras' doctrine of opposing arguments. "On every issue," he writes, "there are two opposing arguments." As Mendelson describes in his book *Many Sides,* Protagoras solidifies in this statement *perspectivism* which Mendelson interprets as the "human-measure doctrine" which implies "that all experience is based on, measured by, [and] filtered through the perceptual apparatus of the individual." Our understandings of truth are subject to variation and the multitude of perspectives by the community in which we engage in discourse. Plato argued that claims are bivalent, they are either true or false, because objective truths are not contradictory to each other (*Theaetetus*). Plato's approach is one of *monism*: all truths are in congruence with other truths. Protagoras, on the other hand, is fundamentally opposed to this monism.

To Protagoras (and as we will see, to Booth also), Plato's monistic view and polarization of all claims (rendering them either fact or fiction) minimizes the account of the many (not simply two) perspectives on any given subject. Protagoras believed that all people share the same physical world and deal with the same issues that this world posits. Like Booth, he believes that each person has a unique perspective through which they view the world. Mendelson expresses Protagoras' position by writing, "knowledge is best seen as multivalent, an expression of the variations that distinguish the human community and our diverse ways of knowing" (5).

Protagoras and Booth are suggesting we look at the world through the lens of pluralism, that the world can have truth claims that are both varied and even conflicting with each other and still we should value these competing claims as part of the wealth of knowledge and perspectives on the subject. This need not result in claiming that the world itself has no objective reality; it simply means that there is an inevitability that people's perspectives will cause them to disagree and perhaps even contradict one another.

Protagoras and other Sophists, however, created some followers who are complete relativists. Some Postmodern authors have taken the idea of perspectivism to claim that all knowledge and moral beliefs and values are only constructs of our individual experiences. What follows is a withdrawal from pursuing transcendent truths into skepticism. This moral relativism is rooted in the idea that transcendent truths, eternal realities, could not be discovered by men (Bizzell and Herzberg 1635). Because of mankind's dependency on empirical learning and because empirical experience can change between people and at different times, no definitive claims could be made or understood by mankind. As Protagoras said, "Many things prevent knowledge including the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life" as quoted in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Poster). Because of this, "ultimate truths" were impossible to discover and thus vainly pursued by philosophers such as Plato. On the other hand, Plato believed rhetoric was useful only if used to discover objective truths. To Protagoras, rhetoric was the means of achieving a relative good, and to Booth, it is a means of righting misunderstandings and finding consensus of shared values through LR. Booth found himself centered between the two believing as Plato did, that there are transcendent truths that are not contingent, but also believing we need an approach to Rhetoric like that of Protagoras, which Booth called pluralism.

Booth and Plato had vastly different approaches to rhetoric. Plato believes in a monist way of discovering truth and that Truth itself is a universal singularity without any contradictions. Booth, on the other hand, believed that some moral truths exist, but argued for a pluralistic approach that encouraged the acceptance of the inevitability of controversies. He believed in the higher moral truth of human dignity and interpreted dignity as truly listening and seeking understanding with others. Unlike Plato, Booth encouraged multiple voices and perspectives on issues in hopes we would become more ethical in our inquiry into knowledge. This approach towards discourse was more prevalent in Plato's student, Aristotle. Booth found Aristotle's teachings on rhetoric more helpful as it took a more centrist role between amoral sophistry and Plato monism. Aristotle's works on ethics, morality, or belief, affirmed Booth's beliefs of universal truths, but even more helpful was Aristotle's method of inquiry that would play a role in Booth's pluralism.

The Role of Aristotle in Booth's Life

Although Aristotle believed the sophists were deceptive and their moral relativism logically flawed, he differed from Plato because he saw rhetoric as a necessary tool to bring people into knowledge of the truth. Booth also agrees with this claim when he writes *The Rhetorical Stance,* "[I believe in] the old Aristotelian truth that the good rhetorician must be master of his subject." (1) A master of one's subject, in other words, must employ good rhetorician who can persuade others to believe their claims.

Aristotle divides knowledge as either *apodeixis* (based on certainty or "capable of demonstration") or *dialectic* (involving probable truths). He writes that rhetoric's role is *dialetic*, to help us illuminate these probable truths,

> "No other of the arts draws opposite conclusions: dialectic and rhetoric alone do this… Nevertheless, the underlying facts do not lend themselves equally well to the contrary views...things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in (*Rhetoric* 181)."

For Aristotle, rhetoric was our means of coming as near the truth as possible given our circumstances. He knew people needed a means of discussing truths of probability. This approach involves some aspects of pluralism, but it remains compatible to the Platonic notion of using rhetoric to promote dialectic truths based on probability.

He was, like Plato, against the sophists' method of using rhetoric for their own means. "What makes a man a sophist," he claimed, "is not his faculty, but his moral purpose." (181) And in saying this, he separates the noble faculty (rhetoric) from the "immoral" motivations of the sophists and so rescues rhetoric's reputation. Rhetoric is worthy of mastering as an ability for a man to "discover the means of coming as near such success as the circumstances of each particular case allow." This rescuing was repeated by Booth who believed in a type of rhetoric that could *correct* misunderstandings (through listening) and be used for the public good. Part of the "ethical value" of rhetoric is trying to understand competing arguments in a dispute, to understand which ethical values and beliefs are shared in a community of discourse. But more important than Aristotle's pursuit of truths is how Aristotle sets up a method of discourse for such pursuits. This method would take hold of the English department at the University of Chicago and would permanently influence and direct Booth's pluralism as he studied this style of argument under the Chicago scholastics.

The Chicago school of criticism was spearheaded by Ronald S. Crane during his years at UC from 1930 - 1952. This school of thought adhered to the Aristotelian concepts of genre and form. Although Crane and Olsen reject Aristotle's broad claims about truths, calling them dogmatic, Crane believed Aristotle

> "grasped the distinctive nature of poetic works as *synola*, or concrete artistic wholes, and made available, though only in outline sketch, hypotheses and analytical devices for defining literally and inductively, and with a maximum degree of differentiation, the multiple causes operative in the construction of poetic wholes of various kinds" (*Critics and Criticism* 17).

This methodological basis in Aristotle for a critical "openness" was adopted by Crane and the Chicago school and gave them the label "Neo-Artistotelian". Crane expresses this openness when he writes in reference to the New Critics whom he believed were dogmatic in their method of literary criticism. New Criticism called for a subjective reading of literary works that claimed only the text itself should be used to determine the meaning of the text. Although the Chicago critics agreed in the "centrality of textual analysis in literary study", they rejected the New Critics' claim that there was only "one way" of performing such an analysis, of arriving at meaning. In essence, the New Critics demanded a singular "authoritarian" method of finding meaning within the text. Contrary to this, Crane insisted we needed "a general critique of literary criticism...such as might yield objective criteria for interpreting the diversities and oppositions among critics and for judging the comparative merits of rival critical school" (*Critics and Criticism* 5). Crane was calling for pluralism amongst his rival critics. This was the climate of literary criticism when Booth earned his PhD under these Chicago critics in 1950.

As Crane used Pluralism as an alternative to the New Critic's method of literary analysis, Booth used Pluralism as a formula to cure the problems brought on by Positivism. Positivism had created a culture of ardent monists on a much larger scale and in many more circles than just in literary criticism. Booth takes the Pluralism he learned from Crane and applied its principles to the rhetoric of his day in an effort to resolve conflict that Modernist philosophy brought with it.

Booth's Pluralism in Response to Modern/Postmodern Ideologies

Modernism, to Booth, is an embodiment of Positivism. Positivism claimed that true knowledge is that which can be proven through scientific method, proven as testable fact. This meant that only what could be known with certainty had value. True knowledge doesn't come from beliefs or value because such assertions are theoretical and cannot be scientifically tested. This created a culture that didn't have a method to express or defend or banter about one's beliefs or values. The "certain" knowledge that science implied offered no real answer to questions about moral and ethical values. Consequently, the academic culture in the 60s and 70s was polarized either abiding in rationalism or aestheticism. This polarization must have reminded Booth of his Mormon childhood where the monism by which he lived excluded the world's ethical counter-arguments and rejected methods of pluralism. But the Pluralism Booth learned through the teachings of his professors at the University of Chicago had prepared him for responding to modernism's ideals. Most "moderns" have held the claim that a person's values should never "intrude upon your cognitive life-that thought and knowledge and fact are on one side and affirmations of value on the other" (*Modern Dogma* 13). The acceptance of that dichotomy is the most defining trait of "Modernism" as far as Booth is concerned. This split between the "facts" and our "values" created irreconcilable camps, and Booth believed the only means of drawing the two together in meaningful dialogue was through pluralism.

The philosophy of Positivism was clearly represented by the writer and philosopher Bertrand Russell. Booth confronts the problems of positivism as it is portrayed in Russell because to him, Russell is a good picture of what Modernism has become in Booth's environment. Booth shows (as I will demonstrate in chapter two) how even Russell finds his own values "indefensible" and must resort to extreme methods of "preaching" or one-sided persuasion when expressing his beliefs and values. This is in part due to the fact that Russell believes the universe is "value-free", that the true nature of the cosmos is indifferent to ethical and moral claims. This belief leaves Russell and the modernists with no *true* reason to ever change their minds. When Booth is writing to the students and faculty at the University of Chicago in the late early seventies, he is imploring them to reject this monistic view of the world and instead embrace a pluralist view that allows for conflicting arguments to coexist without resorting to dehumanizing opposing opinions. Russell believed our values were unrelated to the "facts", and similarly, Booth's colleague, Richard Posner, believed our values were inconsequential in the worth of literature.

Posner's position to reject ethical criticism in literary studies posed the same argument as Russell did in philosophy: a split between what we value and what "is". What Posner suggests is that we ignore ethical claims within a literary work, and stick to judging the work on the basis of "aesthetic" qualities. He states that our ethical beliefs, our moral values (or those of the author), should not play a role in our criticism and discussions of rhetorical pieces. Our values are "mere opinions" and are inconsequential to our readings in literature. But by removing ethical criticism, we are left without a way to share our values and the values within the text. In the second chapter, I will explain how this idea removes listening rhetoric and pluralism from our discourse and the pursuit of transcendent values becomes futile. While Positivism focused on truths that

could only be "positively" proven, Postmodernism turned its focus against the assumption that language founded on logic could discover such truths in the first place.

Postmodern theory shifts from abstract principles outside the context of language, even those principles within science, to what Bizzell and Herzberg call a "language-oriented analysis of concepts (1188)." Most philosophers within this period (from the late 60s through the 90s) became more interested in semantics when speaking about philosophical claims. Foucault and Derrida, according to Bizzell and Herzberg are the "champion[s] of postmodern opposition to philosophy's quest for universals and absolutes (1196)." This rejection of transcendent truths again squandered efforts to seriously listen to ethical claims as harboring possible higher realities.

It was argued that truth claims, or anything transmitted in language, had contextual relevance alone and were not alluding to some ethereal objective truth. Jacques Derrida and Deconstructive Criticism became widely popular and demonstrated a unique characteristic of Postmodern theory. The theory argues that there is no difference between what we call "literary" language and ordinary language. It claims that all language is figurative and doesn't actually refer to anything "real." Booth defines the deconstructionists as those "who seem to argue that literary works are nothing more than texts or systems of signs, refer to no 'reality' other than themselves and other texts" (*The Company We Keep* 7). Consequently, postmodernists focus on the language constructed realities instead of actually contesting with claims themselves.

Booth discards the postmodern idea that language was the end in itself, that the currency of claims was language, and that language creates meanings that are contingent on social contexts. As chapter three will demonstrate, truth is not created and sustained by semiotics or language, but rather it is discovered by language. He writes, "it is important to repeat that current

critics are wrong when they [claim] that everything is totally contingent. Rhetoric did make the reality of our discovery, but it did not make the ethical truth itself." (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 13) He explores how authors who make such claims face the difficulty of not being able to make claims at all in a completely subjective reality. This makes our beliefs and values "mere opinion" and our pursuit of understanding and pluralism inconsequential in discovering objective claims. Booth believes we stop truly "listening" to one another when we assume that our differences are irreconcilable and completely subjective. What he offers us through pluralism is the idea that though our values are irreconcilable, we must make our aim a mutual understanding of our differences and a pursuit of common ground given that transcendent truths (such as valuing ethical differences) exist and are worthy of pursuit.

Booth's Pluralism differentiates Booth's work from postmodern theory. What absolute relativist are claiming, Booth tells us, is an excuse to not be careful in our criticism. As he writes in *Modern Dogma,* "If it's all mere opinion or disguised power play, why pretend to reason carefully about it?" (*Modern Dogma* 82) Wouldn't criticism simply become a shouting match? He sees this subjectivism as a self-refuting argument because if all claims are truly subjective and the scales of measure are nothing but temporal constructs, then as Booth claims, "Nothing is more than anything else. In fact, nothing in such a universe is really worth anything at all. Everything just is. Or rather, isn't." (82) Booth demonstrates that postmodern critics cannot claim all truth is relative and language contingent while advancing this claim as "true" without falling into contradiction. They would otherwise not be asserting their claims.

And so, from Booth's first confrontation of his Mormon rearing to his death, he is consistently opposing monisms and offering pluralism as a means of discourse. A pluralism that renounces the core premises of positivism, deconstruction, and subjectivism which have created

divisions. Instead, pluralism moves us to seeking understanding with the possibility of illuminating common ground among disagreements. A lack of critical understanding, of rhetorical listening, will continue until we see and embrace the fact that interlocutors defending irreconcilable values can still achieve mutual understanding and even recognize that they share commitments to common values. Even if common values are not discovered, by practicing understanding, we are upholding the ethical value of human dignity by showing we value our diverse beliefs.

Conclusion

In the subsequent chapters, I will continue to unpack Booth's understanding and commitment to pluralism in both Modernism and Postmodernism. Chapter two is devoted to Booth's defense of beliefs and values and transcendent truths within a culture of Positivism that proposed that only scientifically based facts can be "true." I will show how this led to disagreeing parties to stop listening to each other because of an assumption that *there is no reason to change one's mind* concerning values and beliefs. Because both sides stop listening to each other, neither understands or sees the transcendent values that exists within both sides of the argument. Even though their disagreements may never be reconciled, if they both practiced pluralism instead of monism (simply trying to win an argument), they would come to see that there are presumptions that both parties agree on, values that both share.

In chapter three, I will focus on Booth's alternative of pluralism in the face of Deconstruction theory. I will demonstrate how Booth aligns himself with some (but not all) of Jacques Derrida's claims about language. I will show how Booth also found language to be pluralistic in nature (i.e. leading to a multitude of possible meanings). Nevertheless, I will juxtapose his pluralism against Deconstruction, the idea that all truth claims are simply a result

of language and not possibly transcendent in any way. Booth's pluralism proposes that there are values that transcend language and context (even among irreconcilable beliefs) and common values can be discovered through pluralism. To employ this pluralism, we must listen and seek to understand competing arguments, not as constructs of a given context so as to explain *why* people come to such conclusions, but instead to contend with the claims themselves and see what possible values are shared among two conflicting claims within a dispute. This understanding stems from the transcendent ethical truth of upholding human values and beliefs.

In my fourth chapter, I will explain in further detail Wayne Booth's pluralism in rhetorical studies and show how it was a continuation of Isaiah Berlin's pluralism within political science. I will draw connections between Berlin's pursuit of pluralism and the health of society and Booth's pursuit of pluralism for our rhetorical practices. I will then demonstrate how Listening Rhetoric plays the main role in his version of pluralism and how LR is practiced within actual disputes. Finally, I will show how Booth calls us to enact upon Pluralism to better understand each other and the truths and values the universe consists of for the improvement of our discourse.

The fact/value split of Positivism and the language contingent realities of Postmodernism were based on the same claims: transcendent moral truths and values either did not exist or were incapable of being discovered. As we've seen, this was not a newly proposed idea, but rather one that the sophists believed thousands of years ago. Booth offers an alternative: on the one hand, transcendent values exists (specifically the dignity of human life and belief) and on the other hand, all texts are indeed rhetorical and should be recognized for their ethical claims. In response to the reality of valuing human dignity, it is our job to engage in ethical criticism by practicing LR in a pursuit of pluralism. Pluralism that doesn't demand we change our approach or claims,

but only listen to others and determine what values we share. What motivated Booth to contend for such realities was the political and divisive climate that surrounded him. He witnessed the tragedy that incurred when people were incapable of arguing for meaningful, shared values. The idea of complete subjectivity of truth caused a conflict with anyone who tried to assert their beliefs, and the need for understanding (the foundation of pluralism) becomes petty and of little importance. It furthermore made it more improbable for people to change their minds *for the better.* And that was Booth's intention, to use rhetoric as a means of improving our lives through listening.

Many remnants of both modern and postmodern theory exists today in the humanities, and the divisiveness of our culture has only increased and spread to nearly every facet of our lives. Booth's arguments for human dignity can still be applied through pluralism today. He believed that it is necessary that as students of rhetoric we weigh and consider the ethical claims of all works in order to obtain a broad and complex collection of perspectives. He claimed that Pluralism is our only hope for achieving understanding between competing arguments, the many that bombard us constantly. We see his call for critical understanding as means for pluralism in his earlier works when the academic and political climate was largely Positivist, and the idea of Positivism rightly summarizes the Modern era.

CHAPTER II

PLURALISM AND POSITIVISM

The term Modernism has taken numerous definitions since its beginnings. In rhetorical and literary studies, it accounts for the cultural ideals that exercised cultural dominance beginning in the late nineteenth century through the end of the second World War, and although scholars have adapted new perspectives, traces of Modernism can still be seen today. Modernism was a cultural development in attitude and approach towards art, social sciences, psychology, philosophy, and nearly every facet of first-world communities. It was a culmination of previous ideologies from the Enlightenment as well as a result from the Industrial Revolution, the role of modern governments, globalization, and an infinite number of other factors occurring in Europe and the Americas in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This chapter will focus on Booth's offer of pluralism in response to the problems put forward in Modernism. We will define Modernism as a philosophical orientation rooted in positivism. We will begin by showing the roots of positivism and its progression from the Enlightenment into the twentieth century. I will demonstrate how what began as an approach to studying the natural sciences turned into a split between the "facts" of the universe and our "values" and beliefs. I will show how this split created a suspicion of rhetoric and made the need to seek and understand one another's ethical and moral values fruitless. Following this, we will see how Booth addresses and deals with this devaluing of our beliefs in the rhetoric and debates of his students and the faculty at the University of Chicago. This will lead us to a critical analysis

of Bertrand Russell whose positivist ideology is represented in the aforementioned context during the 1970s. We will also consider positivist works in literature studies such as Richard Posner's "Against Ethical Criticism" and literary critic, John Carey, and how these critics use the "fact/value" split to remove ethical criticisms from readings of a given text. Finally, we will examine the Positivist belief about a value-free universe and see how Booth answers the question, "Does life have value?"

To begin, we must understand the term "Modernism" as Booth used it in his works. Even within the humanities, there are multiple definitions and complexities to the term, but when Booth wrote *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, he defined "Modernism" as a construct of dogmatic claims that seem prevalent in his scholastic environment. These are claims situated around the beliefs and values of Positivism. Booth and others have identified in Positivism a common foundation of resentment towards rhetoric as means of discovering probable truths. Positivism believes that the only trusted means of finding warrantable belief is through scientific methods (Bizzell and Herzberg 1491).

This method of epistemology left assent and values without provable means. As Booth describes the scene, "from the seventeenth century until quite recently [1973], it grew increasingly unfashionable to see the universe… 'the facts' as implicating values." (*Modern Dogma* 14) *Modern Dogma* contains only a fraction of the Modernism Booth challenges throughout his life, but many of his arguments against Positivism are set up in this work. Frederick Antczak describes *Modern Dogma* in his introduction of *Rhetoric and Pluralism* as "an attempt to found and enact a peaceable, pluralistic community of those readers whose essential assent was an assent to rhetoric - to the pursuit of good reasons together." (6) *Modern*

Dogma is also the work Booth writes to challenge the student and faculty of the University of Chicago to enact pluralism as an ethical approach to dialogue.

Origins of Positivism

Booth charges Positivism for the cause of why the students and faculty at the University of Chicago were not pursuing "good reasons together" in the early seventies. We can see the roots of Positivism emerging at the dawn of the Enlightenment period through the writings of René Descartes who believed that only through experimentation and not mental disputation can factual claims about the universe be made (Bizzell and Herzberg 793). Descartes established the idea that we can only know what can be known *in certainty.* The means of discovering that certainty is to examine the remains after applying what Booth called "the universal solvent of doubt to every belief." (*Modern Dogma* 55) Doubt, which forms the basis of Positivist inquiry, claims that only testable certainty is true and of value. One vital aspect of Descartes' philosophy is the importance of doubt in what cannot be proven and trust through experimentation. His work was published near the time when the same core assertions were championed by the Royal Society: an abandonment of all non-empirical knowledge and a belief that scientific inquiry delivers the only Absolutes upon which knowledge can be based.

The Royal Society of London, an elite group of natural philosophers (scientists) and physicians in England, were first assembled in 1660. Their motto was "*nullius in verba"* roughly translated "take nobody's word for it" ("Incredible"). They declared themselves "enemies of eloquence" and demanded the sciences and subjects of philosophy only use plain, valueless language. Their declaration signaled a historical shift away from the study of rhetoric to more "concrete" and "virtuous" subjects of academics (Thomas Sprat). It was part of Europe's transition out of the Renaissance age into a new period of scientific discovery and cultural

renovation later called the Enlightenment. It was centuries later in 1908, when that same Royal Society endowed Bertrand Russell with the Sylvester Medal (awarded for research in mathematics) and elected him as a member (Kreisel). Russell was a Logician, and his passion for logic became an integral part of his philosophy. He could not, however, ignore that our emotions, our passions, drive our actions and can only be analyzed as wise or unwise. Nevertheless, he classified emotions and passions as a product of our "animal" nature ("The Analysis of Mind" 61-62). He called this divide between knowledge and our emotions the separation between "the happy realms of exactness where pure thought can disport itself in freedom" and "the doubtful problems in which emotion must have its place" (*Bertrand Russell's Dictionary of the Mind* preface).

The Royal Society's skepticism was further developed in the 18th century by Scottish philosopher, David Hume. Hume argued in *A Treatise of Human Nature* that our ideas about the world come from our senses only and not from reasoning, testimony, or revelation (*Nature*). Booth highlights how Hume and other positivists believed in a rationality for a "standard of taste" in ethical and non-ethical situations. He claims Hume believed that people ought to believe and act in certain ways in order to be "reasonable" (*Modern Dogma* 15). Hume believed a rational argument could be made for what people considered valuable and believed some values and beliefs were in fact irrational or "not helpful" for society in general. But the word "helpful" had ethical implications, and thus from the beginning, positivism faced a self-division. The argument for developing a "helpful" set of values demanded an assessment of what is considered "helpful" and thus required a conversation concerning "the good" of mankind, a question of ethics.

The term “Positivism” was coined by the philosopher and the first sociologist, Auguste Comte. He claimed that societies developed their knowledge through three different stages. They begin with theological explanations, then metaphysical, until they arrive at the “positive” or “scientific” stage of knowledge. He called this the highest form of a society’s epistemology. Through making these claims, in *The Course in Positive Philosophy* Comte alienated claims that couldn’t be scientifically tested, those outside of empirical learning. He was a moral relativist who claimed, “the only absolute is that everything is relative … especially when social institutions are concerned”. What cannot be proven, such as how civic life *should* be lived, is founded on subjectivism, moral relativism. Values and beliefs that “work” are those pursued by societies, not necessarily values and beliefs that are transcendent, since such definitions are subjective. And that sentiment of complete moral relativism passed on through Booth’s own time such as in *The Moral Dilemma of Positivism,* where Anthony D’Amato admits that Positivists “have a difficult time in dealing with moral questions once they begin by insisting that law and morality are and ought to be separate from each other” (D’Amato 1) Part of the Modernism dogma is the belief that facts are facts and everything else is subjective.

Modernism is not limited to the beliefs of positivism, but as Booth sees it, Modernism embodies many of Positivism’s claims. Modernism rejects the importance of ethical criticism and by doing so removes a place where ethics can be discussed, discovered, and evaluated for the health of the society. It eliminates public discourse over subjects that are inseparably tied to human affairs. In a sense, Modernism is ignoring a vital and substantial part of the human experience: what is the role of belief? The answers to these are not “scientific proofs” or positive universals, but are nonetheless necessary for societies. Booth is not alone in his critique of

Positivism. Kenneth Burke had also seen the threat Positivism posed to ethical criticism and even more so, to rhetoric.

Burke defines Positivists rather cynically in his *Grammar of Motives* as those "who would discard the category of substance [and] assert that the only meaningful propositions are those which are capable of scientific proof." (52) They "outlaw" the persuasive powers of rhetoric. Burke further claims that they "blandly concede" that science is not always *actually* possible, "but must be possible in principle," which in fact leaves them with no *positivity* at all. The reliance on such principles requires belief, and within belief is an assertion of value. Positivism *values* positive knowledge and infers that scientific principles are the only principles that should guide our lives. And in this proof that even the Positivists employ values concerning the "facts," we see Booth's claim that beliefs and values are inseparable from rhetoric, even rhetoric concerning the sciences. This belief that all rhetoric includes ethical claims was first proposed by Booth outside the debate with the Modernists. Booth's first book was looking at how fiction works as a rhetorical tool, imploring us to enter into its imaginary world and accept a list of ethical norms. Our enjoyment of the text, Booth argues, is tied to whether we accept those structures or reject them outright.

Booth's aim in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is specifically concerned with the ethics of fiction works. His response to the aestheticists (who claimed the chief concern of literary criticism should be the aesthetic/artistic qualities such as form and style) is that it is the *implied* author's set of values that we must come to terms with. He begins his argument by reminding us of Aristotle's claims about poetry: that every artistic work has "it's own soul, it's own *principles of being*" (93) and by those principles we must live and reason with *while* we are reading. Those principles include the beliefs and values of the implied author as shown through the text. Booth

argues that to the degree in which I agree with the implied author's beliefs, I will enjoy his/her work. Similarly, as we read we must subjugate (at least in part) our "mind and heart" to the work by agreeing to the implied author's ethical terms if we are to enjoy it. If that implied author implies that we commend a character we deem implorable, our lack of alliance with that judgement affects our reading of the text.

His evidence for this phenomenon is demonstrated when the reader undergoes some "change" in ideology and re-reads an old work which at one time they thoroughly enjoyed. Because of their changed beliefs, their new set of values, they do not enjoy the work in the same way they once did. This is because our new beliefs and values directly affect our literary responses. He explains that our beliefs don't have to be in total agreement with the implied author's, but the relevancy of those beliefs are always an acting agent of the "aesthetics" by which we judge the work. If ethical claims are part of our experience with these rhetorical acts (such as fiction), then we must give heed to ethical claims. To give heed to these claims requires that we pursue understanding through practicing listening rhetoric. Every rhetorical work, Booth believed, is filled with ethical claims, and many of those claims are contradictory to what we believe. Booth suggests that through understanding seemingly irreconcilable arguments, we learn to live with our differences and cherish our diverse value structure, whether common ground is eventually discovered or not. Even if our disagreement with an author's ethical stance creates dissatisfaction with their work, we must truly seek to understand that ethical position and value it as part of the human experience. But most critics during the Modern period ignored these ethical questions and instead focused on aesthetic qualities due to a separation of facts from values.

The Fact/Value Split

The Fact/Value split is what Booth claims marks the foundations of Positivism since its origins. The notions of excluding our values when reading fiction, which he addressed in *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* he later addressed in the political movement of the 60s and 70s. He claims the belief "that you cannot and indeed should not allow your values to intrude upon your cognitive life" was at the core of Positivist reasoning. This idea, he claimed in 1973 "has been until recently a dogma for all right-thinking moderns." This ideology continued within his academic community throughout his life. Again in *The Company We Keep,* a book he wrote a decade after *Modern Dogma*, Booth still finds "it is not hard to find literary critics, novelists, and poets who [reject a marriage of reason and ethics]." (*The Company We Keep* 165)

In the majority of these works he unpacked this assertion that ethics were completely irrelevant to the "nature" of things. Separating "fact" from "values" in this sense helps scientists take an "objective" stance on findings in their research, but because it has seeped into every subject of inquiry it has made civil discourse and ethical criticism difficult to understand and employ. Positivism implied that scientific method is the only means of knowing, but in reality what can be helpful for some studies is not helpful for others. Charles Gillispie demonstrates this principle of needing a varied approach in one's epistemology when he writes in *The Edge of Objectivity,* "neither in public nor in private life can science establish an ethic. It tells what we can do, never what we should." (154) A divisive culture, like Booth's, would view the split as demanding allegiance of either one side or the other. Booth claims that since the beginning of the 20th century, this split has become a "truism" and though challenged by many, has become the norm in his day (1973).

Positivists expected that researchers and intellectuals across the board both acknowledge and adhere to this rejection of ethical influence, lest their work be seen as "subjective" and refutable. Booth claims that this belief has become so foundational to modernists that they cling to it as dearly as religious people cling to their teaching. For this reason he equates this Fact/Value split as a dogma of his "modern" environment. In his later work, *Rhetoric of Rhetoric,* Booth sets before the reader this fundamental of Positivism. He then says, "If you are tempted by such a claim [that facts are warrantable and values aren't], just pick up any book in the science section of your bookstore and read any paragraph." (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 57) He challenges his readers to flag words that "offer no empirically testable facts and instead rely on rhetorical sources." What sort of rhetorical sources is he expecting the reader to see? He ensues to point out through a biology textbook, *This is Biology: The Science of the Living World*, specific examples where rhetorical choices are made to better persuade the readers. Through three different examples, he shows that the authors of this biology textbook have chosen *specific* words that are best suited for the type of work they are writing, the type of audience who is reading, and the cultural situation in which the text will be read. All which require rhetorical choices that have nothing to do with "scientific" or "provable" fact, but are rather methods of ethos, pathos, and logos, that better present the text in a way that is more effective. The fact/value split ignores the fact that such rhetorical choices are taking place, especially in these "rational" texts.

The fact/value split represents the exact opposite of Booth's Pluralism. Positivism claims values and knowledge are exclusive, while Booth posits they are inclusive. When Positivists seek a united, all inclusive reality that can be tested and proven, they are cutting out anything unprovable through their methods of inquiry (values and beliefs). Pluralism, by contrast, is

"probing… the possibility of a full embrace of more than one critical method without reducing pluralities to one, or multiplying them to a vague or meaningless infinity, or cancelling them out into zero." (*Critical Understanding* 25). What Booth comes to believe, as we read his later works, is that although claims are not "reducible" to some other "superior mode (as Plato would have it)", they contribute to the complexity of values that exist in dialogue. Patsy Callaghan and Ann Dobyns' commentary on *Modern Dogma* summarize it fittingly when they write,

> "The dialogue itself builds the self, so we discover who we are and become who we are through communicating with each other. Through this process the world and truth are both found and made, and the act of finding meaning together supersedes the importance of any particular product." (*Rhetoric and Pluralism* 240).

The exclusivity of Positivism and the fact/value split are the problem, and Booth shows this problem of positivism has seeped into numerous other fields among other scholars.

Positivism had grown out of scientific pursuits and into various other academic pursuits, but Booth finds himself in a good company of critics who see the claims of positivism problematic. Booth uses the credibility of these respected scholars who oppose a Face/Value split in his rhetoric. He recalls Kenneth Burke who spoke about this issue in *Language of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* calling the "troubles that have been plaguing us" a product of the "domineering dichotomy between the cognitive and the emotive." (247-47; 262). He points to the structuralists, namely Claude Levi-Strauss, who in *The Savage Mind* demonstrates the overwhelming importance of finding values in facts when studying anthropology. Another anthropologist in his day, Robert Redfield, claimed that the presence of moral universals exists in all cultures because "necessary conditions for these values are present in all society" ("Relations

of Anthropology to the Social Sciences and the Humanities"). Booth also claims psychologists like George Kelly and Jerome Bruner recognize they cannot do their work without breaking from the dogma of the Fact/Value split. Their work in dependent upon the fact that human observations are intrinsically tied to their system of values (*The Psychology of Personal Constructs* and *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand.)* In law, Charles Fried argues that some values (he uses the term "ends") are rationally made (*Modern Dogma* 210). Booth claims most contemporary philosophers believe that seeing the world as it is infers certain values (*The Company We Keep* 165) and names Donagan, Gewirth, MacIntyre, Williams, Putnam, and others as examples. These philosophers express about life what Booth sees as a truth in rhetoric: "we live in a world of many genuine 'goods', but the fact that they cannot be finally harmonized under any one choral director in no way impugns the rationality of those who live by them and think about them." (166) Through these other challenges of Positivism from other fields of study, Booth show us the problems associated with this philosophy that exist outside of the realm of rhetoric and literary criticism. These philosophers and social scientists are in consensus that our ethical values are part of our pursuit of excellence and evaluation of what we call "good." This idea that every academic pursuit has ethical components comes from Aristotle's idea of the pursuit of the "good".

Aristotle writes in *Nicomachean Ethics*, "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good", and when that good is defined as "futile" , "vain", and "empty" the value of that subject suffers. This understanding of values claim that trying to *rationalize* one's convictions is utterly impossible: people believe what they believe and there is nothing that can change that, as it were. This mindset makes a pluralistic understanding impossible. The result of this idea of not being able to reason with one's convictions leaves all

behavior “irrational” behavior. Russell’s own history of protesting both World Wars and the Vietnam War show his own values of justice and peace. Nevertheless, he is unable to rationalize his positions. Booth points out how Russell’s protests are ethically motivated, but are always inclined to use language of “throwing to the winds all concern about earning the right to [demonstrate]*”* (*Modern Dogma* 79), such as urging his fellow protesters to simply “lay their bodies on the line” instead of defending their positions rhetorically. As he grew older, his protests became less verbal and resorted to action “and even - in the first hysteria after Russia developed the atomic bomb - to threats of violence” (79). Booth points out that Russell didn’t use *logos* in a protest against the hydrogen bomb, but resorted to preaching when he gave this radio address, “Remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you do so, the way lies open to a new paradise. If you cannot, nothing lies before you but universal death.” (“The Russell-Einstein Manifesto”)

Students and activists in Booth’s day felt no choice, then, but to resort to irrational behavior about the injustices they saw around them. Faced with the Fact/Value split, they were obliged to reject a rationalism that dismissed their sentiments or their own values and beliefs without arguments. Many wanted to break from the bonds of a rationalism that seemed lifeless, cold, and reduced mankind to simple machines. Denying one’s values so they do not “intrude upon your cognitive life” left no room for interpretation or discourse about what to do with our values and by consequence created irrational behavior that people were unable to defend. And a clear understanding of arguments and justification for why we believe what we do suffered for it. Communication between “fact” people (who, in the case of *Modern Dogma*, represented the administration at University of Chicago) and the “value” people (the students) was severed. This is exactly why Booth writes - to expose the hypocrisy of this Fact/Value split and educate his

readers on the failures of Positivism and the potential for rhetoric and pluralism. If Booth can show us the need to share and discuss our values, then rhetoric can return to being purposeful in bridging the gap between the people who are in conflict. The kind of rhetoric Booth believes is necessary is one of inclusion, one where listening and understanding and valuing our diverse and complex beliefs was paramount to practice the transcendent value of human dignity. But the fact/value split is not the only product of this "Modern Dogma". Booth uses Bertrand Russell to demonstrate other dogmas of Positivism that had permeated the academic culture of the late 60s and early 70s.

Bertrand Russell

The dogmas Booth articulates in *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* circle around the philosophy of Bertrand Russell whose ideas were widely influential when civil unrest brought Booth to writing this work. Throughout Booth's career, he engaged with other critics and theorists whom he considered "Positivists" and have been a part of the fact/value split. Booth claimed in *Modern Dogma* that he chose Russell, "not because he is at the center of present controversies...But Russell comes closer to being a representative of the main intellectual achievements and problems of our time that anyone else I can think of." (*Modern Dogma* 44*).*

Bertrand Russell's own experience resonates with the student movement Booth was witnessing and writing about. During the first World War, Russell engaged in anti-war campaigns which resulted first in his imprisonment for six months and later, in 1916, with his dismissal as Lecturer from Trinity College, his alma-mater. Russell wrote extensively throughout his life about social and political philosophy and throughout his life protested both World Wars and the Vietnam War. He even influenced the Beatles in becoming peace activists (JAMESPOWER). His anti-war and political activism influenced the youth culture of the 60s

and 70s who were politically active in protesting the Vietnam War. The dogma that is essential to Modernism stemmed from Russell's philosophy and was the cause of rendering ethical claims irrational.

The contradiction that Russell and other "modernists" could never escape are the inconsistencies within positivism to be utter rationalists but ardent supporters of justice in what is presumed (in Positivist's ideology) to be a value-free universe. If the universe is value-free as Positivism suggests, then rhetoric itself serves subjective purposes and should be viewed as trickery, the kind Socrates accused the sophists of using. In *Modern Dogma,* Booth identifies five elements that he derives directly from Russell. These elements create the "Modern Dogma" Booth refers to in the rest of the book. The five beliefs Booth derives from Russell and attributes to Modernism are (1) there are only drives and motives but no meaning or reason for an argument to "change my mind". This dogma strips the purpose and power of communication completely. The presumption that all drives, all motivation is without reason or purpose makes us question the purpose of convincing others at all, much less find consensus or truths shared between us.

The second and third dogmas are connected, (2) the "mind" is simply a biological and chemical organism that cannot truly be "changed", (3) and the universe is value-free and completely indifferent to human value systems. Russell's "scientific view of man" claimed that man is a natural product of the impersonal subconscious of the universe, without purpose. The universe, he claimed, is indifferent to man's values ("A Free Man's Worship"). But if we actually are part of the cosmos, a product of the universe, Booth affirms that the universe must be by definition "man-like", at least in part. A valueless universe could not, by definition, have nor produce beings that are value "full". People are "blind to good and evil, reckless of

destruction," Russell writes. Nevertheless, people are endowed with values. "What should we do?" Booth asks. Immediately following this question and preceding Russell's hopelessness, he writes "One thing a man *might* do is try to verify in discussion with other men his notions of the noble and the corrupting" (54), in other words, engage in pluralistic dialogue.

The fourth dogma is centered around epistemology: (4) truth is found in doubt of what we assert, but always boils down to our natural instinctual behaviors. Knowledge, Russell claims, is "uncertain, inexact, and partial." (506) He claims knowledge obtained through empiricism "inadequate" but believes it is the "least inadequate" and still resorts to Positivism which include empirical evidence to make its claims. This contradictory nature isn't dealt with and leaves Russell's ethical claims *without* explanation or reason for their existence. The last dogma Booth identifies for the modern age is the idea that (because of these previous truths) (5), the only purpose for changing minds is to win. Russell makes this dogma clear in his, "Reply to Criticism". He writes, "Persuasion in ethical questions is necessarily different from persuasion in scientific matters...the person who judges that A is good is wishing others feel certain desires...This is the purpose of preaching, and it was my purpose in the various books in which I have expressed ethical opinion." (*The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* 724) And again, "Where ethics is concerned… it is impossible to produce conclusive intellectual arguments." Booth adds to the above quote, "if arguments are not conclusive, the implication is that they have no force whatsoever." (*Modern Dogma* 76) Booth and even Russell himself show us that Russell's ethical claims, his arguments for ethical questions are not open for debate, to be argued or validated, but only to be preached. The purpose is to "win" converts and not engage in pluralistic dialogue or even weigh conflicting opinions to find middle ground.

In each of these dogmas, Booth shows how modernism renders all objective moral claims about ethics completely "irrational." If it cannot be proven, without proof it cannot be rational, and without rationality it is inconsequential. This inability of rationalizing beliefs has led Russell to a state of irreconcilability. He is unable to explain rationally why his claims for peace and tolerance are actually defensible truths because of his clinging to these dogmas. As all claims about values and ethics are subjective claims, he is robbed of defense for his actions. His own commitment to Positivism leaves his value assertions powerless. The question that Booth asks Modernists is whether can we achieve ethical understanding if we rob ethics of reason or what is left to defend our beliefs and actions.

Booth is concerned with Positivism's rejection of ethical reasoning because if the only purpose of ethical discourse is to win, then there can be no reason to change one's mind. "The notion," Booth writes, "that we have reason to believe only what has been proven in the sense of withstanding all possible doubts, cannot be lived with by most of us even for a moment." This is because we live our lives not *just* according to what has been proven "withstanding all possible doubts", but also by assumptions and pretenses we have come to *believe* are true by instinct or persuasion. (*Modern Dogma* 66) That is the function of rhetoric, to explain ourselves to ourselves and others different perspectives in opposing arguments. Through listening rhetoric, we listen in order to understand the differing values and beliefs in hopes of finding common ground.

And so Booth uses Russell's dogma to show the inconsistency of Modernism's approach to (or reproach of) ethics. His goal is to revive a rhetoric that recognizes ethics as an integral part of the rhetorical process, allowing us tools to improve our beliefs. He is pointing out that in our

admittance or denial, ethical appeals are in every rhetorical act, and to ignore those appeals keeps us from understanding why and when we should change our minds.

What Booth establishes in *Modern Dogma* is the groundwork formulating his conception of pluralism. He begins by showing the inconsistencies of Positivism and how that philosophical framework limits the ability to discuss and share our values and beliefs in our communities. He uses Russell's life and work to show how making claims to simply "win" an argument makes our pursuit of listening and understanding unnecessary. This listening should be employed, not only in political or philosophical discourse, but also in literary criticism. Though *The Rhetoric of Fiction* focused on the title's subject, this work was Booth's attempt to persuade the reader to "listen" and seek an "understanding" with the implied author of a fictional work. Many scholars, such as the New Critics, proposed the idea that aesthetics of an art and the ethical beliefs of the reader and author were mutually exclusive. That is, the aesthetics of a literary work had nothing to do with the ethics in that work. This exclusivity was another expression of the dichotomy that most represented Modern dogma: the split between fact and value.

Richard Posner & John Carey

The separation between "it" and "I", the objective from the subjective, has expressed itself in literary criticism as a separation of aesthetics (such as form, alliterations, rhyme, etc) and ethics. Booth was highly involved with literature as a Professor of Language and Literature at the University of Chicago. A fellow professor in the University of Chicago Law School, Richard Posner published an article in the journal *Philosophy and Literature* title "Against Ethical Criticism" in the spring of 1997. Though this symposium was more recent, it reveals the same problems with Positivism that Booth countered in the early seventies. This was the opening text in a symposium about ethical criticism that included the arguments of Booth and Posner as well

as professor of law and ethics also at University of Chicago, Martha Nussbaum. In his argument, Posner claims the "proper criteria for evaluating literature are aesthetic rather than ethical." He unpacks his argument by proposing three claims: (1) literature does not make us "better" people, (2) we shouldn't be off put by morally offensive content or perspectives in literature, and (3) the author's moral qualities shouldn't affect our reading. What he insists, and admits outright, is that we must separate the *moral* from the *aesthetic.* Like the fact/value split, Posner proposes that there should exclusive attention to things that *are,* and not to things that *ought.* What both dichotomies share is the idea that what exists in nature should be seen as completely separate from the values or beliefs of an author or reader. Posner echoes Nietzsche when he explains that it is futile to improve oneself from values or morals via literature because "All we do when we [compare writers along the ethical dimensions of their writings] is look for mirrors of our own values." (403)

Booth responds to Nietzsche and Posner's argument by posing a question: Can we grade the quality of stories according to overall ethical effects? Posner says no. Booth responds that we should associate ethical effects with quality and shows how Posner himself uses ethics to judge the value of a work. In his own admittance, Posner writes "the aesthetic outlook *is* a moral outlook, one that stresses the values of openness." Posner, Booth points out, employs a very narrow definition of ethics if he doesn't include literature's function as "stretching the student's imagination, multiplying [the student's] cultural perspectives, broadening his intellectual and emotional horizon," as part of its ethical quality. These are all things Posner claims "good" literature does. These are all *values.* They are not offered as "proofs" by Posner, nor does he expect they should be. The development of "liberal individualism" that Posner's outlook promotes, is a value that Posner doesn't attempt to prove. To remove ethical criticism from

literary analysis, simply because of a lack of "proof" of ethical effect on works, Booth claims would leave us "relative ignoramuses" (373).

Posner's reasoning is one based in doubt, a foundational principle of Positivism. Booth summarizes it this way: "His chief evidence against the 'betterment' claim is that we have no evidence *for* it." The Nazis, Posner claimed, were highly educated and well-read individuals, "steeped in Goethe, Schiller, and Kant" yet their ethical choices revealed none of these values. Nussbaum proposes that the Germans were in fact influenced by their literature. As much as they were educated the above authors, she claims they were inundated with authors for whom "human suffering" was not what they were concerned with. "I am not aware," she writes, "that Nazis were great readers of Dickens, nor yet of Henry James." (353) Instead, she proposes the Germans were immersed in Nietzsche and listened to Wagner (figures of "bad influence") and were bombarded with propaganda that demonized the Jewish communities. Contrarily, Booth was not concerned with "what" they have read, but instead *how* they might have read. He claims no one knows *how* they actually read, or how they were taught such works, and because (to Booth) the ethical criticism takes place in the rhetorical listening (reading) and not the text itself, "we must admit that nobody can ever offer any statistical proof on either side of this question." (371) Booth's approach differs from Nausbaum's broaching of the "facts" about Nazi education, and rather proposes that they not make generalizations about facts unknown. But the *principle* of reading ethically can nevertheless be argued for, with or without the "facts" in place. Booth is claiming that a pluralistic approach that required inclusiveness and listening, even among competing interpretations might have changed their ethical education and character to be more understanding and open to different ethnicities, cultures, and ideologies.

Booth's purpose is to show through Positivists like Posner that it is impossible to separate our ethical values from our readings. Furthermore, he shows us that if we allow *doubt* to guide our inquiry, it can result in a belief that our values (which cannot be scientifically tested) are of no consequence, and if they are of no consequence then also of no value in rhetorical situations. Posner follows a trend among many literary critics of only considering aesthetic values and dismissing ethical discourse concerning texts.

Booth was alert to these assertions and recognized them as a divide between what we call objective facts and subjective values. He recognized other literary critics who also discounted ethical criticism such as Oxford literary critic John Carey. Carey wrote extensively on John Milton and John Donne. He claims in "An End to Evaluation" published in 1980, "Nowadays almost no one believes in the possibility of objective or 'correct' literary judgements any longer (204)" thus asserting that objective claims about the value of literature are impossible to make. The evaluation that causes some to judge literary works as better (of more value) than others, in other words, is never objectively true. Booth points out, however, that one year later Carey would argue in his book *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art,* that Donne is among the "great poets (1981)" and dedicates most of his scholarly career arguing that value. Booth questions Carey, Posner, and other critics who denounce ethical readings of literature. He wonders why they would argue for the literature they value if their values were irrelevant. He believes they hold to their values as separate from the aesthetic quality of the work (just as some separate facts from values), when in fact Booth argues the two are tied.

Booth Upholding Beliefs and Values

Booth addresses Bertrand Russell, Richard Posner, and John Carey and their Modernist's claims within the framework of the fact/value split. All three deny the transcendental possibility

of ethical claims and that pluralism and a pursuit of understanding is inconsequential. What ensues is an attitude of futility on our differences, an irreconcilability between disagreeing parties. Booth's alternative is pluralism. His Pluralism is an approach that allows for irreconcilable claims to be made and a value placed on human dignity and understanding. He claims most people think about being persuaded by values and beliefs because of subjective experiences, or personal rhetorical moments. Even if values are derived from subjective experiences, how can we not discourse about them? It may be that in our discourse we find value shared among even the most divided assertions.

Booth asks the reader to think about the question, "Does life have value?" (*Modern Dogma* 179). To Booth, it seems that every living being, whether Positivist or not, promotes the idea that life *does*. The very existence of literary works are proof of that. The question then should be, what are those values, and are any of those actually shared among us? How are some values at work within multiple beliefs? Some have actually rejected that life has value to the point of their own suicide. Booth mentions Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, and Francis Otto Matthiessen as artists who "purposefully leave us" and by their very actions prove that the entire futility of it couldn't be tolerated. But by living and not dying, are not the rest of us asserting that there is, in some form or fashion, some value in life? Even existentialists who assent to a "nothingness" and a "purposeless" of life nevertheless thought it worth publishing and promoting their ideas. They believed they were valuable enough to share. "The great original choice between being and nothingness [the title of John Paul Sartre's book on Existentialism]" Booth writes, "is a[n]... incomprehensible act of assent rather than denial: the universe is, nothingness is not." When people are born, they are entering a world that already "is" and brings with it a list of

demands (*Modern Dogma* 196). Our job is to wrestle and discourse with those demands through ethical criticism, and the approach that shows most honor to our diverse values is Pluralism.

Part of the evaluation of those demands must take place in what Booth calls "*co*duction" and not from inductive or deductive reasoning as one would deal with "proofs". Coduction is the logic that what we are experiencing when "we find *comparatively* desirable, admirable, lovable or, on the other hand, comparatively repugnant, contemptible or hateful [traits]." Booth creates *coduction* from "co" meaning "together" and "*ducere*" which means "to draw out, bring out". When we encounter rhetorical works, or ethical claims anywhere, Booth encourages us to react by positioning ourselves in this way: *in comparison to my experiences with other more or less similar works and audience, this virtue seems better or worse and these are my reasons*. From this position we seek understanding of others reactions and are then creating *coduction* by making meaning with our pluralists perspective (*The Company We Keep* 70-75). This method of observing is part of Booth's pluralism. It involves a reading that requires deep listening and evaluation and bringing our values and reaction to values to a community where we can discuss about them and discover values that we share, even with those whose beliefs are different than ours.

Every text, every rhetorical situation, asserts value towards *something*. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* Booth finishes his introduction summarizing his point that in any work, fiction or not, the implied author's ethos, their judgements and set of values, is present. "The author can choose his disguise," he writes, "but he can never disappear." (20) Booth asks the reader to question, "what should we let them do to us as we read them?" (*Modern Dogma* 182). He claims each rhetorical situation we encounter is slightly (or aggressively) nudging us towards some ethical value. We see this in the examples shown. With these assertions from rhetorics, we are left with

the question, “How then should we live?” with respect to the values put forth. The answer to that question necessitates Pluralism, an inclusion of understanding of all claims to better instruct us how to live our lives and live with those we disagree with.

Booth asserts that most would agree with Cicero who writes in *De Officiis,* that the chief duty of humanity is the have the best “character” possible, given one’s “circumstances.” As rhetoric is the vehicle of ethos, the character of the writer and reader and the values presented within the work, there can be no question that ethical criticism is of the highest importance. Instead of approaching these ethical claims with skepticism as Positivism suggests, Booth encourages us to leave our doubts at the door. He claims that when engaging with ethical claims, we should accept every belief that passes two tests: we have no grounds for doubting it and that we have “good reason to think all men who understand the problem share your belief.” To reverse doubt ushers us into seeking common ground and shared beliefs. This proposition, however, of returning to ethical criticism would only continue to be suppressed in the ideological movements that followed Positivism.

CHAPTER III

BOOTH'S PLURALISM IN RELATION TO DECONSTRUCTION

Positivism was the widely accepted philosophy both in pop culture and by philosophers in the Modern period. But in the mid 60s and early 70s, several philosophers emerged with a new focus and new assertions that differed from Modernists. Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean Paul Sartre, Hazel Barnes, Stanley Fish, and others who would come to be classified as "Postmodernists" believed that truth claims were entirely subjective and could not be "positively" objectified at all (Metz). Some of these theorists do believe in objective realities, but do not see how these realities can be grounded "in something independent from the mind" (Metz), thus concluding that arguments can only have subjective truths. Although there are countless writings and authors considered "postmodern", Booth engaged with Derrida's Deconstruction as Derrida's philosophy and literary approach emerged as overwhelmingly accepted in the Humanities. Deconstruction is considered "Postmodern" because of its orientation to language, truth claims, and rethinking of context. Works on the subject of deconstruction were published during Booth's career, and he found his argument for Pluralism maturing to adapt to new ideas and new beliefs of these theorists. While deconstruction showed the plurality of meaning, many used deconstruction to argue that all truths were contextual and subjective and that all logic was founded on language and not transcendent realities which undermined the need for listening rhetoric and understanding. What ensued was a new

formulation of Booth's definition of ethical criticism and ethical understanding rooted in the belief in the ultimate truth of human dignity and that our beliefs and values matter.

Part of this postmodern movement is the distrust of language as an accurate method of demonstrating argument, of logical proofs. Many postmodernists concluded that truths are mental constructs built on nothing but "shaky" rhetoric (Bizzell and Herzberg 1188). In all Postmodern theories, Booth orients himself in relation to the ethical claims they propose and shows his readers that by denying transcendent truths and the ethical potential within a text, they nullify the essential purpose of argument, seeking understanding. According to Booth, postmodernism discounts values and beliefs claiming they are only true in linguistic or rhetorical contexts. He further shows the propensity of these theories from keeping us from discovering truths that transcend ourselves and our rhetorical situations. In consequence, there is an implied apathy towards using this course for understanding and seeking higher shared truths together.

In this chapter, I will unpack Derrida's Deconstruction theory and show how the theory is based on the idea that truths (both logical and ethical truths) are preceded by language and how our knowledge fully relies upon language. We will look at how Booth interacted with Deconstruction theory with enthusiasm (hoping it would be a propulsion of Pluralism), but equally rejected the notion that all truths were subjective language constructs. I will then show how Deconstruction developed in other theorists after Derrida and how Booth defends the concept of ethical realities and what constitutes *meaning* amongst deconstruction's claims.

Deconstruction

When Booth first encounters Deconstruction, he is skeptical of its claims. In *The Company We Keep,* Booth interprets Derrida's deconstruction as making the point that "no one is free of epistemological and metaphysical adhesions". He associates Derrida with the idea of

"universal openness" (62) which works against our human instinct to make some sort of sense from what we read. We see that at the beginning of Booth's interaction with Derrida, he is critical of the assertion that meaning is always open to new interpretation. Nearly fifteen years later, however, we see Booth accentuates the common ground he has with Derrida in the *Rhetoric of Rhetoric.* Booth believes Derrida's theory points us towards pluralism while his readers have reduced deconstruction to complete relativism that trivializes all claims. Booth has arrived at the understanding of Derrida being one who was reviving "the necessity of pluralistic rhetorical inquiry: truths are multiple, and most truths are uncovered only by methods available when we give up the quest for absolute certainty" (79). Despite his agreements, Booth has some fundamental differences with Derrida concerning transcendent truths. But Booth's interaction with deconstruction demonstrates for us Booth's own use of listening rhetoric because we can see where Booth finds common ground with the deconstructionists despite disagreeing over fundamental beliefs.

Booth's relationship with Derrida and the deconstructionists, as we can see, is complex. On the one hand, Booth agrees with the idea that there is plurality of meaning within texts. Booth uses Derrida's article "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell" to argue that even the deconstructionists (who many times imply that all thoughts lead to a string of unfounded ideas) nevertheless demonstrate that all arguments and claims obligate the reader to reason with those claims (*The Company We Keep* 165n). On the other hand, some deconstructionist writings would claim that knowledge is founded on nothing but language. Before the writings of Derrida and the Deconstructionists, Booth believed knowledge can be grounded on actual truths and there is a knowledge that transcends language. He affirms this in his reflections of his upbringings. He never dismissed the ideas (from Mormonism) that the universe does indeed have values and that

they exist outside of the human experience. Booth believes rhetoric grants us access to those absolutes (166). But the benefit of deconstruction was that it challenged the monist approach of Positivism and refuted the idea that values are separate from facts. Deconstruction also employed a kind of pluralism when reading texts so as to show the multiple meanings that can be derived from them. These two shifts in literary theory were aligned with Booth's Pluralism.

Booth sees deconstruction as affirming the equal validity of Facts and Values. Booth posits in both *Modern Dogma* and *The Company We Keep* that if we were to ask contemporary philosophers, such as these emerging Postmodernist philosophers (and not people who don't spend much time in philosophy), most seem to be in consensus that "the world as it 'is' entails certain 'oughts'" (*The Company We Keep* 165-166). Derrida writes in the opening of his article, "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell," about the "oughts" of responding to texts, "is it not an act to assume in theory the concept of a responsibility? Is that not already to take a responsibility? One's own as well as the responsibility to which one believes one ought to summon others?" ("Like the Sound", 1) Booth argues that this article is pointing out that to live in our world, to function in society, we are required to respond to the ethical claims made all around us by others. How we respond to these claims directs our understanding of the "good" and whether or not all of our responses are in agreement, we cannot diminish the fact that our lives are governed by ethical reasonings of what is "good", and those values cannot and should not be ignored. The admittance from Derrida that we must contend with those propositions of the "good" does not contradict the claim advanced by both Booth and Cicero that the chief duty of mankind, "to make oneself the best 'character' possible, given one's 'circumstances''. (*De Officiis*) Where the two theorists differ is that Booth believes that contending with ethical arguments within texts can lead us to shared values and beliefs. This belief is founded on the

transcendent reality that the diversity of beliefs is valuable and contribute to the wealth of perspectives that inform and shape our lives. Derrida's deconstruction, however, argues that texts are irreducibly complex, and they do not have the potential of revealing truths outside of language.

This idea of transcendent truths differentiates Booth from the Modern and Postmodern movements. At the end of Modernism, a shift in philosophy centered around two French theorists: Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. While many of the Positivists (such as Bertrand Russell) were concerned with deductive reasoning to reach universals (none of which were beliefs and values), these Postmodernists shifted the conversation to language itself. Michel Foucault argued that discourse has been used as a means of control, as a tool of power to manage knowledge in such a way that preserved social structures and institutions (Bizzell and Herzberg 901). "Knowledge is not for knowing," he writes, "knowledge is for cutting." (*The Foucault Reader*) and again in work on prison studies, *Discipline and Punish*, "Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions- to define, classify, control, and regulate people." He also challenged the assertion that language was some 'neutral medium' able to transfer knowledge. These assertions challenged the Positivists claim about facts being independent "objective" knowledge. Foucault argued that even these "facts" based on empirical evidence were nothing but rhetorical methods of positioning power.

Derrida took Foucault's claim about language even further. In *Of Grammatology* and *Dissemination* and essays that followed these works, Derrida challenges the idea that language represents any type of reality at all. Derrida claimed mankind's biggest illusion was the idea that language is a symbol that signifies a reality outside itself. Derrida claims that language is an ambiguous and unreliable tool. Newton Garver in his preface to Derrida's article, "Speech and

Phenomena," writes that up until the twentieth century there was always an understanding that language was built upon logic. What Derrida's project does, Garver claims, is to both demonstrate and argue that language is founded upon rhetoric and not logic. Garver believes this demonstration is necessary because "rhetoric has not been refurbished by new ideas and new vigor and remains a weak and ancillary discipline." (Preface) The shift in philosophy's attention from abstract logic and "provable" realities to the semiotic problems of context, definition, and the orientation of language in our reasoning faculties marks the beginning of a new era. While Booth agrees language is charged with ethical claims, he rejects the idea that ethical claims refer to nothing in reality. Derrida's main claim, the idea that language acts as a referent, actually came from the study of semiotics.

The study of semiotics began in the early half of the twentieth century. Semiotics, a theory of signs and signification, would dominate Postmodern ideology. Charles Sanders Peirce was the first to publish works on this theory. He defined a sign as the operator that invokes a mental image or "signifier" in the reader's mind (Bizzell and Herzberg 1189). The signifier is also a sign, but resides in the mind as a concept. The concept refers to some real-world object or phenomenon. Ferdinand de Saussure would later argue that the signs themselves are completely arbitrary and have no inherent meaning (for example, the word *ant* has no characteristics in the letters or phonetics that have to do with the insects) (Bizzell and Herzberg 1189). The words we create to work as "signs" for abstract concepts have no inherent traits that relate to that concept. They are arbitrary symbols. The attribution of meaning to those signs happens in the mind. Our mind makes meaning of the signs we read.

What Derrida and the deconstructionists propose is that the "sign" doesn't actually refer to anything real, anything outside the mind, but rather refers to other signs, other words and

phrases that are interconnected to the meaning of the given sign. The concepts our minds conjure when we read words, are not representations of reality, they are simply more signs that help us understand the sign presented to us. Meaning is not a concept to be grasped, but rather a collection of signs that constantly defer to one another. In *Signature Event Context,* Derrida begins by using the example of "context". He claims that the concept of "context" is never determinable. He further argues that if what he is saying is true, because rhetoric necessitates the concept of writing, writing itself "would no longer be comprehensible in terms of communication, at least in the limited sense of a transmission of meaning." (1476) Derrida claimed that one cannot grasp the "meaning" of anything without distinguishing it from its context, and context "can never be entirely certain or saturated" (1476). Instead, we are left with endless strands of signifiers that both defer meaning from one word to the next and also exist to differentiate themselves from other signifiers. Derrida coined the word "différance" to mean the dual action these signifiers take. Derrida's approach is termed *Deconstruction* as much of his approach involves deconstructing the text to show the duplicity of ideologies and presumptions the reader bring to the reading but is not aware of. Through "breaking" apart the text, the deconstructionists argue that the "reality" the reader believes the signs are pointing to doesn't actually exist but relies on the reader's language (Tyson). The text is simply deferring to more signs. Deconstruction of the text focuses on ways the text itself seems to undermine what readers assume is the fixed meaning by revealing the ever-fleeting definition of what the text *could* mean.

Language, to the deconstructionists, is seen as a group of signs that shape and construct all of our knowledge. From birth, we are taught to see the world through our respective languages, each containing a unique composition of signifiers. Languages naturally isolate us as each

individual's knowledge has a unique stock of signs. The problem with Western philosophy, Derrida claims, is that we believe everything to be *logocentric,* that is we believe there to be a central objective concept around which the entire cosmos orbits when in fact, *"il n'y a pas de hors-texte"* - there is nothing outside the text (*Of Grammatology* 158-159*).* Many have misinterpreted this to mean "only words exist", but Derrida clarifies his statement by explaining that there is simply no known reality outside of the language that construct our understanding. Still, Derrida's claim is that "every concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain and constitutes in itself a system of predicates" (*Signature Event Context).* Is it possible for a concept to exist at the center of all understanding, all existence, and yet somehow exists outside of it so that it is not subject to any changes? Deconstructionists claim it is not (Tyson). Although Booth does not believe there is some singular objective concept (such as Plato's beliefs of "forms") he does believe there are true transcendent values that supercede language, discourse, and even our ideological disagreements. Booth agrees with Derrida that all reality is mediated by language, but disagrees with Derrida's claim that ethical realities are *created and sustained* by language. Booth believes they transcend language. Booth's position is unique in that it aligns itself with certain claims of deconstruction but rejects others.

Booth's response to Derrida is unique in that he agrees with many of Derrida's claims about rhetoric and language but disagrees about some implications of Derrida's theory. In *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, Booth begins by giving numerous definitions of rhetoric, one which he pulls from Derrida,

> "We should not neglect rhetoric's importance, as if it were simply a formal superstructure or technique exterior to the essential activity. Rhetoric is

> something decisive in society… [T]here are no politics, there is no society without rhetoric, without the force of rhetoric." (8).

Much of Booth's appreciation for Derrida's work stems from Derrida's admittance (perhaps praise) of rhetoric in society. Later in *Rhetoric of Rhetoric,* Booth asks his readers to see Derrida in a different light, not as a philosopher but as a rhetorician. Booth claims if we look closely at Derrida's life and work, it is impossible to ignore how "the rhetorical pursuit of plurality has dominated his thinking. (77)" This method of inclusion is a demonstration of Booth's pluralism. Booth seeks to recognize and highlight beliefs he shares with other theorists (like Derrida), even though there are disagreements. In this case the disagreement lies in the belief that philosophy begins with rhetoric, and not the other way around.

Many have misinterpreted Derrida (Booth claims) to be an absolute relativist, concluding that Derrida boils everything down to "mere" rhetoric. Booth believes readers and other deconstructionists have transformed Derrida's arguments into an annihilation of knowledge and truth. Some far-reaching deconstructionists argue that all of life is constructed by the narratives and metaphors we make through language; they believe all that exists is language. Instead, Booth claims that Derrida was actually "reviving the necessity of pluralistic rhetorical inquiry: truths are multiple" (79). Deconstruction shouldn't be seen as an attack on truth, Booth argues, but rather as an opportunity for us to see the plurality and complexities of truth by deconstructing our 'monisms.' Derrida's theory does not dissolve all claims of meaning. Instead, his theory is a defense of pluralism, that no single perspective can relate truths. Still, Derrida's application of deconstruction encourages readers to reveal the rhetorical dependence of claims on contexts instead of engaging with the claims are manifestations of ethical values.

This is the disagreement between Derrida and Booth. Booth believes language helps us discover truths, truths that exist outside our cultural or relative contexts. Derrida believes that the great mistake of the ancients is assuming that there are transcendent realities that we can discover by way of discourse. The disagreement between Derrida and Booth is another echo of the ancient argument among Plato and the Sophists, between the philosophy and rhetoric. To Plato and similar philosophers, language was a means of understanding and communicating knowledge about "absolute truths" (Bizzell and Herzberg 902) and rhetoric was a distortion, a masking, of those truths. Derrida called these classical philosophers *logocentric* (*Of Grammatology*). The Sophists, on the other hand, always premised that knowledge and truths were either not absolute or unknowable, and were contingent upon context, and thus communication depended strictly on circumstance. They believed truths were a matter of probability and not of fact. Plato would regard them as manipulators of the appearance of truth for their own good (Bizzell and Herzberg 81). This dealing with the "appearance of truths" would lead Booth and others to argue that Foucault and Derrida are much more rhetorical in their approach to meaning than philosophical. While Booth remains a rhetorician and not a philosopher, he doesn't follow the sophists' argument as Derrida does: that truths aren't transcendent and the goal of rhetoric is to accomplish the subjective "good". Booth remains *logocentric* believing that, although language complicates truths, it doesn't dismiss truths away. Booth offered his version of pluralistic rhetoric for discovering common grounds among disputants. It is because of language's complexity that listening rhetoric and understanding must be used to discover what those agreements are. As he writes in *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric,* "Truths are real, but they are multiple, and their pursuers too often hope for one single truth, as they practice complex forms of win-rhetoric - without listening." (81) Derrida's vision of pluralism is

to reveal the instability of language as we try to use it as a means to know values, but for Booth, Pluralism is a tool to bring people together and show the values they already share by trying to understand the claims within their rhetorical contexts.

Derrida's theories are based on the premise that language is an unstable medium for transmitting meaning. Part of the instability of language, that separation of "reality" from language, is better demonstrated by the written text. Derrida challenges his readers to think about whether writing is actually representative of speech, and whether speech represents realities. Written language, he claims, is only a further removal from the "original" meaning of the sign. Writing is a clear example of this separation between signs and the signified, but the same is true with spoken language. Distant as the written word is from the utterance, so is the utterance from the concept it claims to represent.

Newton Garver claims what Derrida is trying to attack is "the whole tradition in which language is conceived as founded on logic rather than on rhetoric." (*Speech and Phenomena*, xiii) Derrida believes there is no "literary" language as opposed to "ordinary" language. All language is figurative and has rhetorical properties that make it "fit" into the text. The definition of what a text can mean is an ever changing and evolving understanding. In *Living On: Border Lines*, Derrida claims that the minute you begin reading a text, its "border" (the limits of what that text could mean) is constantly expanding until you "lose sight of any line of demarcation between a text and what is outside of it." Nevertheless, the text must have an edge, he says, despite the fact that there has been an "overrun that spoils all these boundaries and divisions and forces us to extend the accredited concept of 'text'". (83-84) But his clarification of this statement is key to understanding where he and Booth see eye-to-eye. Booth too claims that the border between life and narrative is "fuzzy" (*The Company We Keep* 16), and deciphering the

ethical claims in a given text gets even "fuzzier". Even as the text continues to surpass the borders we have placed on it previously, Derrida claims it is "not submerging or drowning [the limits] in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines." (84) It is this complexity, this plurality, that Booth finds so treasurable in Derrida's work. In *Company,* he argues that pursuing "total openness" (where the text has no borders) doesn't work. He reasons that we necessarily have to "close some questions in order to open others" just as we are encouraged to ask newer deeper questions after coming to some answers. Booth believes we must work hard to discover such borders in order to understand the ethical claims being made.

Booth argues that even Derrida and others who seem most "open" about how to interpret the text (how to create such borders) create limits on *what sorts* of questions can be asked about the text. In Derrida's *Glas,* for example, Booth shows how we are not allowed to ask questions to answer "Who will do what to whom?" or "In what traditional literary genre shall I place you?" (*Critical Understanding* 240). These sort of questions are in and of themselves out of character for deconstructionists types of inquiry. They are ethically inferior to other types of questions such as "How else could this possibly be misconstrued into ambiguity?" Even though the language makes the meaning of the text rich in complexity, in order to come to any consensus and "dive deeper", certain truths must be agreed upon. For example, in order to practice deconstruction, we must agree that language is deferential in nature. We must agree that truths are language dependent and our realities and perspectives of the world immeasurably diverse. If such truths are not agreed upon, then Derrida's argument has no traction. Much of Booth's relationship with Derrida consists of such agreements, but the deconstructionists who followed had less in common with Booth than Derrida. Others have taken his ideas and expanded their

implications. These additional theorists help us understand Booth's pluralism as deconstruction began to be more and more against transcendent realities and instead dwindle everything down to language alone.

Objective Truths

Deconstruction after Derrida changed and Booth found himself more at odds with what the newer deconstructionists claimed about ethics. For one, the idea of "meaning" changed. As Geoffrey Hartman writes in the preface to *Deconstruction and Criticism*, "[these essays] expose the difficulty of locating meaning totally within one textual source." (viii) Hartman shows his readers the division in deconstruction between who he calls the "boa-deconstructors" and those who are "barely" deconstructors. For the later (he names Harold Bloom and himself) the aesthetic qualities of literature is not separate from its ethical qualities. For the former (he names Derrida, Paul de Man, and J. Hillis Miller) deconstruction of literature is "precisely that use of language which can purge [this] pathos, which can show that it too is figurative, ironic or aesthetic." (using "too" hear as an example) (ix). But even Hillis Miller admits that there is an ethics of reading which subjugates and persuades him to believe in its existence by proof of what happens to him as he engages with the text (*The Ethics of Reading* 127). Similarly, Booth argues that if the author of the texts isn't trying to give the reader a "superior form of life" as they read, why would they have created and presented it to us at all? Booth believes we write (and read) because we instinctively believe such values exists. While we read, we are experiencing a *quality* that can and should be considered, and that quality is defined by the ethics therein. Because reading requires interpretation of those ethical claims, Booth claims in *The Company We Keep* that it is criticism's job to "make explicit those appraisals that are implicit" in a text (9). The appraisals for those values are not contingent on rhetoric, but are rather discovered via rhetoric.

Booth believes the ethical claims in rhetoric refer to real beliefs of the author and readers, beliefs that are not linguistic constructs but actually beliefs that are part of our complex value system that is part of the cosmos. In *My Many Selves,* he names at least three specific values that transcend language: truth, beauty, and goodness. Booth believes "they were discovered, not invented, by me and by the thousands of predecessors who passed their discoveries on to me…they will live after the…circumstance-structured, unique 'I' has decayed." (*My Many Selves* 303) Booth makes it clear he believes these values are transcendent when he writes that they "go on living not just in other actual living creatures but in the Whole of Things. It was their actual existence in the total range of possibilities in Supreme Being that enabled any one of us to come along and discover them." (303) To Booth, the contrary idea that beliefs are simply linguistic constructs undermines the possibility of pursuing these three values.

If objective truths don't exist, then the implication is that ethical qualities in texts are metaphorical, and it is not important to contend with those values. Booth claims the opposite, he tries to understand what the ethical implications of beliefs are and doesn't dismiss them away as being mental constructs that are products of linguistic tropes. He doesn't "deconstruct" arguments to reveal its contradictions with itself, but rather to try and understand what ethical values are motivating these arguments. This type of listening rhetoric considers the abstract values and principles the speaker is referring to. This is different than Derrida's deconstruction approach which rejects the idea that metaphors are referring to abstract values. The approach omits listening rhetoric as is evident in Derrida's explanation of the metaphor.

Derrida followed the argument first presented by Nietzsche, that all language is metaphoric in operation and that language cannot be used to record and materialize "objective" truths. He claims that metaphors do not properly identify meaning but rather believes they are

constituted by *différence* (*White Mythology).* The only thing Booth finds helpful in this claim is in reminding us that we might misinterpret (for lack of listening rhetoric) arguments when we are actually dealing with a metaphor (*The Company We Keep* 302). But while Derrida claims metaphors only point to more metaphors, Booth doesn't believe that all literary works are referential to other metaphors. He spends time in *The Company We Keep* analyzing and elaborating the purpose of the metaphor. He urges his readers to abstract the concepts to which the metaphors are referring. If the metaphor is not taken as implying ethical claims, then there is no means of deciding whether it is "good for us" or not (303). Booth argues that metaphors compare *things* and not simply *words* or *more metaphors.*

To illustrate how Booth believes metaphors function to compare actual principles, he uses an example of a metaphor he heard from a lawyer who was on one side of a lawsuit. The lawyer thus spoke to the jury, "They got us where they want us. They're holding us up with one hand, their good sharp fishin' knife in the other, and they're sayin', 'you jes set still, little catfish, we're *jes* gonna *gut* ya.'" (*The Company We Keep* 304) In this metaphor, one law firm in the lawsuit was larger and represented the fisherman in the metaphor, the other smaller law firm represented the catfish. With this example, Booth points out that metaphors are referential to meta-lingual *situations* and not simply to other signs. "If it were normal in any society to see those two things as comparable," he writes, "nobody would take the comparison as metaphoric." (306) This represents Booth's break from the deconstructionists, he disagrees that metaphors and language are *completely* self-referential. The belief that metaphors refer to a meta-lingual reality stems from their divide over pluralism. Deconstruction suggests pluralism is the confounding of endless referents within a given text while Booth claims pluralism is the multiple perspectives of a given argument that represent actual human values and beliefs.

As we have seen, Booth agrees with the complexity of language and perhaps even identifies himself at times with deconstruction. In *Critical Understanding,* he writes about a conversation he has with a colleague who is eager for Booth to write on the offensive, to refute and demonize those "French crazies" (referring to Foucault and Derrida) (235). Booth reacts negatively to this and accurately portrays his highest ethical principle, that of valuing others' perspectives. He admits, "the enemies are enemies, for [his colleague], because they repudiate understanding, insist on their right to ignore intentions, and blissfully impose the critic's character and interests upon a text" (just as his colleague was doing) (235). This colleague of his wanted Booth to impose his own (and he presumed) Booth's "superior understanding" upon the texts of these theories. Whether it be his colleague or the deconstructionists, Booth acknowledges that instead of imperially preaching or deconstructing rhetorical arguments, seeking to understand the ethics involve will offer something to be discovered by those reading the work. At times (such was the case for Booth), common ground can be found between seemingly irreconcilable claims. Instead of clinging to his colleagues' skepticism, Booth employed pluralism with Derrida in order to see where he and the deconstructionists agreed. Booth plumb-lines himself between the two and orients himself in any given reading by asking, "Although I don't agree with the subjective truth claims of Derrida, what values do he and I share?" This pluralistic approach governs Booth's rhetorical approach to all rhetorical texts.

Booth finds deconstruction to be a tool for using pluralism in our readings to see how the texts can take a myriad of possible interpretations, but Booth urges the reader to see how these interpretations construct a base of human values. Booth hopes these deconstructions are only a beginning for synthesis of what values remain after the dense complexities are examined. Booth is developing his own pluralism in response to deconstruction. He concludes from studying

Derrida that truths are indeed multiple, and that "most truths are uncovered only by methods available when we give up the quest for absolute certainty". (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 79*)* Although their approaches are consistent in many ways, Booth beliefs in transcendent truths, specifically the value of our differences.

Conclusion

Booth meets Deconstruction with both appraisal and criticism. Booth refined his approach to listening and understanding by the critical perspectives of language offered by deconstruction. Derrida's exposition of language illuminated truths that helped develop Booth's argument for a pluralistic approach. The incredible density and complexity of meanings within texts informed Booth's Pluralism by bringing to light the need for inclusivity among competing arguments. Semiotics revealed that understanding required a listening to a vast array of seemingly contradictory claims in rhetoric. But Derrida's theory also created challenges for Booth. Unlike Derrida, Booth wanted our rhetoric to involve seeking our shared beliefs while deconstruction mostly focused on the shaky ground our beliefs were founded upon. The later deconstructionists had asserted that no meaning transcended the text, that there was no truth outside of language. This created problems for Booth's Pluralism which reasoned that people need to come together and value each other's perspectives and methods equally and seek common ground. If there was no value placed on such realities, if none were believed to be true, then literary criticism would fall into the win-rhetoric of Positivism. Minds would not actually be changed, and pursuit of higher truths would be dropped.

Throughout the Modern and Postmodern theories, Booth's Pluralism is cultivated and elevated. By juxtaposing his ideas next to the Positivists and Deconstructionists, we understand more clearly what Booth had hoped to achieve by bringing back ethical criticism: a discourse of

understanding and inclusion in hopes that we might transcend our narrow views and validate the vastness of perspectives in the pursuit of finding common beliefs and values we share with others. This pursuit is rooted in the assertion that human values are part of what makes them exceptional and we should value others beliefs as much as we value our own.

CHAPTER IV

LISTENING RHETORIC AND PLURALISM

Wayne Booth's career was founded upon the desire to create ethically minded people who pursued understanding in all rhetorical situations. He believed serious ethical criticism and the pursuit for understanding had been deemed irrelevant by both Bertrand Russell's Positivism and Derrida's Deconstruction. Without encouraging ethical criticism, Booth worried that rhetoricians would fall into the assumption that listening to counter arguments would be a pointless practice. The way he positions himself against the Positivist movement is by showing how the fact/value split had created two irreconcilable camps of rhetors: the rationalists who upheld scientific claims and the irrationalists who despised the "life of the mind" and clung passionately to their values and beliefs. He was motivated to change the culture from one of hostility to one of understanding. He wanted both sides to consider what values both shared with each other without having to surrender their own perspectives. He was looking for a reconciliation between these two ways of interpreting the world, that is, he is not arguing that there can be two opposing facts that are equally true (such as the number of organs in the body), but rather a pluralistic view of our competing values and philosophical identities. He believed our methods of discovering truths and values are diverse. The distrust between students and teachers in the University of Chicago in the late 60s, between rationalists and irrationalists, had been the result of Positivism that claimed only facts were legitimate reasons to change one's mind, not ethical appeals. These opposing camps did not see the validity of each community's

argument. If they had, then a more constructive and not destructive understanding would have emerged, namely Booth's definition of *Pluralism*: a pursuit of understanding despite disagreements in order to elevate an ethic of human diversity and dignity and at times, a realization of shared values. But because Positivism didn't encourage understanding but rather asserting one's beliefs, academics had become divisive culture.

But from the mid-70s onward, higher education shifted from Positivism, to newer postmodern theories such as Deconstruction. Booth found Deconstruction to shed light and help in the discovery of the pluralistic nature of language. He found Derrida's claims about language (that it was deferential) helped correctly frame the way we understand knowledge. But, after Derrida, deconstruction implicitly and explicitly offered Relativism as the ultimate reality of all claims. People had different opinions on values and beliefs, but they were never founded on abstract truths, but rather language constructs. For this reason, there were innumerable inconsistencies of ethical claims. These theories invoked questions of purpose such as, what could result in seeking to understand other's perspectives? Why should we seriously account for others' values over our own? Booth found himself again offering Pluralism as a way of recognizing these inconsistencies as independent and equally valid, and still urging us towards listening rhetoric and seeking common ground. Among the intellectual advocates for Pluralism within Booth's lifetime, Isaiah Berlin was amongst the most prominent in the field of political philosophy. By observing Berlin's pluralism, we get a clearer picture of Booth's version of pluralism. The principles Berlin sets up in his political philosophy is adapted by Booth to be applied in rhetorical studies. Berlin proposed that beliefs are vastly different but should be valued as equal, and Booth argues that, though beliefs are vastly different, they sometimes share

similar qualities with each other, and it is those qualities (values) that bring us together (even though we may never agree on our subjective beliefs).

The Pluralism of Isaiah Berlin

Berlin believed that the fact that all humanity understood and proposed ethical values *made ethical values objective*. It was human nature to live with such values. He writes of the value of "liberty" for example as being an objective value. He defends this value as objective because it is *in our nature* to value the freedom of thought. We are naturally created (by deity or nature) to see it as good and valuable. People vary in their values, but there are limits to their variations. The creation of and commitment to values makes humanity unique. Value creation is intricately connected to our human nature. (*Against the Current*)

In a letter Berlin writes to author Beata Polanowska-Sygulska, he explains his belief that human nature is not "fixed" as Rousseau believed it was: "I do not believe that all men are in the relevant respects the same 'beneath the skin,' i.e., I believe that variety is part of human existence and in fact…that this is a valuable attribute" ("A Letter on Human Nature"). What Berlin does hold true, however, is the idea that all human life consists of the same list of human needs: "I think that common ground between human beings must exist if there is to be any meaning in the concept of human being at all." He goes on to list those needs as both physical (food, shelter, security) and ethical (happiness, self-expression, love, communication, etc). Though all these needs are objective, humans have uniquely different methods of obtaining these needs ("A Letter on Human Nature"). Those methods should not be seen as "better" or "worse", but should be equally valued and understood. Such an approach to the variety of human values and assertions is an example of Berlin's pluralism.

These claims by Berlin are influential to Booth's own pluralism as Booth too argues that values are connected to something higher than our own creation. In the afterward of *Rhetoric and Pluralism,* he argues that "Everything we do, if it has a point, can be shown to relate to some notion of a cosmos that…[which] validates its making. A real point is a point that matters, and to matter...is to matter in some...dimension of reality, larger that any one person's vision." (297) He argues that "to matter" exists as a kind of proof of transcendental reality, as proof of the "cosmos." One can see that Berlin provided Booth philosophical ground for what Booth intended to accomplish. While Berlin's pursuit and explanation of pluralism was written as an approach towards political situations, Booth uses Berlin's platform to build an argument for extending pluralism into rhetorical studies.

Opposed to both Booth and Berlin's pluralism is Monism. Monism derives from claims and assumptions that date at least as far back as Plato. Berlin describes Monism as founded on three tenets: (1) there is one answer to all serious and well thought out questions, (2) there are general ways to discovering these truths that must be followed, (3) and all discovered truths must work together forming a larger overarching narrative. Booth mentions monism in his work *Critical Understanding.* It is essentially, "some one view [that] will prove to be right and all others wrong." (12) Those who adhere to such monisms believe that "a single resolution (however complex in structure) is both desirable and attainable". By their nature, monisms create irreconcilable conflict. They make demands and uphold values that conflict with other views. Berlin is trying to show how, though irreconcilable claims may exist all around us, they do not necessarily have to negate or cancel out other claims. Instead he encourages monistic perspectives to be inclusive and not exclusive of other perspectives.

Isaiah Berlin proposes that just because competing claims seem to contradict one another, they are still genuine and "good" values. No value should be seen as having priority over another because there is no rational way of resolving such conflicts. Those conflicts are what defines our humanity, not the congruency of all claims, but their equal and divided nature (*Against the Current*). Booth and Berlin both consider at least *some* values to be objective (at least in some sense) and not simply subjective. Berlin writes that it is "clear that ability to recognize universal - or almost universal - values enters into our analysis of such fundamental concepts as 'man', 'rational', 'sane', 'natural'." (*The Proper Study of Mankind* 83) Berlin lays the foundational argument for universal concepts that all people share. He places our competing beliefs and universal values into a framework for understanding the vast complexity of our humanity. Booth uses this philosophical groundwork and then asks questions such as, how do we discuss universals and our vastly diverse stock of values and beliefs? How can we understand the myriad of ways people arrive at their claims if we don't understand the values that root them? Booth uses Isaiah Berlin's foundation to apply pluralism in rhetorical studies. He applies these principles by proposing we achieve pluralism through the act of listening rhetoric.

Listening Rhetoric

Booth calls Pluralists those who "claim to embrace at least two enterprises in their full integrity, without reducing the two to one." (*Critical Understanding* 21) Such an embrace requires what Booth will claim is the highest ethical quality: listening and seeking understanding. His essential claim when he published his book *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* in 1979 is, "Let the voices multiply; the more voices we have, the more truth will finally emerge." (4) The pluralism Booth advocates is the opposite of monism. It has nothing to do with uniformity of opinion, something that Booth warns we should always "mistrust" (4). If

critics of a text are in complete uniformity, there is something other than reason that governs their decisiveness. Instead, Booth suggest that a healthy body of criticism is determined by the complexity and vigor of competing critical claims because Pluralism can only happen in a community of diverse claims. To understand how such competing views can contribute to our knowledge requires true listening and open discourse. Two claims that are contradictory can be of value though they seem incompatible because they represent true human values. If we listen close enough, we have a greater understanding of human values which are objective, and sometimes we see past our differences to find our common ground. The effort to treat others with dignity changes the nature of discourse to focus on learning and maturing in knowledge instead of focusing on simply proving one's argument or ignoring differences.

Booth demonstrates this effort of treating others with dignity in his interview with John Boe from *Writing on the Edge.* John Boe published the interview in *Writing on the Edge* in 2005 and talked with Booth about how his pluralism covered nearly all his life. The interview took place between Booth's last published book and his death. In the interview, Booth shares how he applies listening rhetoric when grading students' papers, "if you can demonstrate in what you've said [in the rubric] that the student has really been heard, then the student has some reason for responding." ("An Interview with Wayne Booth") Booth would read the student's essays and seek to understand that student's values and see their argument from their point of view and give appropriate correction afterwards. This would cause the students to be more receptive to his instruction. Booth's own pedagogy is entrenched in LR as his own method of applying Pluralism in the classroom. When a debate took place in class, he would ask his student before their rebuttal, "John, can you repeat what Mary said in such a way that she would accept it if you were her attorney?" This would require John to truly understand Mary's point of view and align

himself with her values before reacting with his own opinions. Mary would then feel John was seeing her perspective before jumping to conclusions about her intelligence or character. To read and discourse as a pluralist, one must employ that type of listening. Booth's idea of Pluralism gives motivation for people to start listening to one another, a motivation for discovering truth.

Booth believed that what destroys critical culture is unquestioned conformity, while encouraging and participating in criticism keeps a culture from becoming innate and unchallenged. He encourages readers to approach the works of other critics *ethically*: "Only if my opponent's survival is possible without my defeat am I likely to treat his arguments with as much respect as I spontaneously accord my own." (28) And he thus asks us to humble ourselves and concede to ethical behavior (listening rhetoric) even before entering into discourse.

Listening rhetoric is described as the highest ethical approach we should take when employing rhetorical analysis. It requires an ethical motivation, one that seeks the best for the benefit of learning truth, not being right and not to simply "win" any given argument. To many, however, who claim that transcendent truths don't exist, there is little reason and motivation for applying listening rhetoric. Moral Relativism removes the pursuit for listening rhetoric by the assumption that all claims are "mere rhetoric."

Relativism vs Pluralism

Just as Berlin set the philosophical framework for Booth's application of pluralism, Berlin also distinguishes his definition of Pluralism from relativism by affirming the idea that objective values do in fact exists in societies. Booth admits that the term "relativism" has meant many things in many different situations depending on who is speaking and the context they are speaking in. Booth associates the term as synonymous with skepticism. Though our lives are filled with competing Monisms, "we shouldn't be surprised, [skeptics] say, or trouble ourselves

about [truth claims] much, because there is no real truth in any of them." (*Critical Understanding* 17) Booth believes that skeptics asses claims while predicting that there will soon be another "swing in the pendulum" from the ideology of the day and thus reasoning with such claims is futile, "It's all relative" they claim. Taken far enough, skepticism concludes that "all critical statements are without cognitive value" and at best reveal the personal feeling or preference of the authors. (17) Booth agrees with the relativist that no "fully coherent, correspondent, and comprehensive vision of the world is available to any human being" but adds that "skepticism about total views need not lead to skepticism about our various intellectual enterprises." (84). Booth encourages his readers to abandon the skeptic's doubt about values and instead employ pluralism, believing that some values are objective in that all humans know and share them.

Some modernists and postmodernists reject the idea that some works can be "superior" to other works. This belief is tied to a skepticism that rejects moral truths as possibly being "objective". Richard Posner dismisses the importance of ethical criticism because values were not seen as being objective. He believed that ethics of the author or readers should never affect the quality of the text. Yet Posner himself admitted that "the aesthetic outlook *is* a moral outlook, one that stresses the values of openness" and demonstrates how the texts that promote that sort of "openness" are superior than those that suppress it. He certainly felt his methods (such as his method of reading) were *objectively* better than the ethical critics, and thus proved he believed that there are some values that are objective (ie the "values of openness"). Posner cannot maintain his relativistic stance on ethical values without falling into contradiction. This contradiction can be avoided through Booth and Berlin's pluralism in place of Posner's relativism.

The difference between relativism and pluralism is in the evaluation of the claims being made. In relativism, claims made are always seen as relative to something else. The reasons for making such claims are always explained by understanding situational aspects, cultural influence, and context. The claims are not actually considered, but rather considered as consequence of other factors. As Booth puts it in *Critical Understanding,* "All human reasoning [to the relativists] is simply a manifestation of the true line of causation that leads from *this* physical configuration of the universe to that one" (27). What Booth is demonstrating here is that in Relativism human reason (both logical and ethical) is understood by mapping out the *causes* for those beliefs instead of taking them at face value. Instead of "explaining away" reasons for argument, pluralism requires that we take other critics' reasonings and apply the same listening and attentiveness as they applied to their own reasoning. Pluralism is the inclusion of all philosophical approaches in a dispute. We see this in his example previously mentioned of how to handle students debating within the classroom. After properly understanding (by defending your opponent's argument as if you were their defense attorney), a pluralist will focus on the values that are raised in another's claims to discover if those values are shared in the discourse community. Both student's opinions, however, might remain the same. If, for example the debate was about capital punishment, one student may remain pro and the other against. But what an exercise of pluralism might show, is that both students value human life: one values the life of a victim high enough that a harsh sentence is just, while the other student may value all life enough to spare the convict from his/her death. LR will result in the underlying truths emerging without reducing or transforming one's opinion to something else.

B.F. Skinner's behaviorism is a good example of how a relativist might consider a person's claims. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity,* Skinner makes a claim about reasoning, that

"it is at best a weak form of persuasion and is usually a disguise for, and thus relative to, the effects of conditioning" (27) When a disagreement is found, the relativists is likely to focus on why that person believes their claim: "You think that because the following factors have influenced your opinion…" This subjugates the claim itself by claiming it is simply a reaction to a given circumstance. The claim is not seriously considered as a possible truth. Instead, when the pluralist encounters controversies, they will listen and weigh the argument and then seek common ground. They will ask questions such as, what warrants or pretense are we both agreeing on? How are our shared values part of the larger picture? Pluralism requires rhetors of differing opinions to value human opinions and seek to understand different perspectives, while relativism defines claims as nothing else but the result of causation.

Just because we listen, however, doesn't mean that all skepticism should be rejected. As Booth writes in a 2005 symposium, "The skeptical side certainly must not be neglected, as we are flooded daily with shoddy rhetoric, often downright lies, that we must reject." But Skinner's skepticism has made all claims products of circumstance. Applying skepticism to all methods of inquiry has removed Skinner from compulsory LR. Pluralism would suggest we include skepticism as *one* method of *many* methods that can lead us to knowledge, whether scientific values or ethical values. Booth begins his critical understanding of ethical claims with trust and then seeks commonalities that lead to conclusions. The reason skepticism shouldn't be applied to all ethical methods of inquiry is because it leads to positivism, a doubt of all "unprovable" value claims.

If there were no transcendental "truths" that rhetoric represents, then what would be the purpose of seeking such truths within our differences? Booth argues we would be left with argument for *argument's sake.* If the postmodernists are right in that there are no absolutes, then

arguing for ethical principles is simply a matter of relative purpose. Booth claims it is easy to fall into the trap of, "there's no such thing as truth, so why bother?" (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 159). Later in *Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, he uses Robert Wuthnow's article *Is there a place for 'Scientific' Studies in Religion?* as an example of this approach. "The role of scientific studies should not be," Wuthnow writes, "to discover what is common among the various religious traditions, but to understand what is different and to gauge reactions to those differences." He claims that most social scientists are concerned with an "in-depth analysis of specific traditions" and not interested in "superficial generalizations." Booth points out that although Wuthnow claims to be studying these religions "in depth," he is actually only examining their differences. He is not weighing the claims each religion is making, but rather comparing how they differ from one another. The reason is Wuthnow assumes that the religious claims couldn't have any transcendent truths (as they don't exist). In this chapter of *Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, Booth is trying to reveal how complete subjectivism infers that the reader shouldn't judge the beliefs and values of a given rhetoric, but instead seek out the cause of such claims. Instead of this approach, Booth asks (concerning these different religions), "what are the shared unquestionable convictions of the combatants: the assumptions, commonplaces, *topoi*, firm platforms or "places" on which they stand?" (159).

In another example, Booth attempts to demonstrate the difference between relativism and pluralism through a commonly known example, the story of the Blind Men and the Elephant. The story is about several blind men surrounding an elephant from all sides. Each is using their hands to feel the animal in order to visualize its shape and detail. After doing so, they conclude that they know what an elephant is, but as they are describing it to one another their empirical results are vastly different (one holding a trunk claims an elephant is shaped like a snake, another

holding the leg claims it's more like a tree, etc). This illustration is used in relativists' arguments to argue that each person's beliefs and values are based upon the context of their relative environment. Booth argues that in this analogy, the blind men weren't offering up "invalid" claims ("mere" opinions) but actual perspectives. If there were enough blind men each in one specific area of the elephant's body, and if they could accurately describe what it is they are feeling, then why couldn't an "objective" understanding of an elephant ensue? Booth explains that our limited perspective does not mean that our values are totally irrelevant and subjective, but that knowledge is acquired through our different perspectives, *given we share and seek to understand other perspectives*. Such truths could be understood if there are enough perspectives for us to "see" the diversity of our observations as part of a whole. There is nothing wrong with the perspectives of these individuals, their perspectives shouldn't be dismissed as irrelevant or "mere opinion", but rather shared and understood. (*Critical Understanding* 31)

What Booth is trying to show is the value in having multiple and competing claims which demonstrate the complex reality that all human beings share. We need each other's view to understand the variety of human values and discover our common ground (the values we share but express differently) (31). Booth uses the metaphor of the blind men and the elephant to explain his pluralism as it differs from relativism. Relativism suggests that everyone's observations and claims are simply a result from their subjective experiences, while Booth's pluralism suggests that although these perspectives are different, they are equally valuable for informing us of shared beliefs. Although competing claims seem to clash, they are expanding the understandings, the growing "border" (as Derrida would have it) that gives us insight into meaning. Disagreements will always exist and Booth is not motivated to refute disagreements. Instead, he tries to demonstrate how disagreements contribute to our broader understanding. As

he says concerning the Blind Men and the Elephant, "what is hidden from them is not anything 'in' the object but rather the addition that can be revealed only by the other perspectives." (31) By allowing and encouraging such a range of perspectives, a critical community acknowledges the foundational truths within their perspectives.

Transcendent Truths

Booth's pluralism encourages ethical criticism because it is tied to his belief that values have objective reality. There are some claims, Booth says, that are true in any and all scenarios. He affirms, for example, that "slavery is always wrong" and rejects that such a claim is simply true in our cultural reality of the 21st century only. Why is this not just a reality "in our time"? Booth argues that the vast amount of voices, the aggregate of data and of competing claims that have taken millennia to gather has shown humanity that slavery is indeed wrong. He refutes "current critics of rhetoric... when they tie it [rhetoric] to the claims that everything is totally contingent." (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 13) Rhetoric might influence our beliefs to think the opposite, but that does not change the universe's truth. (13)

Booth continues to other truths. He argues that: "Torturing a child to death for the sheer pleasure of it is *always* wrong" (13). No matter the agreements or disagreements communities share, it is a *fact* that such an act is ethically wrong. Part of the reason we have arrived at such an opinion (a *correct* opinion) as most have, is due to the large volume of history, of philosophical claims, or ideological and theological pursuits that have been written, argued, and studied. Booth provides perhaps a more relevant example in his notes when he asks, "You think that to call faking scholarly evidence morally wrong is merely a human invention, not real?" (174n12) We *trust* scholars to not "make up" evidence simply to improve their arguments. That sort of act (lying, cheating) is disdained among all scholars. It is a transcendent truth that even those who

are total relativists agree upon. All of these values (honesty, anti-slavery, and condemning the torturing of children) are all part of the larger value that encompasses Booth's pluralism. Cherishing the life and health of a child, seeking to make all humans equal in value, and doing honest research for the improvement of our knowledge are all aspects of human dignity. Booth believes these claims are valued as objectively true even between scholars from opposing philosophies, and all of them promote Booth's highest ethical value: the dignity and respect for human life. That value is clearly evident in Booth's pluralism as it seeks to uphold values and beliefs of individuals in the most divided communities. But claiming that some values are transcendent is a false idea to Positivists and many Postmodernists.

The innate nature of humans to seek truth and share what we discover is proof in and of itself that the universe is not "value free" as Bertrand Russell suggested. If mankind is part of the universe, then by definition "nature is...man-like, at least in part; all the phenomena of man's consciousness become part of 'the world'" (*Modern Dogma* 51) as Booth argues against the Positivists. Bertrand Russell was hoping to see the world "as it is" ruling out things such as beliefs and values which in fact *are* (*Modern Dogma* 51n8). Booth claims that people are born into a universe that has already been made and has constructed rules, both scientific and ethical, that we are compelled to recognize. It is through discourse that we learn of those truths and debate them with our peers. His final sentence in *Modern Dogma* summarizes his hopes for achieving such ethical truths. "What I am asking," he writes, "is for a leap over modernist battlefields to the ...rediscovery that the primal symbolic act is saying yes to processes like the wrenching one in which you are engaged [that is, a divided discourse]." (204) In this instance, he is asking the "rationalists" (the administration) to listen to the assent of the "irrationalists" (the students) and vice versa. If we are to pursue understanding, we must begin by listening and

carefully weighing claims, especially those most contrary. How does such listening work in our discourse? Booth guides us with several examples of how we can practice pluralism.

Examples of Pluralism

Throughout his career, Booth addresses core divisions in the cultures he believed most needed to practice listening rhetoric. One division that existed throughout Booth's life was the contentious relationship between science and religion. This division existed far before Booth's time. To understand Booth's pluralistic response, it is necessary to understanding the background behind the debate. In *Modern Dogma* and much later in *Rhetoric of Rhetoric,* Booth seeks to point out how these subjects of study do not need to be mutually exclusive. Many positivists, he argues, have lumped religion with rhetoric and claimed both are equally untrustworthy. Positivism has demonized rhetoric as making much of dire probabilities and religion has equally lied or given "false hope" to people when only science can give us *true* knowledge. The debate between science and religion has, at least since the Victorian era, been divisive with each side making claims that seemingly contradict the other. Helen De Cruz claims that "Evolutionary theorists from Darwin (1871) onward argued that human morality is continuous with social behaviors in nonhuman animals, and that we can explain moral sentiments as the result of natural selection" (De Cruz 1). This argument has continued even to Booth's time when Michael Ruse argued that our belief that morality is "objective" is actually an illusion that has helped humans cooperate with each other (Ruse and Wilson 1986). Religion has naturally been on the defensive. In Texas, for example, religious leaders have backed a ban on teaching Darwinian Evolution in public schools which has led to the state offering alternative science material that challenges the foundational principles of environmental sciences. (Chang 1) Booth spent time in his works

writing to these two divided audiences in order to persuade them to employ a pluralistic approach instead of monistic towards each other.

Although briefly mentioning this contention in *Modern Dogma,* Booth spends more time in *Rhetoric of Rhetoric* explaining how both science and religion are equally founded on rhetoric. His goal, throughout this work, is to promote listening rhetoric and pluralism and by examining this divided community, he demonstrates how it can be implemented. Both religious and science rhetors rely on persuasive technique to instill belief within their audience. The reason the two appear exclusive is due to a lack of pluralism. By applying LR, Booth's application of Pluralism reveals that science and religion share seven fundamental similarities. By looking at only a few of these warrants, one can see how Booth employs listening rhetoric to show the shared beliefs that both the "purest of scientists" believe as well as religious fundamentalists. One warrant is that the world is somehow flawed and that the flaws are seen in the light of the Unflawed. When scientists attack other scientists who cheat, for example, they are expressing a faith that scientific cheating is always wrong. Another warrant is the idea that there must be some higher order/reality of standards that lead to our judgements of the flawed and Unflawed (the idea many scientists call the *cosmos).* Booth explains these seven foundational principles as being shared by both positivists (whose truths are solely reliant upon science) and the religious community. This shared foundation is the goal of pluralism. What begins as an exercise in listening to one's opponents views, ends in an understanding of values that exist in both religious and science dogma even if those values come with separate distinct claims. Following this example of pluralism, Booth asks the reader, "Can we hope that by practicing [pluralism] of some kind - listening rhetoric in its most committed form - we might diminish some of the *pointless* demonizing that diverse quarrelers commit?" [emphasis added] (*Rhetoric of Rhetoric* 170) This

is an example of pluralism, and finding such unity of values has motivated Booth throughout his works.

Just because one community believes God created and the other claims agnosticism or atheism, shouldn't lead either one from dismissing the values of belief and scientific inquiry. As shown above, some scholars focus on the differences between our subjective assertions, or the reasons why we believe what we do. In the example of religion and science, we see Booth's primary principle in practicing pluralism: the act of listening. Both sides must admit they don't have "all the answers" and be open to learning from other philosophical inquiries.

This application of pluralism shows how Booth demonstrates that truths can be in more than one philosophical approach. Religion and science both offer us truths that give us a broader understanding of our values that are diverse and complex. Booth's pluralism is founded on that complex and diverse nature on truth. He admits,

> "...you can't reduce truth to this philosophical tradition or that philosophical tradition. If you go to Plato, and he's reasoning from the top down, that's one version of truth. If you go to Hume, and he's reasoning from the bottom up, that's another version of truth, and both of them are revealing real truths." ("An Interview with Wayne Booth'')

What Booth is pointing out here and in his other works, is that truth is not exclusive to one perspective, or one "tradition", but discovered by the congregate of many perspectives. A pluralist realizes that both perspectives contain truths, and one doesn't need to adhere to one interpretation of reality (monism), such as positive science and strict theology. Booth believes there can be different claims that clash against each other, and although not reconcilable, can still harbor values and beliefs shared by the both of them.

Booth advocates for a discourse grounded in understanding and inquiry that "reduces the pressure to constantly persuade, mitigates the potential stigma of being persuaded, and decreases the risk of perceiving oneself as either battering or being battered." ("Art of Being Persuaded" 28-29). In a sense, Booth is removing the attitude of "winning" and "losing" as goals of rhetoric in order for there to be synthesis and understanding both which require a great deal of humility. Booth believes that societal improvement through warrantable beliefs begins with a mutual trust to listen. If we value the diverse beliefs of humanity, and if we listen to understand those differences, then are more likely to become pluralists and see the world of having multiple competing truths that are all equally valuable.

Another way of seeing Booth's ethical plea for listening and pluralism is by examining his life. Dr. James Chandler was a colleague of Booth's at the University of Chicago and writes in his memorial of Booth, that Booth loved visiting debates in other classrooms where he was able to watch the discourse between the students and teachers. "When a member of an audience asked a question whose point was lost on a speaker," Chandler writes, "Wayne would instinctively jump in to clear things up. It drove him mad to see people talking past one another." He believed that the truest ethical principle that made pluralism "work" was the principle of listening rhetoric. Chandler believes his listening was an effort, not to create agreement or disagreement, but to produce a situation in which a change might or might not happen after both parties understood their common ground (1). Another colleague in the department, Dr. James Redfield shared with me that Booth spoke of rhetoric as "the art of finding good reasons" and by good reasons he specifically meant reasons that were "grounded in righteousness" (Redfield). And righteousness began with listening and ended with pluralism. Booth, Redfield claims, argued that the purpose of rhetorical disputation was to elevate truths,

and Booth's method of doing so was through pluralism: an acknowledgement of disagreement, but a pursuit of common ground.

Conclusion

Modernism demanded a monist view of the world, a world without transcendent values. Booth showed how positivism created a shouting match by claiming the universe was value-free, but Booth illustrates that values even existed in the claims the scientists were making. Modernism demanded Booth drop his belief in the value of ethical claims as they were not "reasonable". His hope for Modernism was to educate everyone to come to terms with what is considered *warrantable* beliefs, that is, *when and why should I change my mind?* The answer would come through listening rhetoric and pluralism.

As the Modernist movement and its impact drew to a close, it was replaced by philosophies concerned with language and semiotics. Booth saw something both redemptive and dangerous with Postmodernism. Jacque Derrida was publishing a number of works on *différance* and "Deconstruction" which would become an extremely influential idea even to today. Booth found Derrida's claim on the elusiveness and highly pluralistic nature of language a compelling argument. It helped reinforce the pluralism approach to rhetoric Booth had been exploring since his early works. Deconstruction called for readers to see the complexity and seemingly infinite possible definitions of the text. It called for a plurality of definitions, which Booth found a helpful way of looking at the text. What deconstructionist would come to claim was that what we call "meaning" does not actually exists, but meaning is rather a construct of language that cannot exists outside of itself. This challenged assent to transcendent truths and marks where Booth differentiates himself from Postmodernists who were also adhering to a monism: "truths don't exist, so...so what?"

Booth is different from the Postmodernists primarily because rhetoric (for him) was not *the end*. Rhetoric was a *means* to an end, or rather THE means to THE end. Deconstructionist had gotten it right that we rely on language and not simple logic to understand and function in the world around us, but they missed that language was our tool for understanding objective truths that actually exist. To read rhetorically and reach that end, Booth argues that we must be vigilant in our listening and seek understanding between competing arguments. He knew we would never reach a point of changing our minds or maturing our knowledge to understand higher truths unless we began by listening to what the arguments are. He applied pluralism by showing how divided communities in Modernism actually shared values and beliefs. He applied pluralism in Postmodernism by seeing the good awareness that semiotics offered, but also the dangers of complete subjectivism.

We position ourselves to become better pluralists through seeking the "good" that exists in competing claims, even claims that assert opposites. Booth's hope for rhetoric is that it can lead us to valuing each other's beliefs as high as our own perspectives and seeking the common values and beliefs we all share. His hope is that we come to an understanding of values that exist all around us.

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