Bureaucratic Modernity and the Erosion of Practical Reason: A Rhetorical Education as an Antidote

David Impellizzeri

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BUREAUCRATIC MODERNITY AND THE EROSION OF PRACTICAL REASON:
A RHETORICAL EDUCATION AS AN ANTIDOTE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
David Impellizzeri

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BUREAUCRATIC MODERNITY AND THE EROSION OF PRACTICAL REASON:
A RHETORICAL EDUCATION AS AN ANTIDOTE

By

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Approved October 25, 2019

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ABSTRACT

BUREAUCRATIC MODERNITY AND THE EROSION OF PRACTICAL REASON:
A RHETORICAL EDUCATION AS AN ANTITODE

By
David Impellizzeri
December 2019

Dissertation supervised by Ronald C. Arnett, Ph.D.

To what extent and in what ways does modernity reveal itself through the bureaucratic?

This project aims at an interpretive understanding of bureaucratic modernity. The rationalization of society and action in the (late) modern world requires that an increasing number of human activities and domains be explained in allegedly neutral, ‘rational’ terms and without reference to morally substantive ends. Ultimately, this entails a form of epistemic reductionism that elevates instrumental rationality to the exclusion of practical reason and probabilistic ways of knowing. Bureaucratic modernity signifies a decrease in choices that can be legitimized in public on some basis other than calculative-methodological-procedural thought. Guidance for civic and marketplace conduct now comes from administrative expertise. Such a milieu promotes a disposition to reality that has implications for: what counts as knowledge, ethical discourse and action, and education. The dynamics of bureaucratic modernity function as an informal cultural pedagogy that reshapes knowledge, ethics, and formal education for its own purposes and after its own
model of human life and sociopolitical community. This project engages the work of Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, and Alasdair MacIntyre in order to construct a communication ethics story of bureaucratic modernity’s significance. The final episode in this narrative consists in a turn to Giambattista Vico’s rhetorical conception of human knowledge and action for the purpose of articulating a communication ethics of prudentia. Vico’s curricular vision promotes a rhetorical way of being in pragmatic contexts and offers a source of hope for the recuperation of practical reason.
DEDICATION

To

the Wellspring

of wisdom and eloquence.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

That this work bears the name of a single author potentially conceal the significant fact that it was made possible by the irreplaceable contributions and support of many. I owe a debt of gratitude to my dissertation director, Dr. Ronald C. Arnett, whose tenacious scholarly drive and sage guidance throughout made this project far more than it would have been otherwise. I am grateful for the enthusiastic support and insightful commentary of Drs. Janie M. Harden Fritz and Anthony M. Wachs, my two other committee members and readers. Dr. Calvin L. Troup’s sustained attention to the school of civic rhetoric provided inspiration for my turn to Giambattista Vico toward the end of this project. Furthermore, I had the privilege of ‘looking over his shoulder’ for a year and half as he practiced his craft in the undergraduate classroom. I would like to offer my thanks to Dr. Inci Ozum Ucok-Sayrak whose participatory and responsive approach as a scholar-teacher was the other significant influence upon my development as an instructor during my time at Duquesne University. I offer my appreciation to the Ph.D. program faculty in the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies who together has provided, through their counsel and example, a vision for the tight unity between scholarship and teaching.

The ongoing presence and loving support of my parents, Richard and Roseanne, have provided for me roots in this world—the beginning of which precedes my conscious memory while the fruition of which enables a project such as this to flower. I offer my unbridled gratitude and affection to Meghan, my wife and one-of-a-kind friend. Your sacrificial self-giving, patient endurance, gentle strength, and, above all, charitable spirit will forever be part of the beautiful memory of this season of our shared life.
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CHAPTER 1:

BUREAUCRATIC MODERNITY

Bureaucracy is not peculiar to modern society. Ancient empires were made possible in large part due to bureaucratic structures, controls, and agents (Innis, *Bias*; Beniger; Walbank; Wells). Yet, this project explores what is distinctly modern about bureaucratic society and organization emerging on the heels of the European Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. To what extent do bureaucratic society, organization, and agents concretely instantiate central dynamics at work in the process of modernization in the West? Put differently, how does modernity reveal itself through the bureaucratic?

What is at stake in *bureaucratic modernity* is nothing less than a particular orientation to reality. Ronald C. Arnett captures core threads of modernity when he suggests it amounts to a “secular religion” consisting of a threefold confessional affirmation: progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy (*Communication Ethics* 3, 242-253). Extending this insight, I propose three further characteristics of modernity in general and of bureaucratic modernity in particular as central to the exigence propelling my inquiry: *mechanization*, *methodization*, and *rationalization*.

First, the *mechanization of nature* derives partially from Enlightenment science influenced by Descartes and crystalized by Newton. Closely related to their mechanistic conceptualization, the natural world was also mathematized and atomized. This view of nature results in what Charles

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1 The conception of ‘science’ developed in the seventeenth century is hardly the only nor the earliest source of a mechanized view of the natural world. Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media*) discusses the influence of Gutenberg’s fifteenth century printing press on modern science. Lewis Mumford (*Technics and Civilization*) argues for the formative influence of the thirteenth century invention of the mechanical clock upon modern economics and our view of the world—the metaphor of ‘the machine’ disrupts the natural relationship between biology and technology.
Taylor refers to as the ‘naturalistic temper’ that treats morally evaluative terms as mere epiphenomenal projections onto a neutral universe. Second, the methodization of knowledge entails the claim that knowledge must be vindicated in terms of method. Here epistemic validity derives from the most reliable rational method. This will prove to be important for the claim to knowledge on which bureaucratic expertise depends. Third, the rationalization of society and action refers to the ascendance of instrumental rationality. An increasing number of human activities and life domains, particularly in the public sphere and marketplace, must now be explained in allegedly neutral, rational terms and without reference to morally substantive ends. Regrettably, this entails a form of epistemic reductionism along with a dismissal of practical reason, common sense, and probabilistic ways of knowing in the world. Guidance for civic and marketplace conduct now comes from techno-bureaucratic expertise (MacIntyre; Weber; Postman). Bureaucratic modernity, understood in terms of mechanization, methodization, and rationalization, promotes a disposition to reality that has far-reaching implications for: what counts as knowledge, ethical discourse and action, and education—three areas given special attention in this project.

As Max Weber claimed and Charles Taylor elaborates, modernity entails the ‘disenchantment of reality.’ The mechanization of nature, methodization of knowledge, and rationalization of society and action result in our sense of the world as no longer consisting of a meaningful moral order. This naturalistic temper, according to Taylor, “neutraliz[es] the cosmos,” that is, it treats evaluative claims as mere projections onto an otherwise neutral universe (Sources 5-6, 148). Practical wisdom in the Aristotelian sense of phronesis, which includes morally substantive reasoning over intrinsic human goods, becomes a discredited public

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2 This is true not only of Descartes but also Husserl (see Cartesian Meditations), a perspective from which Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics departs (see Truth and Method).
way of knowing in the world (Ethics; Taylor, Sources). Instrumental rationality prevails in our economic, professional, and political activity. The public dominance of instrumental reasoning coincides with the epistemic reductionism and “methodological monism” that emerges from the European Enlightenment (Gianturco). Yet, how does bureaucracy fit into this picture? What role does it play? Is it a mere result or also a contributor to this situation? Rooted in the resources of rhetoric and philosophy of communication, my project endeavors to construct a communication ethics narrative about bureaucracy in the West. The vast majority of this project is dedicated to developing the intellectual resources of Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, and Alasdair McIntyre in order to identify and develop bureaucracy as a salient theme of modernity. This story is also an effort to give an account for the erosion of practical reason, and its related categories, and to point toward a way of rejuvenating this vital means of knowing and acting in the world. I conclude by turning to the tradition of civic rhetoric, as represented by Giambattista Vico, in search for a humanizing alternative to the bureaucratization of knowledge, ethics, and education.  

BUREAUCRACY IN THE COMMUNICATION LITERATURE

Within the literature of the communication field there is an assortment of interest in and concern for modern bureaucratic society, with its forms of organization and ways of structuring human relations and activity. Communication scholars range from praising bureaucracy’s power and potential to criticizing its structure and effects. They also develop a notion of the postbureaucratic with the hope of moving beyond the limitations and even deleterious effects of the bureaucratic.

Of these three characteristics of modernity, the rationalization of society and action is a more prominent theme throughout most of this project. However, the first two characteristics (mechanization and methodization) become more salient toward the end of this work.
James Carey’s book *Communication as Culture* proposes that culture and human society are products of communicative activity (21-22, 65). Communicating yields an imaginative-significative orientation to reality that functions as the environment for social action and cultural practices. Communication is culture because it generates for us a symbolic dwelling. It is through communication as a “symbolic process” that our comprehension of reality is “produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” (23). Understandings of reality are brought into existence communicatively through significative forms. Symbols are representations *of* and *for* reality—they present reality *and* constitute “the very reality they present,” offering “templates that guide” (29, 32). Whether scientific discourse, poetic expression, or conversation, communication, Carey contends, should be studied as “the primary phenomena of experience” (26).

In a similar fashion, a variety of communication scholars contend that *communication is the basis of society and organization* and is thus a more fundamental explanatory lens than even social structures. For social structures themselves are communicatively produced. Michael Calvin McGee appropriates the work of German social theorist Niklas Luhmann for the field of communication. Luhmann privileges communication, rather than social and institutional structures, as basic for understanding society (McGee). Relatedly, George Cheney explores connections between Weber’s work on modernization, rationalization, bureaucracy, and technology *and* Burke’s scholarship on symbolic action in order to probe *the communicative dimensions of organizing* (Aune). *Forms of organization are an outgrowth of communication*; communication establishes the conditions of possibility for organizing and the exercise of organizational power. Communication plays a constitutive role in forming and utilizing organizational power. On this point Dennis K. Mumby observes that “phenomena such as
resource allocation, conflict, hierarchy, and so forth, only make sense within a particular field of meaning that communicatively constructs the significance of such phenomena. Communication is not a handmaiden to the exercise of organizational power, but creates its very possibility” (“Organizing Power” 26). Extending Carey’s framing of communication as culture, communication also serves as the basis for organization and its uses of power.

Framing society and organization communicatively provides a hermeneutic entrance for discerning the contours of bureaucracy within the modern West. The communication literature rightly attends to arguably the most formative observer of modern bureaucracy in the twentieth century. Max Weber’s interpretive undertaking on the nature of modern society features his theory of the rationalization of society and the increased prominence of instrumental reason. According to Zygmunt Bauman, Weber represents one of two intellectual traditions in the self-understanding of the modern West; Freud represents the other. Unlike Karl Marx who identified economic motivation as most basic in human activity, Max Weber, resonant with the tradition of ‘political economy,’ contextualizes the market within ‘society,’ making possible his analysis of religious motives for economic activity in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and in his 1915 essay “The Social Psychology of World Religions” (Ashley). Weber measures (bureaucratic) modernity in terms of the growth of rationality and the complementary decrease in choices that can be made, especially in public, on some other basis than instrumental reason (Bauman). Along with the dominance of instrumental reason, *bureaucratic modernity* refers to the modernization of society by means of the rationalization of social life (Vieira and Trindade). Young and Bramdaw perceive modernization via rationalization as a threat to traditional cultures and human identities associated with those ways of life. “Weber conceived of rationalisation as
the invasion of traditional forms of life and religious belief by capitalist [and bureaucratic] modernity, which results in ‘the disenchantment of the world’” (56).

James Hamilton insightfully highlights that according to Weber’s account, “bureaucratization [is] the organizational manifestation of rationalization [that] creates its own kind of inhumane social order organized around the instrumental values of efficiency and formal standardization” (46). Organizing in accordance with these instrumental values results in remote centers of regulation and control in government and commerce—with the result that local centers of decision-making, namely those more intimately knowledgeable of the particular circumstances involved and whose lives are more immediately and profoundly affected by those decisions, are overridden (Hamilton). Aiming at standardization and efficiency, these remote centers of control impose forms of bureaucratic organization that are rational, hierarchical, and formalized (Cyphert and Saiia; Eid and Fyfe; Halvorsen; Hodgson; Schweitzer). In light of this, Weber worries that bureaucracies ensnare people in an “iron cage of control” (Larson and Tompkins).

**Bureaucracy, Legitimation, and Power**

In addition to rationalization and instrumentality, Weber also is reputed for the types of legitimate authority or ‘domination’ he develops in *Economy and Society* (212-254). He advances a threefold typology of authority: traditional (patrimonial), charismatic (hierocratic), and rational-legal (bureaucratic) (*Economy and Society*; Lammers and Krikorian; Laufer). Rational-legal authority, which is exemplified in bureaucracy, legitimizes liberal political theory. Weber’s three types can be utilized to discern authority systems in organizational contexts (Lammers and Krikorian). Elements of each are often found in organizations, although one tends to be most salient. Based on a quantitative study, however, Gabriel Weimann contests the
universalistic nature of Weber’s notion of ideal-type bureaucracy, claiming that bureaucrats’ attitudes and behaviors are neither as universalistic nor as impersonal as his typology stipulates.

Though he does not explicitly refer to Weber in his essay “Organizing Power,” Dennis K. Mumby discusses how communication plays a constitutive role in legitimating the formation and use of power not only in organizations but also in society in general. Not only are forms of organization an outgrowth of communication, but so too are types of society. According Klaus Krippendorff, Weber offers a more concrete conception of power by defining it in terms of relationships within a given embedded social matrix. In this context, power pertains to the one positioned most to carry out her will despite resistance (188). Related to this definition, David J. Sholle discusses how Weber advanced a notion of *legitimation* as that which gives official sanction to and consent for a specific type of authority in society (33). I would like to place this understanding of legitimate power in relation to Mumby’s categorization of modern society into three phases of socioeconomic organization in the process of modernization. *Pre-bureaucratic society* represents the first iteration of modern organization and economics. J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller, and the charisma they exuded in a crisis oriented socioeconomic system, exemplify the first ‘spirit,’ or ideological meaning, of modern capitalism (Mumby). Power in this context manifests in the form of the robber baron. The second spirit of capitalism emerges with the rise of bureaucracy and the bureaucratic manager. Here chaos and short-term gains come to be replaced with stability, security, and long-term planning characteristic of “Fordist modernism” (22). Bureaucratic institutions and scientific management have a stabilizing function. “The period from roughly 1930 through the 1960s, then, can be seen as the age of the manager, in which a bureaucratic logic of rational, impersonal, and instrumental decision making ruled the day, grounded in a Keynesian economic philosophy that legitimated a significant
government role in maintaining political and economic stability” (Mumby 22). Yet, bureaucratic organization and the second ‘spirit’ of capitalism, according to Mumby, resulted in inequalities, a sense of alienation, and limitations to individual autonomy (23). But now in the context of “liquid modernity” and post-Fordist models, a third form of organization and economics has emerged with its own managerial discourse (Mumby 22-23, 26, 33). In a later modern context, sociologist Hans Haferkamp explains, empirical research reveals irrational and even anarchic tendencies in contemporary bureaucratic organizations that undermines Weber’s rationalization thesis.

Mumby’s distinction between bureaucratic organization and a post-Fordist model of discursive organization provides a broad historical framework for considering the communication literature on bureaucracy and modern society. The one significant difference is that other communication scholars broadly refer to the organizational form of the third stage as ‘post-bureaucratic’ rather than ‘post-Fordist.’ Much of the discussion that follows herein addresses the bureaucratic as distinct from the forms of society that preceded it but also considers the postbureaucratic in relation to the bureaucratic.

Critical organizational studies seeks to understand the way communication functions to legitimate specific uses of power in organizations (Mumby, “Organizing”; Sholle; Tompkins et al.). Communicative action generates the symbolic milieu in which the exercise of organizational power occurs and is legitimated (Mumby, “Organizing”). In “The Political Function of Narrative in Organizations,” Mumby appropriates Weber’s notions of bureaucracy and power in order to propose a connection between bureaucratic structures and rules, organizational narratives, ideology, and the interests of those in power. Organizational narratives and bureaucratic rules buttress the ideology of those in power (115). On a macro-societal level, Jurgen Habermas
associates bureaucracy with both “state power” and “corporate commodification of everyday life” (Lembo and Tucker 102-103). While discussing Habermas’ concept of the law in relation to regulations and the modern welfare state, Baynes expresses concern for the subordination of too many facets of social life to bureaucratic control. With eerie parallels to more present-day sociopolitical trends, nearly thirty years ago (1990) Lembo and Tucker observe that “contemporary social movements, from the Greens of West Germany to the new American populism, are also responding to the invasion of everyday life by corporations and a bureaucratic state” (114). Marketplace organizations have also adopted rational-legal authority and bureaucratic forms of control. As exemplified in Frederick Taylor’s Principles of Scientific Management, techniques are the primary means of instrumental control, routinizing action so as to reduce individual idiosyncrasies and increase efficiency (Ziegler 420-41). Shawna Malvini Redden and Jennifer A. Scarduzio explore the psychological dimension of working in a bureaucratic organization, revealing that power dynamics therein intrude so far as even to regulate employee emotion norms. Legitimation of bureaucratic authority depends upon and extends a particular mode of human thought.

Bureaucracy, Rationalities, and Modes of Human Thought

Related to instrumental control, Weber perceives that modern society is characterized by a form of rationality concerned with use, one that objectifies, abstracts, and “has insisted on the differentiation of questions of value from questions of practice” (Young and Bramdaw 52). A course of action is publicly justifiable insofar as it is useful, instrumentally speaking. Usefulness, apart from considerations of axiological ground, vindicates the authority of the expert—a theme both Hannah Arendt and Alasdair MacIntyre identify with bureaucratic modernity (Eichmann; 4

4 In the Technological Society (1954/1964), Jacques Ellul expresses similar concern for the ubiquity of efficiency and rational methodology in his warning about la technique.
Instrumental rationality buttresses a culture of expertise and functions to objectify and abstract with respect to the lifeworld (Young and Bramdaw 51-52). Moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive forms of reasoning lack credibility for public deliberation because they are considered to be subjective—an arrangement that contributes significantly to the disenchantment of the world (Young and Bramdaw; Charles Taylor). Bureaucratic and instrumental forms of rationality circumscribe, if not invalidated, the ordinary meanings people cast upon their experiences in the lifeworld. Modernity defines “as subjective and irrational any appeal to or invocation of any value other than use-value in the rational determination of useful ends—and has so negated its own promise of enlightenment” (Young and Bramdaw 52). It turns out that the character of a social world governed by instrumental rationality and experts (i.e., masters of maximizing use-value) impedes, as an ironic consequence, the elevation of humanity toward a well-articulated, higher moral vision.

Instrumental rationality is in many respects eclipsing religious, aesthetic, and ethical ways of knowing in the world, leaving us without recourse to a substantive public vision(s) of intrinsic human goods. First, sociologist Bülent Diken holds that a new conception of religion has emerged—one that has been reimagined in accordance with the instrumental logic of the market. According to Diken, this is comparable to, though the inverse of, Benjamin’s notion of ‘capitalism as religion.’ Second, the ubiquity and potency of instrumental-bureaucratic rationality poses a threat to aesthetic thought and thus to architecture along with the visual and performing arts (Escobar; Fallon; Gartman; Harrison; Harter). A “corporatist worldview” aims to evaluate art according to its own ‘objective’ standards (Harrison). Instrumental logic triumphs over aesthetic judgment. Third, instrumental rationality constrains ethical thought. Cheri Ketchum maintains the news media’s restrictive logic identifies, frames and limits controversies;
squelches substantive reasoning; and constructs public knowledge after its own image. Ginna Hustling, appropriating Hannah Arendt’s notion of ‘the rise of the social,’ proposes a similar point. Televisual news, as a feature of the social domain, “creates a narrowly defined mass identity” (165). While neither public nor private, the social sphere features bureaucratic institutions, rule-following behavior, and thoughtless homogeneity. From an intercultural communication perspective, Ricardo Vieira and Jose Trindale attend to the ways modernization undermines the ethical and religious understanding of traditional cultures and of those who immigrate from such cultures to modernized ones. Dwelling in “a modern society implies a clear cut with the former way of thinking and living. Modernisation of society is based . . . in the rationalisation of social life. For many immigrants coming from traditional pre-modern or pre-bureaucratic societies, living between these two worlds may lead to a division in their selves,” requiring them to negotiate multiple identities and incongruent rationalities (38). Late modern bureaucratic societies subvert ethical and religious traditions that function to narrative one’s life as a whole. The result of modernization in this regard is the inability to give a substantive account (either religious, aesthetic, or ethical) of intrinsic human goods and of worthy ends for human action.

Bureaucracy, Discursive Practices, and Speech Acts

The metaphor of bureaucracy has not only epistemic but also praxiological implications, shaping discursive action and speech. Ways of knowing are tied to our embodied communicative practices. Often in modern society human language and speech acts are compelled to fit the structures and procedures of bureaucratic organizations and technological paradigms. A few examples illustrate this point. First, bureaucracy encourages a technical form of discourse that obfuscates and overwhelsms by bogging down. In contrast to “plain English,” bureaucratized
speech tends to be standardized, include Latinate terms, feature “professional jargon,” be excessively lengthy, and promote technical thought (Erb; Krippendorff). From an applied linguistic perspective and interacting with Weber, Aaron V. Cicourel addresses the rationalization of Western medical practice as it manifests in the form of a technical-specialist discourse amidst bureaucratic rituals. The technical nature of the discourse inhibits patients’ understanding of their own health situation. David J. Sholle contends that the social practices associated with bureaucracy are mechanisms of ideology that technicize and fossilize ordinary language by closing off alternative forms of discursive expression (34). Second, bureaucratic rhetoric may be understood as ‘managerial rhetoric’ in which authorial voice—a personalizing source—is lost since the message seems to come from the organization itself (Kent; Sproule). Third, bureaucratic rationality is reshaping interview discourse. Interviewing for a job with a bureaucratic functionary compels interviewees to produce ‘bureaucratically processable’ speech (Roberts and Campbell). This requirement implicitly entails (a) adherence to the conventions of a specific professional culture and (b) internal, dispositional possession of specific forms of linguistic capital, what Bourdieu refers to as habitus (Roberts and Campbell; Bourdieu and Wacquant). The standard of bureaucratically processable speech also creates a linguistic penalty for those who do not know the rules of this cultural game (Roberts and Campbell). While assisting with a hiring process as part of my own professional experience, a candidate demonstrated little facility for philosophically-inclined cultural understanding, a requirement of the position. But because the candidate spoke in familiar organizational and field-specific lingo, the participating human resources professional gave a glowing review of the interview. Bureaucratized professions and organizations shape our linguistic expectations and use.
Many are concerned about the application of bureaucratic rationality to political discourse and decision-making. A strong theme in the communication literature is the way bureaucratic organization in politics and the law functions to restrict speech and communicative action. Lilian Radovac expresses concern for how bureaucratic regulations in the United States suppress public protest through the implementation of noise ordinances and permit requirements on amplification devices in public spaces. Noise ordinances aim to restrict not what is said but where and how loud it may be said (38). Such bureaucratic regulatory protocols enable government officials to sidestep the deliberative process of passing explicit legislative bans related to protesting, bans that are likely to be met with great public disapprobation. Outside of the U.S., political bureaucracies, particularly those of the former U.S.S.R., pose a threat to freedom of action and speech (Umar). Through his novel Cancer Ward, Alexander Solzhenitsyn exposed the pattern of Soviet political bureaucrats exploiting government resources for personal gain, expecting compliance from the masses, punishing disobedience, and suppressing free speech (Umar).

Some communication scholars link bureaucracy, including its impact upon speech, with a forsaking of responsibility, political and otherwise. Political bureaucrats frequently appropriate technical discourse in order to ‘ethically’ sidestep controversies and crises, utilizing linguistic strategies of “blame avoidance” (Hansson). Comparably, some crisis communication theories, such as corporate apologia (which focuses on organizational self-defense) and image restoration theory (which utilizes strategies of deflecting and denying responsibility to protect and repair an organization’s reputation), are arguably susceptible to responsibility-denying strategies (Coombs; Ulmer et al.; Littlefield and Sellnow). There is a growing trend in the political sphere to decouple ethical-public forms of discourse from technical discourse, that is, to divorce the
ethical realm of ‘the public’ from the non-ethical realm of ‘the technical’ (Lee and Spano). Decision-makers are guilty of this when they offer technical justification on matters that are intrinsically and substantively ethical in nature. Instrumental rationality, after the image of bureaucratic organization, frequently guides public discourse and communicative decisions (Lee and Spano). The interaction of the bureaucratic with our discursive practices and ways of knowing hints at another vital consideration: the ethical.

**Bureaucracy and Ethics**

The following question announces a scholarly disagreement: does the bureaucratic invigorate the ethical or stifle it? Some management scholars addressing the issue of professional ethics make recourse to bureaucratic structures and controls as a means to promote ethical behavior and to settle differences in ethical understanding in organizational life. Johanna Fawkes highlights that Western professional ethics is still largely influenced by a Weberian ideal-typical practitioner model involving codes and best practices (213). Debbie S. Dougherty and Michael W. Kramer argue that, through their efforts to promote standards of ethical conduct, IRBs (institutional review boards) exist to prevent bureaucracies from running amok, which is one of Weber’s concerns. Uses of marketing research is another area an ethical concern (Ferrell and Skinner). The question arises whether and to what extent regulations ought to be imposed to discourage unethical conduct, such as “[d]eception, invasion of privacy, dissemination of faulty conclusions, and disguising sales efforts as marketing research” (103). O. C. Ferrell and Steven J. Skinner conclude that formal policies accompanied by bureaucratic rewards and punishments can promote ethical behavior in organizations. They argue managers should leverage “administrative procedures” in order to “enforce ethical behavior” and to navigate ethical ambiguity (107). Corroborating this line of thought, Ishmael P. Akaah conducted a study that
found “professionals in organizations with a bureaucratic-innovative-supportive culture reported significantly higher ethical research behavior than their counterparts” (62). Bureaucracy, especially coupled with innovation and support, is a champion of ethics, although ‘ethics’ here is tantamount to a regulatory code.

In contrast to management theorists who seek to promote ethics through administrative policies and procedures, other communication scholars aim to reintegrate ethics through organizational values and social ideals. The paradigms of ‘corporate citizenship’ and ‘organizational citizenship’ seek to foster ethical sensibilities through a performative enactment of the organization’s core values motivated by more than mere economic interest (Cyphert and Saiia). As part of the effort to humanize experience in bureaucracies, and as an antidote to their impersonality, Yiannis Gabriel proposes introducing stories and myths. Core values and myths that carry ideals and beliefs are employed to humanize the workplace and to incorporate the ethical in modern organizing.

Another line of scholarship, drawing broadly from Weber’s critical resources, is more skeptical about the potential for bureaucracies to promote the ethical. Fawkes implicates bureaucracies in producing power imbalances and exclusivity. She also notes that bureaucratic professional ethics lacks a framework with any philosophical depth and results in banal activity (212). Because the dominant discourse in professional ethics is oriented around an egoistic promulgation of an “idealized self-image,” this to the exclusion of self-examination, it is ultimately “empty and self-promotional” (212, 213, 220, 222). Related to this self-promotional

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5 Fawkes contends that professional ethics situated in the discourse of idealized self-image not only fails to ensure principled moral rectitude but also obscures it (213). She explains, “This insistence on probity at all times (with appropriate punishment for deviants) closes discussion of collective shortcomings or neglected aspects of a profession. According to Jung’s ideas of compensation, the more a group insists on its idealized self-image (and blames others for misrepresentation or, in extremis, “bad apples” in its own ranks), the more obscure—and potent—its own shadow becomes. The emphasis on promotion rather than self-examination, common to most professions, illustrates this trait” (220).
impulse, Rousiley Celi Moreira Maia observes that bureaucratic administration promotes not only mere rule-following and law-compliance but also the moral degeneracy of authoritarianism.

In opposition to this line of criticism and perhaps the most noteworthy recent defense of bureaucracy, sociologist and organizational theorist Paul du Gay produced a scholarly encomium to the institutional expression of rational-legal authority. *In Praise of Bureaucracy*, du Gay’s 2000 work, makes a case for the continuing importance of bureaucracy amidst what he sees as three strands of anti-bureaucratic sentiment: (1) popular frustration with the defects of a large organization; (2) a philosophical critique that levels against bureaucracy the charge of promoting an amoral instrumental rationality that transgresses dimensions of our humanity, such as emotion and personable-ness; and (3) theories of ‘new public management’ and ‘entrepreneurial governance’ that advocate for elected representatives to function more entrepreneurially and for restricting the influence of public bureaucracies (1-9). Interpreting Weber, du Gay contends that efforts to collapse different spheres of social life (e.g., the political and the commercial), along with the ethos governing each of those realms (viz., that of the state bureaucrat and that of the business leader), into one ethical principle violates the irreducibility of those spheres and norms. The norms governing each realm are milieu-specific and non-transferable. Conflating them is ‘unworldly,’ to use Weber’s term (8).

Du Gay proposes that the popular, philosophical, and entrepreneurial-managerialist forms of bureau critique all share in common “a tendency towards this sort of ‘unworldliness’” (8). He controverts MacIntyre’s portrayal of the ‘bureaucratic manager’ as an emotivist representative of moral decay (15). Du Gay proposes that MacIntyre errs by treating a teleological conception of the human person as a standard for the ideal-typical bureaucratic manager. When bureaucracy is understood in terms of Weber’s notion of the “irreducible plurality of ‘value spheres,’ “it cannot
be open to problematization for its failure to realise ends it was not designed to meet. The religious and romantic temptation to treat the ethical persona of the bureaucrat as a partial realization of a ‘fuller’ mode of being is one that should be avoided. The urge to unity in this regard, as Weber indicated, is a potential fanaticism” (11). Du Gay also contests Zygmunt Bauman’s critique of bureaucratic modernity and the dominance of instrumental reason—namely, the erosion of morality these effect—averring that they open the door to “Holocaust-style solutions” (41). Although both MacIntyre and Bauman draw upon Weber’s categories and theoretical lexicon, their conclusions about the moral vacuity of bureaucratic society and organization, du Gay maintains, are in stark opposition to Weber’s (41). Du Gay defends both the ‘bureaucratic ethos’ (as relevant for liberal democratic governance and social order) and its impersonal impartiality (as a protector of equality). However, one noteworthy figure whose work on bureaucracy du Gay overlooks entirely, but communication scholars do not, is that of Hannah Arendt.

Hannah Arendt’s work on the public sphere, action, the bureaucrat, and distinctly modern evils presents a stark contrast to du Gay’s praise. Through public speech and action—not labor or work—people make themselves known, that is, they show forth by being seen and heard (Arendt, Human 48-52, 175-247; Arnett, “Biopolitics”). The public sphere is a place where our action and speech are seen and heard yet misrepresented and attacked because it is a realm of verisimilitude or appearances (Arendt, Human; O’Loughlin). It is a space where difference meets in the form of argumentation, public opinion, and discursive action and where one could distinguish oneself by ‘excelling’ in the sense of arete (Arendt, Human; Arnett, “Biopolitics”). By contrast, a faceless anonymity characterizes bureaucracy. In the person of Adolf Eichmann, Arendt discerns a characteristically modern social type—the bureaucrat (Eichmann). This makes
possible her interpretive claim that the Holocaust was indeed to a great extent ‘bureaucratically engineered’ (Ehrenhaus). In contrast to du Gay’s encomiastic apology, Arendt exposes the “artificial light” issuing from bureaucratic modernity tied to ‘progress’ and ‘efficiency’ (Arnett, *Communication Ethics*).

Robin Patric Clair and Adrianne W. Kunkel appropriate this Arendtian hermeneutic framework for two applied contexts—first to the impersonalized “care” of child abuse victims by bureaucratic agencies. Bureaucratized ‘care’ translates to the completion of paperwork, following protocols and rules, and renders the child to be a ‘case.’ Bureaucratic realities rob caregivers of ordinary human reactions (Clair and Kunkel 42). In an educational context, some teachers did not forsake the responsibility to think when bureaucratic rules stipulated they send a punitive note home with a student for bad behavior regardless of concrete circumstantial considerations (Clair and Kunkel 40). With conscious disobedience to bureaucratic, rule-bound logic and with regard to the particulars of the given situation, they exercised ethically substantive judgment for the sake of their student’s good.

*Bureaucracy in Cyberspace*

Arendt’s notion of the ‘rise of the social’ vindicates the association of bureaucratic structures and forms not just with the state but also with the economy and corporations. Slavko Splichal treats the public as ‘civil society’ but more recently in light of cyberspace and virtual reality, civil society has become a hybrid space that is not only partly public but also ‘social’ in an Arendtian sense (6). That is, civil society reshaped by cyberspace is also a site of bureaucratic structures and of the private sphere of family, friends, and romantic relations. Corroborating this, Lori Reed links computer technologies to a bureaucratic society (170-171). The computer became a symbol of bureaucratic society, and the computer age has come to be understood as a
computerized bureaucracy (Reed 171). This symbolic resonance may be due to a rule-based structural commonality. Law professor Lawrence Lessig notes that cyberspace is a highly regulable and regulated space of control by means of law-like code. While he opposes a significant regulatory role for governmental and legal systems, Lessig calls for the development of a cyberspace code that offers more efficient controls, better reflects society’s desired values, and is more amenable to vital human liberties. Although he calls for a more expansive account of regulation, the software and hardware of cyberspace nevertheless depends on a techno-bureaucratic logic and architecture. Arendt’s prescience about the increasing confusion and strange blending of private and public elements in the ‘rise of the social’ and the bureaucratic is perhaps most remarkable in the advent and accelerated growth of cyberspace as a site of human interaction.

These advanced electronic technologies complicate the relationship of the law to the workplace, marketplace, and government bureaucracies. They provide new techniques for tracking citizens and consumers. By means of databases and tracking (marketing) techniques, corporate and government bureaucracies transgress public-private boundaries in their demand for personal information, for which there is increasing economic and security value to such organizations (Gandy). Cyber interactivity is impacting organizational structures and work processes. Eric W. Welch and Shelley Fulla’s study of the Chicago Police Department’s Citizen ICAM Web application exemplifies the marriage between organizational change and those in technique or technology. It confirms not only that bureaucracy is amendable to technical logic but also Richard Weaver’s characterization of technological fanaticism, which is “the conclusion

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6 In this way, cyberspace may be seen as the Information Age successor to bureaucracy, which was the control technique developed to accommodate the fruits of the Industrial Revolution, as James R. Beniger explains in The Control Revolution.
that because a thing can be done, it must be done” (Weaver 60). Even as early as 1989 Oscar H. Gandy Jr. expressed concern for the expansion of surveillance technologies in relation to bureaucratic organization and the justification of decisions therein. As an instance of virtual communication, bureaucrat-citizen interactions in cyberspace are effecting transformations in organizations, communities, and the bureaucrat-citizen relationship (Welch and Fulla).

FOUR SCHOLARLY ALTERNATIVES TO THE BUREAUCRATIC

Singing a different tune from du Gay’s paean, corporate-managerial communication and critical-cultural scholars, respectively, offer critiques of bureaucracy—discerning problems, puzzles, anti-democratic tendencies, injustices, and forms of dehumanization. Addressing the “fundamental transformation” in the marketplace and workplace globally over the past few decades, both managerialist and critical literatures, according to Damian E. Hodgson, express interest in the ‘postbureaucratic’ because of “its perceived potential to break with the traditions of bureaucratic, hierarchical control in work organizations” (82, 98). Yet, strategic-managerialist communication researchers and those of critical studies part company in important ways regarding their diagnoses and remedies. In addition to these first two groupings of communication scholars, a third consortium engage the issue of the bureaucratic and the postbureaucratic from the standpoint of a ‘rhetorical turn’ in organizational studies. Finally, I identify a fourth possible orientation to the (post)-bureaucratic. Privileging a conception of ‘rhetoric as philosophy,’ these scholars open the door for formulating another alternative to bureaucratic modernity.

First, in relation to managerial discursive practices and decision-making, scholars working in some aspect of organizational-strategic-corporate communication are calling organizational leaders away from traditional forms of bureaucratic organization—which are
rational, hierarchical, formalized, and impersonal—to more post-bureaucratic models. The structures and practices of these latter models are horizontal, self-organizing, team-based, collaborative, flexible, adaptive, innovative, and learning-promoting (Cyphert and Saiia; Eid and Fyfe; Halvorsen; Handelman; Schweitzer; Yiannis). They strive for higher functioning organizations in the present socio-economic environment. Frederick E. Webster, Jr., for example, advocates for new marketing practices based on strategic partnerships and networks instead of bureaucratic models. Greater flexibility and innovation, along with more ‘open systems,’ are needed in the contemporary marketplace because, according to John C. Schweitzer, traditional bureaucratic organizations characterized by “centralized authority, rigid chain of command, division of labor, task specialization and close supervision” are outmoded and ineffective (4).

One study reveals that although bureaucratic formalization may positively impact the relationship between marketing managers and research and development managers during product development, bureaucratic centralization and controls otherwise discourage cross-functional communication (Massey and Kyriazis). The hope is that these more team-based and collaborative “post-bureaucratic” organizations will not only humanize work environments but also provide companies with a strategic advantage in a competitive, shifting marketplace (Halvorsen). Others are optimistic about refashioning bureaucracies after the model of democratic ideals—rather than the reverse—in order to suit our cultural and political sensibilities (Metzler).

Critical communication studies literature, representing a second scholarly alternative, also promotes a notion of the postbureaucratic in organizations but with quite different ends in mind. Critical-cultural scholars aim to disrupt bureaucratic forms of organization, control, and conduct because they legitimate and promote inequality, oppressive power and domination, and
deprive people of freedom. They advocate for alternate forms of organization—those featuring decentralized, flattened, and more democratic structures of control; personalized work environments; and postbureaucratic logics and conduct. As discussed earlier, critical organizational communication scholars strive to reveal ways communication functions to establish and normalize specific uses of power in organizations (Mumby “Organizing Power”; Sholle; Tompkins et al.; Buaman). They contend that the structure and effects of bureaucratic power are gendered, raced, and classed (Mumby “Organizing Power”; Overton-de Klerk and Verwey; Malvini Redden and Scarduzio; Ashcraft). Critical-cultural scholars look to the postbureaucratic for emancipation from the intersectional character of these discriminations and type of domination.

Motivated by concerns for social justice, feminist scholars argue that bureaucratic organizational structures disadvantage women and that, even in a post-bureaucratic age, the effects of a ‘bureaucratic skeleton’ nevertheless persist (Garrison). In her discussion of feminism, bureaucracy, and Weber, Karen Lee Ashcraft argues feminist forms of organization resonate with postbureaucratic organization and practice. Feminist organizational communication studies attend to the gendering of organizations and the impact of this on those who inhabit such organizations. Kathy E. Ferguson’s book The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy, which engages the work of Foucault, is a good example of a feminist critique of bureaucratic organization and society. Feminist scholars espouse that bureaucratic organizing is not gender neutral but rather expresses hegemonic male domination (Harter; Rushing).

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7 Even as Mumby (“Organizing Power”) frames bureaucratic organization as classed, raced, and gendered, he recognizes the irony that they also alienate white-collar workers therein even as such organizations provide them security and stability.

8 These organizational structures and effects are buttressed by masculine cultural themes of military, conquest, patriarchy, and technology reflected in frontier mythology (represented literarily in the form of robots and computers) (Rushing).
agency lies in the capacity of women to generate a more cooperative and democratic alternative (Harter 94). Harter and Krone argue that feminist approaches to organizing promote a more ‘democratic spirit,’ that is a spirit of creative expression, participation, mutual understanding, and consensus building.

More democratic and cooperative forms of organization are associated with concertive control systems (Papa, Auwal, and Singhal; Larson and Tompkins). Promoting self-directed/self-managed teams, concertive control systems contrast with bureaucratic organization (Papa et al.). Gregory S. Larson and Phillip K. Tompkins promote a shift from hierarchical/rational forms of control in bureaucratic organizations to concertive control because it expresses a value for employee consensus, an emphasis that is resonant with postbureaucratic forms of organization. Hodgson advocates for the paradigm and techniques of ‘project management’. Yet he finds that efforts at ‘debureaucratization’ often result in ‘rebureaucratization.’ Nevertheless, the theory of concertive control shifts the locus of control away from bureaucratic rules and seeks to help overcome another concern with bureaucracies: inefficiency (Larson and Tompkins).

Nina Overton-de Klerk and Sonja Verwey explore the nature of strategic communication in postbureaucratic organizations. This postmodern approach to strategic organizing encourages multiple perspectives, heterogeneous meanings, and permits conflict. Contrary to what critical-cultural scholars claimed above, it does not seek consensus because consensus is an authoritarian notion that legitimizes managerial power within modernity. Instead, postbureaucratic strategic communication “acknowledges and fosters multiple propositions and perceptions so as to allow for conflict and rhetoric that ultimately advance the organisation, to the benefit of all
stakeholders” (372). Privileging conflict and difference, including those related to class, gender, and race, is not only a pathway to emancipation for the subjugated but is also strategically effective for the organization.

In light of the present discussion about the postbureaucratic, one might conclude bureaucracy is becoming an obsolete technique for addressing the information control needs of the electronic-digital age (Aune; Beniger). Yet, for as much as managerial and critical communication scholars call for postbureaucratic arrangements and for explanatory paradigms that recognize the obsolescence of Weberian-styled bureaucracy, bureaucratic organization and society persists (Turner; Svensson). In our postmodern age, the post-bureaucratic exists alongside the bureaucratic in a “paradoxical hybrid” of organizational forms (Ashcraft 56, 79-81). On the one hand, instrumental rationality, which is integral to the bureaucratic, endures and goes largely uncontested in the corporate-managerial communication literature on the postbureaucratic. The vacuum of substantive moral thought and action resulting from the dominance of instrumental rationality opens the door for critique from critical-cultural communication scholars interested in notions of the postbureaucratic. Our moment is characterized by a complex, simultaneous coexistence of the bureaucratic and postbureaucratic. Drawing from a study conducted in the UK, Brendan McSweeny contests the thesis of epochal transformation central to much discussion of the postbureaucratic. As a kind of organizational hypertextuality, the post-bureaucratic does not replace but is instead co-present with the bureaucratic (McSweeny). In this sense an expanded version of the central question animating

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9 The strong insistence upon encouraging conflict in postbureaucratic organizations, a feature of organizational theorizing done in a postmodern (or reflexive modern) historical moment, may be an analogue to agonistic (as opposed to deliberative) democracy.
this project may be articulated: *how does modernity disclose itself through the bureaucratic, including the bureaucratic’s relationship to the postbureaucratic?*

Regarding this discussion of alternatives, a third scholarly orientation is worthy of consideration that neither wholly embraces nor wholly rejects the bureaucratic. The works of George Cheney, Jill J. McMillan, and Phillip K. Tompkins, among others, make a case for a *rhetorical turn* in organizational studies in the communication field, especially with respect to the issue of the bureaucratic and postbureaucratic. They probe the theoretical resources of Kenneth Burke on rhetoric and the symbolic while simultaneously engaging Weber on bureaucracy (Tompkins, et al.; Cheney, *Values at Work*; Cheney and McMillan). George Cheney and Jill J. McMillan explain that a ‘rhetorical turn’ in organizational study means the “rhetorical analysis of organizations, institutions, and social structure in general” (“Organizational Rhetoric” 109). It investigates “organizational rhetoric” as the study of organizational communication in relation to rhetorical studies (93-95, 97-101, 107-110). Overall, George Cheney’s voice may be the most significant representative of this orientation.

George Cheney’s research addresses bureaucratic and democratic forms of organization and communicative practice vis-à-vis rhetorical studies. Offering a genealogical understanding of organizational forms, Cheney seeks to offer historical perspective to those who perceive ‘bureaucracy’ as either a “devil-term” or an unmitigated panacea (*Values* 20). His thinking is dialectical on the matter. Cheney and McMillan express concerns with bureaucracy: inequality between communicators; impersonal emphasis on role over person; the stress given to regulations; formal rationality; suppression of individual needs, difference, and expression; and abuses of symbols (98, 109, 110). Yet, their analysis extends beyond mere organizational forms themselves—whether the postbureaucratic as such is an end toward which to strive—to the shape
of human thought and action particular organizing encourages. This is because “even some apparently and intendedly non-bureaucratic forms of organization (such as lean, value-centered high-tech firms) often manifest a technical-formal rationality that governs individual behavior in a thoroughgoing manner” (98). Nevertheless, Cheney explores the widespread democratization of work and workplaces but expresses a concern for bureaucracy (and its hierarchic character) as a source of resistance to the flat hierarchies of democratic structures (“Democracy” 175). Cheney’s work in particular and the rhetorical turn in organizational communication studies in general are highly fruitful and merit attention for reimagining organizing in relation to the bureaucratic and postbureaucratic. Yet, another perspective—one that overlaps with and yet adds conceptual resources to the rhetorical turn—is available even if under-articulated as an alternative to the bureaucratic and what the bureaucratic yields.

A perspective championing the unity of poetics, rhetoric, and philosophy offers a fourth alternative to bureaucratic modernity’s degradations. Alasdair MacIntyre’s critique of the bureaucratic manager and social scientific ‘expertise’ as the basis for public decision-making had a profound influence on communication scholar Walter Fisher who wrote against ‘expertise’ and other forms of elitist and technical discourse central to bureaucratic modernity. Proposing a homo narrans anthropology, Walter Fisher extends MacIntyre’s discussion of narrative and argues for narrative discourse, deriving from the poetic domain, as basic to all other forms of human discourse (“Narration”; “Narrative Paradigm”; “Clarifying”). Technical and persuasive discourses, for Fisher, are a species or narration. In addition to drawing from MacIntyre, Fisher’s themes reflect the heightened scholarly interest during the twentieth century in narrative, metaphor, and the poetic—and their relation to rhetoric—that animates the work of I. A. Richards, Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer, David Carr, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,
Jeffery Walker, and Calvin O. Schrag. Moreover, Kenneth Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives* Chaim Perelman and Lucille Olbrechts-Tyteca’s *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* helped launch an interest in a ‘new rhetoric’ that is more than mere stylistic window-dressing and that accounts for rhetoric’s epistemic, significative, and axiological potency. Rhetorical argumentation and probabilistic knowledge, rather than formal logic and certain conclusion, are valid grounds for practical reasoning and discursive action. Relatedly, Ernesto Grassi and Phillip D. Verene excavate pre-Enlightenment resources in Renaissance humanism for conceiving of rhetoric as philosophy through the unity of rhetoric and poetics.10 This philosophical rhetoric generates a robust notion of practical wisdom relevant for public discourse and action.

The work of this group of scholars, which explores the intimacy of poetics, rhetoric, and philosophy, has a specific relevance to my project. Collectively they can be understood as part of a larger effort to recover multiple valid ways of: knowing in the world, communicating publicly, and organizing human action. Bureaucratic modernity’s mechanization, methodization, and rationalization have reductively delegitimized these multiple valid ways of knowing, communicating, and organizing in the public sphere. Though these scholars may not address ‘bureaucracy’ explicitly, their work contributes in one form or another to the search for alternatives to the vision of knowledge, ethics, and education characteristic of bureaucratic modernity. In particular, the scholarship of Grassi and Verene together constructs a bridge from the classical and Renaissance rhetorical tradition into the contemporary world. Contributing to this endeavor to recover multiple, valid forms of human discourse and action, my project makes bureaucracy a salient theme of modernity for the initial purpose of discerning specific ‘mis-

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10 Here poetry and rhetoric are understood as basic to and facilitative of philosophical argumentation.
directions’ of modernity. I then probe the tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric as a rich source of hope for renewing human knowledge, ethics, and education.

MODERNITY REVEALED THROUGH THE BUREAUCRATIC

*Communication Ethics Rooted in Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication*

My efforts to narrate how bureaucratic society, organization, and agents concretely instantiate central dynamics at work in the modern West arise from a standpoint of affirming a collaborative partnership between rhetoric and philosophy of communication. Placing the work of Jeffery Walker and Paul Ricoeur in conversation establishes an interplay between rhetoric and philosophy of communication. Rhetoric, according to Jeffery Walker’s historical interpretation, is a broad art of philosophico-poetic discourse (x, 32-38). Rather than being conceived primarily as a pragmatic art of legislative and judicial speech-making, rhetoric is more fundamentally an epideictic genre characterized as “wisdom-speaking eloquence” (ix, 5-7, 18). This broad philosophico-literary art of discourse is capable of being applied secondarily to pragmatic contexts. Rhetoric is first an *epideiktikon* before it is a *pragmatikon* (6-16). Deeply linked to the realm of the poetic via the *epos*—the cultural lore, narrative and virtue structures, customary laws and precedents—rhetoric enjoys an intimate relationship to philosophy of communication.

Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative* opens an understanding of philosophy of communication. Ricoeur investigates the symbiotic relationship between narrative discourse (the poetic) and temporal action (the rhetorical) in the production of communicative meaning in a given historical moment. Ricoeur suggests “the narrative work is an invitation to see our *praxis* as it is ordered by this or that plot articulated in our literature” (83). Similarly, Ronald C. Arnett frames philosophy of communication as attentive to the “story laden” meanings that function as a background to, or “communicative architecture” for, public belief and communicative action in
the foreground (Arnett, “Defining” 58, 60). Philosophy of communication seeks a hermeneutic form of understanding distinct from the knowledge paradigm of allegedly neutral, methodologically-derived data. Its task is to discern communicatively-shaped meaning and interpret the significance of a phenomenal field of lived experience, thereby functioning as a kind of “public map” for “temporal conviction[s]” (58). Temporal human experience, Ricoeur maintains, is “narrated time”; our lives are shaped or reshaped by the configuration of some plot (83). Philosophy of communication dwells in the intersection of rhetorical acts and poetic-emplotted discourse, fictive or historical, in order to discern the narratively-structured meanings motivating human action. It is a revealer of what is morally significant in an embedded historical context (Arnett, “Defining”; Barnlund).

Philosophy of communication and rhetoric so understood collaborate to provide resources (a) for interpreting the spatiotemporally embedded significance of a given rhetorical artifact and (b) for narrating philosophically and historically informed accounts of meaning that shape lived experience in the everyday lifeworld (Ricoeur; Gadamer). Taken together, this Ricoeur-Walker interplay frames the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy of communication not as in conflict, as J. C. JIsseling’s book title indicates, but as partners with distinctive as well as overlapping conceptual resources for comprehending the relationship between discourse and action, word and deed, the poetic and the pragmatic. Rhetoric is indeed the “counterpart” to philosophy of communication. Rhetoric and philosophy of communication as a unit attends to the embedded significance of a social and historical context. The conception of communication ethics I employ in this project is rooted in an understanding of the union between rhetoric and philosophy of communication. Growing out of this union, communication ethics makes salient attention to communicative goods. Communication ethics, rooted in rhetoric and philosophy of
communication, seeks to discern the contextualized significance of the goods promoted and protected in a given pragmatic field—those goods internal to practices and those intrinsic to one’s life as a narrative whole (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell; Arnett, Bell, and Fritz; MacIntyre). From a *rhetoric and philosophy of communication* perspective, I engage the work of Max Weber, Hannah Arendt, and Alasdair MacIntyre in order to tell a communication ethics story of the significance of bureaucratic modernity in the West. The final episode in this story consists in a turn to Giambattista Vico’s rhetorical conception of human knowledge and action for the purpose of articulating a communication ethics of *prudentia*.

*Max Weber on Modern Bureaucracy: A Perspective from Social Theory*

As one of the foremost architects of modern social science, Max Weber presents a model of empirically-grounded, interpretive sociology (Roth xxxiv-xxxviii, cii). His expansive, posthumously published work *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* provides, as Guenther Roth claims, a summary of “Weber’s scholarly vision of society” (xxxiii). *Economy and Society* delivers a historically-grounded explanation for bureaucratization, along with that for industrialization and democratization. Resisting “mono-causal theories” and the “reductionism of social scientists,” Weber offers an account of economics, for example, as situated in a complex conception of society—as famously exemplified in his *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, which was an alternative to a Marxist, mono-causal account for the origins of modern capitalism (xxxv, lxxii). He proposes an explanation of social groups and action from the standpoint of social order via laws and customary norms (lxviii-lxix, lxxiii-lxxv, lxxx, lxxxiv, lxxxvii).

At the heart of *Economy and Society* is Weber’s sociology of domination, wherein he offers his famous “historically saturated typology” of legitimate authority (Roth e). Those with
political, economic, or honorific power to rule others (*domination*) in a social group have not only the means for ruling (*appropriation*) but also recourse to means for the justification of their privileged status over ‘the ruled’(*legitimacy*) (xc, xciii). Weber explicates three historic types of legitimate domination: *traditional*, exemplified in patrimonial authority, such as a household patriarch or military chieftain; *charismatic*, manifesting an institutionalized hierocracy and caesaropapism; and *rational-legal*, reflected in bureaucracy, which characterizes modern democracy (xcv-xcvi).

With reference to rational-legal legitimate domination, Weber’s interpretive sociology constructs a narrative of the modern West as a process of rationalization to which instrumental reason is integral. The rationalization of social life and action means the reestablishing of all aspects of society—from economics, politics, and law to religion, art, family, and professional life—on the grounds of rational calculation aiming at predictability (Kim). Instrumental reason is a form of calculative thought that facilitates predictability, efficiency, and unprecedented mastery. It seeks causally framed knowledge of means for accomplishing desired ends, aims for control through scientific and technological means, and is impersonal and objectifying. It is the reasoning of a (hyper-)specialist. All this is in contradistinction to traditional and religious understandings and to the ways of knowing in the world derived from morally substantive reasoning. A product of the rationalization of society and action in terms of instrumental rationality, modern bureaucracy is an administrative technique for carrying out this form of calculable mastery, control, efficiency, and predictability on an organizational level in government and the marketplace. Rationalization, instrumentality, and a bureaucratized society tends to ensnare human agency in an “iron cage” and disenchants the lifeworld (Kim).

*Hannah Arendt: A Perspective from Social and Political Philosophy*
Hannah Arendt, German-born social and political philosopher, devoted her scholarly career to diagnosing the condition of modernity. Arendt sought “to discern direction and identity in the midst of historical chaos and collapse” before, during, and following the “madness of the World War II era” (Arnett, “Arendt and Saint Augustine” 43). Two of her works in particular—*The Human Condition* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*—contribute to the story of bureaucracy and modern society in the West I develop here. *The Human Condition* furnishes an account of three kinds of activity vital to the human condition: labor, work, and action. The diminishment of *action* in modern life in the West is tied to the erosion of boundaries between the public and private spheres, an erosion accompanied by the ascendance of the ‘social’ sphere. It turns out that bureaucratic forms of activity are linked to the rising social sphere, which is patterned after the model of the private domain of the family. *Society* exists as a “gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping,” thrusting private activities and pursuits pertaining to “the maintenance of life” (i.e., the realm of *labor*) into the political sphere (28, 30). With the deterioration of the shared world of the public, human greatness and public virtue have “given way to charm everywhere” (52). In modern bureaucratic society, rule-following-*behavior* replaces free-*action* as the political form of activity, encouraging thoughtless behavioral conformism through a mathematized, statistical arrangement of human affairs (40-43).

This grand general account of bureaucratic modernity with its *socialized* political realm takes on flesh in Arendt’s report on the monumental trial of Adolph Eichmann, namely *Eichmann in the Jerusalem*. As a Nazi official, he administrated the logistics for mass deportation of German Jews to extermination camps. Rather than discerning in him a blood-thirsty, demonic villain, Arendt witnesses the horror of a void—the thoughtless, spiritless shell of a human. Instead of “radical evil” (which depends upon a good-evil dualism) she finds Eichmann
to be an “emaciated bureaucrat” without depth who turns from being toward non-being (Birkhead; Elon; Troup). Many would have taken great comfort, Arendt explains, had Eichmann been a sadistic monster, but he was instead “a new type of criminal” (276). Arendt insists that “the trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal” (276). The real threat Eichmann poses is in relation to the extreme commonness of the social type he represents—the bureaucrat (Elon xiv). The terrifying normality of this mode of engagement dulls moral perception. As an ordinary social type characteristic of modernity, the bureaucrat represents both discursive cliché and a commonplace failure to think substantively (Birkhead). Herein lies the “banality of evil” in modernity.

_Alasdair MacIntyre on Our Emotivist Context: A Perspective from Moral Philosophy_

In his discussion of the ethics of _emotivism_ in _After Virtue_, moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre identifies the bureaucrat as a prevalent dramatic character type in our social world. The prevailing ‘morality’ of our ethical, dramatic context in advanced modernity turns out to be a mere simulacrum of moral thought, speech, and action—grounded in nothing more than criteria-less, arbitrary preference. The absence of a substantive moral tradition through which one’s life, both individually and corporately, is framed in terms of a narrative whole results in the _obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative sociopolitical relations_ (23-24). The bureaucratic managerial mode is an expression of manipulative control for the purpose of achieving behavior compliance (74). The bureaucrat-type emerges to fill the void of ethically substantive public reasoning. Moral judgment grounded in a narrative tradition has been replaced by rule-governed managerial expertise and techniques of effectiveness vindicated by an allegedly value-neutral social science capable of yielding
universal, law-like generalizations and predictive power for human behavior (30, 74, 82-88).

“Bureaucratic rationality is the rationality of matching means to ends economically and efficiently” (25). This entails a form of “moral instrumentalism” whereby the bureaucrat treats others as “means, never ends” (24). We are to take our political and marketplace decision-making cues from the fruits of (social scientific) method rather than from practical reason.

Yet the bureaucrat, according to MacIntyre, is not the only characterological manifestation of emotivism’s obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative relations (23, 30). Other dramatic ethical representatives of our socio-moral milieu include the rich aesthete (a type representing leisure, work, and individualism) and the therapist (a mode in one’s personal life oriented to effective techniques for yielding desired psychological states) (30-31, 74). Moreover, MacIntyre addresses the prevalence of ideologies, along with theories of ideology, in this context (86, 109-110). Though he mostly hints at ideology, and the proliferation of ideologically-based public engagement, as a ramification an emotivist context, MacIntyre provides the conceptual resources for considering ideologies as simulacra of genuine narrative traditions. Communicative agents, whether characterized by techno-bureaucrat rationality or ideological fervor, neither speak nor act from a rooted narrative tradition, and their respective starting-points for reasoning and discourse share no common measure. MacIntyre proposes that this basic discursive incommensurability and decision-making arbitrariness is a major contributor to the particularly “shrill tone” of our public discourse (8).

While bureaucratic rationality and managerial expertise promote ideals of objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and rationality, they conceal an incommensurability, arbitrariness, and moral instrumentalism that contributes to the evaporation of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative political and marketplace relations. But the appetite for
moral substance inevitably bubbles to the surface of social and political life. In an emotivist context, however, this surfacing often occurs in the form of ideology, a deceptive apparition of a genuine narrative moral tradition. Through partisan simplifications of ‘reality’ that divide and frame the social world into binary, black and white terms, ideology promotes its own form of code-compliance (though not through written bureaucratic rules)—this in contradistinction to a genuine education that complicates the world—and contributes to manipulative social relations and to the existence of acrimonious, revenge-seeking communicative engagement. An ideological outlook evaluates events in terms of the abstracted categories human agents fall into rather than the specific actions and particular circumstances of the case at hand. The sociopolitical particular is reduced to just another instance of a sociopolitical universal. It may be that ideological certitude, as a character quality in the social drama of late modernity, is the flipside of bureaucratic rationality but on the same emotivist coin.

*Giambattista Vico’s Philosophy of Education and the Tradition of Civic Rhetoric as a Humanizing Alternative*

When made a salient theme of modernity, bureaucratic society, organization, and agency function as a potent means of cultural formation for those who inhabit such a world. Bureaucratic modernity serves as a kind informal cultural pedagogy. Moreover, bureaucratic modernity *reshapes formal education* for its own purposes and after its own model of society and human life. An effect of bureaucratic modernity is a kind of anti-historical, anti-philosophical, anti-linguistic attitude (Postman). An alternative educational vision—along with the model of communication and society it implies—is needed. For such a vision I turn to a much forgotten,
but nevertheless incredibly bountiful, tradition of civic rhetoric as a humanizing alternative for communicative action.\(^{11}\)

As a last representative of Italian Renaissance humanism and the conception of rhetoric and civil society associated with it, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) offered in his own time a way of resisting the Cartesian *methodization of human knowing* and the epistemic reductionism central to the *rationalization of society and action* (Gianturco xxx). These Cartesian orientations in Vico’s own time are historical antecedents to the approaches to knowledge and conduct promoted in bureaucratic modernity. Vico alerts us to the degradations to human knowledge, discourse, and action effected by Cartesianism. More than this, however, Vico supplies us with the general contours of a way out. And it is this hope that stands as the culminating purpose of my project—a modest but fervent hope of recovering all that is associated with a robust Vichian conception of practical wisdom (*prudentia*) as the crown of a rhetorical education. From Vico’s philosophy of education flows a rhetorical conception of human knowledge and an understanding of “rhetoric as philosophy,” a notion of rhetoric as discursively basic to philosophy (Grassi *Rhetoric*; Verene, “Philosophical Rhetoric”; Verene “Philosophy”; Verene, “Sociopath”). This vision of ‘rhetoric as philosophy’ frames an understanding of *prudentia* and accounts for the unity of *theoria* and *praxis*, the unity of expansive erudition and discursive action in pragmatic contexts.

Vico’s educational orations—contained in *On Humanistic Education* (1699-1707), *On the Study Methods of Our Time* (1708/1709), *On the Heroic Mind* (1732), and *The Academies*

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\(^{11}\) Such a turn is justified in part by the attentiveness of founding media ecologists to the relationship between form and content, discourse and action (Gencarelli; Strate). Such media ecological attentiveness supplies a bridge to the humanist rhetorical tradition and its ideal of an expansive education for a life of discursive public service. Media ecology pioneers consciously linked their work to the trivium of the liberal arts, and Postman himself takes media ecology beyond mere description to a concern for elevating the nature of action in the public arena (Strate 17).
and Relation between Philosophy and Eloquence (1737)—offer a philosophical statement on learning. Together they constitute a communication ethics philosophy of higher education. Gleaning from the traditions of ancient rhetoric and Renaissance humanism, Donald Phillip Verene summarizes Vico’s educational ideal in terms of the interrelations among three metaphors: sapientia, eloquentia, and prudentia (“Introduction”). First, sapientia or comprehensive human wisdom aims at self-knowledge (Humanistic). Such wisdom requires aiming for the whole, i.e., for an understanding of the self in relation to the whole of reality (Verene, “Introduction” 4). Second, far more than mere linguistic ornamentation, eloquentia is facility in speaking “about the whole of the subject” (7). While philosophy is the love of wisdom, eloquence is “love of the word as the medium of wisdom” (8). Third, self-knowledge is ultimately a moral category, aiming for and culminating in prudentia in private and public affairs. Verene explains, “Prudent action is based on the interconnection among sapientia (wisdom), eloquentia (eloquence), and prudentia (prudence) as formulated by Cicero” (“Sociopaths” 217).

As the capstone of a rhetorically shaped, classic liberal arts education, prudentia supplies a vital link between broad, discursive erudition and communicative praxis. Vico represents this in a poignant metaphor when he expresses that the aim of his education is to produce those who will “act as philosophers, even at court” (Study Methods 38). Vico offers us a character type that imagines a mode of engagement in the marketplace and public sphere that is a genuine counter-model to pragmatic modes on the two sides of the emotivist coin of bureaucratic modernity, namely bureaucratic rationality-expertise and ideological certitude. Educational institutions inevitably endeavor to form us into certain kinds of persons. I propose that Vico offers the type of the prudent jurist, not merely in a narrow professional sense but rather as a rhetorical way of
being in pragmatic contexts. Cicero, in Vico’s imagination as the wisest and most eloquent, may be the chief paragon here (*Humanistic*). The prudent jurist represents a mode of engagement in pragmatic contexts that makes recourse to neither social scientific expertise nor binary simplifications of sociopolitical realities. Instead, as an educational ideal, the prudent jurist: brings an expansive erudition (*sapientia*) and poetic-discursive facility (*eloquentia*) to bear; makes recourse to narrative traditions and common sense understandings; and exercises sound judgment and morally substantive, probabilistic reasoning (*prudentia*) based on concrete circumstances in situations characterized by verisimilitude and uncertainty.

Vico makes possible a genuine alternative to the (de-)formative power of bureaucratic modernity and its intellectually and morally impoverished educational aims. But first bureaucracy must be understood as a salient feature of modernity that shapes our sense of knowledge, ethics, and education, and by extension our orientation to reality. For the first chapter in this communication ethics story of bureaucratic modernity, I turn to Max Weber who conceptualized modernization as a process of the rationalization of society and action. His sociology of domination discusses the establishment of modern society upon a system of rational-legal authority of which bureaucracy is the institutional manifestation.
CHAPTER 2:

MODERN BUREAUCRACY IN WEBER’S SOCIOLOGY OF DOMINATION

Any account of bureaucracy in the modern West must engage, if not begin with, the groundbreaking work of German social theorist Max Weber. Of particular relevance to my project, Weber’s *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, posthumously published in 1922, supplies a historically situated account for the bureaucratization of the modern economy, state, and society. Weber’s sociology of domination interpretively constructs a narrative of the modern West as a process of rationalization by means of rational-legal authority, which manifests concretely in modern bureaucracy and its instrumental form of thought.

Max Weber provides an interpretive description of massive shifts in the constitution of society in the modern West. Ancient and medieval society were still situated within the broad historical context of the agricultural revolution (Diamond; Roberts; Innis). But with the advent of modern science and technology and in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, Western society came to be legitimated on historically unprecedented grounds (Randall; Lyotard; Beniger; Postman; Henry). A new form of social organization, a new conception of legitimate authority, and a new mode of human action would come to prevail. Weber’s *sociology of domination* is an effort to explicate these differences. Drawing upon an expansive range of historical examples and artifacts, Weber proposes three types of legitimate authority, each constituting the validity of a social order and of action within that order: traditional-patrimonial, charismatic-hierocratic, and rational-legal-bureaucratic. With the dawn of modern society, this third type of legitimate authority and valid order emerges as a historical novelty on the other side of the Scientific and
Industrial Revolutions (Weber, *Economy*; Lyotard; Beniger; Henry). The *mechanization* (and *mathematization*) of nature (Taylor; Arendt, *Human*; MacIntyre; Postman; Henry) and the *methodization of knowledge* (Descartes; Vico; Husserl; Gadamer; Mumford; McLuhan; Ellul) are prominent in yielding the *rationalization of society and action* (Weber; Ellul; Arendt, *Human*; MacIntyre). This third thread—the one that is most integral to my discussion of bureaucratic modernity in this project—is a theme for which Weber’s *Economy and Society* is known. Weber proposes that modernization is a process characterized by the rationalization of society and social action.\(^\text{12}\) But he is careful to distinguish the specific form of rationality he means. Modernization is not a process that privileges, nor does it tolerate, the elevation of practical-moral reasoning, what Weber refers to as *value-rationality* (Weber, *Economy*; Aristotle *Ethics*; Vico, *Humanistic*; Vico, *Study Methods*; Perelman; Mootz). Quite the contrary, reasoning grounded in some form of axiologically substantive criteria, and which is oriented toward action in the public sphere, is overcome by instrumental-calculative rationality. This triumph of instrumental thought, predicated upon the validity of a rational-legal system of authority, manifests most saliently in the bureaucratic structure of society and the bureaucratic organization of social action. Herein lies the significance of Weber’s contribution to the central narrative of this project that aims to illuminate how it is modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic.

In *Economy and Society*, bureaucracy serves as the culminating, concrete social expression of a rational-legal system of legitimate domination. Weber begins with rational-legal authority in order to highlight the departure of a distinctly modern organization of society from historically previous ones. Discussions of patrimonial-patriarchal, feudal, and charismatic

\(^{12}\) Weber’s theory of modernization had far-reaching impact on twentieth century scholars. Jurgen Habermas is one such example of a philosopher working from Weber’s account of modernization and theory of the rationalization of society, thereby explaining differences Habermas had with Heidegger’s view on modernity and technology (Lembo and Tucker; Sikka).
systems of authority ensue following his explication of rational-legal (i.e. bureaucratic) structures, organizing, and conduct. Thus, the chapter Weber devotes specifically to an investigation of bureaucracy, specifically in relation to his thesis of modernization as a process of rationalization, occupies a critical position in *Economy and Society*. But in an effort to understand Weber’s thinking about bureaucracy in context, in the discussion that follows I will: first, provide an overview of Weber’s sociology of domination; second, explicate his overarching thesis of modernization as a process of rationalization; third, discuss the significance of his sociology of religion for comprehending the real differences in authority systems and types of rationalization from those that are peculiarly modern; and fourth, draw from his discussion of community formation in the marketplace. With this broad context established, I then engage Weber’s interpretive analysis of bureaucracy as the final move in this chapter, one that lays indispensable groundwork for my project’s overarching communication ethics narrative on bureaucratic modernity. Weber’s work of interpretive sociology makes a vital contribution to an understanding of the erosion of practical reason and the dominance of instrumental rationality in the process of modernization in the West, which manifests concretely in the bureaucratic.

**SOCI OCY OF DOMINATION**

*Weberian Sociology and Typology*

In *Economy and Society* Max Weber develops a sociological theory of economic action (68). Weber’s sociology (of economic action) is both empirical and interpretive (Roth). He resists reducing economic action to mere psychic phenomena by attending both to concrete actions or phenomena as well as to the subjective meaning of those actions or phenomena (Weber, *Economy* 64). The significance of economic action stems from its concrete instantiation within a socio-economic matrix (65). Producing goods, establishing prices, and valuing of goods
and services are genuinely empirical phenomena and as actions may never be reduced to a mere psychic event. Nevertheless, such actions and “phenomena have a peculiar type of subjective meaning. This alone defines the unity of the corresponding processes, and this alone makes them accessible to subjective interpretation” (64). The concept of ‘goods’ is significant for a sociology of economic action since these represent the outcome of an economic actor’s deliberations (68). Treating goods as a result of deliberations provides an interpretive opening for discerning the subjective meaning of an empirically observable action or phenomena. The goods an economic actor pursues signifies something that may be interpreted. Weber works from the assumption that, regarding social action, there are certain “empirical uniformities,” and these in relation to shared subjective meanings (29). This is the broad sociological approach Weber applies to an understanding of social action in different systems of authority.

In an effort to analyze and compare historical and current systems of authority, Weber constructs a threefold typology of legitimate domination: traditional, charismatic, and legal. This typology functions as a tool of analysis for understanding concrete social organizations. Weber makes it clear that no historical examples will reflect any of these three ideal-types in their pure form. But the benefit of sociological types for historical analysis (over and against that of mere empirical historical inquiry) is that they serve as fairly unambiguous point of comparison against which historical phenomenon may be investigated for its degree of approximation to a specific type. Importantly, Weber also acknowledges limitations to ideal-typical analysis. “But the idea that they whole of concrete historical reality can be exhausted in the conceptual scheme about to be developed is as far from the author’s thoughts as anything could be” (216). He makes a strong admission of the limits of typological schema, while also affirming their utility for analysis.

*Domination and Power of Command*
By *domination* Weber means “*authoritarian power of command*” (946).¹³ He defines domination (sometimes more colloquially expressed as *authority*) as “the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (212).¹⁴ Not all power, however, is a form of domination. Domination is a specific kind of power. Weber further explains that domination refers to “the situation in which the manifested will (*command*) of the *ruler* or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (*the ruled*) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake. Looked upon from the other end, this situation will be called *obedience*” (946). The ruled conduct themselves in accordance with an “as if” formula, that is *as if* the command of the ruler is “a ‘valid’ norm” (946). The ruled act in such a way that the will of their ruler becomes the content of their very own will—the ruler’s will becomes the maxim of the ruled *as if* it were the ruled’s very own maxim. Such is the nature of the obedience of the ruled; the authoritarian power of command compelling that obedience is very often undiscerned. “Domination in the most general sense is one of the most important elements of social action. . . But in most of the varieties of social action domination plays a considerable role, even where it is not obvious at first sight” (941). Some examples of domination include: the declaration of a dialect as the official language of a polity, schools function as sites of domination in establishing official

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¹³ Weber delineates two contrasting types of domination. The first is “domination by virtue of a constellation of interests,” which is a result of a monopolistic position (*Economy*, 943). The second is “domination by virtue of authority,” which involves an authoritarian power of command by the rules and the obligation of obedience by the ruled (943, 946). “The purest type of the former is monopolistic domination in the market; of the latter, patriarchal, magisterial, or princely power” (943). Over time a domination based on an interest constellation may be transformed into one based on authority.

¹⁴ Also see Weber’s discussion of domination on pp. 53-54, 941-948 and Talcott Parson’s notes in *Economy and Society* on pp. 299-300.
school languages. The structure of domination in a given society is decisive for the nature of the social action therein.

More specifically domination connotes some measure of voluntary compliance or “interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience” on the part of the dominated (212). *Authority relationships* do not require coercion. In fact, they very often emerge within the context of formally free contracts, such as in the cases of “the *authority* of the employer over the worker . . . and also of the *authority* of a feudal lord over a vassal who has freely entered into the relation of fealty” (213). That voluntary subjection to authority is formally free is true in the case of the factory worker as well as that of the bureaucratic official. Obedience is freely given. Weber defines *obedience* as following (or taking action on the basis of) the content of a command because it has been commanded. Obedience occurs when “the action of the person obeying follows in essentials such a course that the content of the command may be taken to have become the basis of action for its own sake. Furthermore, the fact that it is so taken is referable only to the formal obligation, without regard to the actor’s own attitude to the value or lack of value of the content of the command as such” (215). This kind of obedience eventually occupies Hannah Arendt’s attention in her critique of modernity and one of its most iconic representatives, an infamous bureaucrat who failed to engage in thoughtful judgment and morally substantive reasoning.

Not all domination makes use of economic means or objectives. Typically, however, domination requires the administration of a *staff*, that is “a *special* group which can normally be trusted to execute the general policy as well as the specific commands” (212). A system of domination tends to require this form of implementation and reinforcement. The members of an administrative staff give their obedience to their superiors for a variety of motives. Chief among
a staff’s motivations for obedience, however, is most commonly the belief in the legitimacy of a given system of domination (213). Weber explains, “But custom, personal advantage, purely affectual or ideal motives of solidarity, do not form a sufficiently reliable basis for a given domination. In addition there is normally a further element, the belief in legitimacy” (213). It is this motive and phenomenon that captivates Weber’s analytic attention. Every system of domination or control, Weber contends, strives to foster belief and reinforce faith in its legitimacy.¹⁵ He is interested in the type of legitimacy claim involved in typical systems of domination. Weber begins with the modern type, rational-legal authority, as a more familiar point of departure to serve as a comparison point for earlier types of systems of domination, particularly traditional and charismatic authorities.

Two Key Grounds of Distinction among the Three Types of Legitimate Authority

Weber employs two key criteria for distinguishing among the three pure types of legitimate domination. The first criteria pertains to the validity granted to an authority’s claim to legitimacy. In other words, on what basis is an authority’s claim to legitimacy valid? He propose three grounds for this: rational, traditional, and charismatic (215). Legal domination, the validity of which stems from rational grounds, depends upon “a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands” (215). A traditional system of domination rests upon “an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them” (215). Charismatic authority

¹⁵ From a philosophy of communication perspective, the legitimacy of a system of domination, along with legitimate actions, are informed and sustained by narratives—that is shared stories about what a successful life entails. Narrative meanings and understandings are co-produced through communicative action and generate confidence in the legitimacy of a given system of control. A century after Weber’s Economy and Society, scholarly attention to the disruption of belief in legitimacy claims has ascended. In The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard contends that a postmodern society and historical moment is essentially characterized by a crisis of legitimation, in which all metanarratives are destabilized.
depends upon “devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an
individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him” (215).

These grounds for believing in the validity of an authority’s claim to legitimacy also give
rise to a second criteria for distinguishing these three pure types: to what or to whom is
obedience owed within a given system of domination? In a legal system of domination,
“obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order” (215). There is an impersonality
to rational-legal legitimacy and authority. It is worthy of note that some resist Weber’s sociology
of domination on this point. Gabriel Weimann contends that bureaucratic attitudes and conduct
are neither as universalistic nor as impersonal as Weber characterizes. Even if one wants to
contest the extent of Weber’s attribution of impersonality to a modern legal order, the significant
point is the comparison Weber has in mind as he juxtaposes differing pure types. Under rational-
legal authority obedience is given to an office-holder, not the person as such as contrasted with
traditional and charismatic dominations (Economy 215-216). Authority is derived from an office
that is legally established regardless of who executes it. Commands are valid within the scope of
an office invested legal authority. Within a traditional system of domination obedience is far
more personal in nature. By way of contrast to legal authority, obedience under traditional
authority “is owed to the person of the chief who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position
of authority and who is . . . bound by tradition” (216). Though the chief’s position emerges from
and is constrained by tradition, the obligation to obey is nevertheless a matter of personal loyalty,
not a matter of an impersonal order established by written laws. With charismatic authority,
either the leader’s special revelation, exemplary heroism, or extraordinary traits serve as the
qualifications and basis of trust for giving her obedience. Individuals believe in the special
charisma or ‘gift of grace’ of the leader (216). The nature of obedience is deeply personal in a system of legitimate domination ordered around charisma.

Rational-Legal Legitimate Domination

Weber begins with the specifically modern type of legitimate authority because it is more familiar to us and will serve as a point of departure for understanding the other two which are more historically remote to the experience of modern Westerners. Legal authority consists of a constellation of characteristics (217-219). A rational-legal social organization entails a body of written laws, that is a network of abstract rules, which are developed intentionally and aim to be a consistent system. These laws may be imposed or established by agreement. Not only is this system of abstract rules an impersonal source of authority, but it also dictates that the person in authority be subject to that order in her own conduct and in what she commands to members of the organization (i.e. those under the rule of her office). By obeying the law and the legally-sanctioned, authoritative officeholder, organization members give their obedience to an impersonal order.

A member’s obligation to obey is restricted to “the sphere of the rationally delimited jurisdiction,” a sphere outlined by the order (218). Jurisdiction represents a delimited domain of competence within which officeholders are legally empowered with the means for reinforcing the obligation for (and, if necessary, even compelling) obedience. Within a legal order jurisdiction is a key dimension of a systematic division of labor. Weber refers to those units exercising authority within a legal system of organization as agencies (Behorde) or administrative organs (218). Such agencies are not limited to the state but extend also into any and all other spheres of coordinated social action, particularly on a large scale, such as private enterprise, the military, and ecclesial bodies.
Rational-legal agencies consist of offices, which are “the central focus of all types of modern organized action” (219). An administrative office (bureau) involves continuous operation and depends on written documentation. In its thoroughgoing dependence upon written records and documentation, official administrative activity, expressing itself through the office, entails an overwhelming typographic bias—insisting upon literate thought and expression, particularly written verbalizations that are eminently technical, rule-based, and quantitatively vast (Innis, *Bias*; Innis, *Empire*; McLuhan; Ong). Modern society in the West is deeply shaped by technologies of print in general and technical, rational-legal documentation in particular. Such technologies provide the environmental conditions for the emergence of modern bureaucracy, what Weber also refers to as *officialdom*.

With respect to offices, administrative organs predicated on legal authority are structured hierarchically, by which Weber means that agencies are organized so that “each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one” (218). Eligibility for becoming an official hinges upon the requirement of specialized training for the rational application of the rules. Officials are appointed on the basis of expertise or technical knowledge (218). It is worth noting that Weber’s discussion of the specialized training oriented to rational rule-application, and

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16 The mechanization of printing, and along with it communication, Harold Innis explains in *The Bias of Communication*, not only accelerated the growth of compulsory education, the Industrial Revolution, and advertising, but it also “divided reason and emotion” (30). Stressing the tight link between dominant communication media and knowledge monopolies within a given society, Innis also contends that the “application of power to communication industries hastened the consolidation of vernaculars, the rise of nationalism, revolution, and new outbreaks of savagery in the twentieth century” (29). While Weber does not make the same cause and effect claims as Innis, Weber does provide a way of understanding this ‘application of communication industries’ in relation to legal authority, technical knowledge and skill, rule-bound conduct, and typographic insistence upon documentation and written records for official administrative activity. In *Empire and Communications*, Harold A. Innis (1950) pursues historical understanding through the prism of the communication media a culture utilizes in a particular socio-historical horizon. Tools of communication are a significant interpretive key for discerning the economic, administrative, political, and legal dynamics contributing to the rise and fall of world empires. Certain media, whether they are time-biased or space-biased, lend themselves to specific cultural possibilities in general and to specific *knowledge monopolies* in particular. A society’s particular understanding of and problems related to *time* and *space* were shaped by their communication media.
which legitimizes the notion and function of an “official,” not only anticipates aspects of Ellul’s metaphor of la technique but also foreshadows Alasdair MacIntyre’s notion of bureaucratic-managerial expertise in After Virtue, which occupies a prominent place in this overall project. The official, the expert, and the specialist are related and among the key actors in the social drama of bureaucratic modernity. I will further explicate these themes and others in Weber’s preliminary discussion of rational-legal authority expressing itself through bureaucratic structures and agents later in this chapter. Before entering into this discussion, however, it is vital to explore three other related Weberian themes in order to gain a fuller sense for the distinctiveness of a rational-legal system of legitimate domination as the context for modern bureaucracy: first, modernization as a process of rationalization; second, the two other pure types of legitimate domination as Weber discusses his sociology of religion; and third, the process of group formation.

RATIONALIZATION THESIS: INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY AND CALCULATION

Four Ways of Orienting Social Action

Central to Weber’s overarching project in Economy and Society is the thesis that modernization is a process characterized by the extension and intensification of rationality in the structuring of society and in the organizing of social action. In sum, modernization is a process of rationalization. But Weber has a specific type of rationality in mind. In order to perceive this we look to Weber’s outline of four ways in which social action may be oriented. Social action may be established on the following grounds: (1) traditional, (2) affectual, (3) value-rational (wertrational), and (4) instrumentally rational (zweckrational) (24-25).

First, traditionally oriented social action is “determined by ingrained habituation” (25). As a pure type, traditional behavior, according to Weber, “lies very close to the borderline of
what can justifiably be called meaningfully oriented action . . . For it is very often a matter of almost automatic reaction to habitual stimuli which guide behavior in a course which has been repeatedly followed. The great bulk of all everyday action to which people have become habitually accustomed approaches this type” (25). This appears to be a different take from Aristotle (and the whole eudaemonistic tradition) on emulation and habituation as meaningful and from phenomenology’s account (including the notion of a social imaginary) of meaningful action and of the lifeworld. Nevertheless, to his credit, Weber admits that this orientation may blend into that of value rationality.

Second, social action that is affectually inclined are governed by states of affect or feeling (25). By affectual, Weber especially means ‘emotional.’ Similar to traditional behavior, purely affectual conduct borders on what can be considered meaningful social action. It can be an “uncontrolled reaction” or consciously releasing “emotional tension” (25). Third, social action shaped by value-rationality is “determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success” (24-25). Decision making here is informed by reasoning over intrinsic human goods that should inform social action or over those worthy purposes (ends/teloi) toward which social action ought to aim. Two things distinguish value-rational from affectual social action: first, value rationality involves “clear self-conscious formulation of the ultimate values governing the action,” and second, consistent planning of a course of actions in light of these ultimate values. “At the same time the two types have a common elements, namely that the meaning of the action does not lie in the achievement of a result ulterior to it, but in carrying out the specific type of action for its own sake” (25). It is on the basis of value rationality when actors willingly take on significant personal cost for the sake of “duty, honor, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call,
personal loyalty, or the importance of some ‘cause’ no matter in what it consists” (25). Weber contends that “value-rational action always involves ‘commands’ or ‘demands’ which, in the actor’s opinion, are binding on him” (25). It is the nature of intrinsic human goods that they confront us with an obligation and have a binding character.

Fourth, social action oriented in terms of instrumental rationality is characterized by expectations regarding the behavior of objects which or people who serve as the “‘conditions’ or ‘means’ for the attainment of the actor’s own rationally pursued and calculated ends” (24). An agent’s action is determined by a calculation of means with respect to an expected outcome. An agent calculates the means she anticipates as most likely to yield a desired end, estimating the prospects for success. Instrumental rationality is a procedural form of thought that aims to match means effectively to a desired goal. It is concerned with technical procedures, methods, and tactics. Action shaped by instrumental thought rationally takes into account and weighs the available methods and the likely secondary results of utilizing those means all in relation to a desired end (26). An actor may derive the purposes of her action from a value orientation or from mere subjective desire. But these considerations are foreign to instrumental rationality itself, and the morally substantive limits associated with value-rational and traditional considerations are often received as ‘irrational’ impediments to full effective operation of instrumental rationality.  

17 Weber explains how other forms of reasoning are viewed from the standpoint of instrumental rationality. “Value-rational action may thus have various different relations to the instrumentally rational action. From the latter point of view, however, value-rationality is always irrational. Indeed, the more the value to which action is oriented is elevated to the status of an absolute value, the more ‘irrational’ in this sense the corresponding action is. For the more unconditionally the actor devotes himself to this value for its own sake, to pure sentiment or beauty, to absolute goodness or devotion to duty, the less is he influenced by considerations of the consequences of his action” (26).

Relatedly, those working from an Enlightenment notion of “reason” primarily understood as methodological, procedural, or calculative rationality, which is allegedly intrinsically value-neutral, often derisively and dismissively brand expressions of value-rational convictions (i.e. those informed by epideictic ground, whether religious or moral) as “irrational.” Eminent historian George Marsden commenting on the pretense of “inclusivity” impositions on colleges and universities and on student religious groups, notes, among other case, a recent comment by a university scholar. “Peter Conn, an English professor emeritus at Penn, recently argued in The Chronicle of Higher Education that it is ‘a scandal’ that schools like Wheaton College in Illinois should be accredited, since by
This is why in modern bureaucratic society all other ways of knowing in the world appear as publicly invalid—they appear to be irrational. In sum, instrumental rationality involves rational calculation regarding a choice of means for achieving desired ends—deriving from some other orientation—arranged in a scale of urgency or importance and in relation to the expected secondary consequences of the chosen means. And, this form of reasoning prevails in large part due to the modern economy

*Instrumental Rationality and the Modern Economy*

In accordance with the title of his book, Weber gives special attention to the influence of the economy upon social action. Neither a market economy nor a planned economy is in itself the decisive feature of distinctively modern economic systems (109). Modern economics, requiring faith statements from their faculty they abandon ‘the primacy of reason’ in higher education. ‘Providing accreditation of colleges like Wheaton makes a mockery of whatever academic and intellectual standards the process of accreditation is supposed to uphold’” (First Things, “A More Inclusive Pluralism” February 2015, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/02/a-more-inclusivepluralism). Marsden notes the hypocrisy: “We’re seeing religious groups that do not adopt a uniform public standard of non-discrimination discriminated against. . . Despite the celebration of diversity in American life in recent decades, religious diversity often has been merely tolerated. Now there is a strong impulse to insist that religious organizations and institutions conform to” the Enlightenment image of rationality as instrumental and value-neutral. Bureaucratic modernity yields conformity. Instrumental rationality and the rationalization of society seek to homogenize the realm of values and turn out to be imperialistically intolerant to axiological expressions derived from other ways of knowing in the world.

Additionally, according to the expectations of the economistic or credentialist philistine, the arts and humanities in the educational curriculum must be shown to have some calculable value in the marketplace or some empirically measurable social worth in order to be included into the curriculum. Ultimately, these subject matters and areas of human knowledge must now be vindicated on terms foreign to the very contribution they make to human knowing and to human society. In other words, criteria that is foreign to the very intrinsic human goods they represent are imposed upon them from outside by an altogether different rational orientation or way of knowing in the world. For example, advocates for an art program tend to be expected to provide evidence or argumentation that such a program will make graduates better employees and more successful in their careers. Current plausibility structures, unless those structures themselves are explicitly contested, require a mode of argumentation (viz. empirical, outcome-based proof relying on natural or social scientific method) that is external or peripheral to the arts and humanities. Instrumental rationality imposes its dominance and exclusivity most imperialistically in such cases. Contrary to the attributions of (neo-)Marxist critical theorists, our society’s lack of ability to make a robust case for arts education is not most fundamentally due to neoliberal economics, though this is a factor. Instead Weber finds a more basic root source in our social order wherein even our political argumentation is subservient to instrumental rationality in the form of technical-instrumental expertise. We are incapable of public knowledge regarding the value of arts education in our political society, not just in our economic relations. Both our economy and our political society are incapable of accounting for intrinsic human goods, such as those associated with art education and the humanities. This has much to do with the role instrumental rationality plays in a rational-legal system of domination expressed through bureaucratic structures and agents.
whether market-based (capitalist) or planned (socialist), is characterized uniquely by the dominance of calculative thought—a form of instrumental rationality—as well as by an orientation to and some rational provision for the wants of societal members. Modern economic activity is guided by calculation over the most optimal means for satisfying wants (65-67).

Weber distinguishes modern economies in terms of how they facilitate the satisfaction of wants. Market economies depend upon *money calculation* whereas planned economies depend on *calculation in kind*. A modern capitalist marketplace is shaped by *money calculation*, *capital accounting*, and the division of the wealth-building household from the profit-making enterprise. Weber observes, “Want satisfaction through a market economy normally, and in proportion to the degree of rationality, presupposes money calculation. Where capital accounting is used it presupposes the economic separation of the budgetary unit (household) and the enterprise” (109).

Although though planned economies leverage calculative thought differently, they nevertheless privilege calculation as well. Calculation in kind replaces money calculation. “Want satisfaction by means of a planned economy,” Weber explains, “is dependent, in ways which vary in kind and degree according to its extensiveness, on calculation in kind as the ultimate basis of the substantive orientation of economic action” (109). In planned economies the role of an administrative staff, who supplies instructions that guide productive action on the basis of *calculation in kind*, is indispensable. Distinctively modern economies orient social action on the basis of calculability. Later this chapter will explore the significance of calculative thought in relation to group formation in the modern market economies.

**SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION**

Insights from Weber’s sociology of religion in *Economy and Society* are illuminating with regard to the particular narrative about bureaucratic modernity I am developing in this
project. It relates to and extends his sociology of legitimate domination and reveals important distinctions in the types of rationality that prevail in given systems of authority. (Weber affirms that “religiously or magically motivated behavior is relatively rational behavior” since at the very least it “follows rules of experience” (400). Furthermore, because religiously informed action is purposive and have an economic orientation they should be included in an analysis of ordinary social action.) But in the context of his sociology of religion, differences among the types of authority play out in relation to the distinction, and even competition, between the role of the priest and the role of the prophet within many world religious communities (457-458).

According to Weber, cultic beliefs and practices (kultus)—that is those pertaining to prayer, sacrifice, and worship in the relationship of humanity to the supernatural—replace original naturalism with a magical posture toward reality (401-407, 424). Magical belief in spirits and the supersensual and supernatural, if they hope to endure, must be routinized (402-403; 452). The priestly and prophetic types play different functions within religious congregations or communities and with this a different role in routinizing moral conduct and systematizing not only metaphysical doctrines but also religiously informed ethical reasoning (452-457).

The priest, as a broad type of religious authority, functions in the context of an official sanctioned position situated within a religious community. Taking into consideration a wide range of historical and global examples, Weber defines the priesthood, in contradistinction to sorcerers and charismatic magicians, as “the specialization of a particular group of persons in the continuous operation of a cultic enterprise, permanently associated with particular norms, places and times, and related to specific social groups. There can be no priesthood without a cult, although there may be a cult without a specialized priesthood” (426; 425). In preparation for his vocation, a priest tends to go through a rational and disciplined system of education. He learns
doctrine, that is a rational system of religious ideas and a systematic understanding of religious ethics (424-427). Weber explains that a “rationalization of metaphysical views and a specifically religious ethic are usually missing in the case of a cult without priests . . . The full development of both a metaphysical rationalization and a religious ethic requires an independent and professionally trained priesthood, permanently occupied with the cult and with the practical problems involved in the cure of souls” (426). In light of his professionally trained role within the social group, his authority is traditional; it seeking to preserve a way of life hailing from a remote or immemorial past. He preserves the community’s sacred heritage, including working to codify it (440). The magical rites he performs, especially sacrifices, appeases the anger of God, gods, or spirits against the transgressions of the people (423). Sacrifice, especially the notion of an animal as a scapegoat, is a form of magical instrumentality oriented to producing a “fraternal community between the sacrificers and the god” (communio) (423). His legitimacy is tied to the clearly delineated vocation he holds as a fixed or permanent position in the religious community (425-426). But the priesthood has tended not to be the only force in the religious development of systematic metaphysics and ethics. Prophets have played a significant role (427, 439).

Weber characterizes a prophet as “a purely individual bearer of charism, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment” (439). Prophetic legitimacy rests upon charisma and a personal call to a mission, not formal doctrinal education for a fixed office (440). “The priest, in clear contrast, dispenses salvation by virtue of his office. Even in cases in which persona charisma may be involved, it is the hierarchical office that confers legitimate authority upon the priest as a member of an organized enterprise of salvation” (440). The prophet, unlike the professionally trained priest, derives his authority from his personal gifts of extraordinary insight or special revelation evident in his preaching (440-442, 445). The
prophet is a kind of teacher of ethics, but what makes him unique from teachers of religious wisdom (as in the case of the Hindu guru or Brahminic teacher featuring the disciple-master relationship), philosophical ethicists (such as the Greek philosophical sages like Empedocles and Pythagoras), and social reformers and founders of schools of philosophy (e.g. Confucius and Plato) is one distinctive feature: “vital emotional preaching” (445; 441). In fact, the prophet’s undertaking “is closer to that of the popular leader (demagogos) or political publicist than to that of the teacher” (445). This quality can be found in prophetic figures as diverse as Zoraster, the Israelite prophets, the Buddha, Jesus, Marcion, Montanus, Novatianus, Mani, Muhammad, George Fox, and Joseph Smith (444-447). The charisma manifested in his preaching establishes the validity of his authority (440, 445). Preaching, rather than magical ceremonies, is the heart of his calling. Sometimes his charisma was evidenced through magical-supernatural powers or miraculous ‘signs and wonders,’ which authenticated and validated his message of renewed obedience to spiritual teachings or divine commands (438, 440). The prophet performs no magical rites and tends to deprivilege ceremonial practices (e.g., sacrifices) in favor of righteous living. “All prophets, by virtue of their rejection of magic, were necessarily skeptical of the priestly enterprise . . . the [G]od of the Israelite prophets desired not burnt offerings, but obedience to his commandments. The Buddhist will get nowhere in his quest for salvation merely with Vedic knowledge and ritual” (457). His preaching functioned to point out the people’s transgression of religious ethics and would involve a call to piety (or conduct pleasing to a divinity) and personal salvation, that is some form of “liberation from concrete ills” (437-438). Unlike the priest, the prophet does not have an official position within the religious congregation and, of economic significance, is unremunerated (441). He stands outside of, and his work is in some cases prior to, the professional cultic establishment positionally and
economically (452). In fact, he is ordinarily a layman who gains followers from within that community, devotees from the religious congregation who contribute to the basis of his authority (440, 452, 456). Yet, the religious movement that ensues from a prophet’s preaching yields a continuous association that through a process of routinization (including making provision for its economic existence as an enterprise) becomes a religious congregation (452).

In terms of their respective contributions to the ethical beliefs and lifestyle of the religious community, there is a kind of dialectical tension between traditional and charismatic authority in the clash between priests and prophets (456-458; 440). This reflects, within Weber’s sociology of legitimate domination, two types of authority in a power struggle for position and validity within a religious community: traditional priestly authority versus charismatic-prophetic authority (457-460). The existence of this specific tension has been widespread. Priests stress inherited moral understanding and seek to preserve traditional beliefs and practices. They are chief representatives (and beneficiaries) of the religious establishment. Prophets stand outside of the religious establishment and criticize apathy toward abuse and oppression within it (437-438). While they are not revolutionaries in the modern sense of the term, prophets offer a new revelation that calls daily routines into question and challenges the prevailing religio-moral homeostasis (Weber 457; Brueggemann). The prophet energizes a new moral consciousness among the people and entreats them to renew their lifestyle. Both, however, play a vital role in the religious and moral understanding of the community. Priests carry on inherited wisdom, while prophets offer new wisdom and a new way of receiving the past and living into the future. Weber explains that together “prophets and priests are twin bearers of the systematization and rationalization of religious ethics” (Economy 439). If unable to “outbid” the new revelation and there is wide acceptance that prophet’s authority and word among the congregation, the priest is
compelled to integrate, while also attempting to “delimit,” that revelation (457). The prophet offers a unifying and integrated vision of the world that the priest must then systematize in a way the people can apply to daily living (450-451, 460). The prophet systematizes in terms of an overarching vision of the world. The priest systematizes by applying that vision to practice, often through cases, a kind of religious case law form of reasoning (465-466).

But what is vital for my purposes is that, as representative types in a range of world religions, both the priest and the prophet, along with their followers and the whole religious congregation they lead, represent religious communities and whole societies whose lifestyle was organized around substantive moral reflection and practical reasoning (Weber, Economy 439, 450-451, 460, 464; Aristotle Ethics; Vico, Humanistic). They are twin bearers of metaphysical systematization and a process of substantive ethical rationalization. Weber reiterates, “Prophets systematized religion with a view to unifying the relationship of man to the world, by reference to an ultimate and integrated value position. On the other hand, priests systematized the content of prophecy or of the sacred traditions by supplying them with a casuistical, rationalistic framework of analysis, and by adapting them to the customs of life and thought of their own stratum and of the laity whom they controlled” (Economy 460, emphasis mine). Though the prophet represented deductive thought that proceeds from an integrated and unified moral vision of the cosmos and the priest proceeded inductively by inviting application of the unified, prophetic moral vision to the particulars of concrete practice, both of their systematization projects privileged what Weber refers to as value rationality, not instrumental rationality (450-451, 460, 464-466). Unlike traditional and charismatic types of authority, legal authority, along with its peculiar form of organization, namely bureaucracy, dominates by means of instrumental rationality, which deems decisions made on the basis of value rationality to be irrational.
Moreover, while many traditional religions, especially salvation types, are oriented to a transcendent and other-worldly hope, bureaucratic attitudes toward religion are this-worldly, especially in their orientation to economic success, and soberly rationalistic (424, 476-477). A bureaucracy that is dominant in society is “the carrier of a comprehensive sober rationalism and, at the same time, of the ideal of a disciplined ‘order’ and security as absolute standards of value” (476). The immanentized orientation of their ethics promotes a dismissiveness toward claims about the need for salvation—a dismissiveness that reveals the bureaucratization of attitudes. Weber’s sociology of religion assists in understanding how bureaucratic modernity entails more than mere social structures and organization but also their effects, especially a particular posture toward reality. Except for the utility salvation religions offer for effecting social order and producing disciplined social obedience, the distinctive bureaucratic attitude views religious ethics as irrational (476-477). This is not exclusive to modern bureaucracy in the West but is also reflected, according to Weber, in the attitude of Roman officials in antiquity and in Confucianism. These “bureaucratic religions” distance themselves from magical orientations to the world and their accompanying “emotional and irrational manifestations” (476). This attitude, however, intensifies within a rational-legal system of domination. An immanentized optimism and a utilitarian opportunism regarding progress replace the sense of a need for salvation. A bureaucratized imagination sees in the predictive power of instrumental-calculative rationality a source of administrative control and material security, a this-worldly hedge against the unpredictability of life and the precarity of human existence. Such a hedge is commonly sought from the economic domain.

GROUP FORMATION IN THE MARKETPLACE

Human beings form groups in large part for the satisfaction of the most basic needs for physical sustenance, safety, and security. The economic sphere, on the most basic level, encourages the formation of human relations supplying for material needs such as food, drink,
clothes, and shelter. People look to the formation of political community as the primary source of protection against threats of violence from both outside and inside the social group. That both the marketplace and the political community may have higher aims as their proper fulfillment is not the concern of focus for Weber’s sociological analysis here. His attention *Economy and Society* is transfixed upon the following questions. First, what influences are most potent in constituting social action? These include not only religious ethics but also and especially, in modern times, the economic rationalization of an autonomous marketplace. Second, what social means or activity mediate the formation of social groups (636)? Social action is oriented to the establishment of certain types of *consociation* (*Vergesellschaftung*) (635). Combining these two questions, Weber inquires about particular instances of consociation in the following manner: does group formation (*Vergemeinschaftung*) take place around religious ceremonies, rituals, education, and ethical practice or around the use of money (636)?

A key dynamic of rational-legal authority is the peculiar type of community formed in the modern marketplace in the West. We can gain an initial sense for this by way of contrast. Ancient and medieval economies, which were situated within traditional and charismatic systems of valid order involved personal relationships (characterized by reciprocity) that would typically endure since both parties genuinely needed one another on a continuing basis (Weber 637; Meikle; Finley). Initially free exchange took place within the context of neighborhood and personal associations. But even after they began to occur frequently outside of one’s household and kin group, they nevertheless encouraged continuing relationships and functioned to promote peaceful relations within the political community (Weber 637-640). These relationships of

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18 This question may be extended from a communication perspective. Working from the assumption that it is through communication that particular communities are formed, what communicative activity functions as the basis of a community: a religious ethic, use of money in the marketplace, legal rules, or political ideology (Carey; McGee)?
mutual dependence often developed into friendships (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; Meikle; Finley). Because both partners in an exchange typically desired a continuous economic relationship, partners had confidence that the other individual “will adhere to his promises for this reason and avoid at least striking infringements of the rules of good faith and fair dealing” (637). Not only was market consociation personal and enduring, *there were socio-economic grounds for trusting one’s exchange partners.*

By contrast, the modern “market represents a coexistence and sequence of rational consociations” that are *impersonal because those consociations cease to exist once the economic exchange concludes.* The consociation established in modern market economies is ephemeral rather than enduring as in the case of ancient and medieval economies. According to Weber, the modern capitalistic “market’s most distinctive feature” is *dickering* (635). “The completed barter constitutes a consociation only with the immediate partner” (635). *Ephemeral consociation* and the completed barter encourage dickering since one may never have to interact with their exchange partner ever again. The likely need for continued interaction and exchanges incentivizes a measure of civility and fair dealings. In the modern marketplace, the focus of attention is not on preserving an enduring relationship for trade and exchange but rather on the immediate *commodity* at hand (636). Thus one haggles to secure an optimal deal. Little socioeconomic motivation exists to treat one’s exchange partner with communicative respect and dignity. Such motivation, on the occasions when it is present, must come from a source outside of market rationality. For example, consider how many people today interact with customer service representatives or insurance claims associates over the phone. Yelling, profanity, name-calling, and abruptly ending calls in frustration are not uncommon behaviors. A customer knows she will likely never have to interact with that representative or associate ever again. In this
scenario there is another dimension at work. The significance of the incarnate presence of an exchange partner is denied. Disincarnated, ephemeral consociation intensifies impersonality. Communicative action in the modern marketplace is characterized by abstraction not only in terms of the disincarnate nature of many of the technologized interactions (e.g. telephone, social media) but also with respect to one’s potential competition. Dickering is driven not just by the immediate presence of actual competitor but by the imagined prospect of an indeterminant number of competitors (636).

Where money, within a system of rational-legal domination, is the means by which a group or consociation is formed, rather than an ethical understanding emerging from a common religious way of life, the nature of relations are impersonal (636). Weber explains,

The market community as such is the most impersonal relationship of practical life into which humans can enter with one another. . . The reason for the impersonality of the market is its matter-of-factness, its orientation to the commodity and only to that. Where the market is allowed to follow its own autonomous tendencies, its participants do not look toward the personae of each other but only toward the commodity; there are no obligations of brotherliness or reverence, and none of those spontaneous human relations that are sustained by personal unions. (636)

When the market becomes its own autonomous standard—presenting an ‘ethic’ guided only by instrumental-calculative reasoning and action unimpeded by some other religious or morally substantive value rationality—a community characterized by impersonality emerges. Modernization in the West promotes the bare market relationship and in so doing seeks to “weaken the sentiments” derived from other ethical obligations and moral relations that might limit or obstruct the “rational, purposeful pursuit of interests” (636). The pedagogy of the modern
market inculcates an “absolute depersonalization [that] is contrary to all the elementary forms of human relationship” (637).

Where religious ethics promotes brotherhood, long-term commitment based on caritas, and moral obligations to one’s neighbor and the other, modern market ethics promotes impersonality, ephemeral consociation, and self-interest (637). Weber avers that a ‘free’ market in the modern sense is one unencumbered by morally substantive norms (637). A market ethic situated within a system of rational legality is deeply threatened by forms of fraternal ethics because they supply motivation for other kinds of consociation. “In sharp contrast to all other groups which always presuppose some measure of personal fraternization or even blood kinship,” explains Weber, “the market is fundamentally alien to any type of fraternal relationship” (637). Rather than being characterized by trust, as is the case with free exchange in ancient and medieval societies, modern market consociation breeds suspicion (638). Commerce under the influence of market ethics is “an activity in which the sole question is: who will cheat whom” (638). The market characterized by money-use, dickering, and capital accounting insists upon recourse to instrumental-calculative rationality. It incentivizes an orientation to self-interest, commodities, ephemeral consociations, and an impersonal ethic and champions desacralization in part by marginalizing religion ethics.

BUREAUCRACY

Preliminary Overview of Weber’s Interpretive Analysis of Modern Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy represents the concrete instantiation of rational legal domination. As an administrative technique, it is the primary technical means of achieving obedience and disciplined compliance within a system of legal domination (Weber, Economy 223). Weber proposes that the monocratic variety of bureaucracy, whereby authority and power culminate in a
single head, is the truest form of administrative organization. Unlike more collegial models of bureaucracy, monocratic bureaucracy consist of individual officials hierarchically arranged in an administrative staff as a whole under the supreme authority of the chief. The authority of the supreme chief of the organization (who alone enjoys a position of dominance) consists in legal competency. A bureaucracy refers to the exercise of control through an administrative staff of officials distinguished by their technical expertise and specialized knowledge. Weber characterizes a bureaucratic administrative staff as “the purest type of exercise of legal authority” (220). The staff is hierarchically organized with each office possessing “a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense” (220). These individuals are free personally and agreed to the position on the basis of a contractually free relationship, but with respect to their office staff members are subject to authority. In connection to monetary calculation, bureaucrats receive their salaries in the form of money, thereby expanding the domain of calculability and monetary calculation within the management of budgetary units.

Officials are selected on the basis of specialized or technical qualifications. Technical knowledge, according to Weber, is the “primary source of the superiority of bureaucratic administration” (223). Weber bluntly states that the fundamental meaning of bureaucratic administration in the context of legal authority is “domination through knowledge” (225). In virtue of this bureaucracy is considered rational. In addition and closely related to calculative thought, technical rationality and specialized knowledge is key to a rational-legal system of domination. Technical knowledge and specialized training give one the credentials for appointment to a position of power as a bureaucratic official. This not only elevates the value of expertise in a monocratic-bureaucratic society but also begins to reshape the aims of education. Education is a means to becoming a career official. Selection on the basis of technical
qualification is most rational when those qualifications are “tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training, or both. In a modern bureaucratic society (higher) education fosters technical-instrumental thought, not ethically substantive reasoning. Education begins to accommodate to such a workforce to remain relevant to the social-organizational context in which it is situated. The priorities of such a selection process incentivize instrumental rationality to the neglect of value rationality. Bureaucracy is the organizational form par excellence of modernity. This form of administrative organization—as reflective of and instantiating modern legitimate domination established on rational-legal grounds—includes not just the economic and political spheres but spreads to all fields of activity/endeavor, such as religion, the military, hospitals, clubs, charities interest groups, endowments, and many other organizations (223).

Bureaucracy, especially the monocratic variety, is the specifically modern form of organization and increasingly pervades modern life, effecting more thoroughgoing legal domination. Weber minces no words when he contends that the development of bureaucratic administration “is, to take the most striking case, at the root of the modern Western state” (223, emphasis mine). One might object that modern society is not so organizationally homogenous and that other forms persist and flourish. However, Weber’s point is not that monocratic bureaucracy is the only organizational form but turns out to be the one on which all the others depend for their continued existence in a rational-legal system of domination. For “it would be sheer illusion to think for a moment that continuous administrative work can be carried out in any field except by means of officials working in offices. The whole pattern of everyday life is cut to fit this framework” (223, emphasis mine). As the supreme technical instrument of legal authority, bureaucracy is the most (technically) rational type of administration. Given the scope
and scale of society in the modern West, with its “needs of mass administration, bureaucracy is “completely indispensable” (223). The remaining discussion in this chapter seeks to delineate central dynamics at work in this pattern of everyday life in modern bureaucratic society.

**Officialdom**

Weber concludes his chapter on bureaucracy by observing that the ubiquity of bureaucratic structures is a relatively recent product of historical development (1002). “The further we trace our steps,” Weber claims, “the more typical is the absence of bureaucracy and of officialdom in general” (1002). By this Weber means that the peculiarly modern aspects of bureaucracy and its full realization in the form of a hierarchically organized system of expert officials are historically novel. He summarizes the characteristics of such in relation to their historical significance for society: “Since bureaucracy has a ‘rational’ character, with rules, means-ends calculus, and matter-of-factness predominating, its rise and expansion has everywhere had ‘revolutionary’ results, in a special sense still to be discussed, as had the advance of rationalism in general” (1002). What follows in my own engagement with Weber’s discussion here is an effort to illuminate the implications of this summary for an understanding of key dynamics operating in modern bureaucratic society in the West. In particular, his summary expresses a core theme in this project: the rationalization of action and society. The advance of the bureaucratic in modern society subverts and eliminates historically prior social systems of legitimate domination, which fail to meet modernist standards for rational social action and for a rational organization of society (1002-03).

For Weber officialdom is synonymous for modern bureaucracy due to the significant role of the official (956). As articulated earlier, the research question driving this project is: To what extent do bureaucratic society, organization, and agents concretely instantiate central dynamics
at work in the process of modernization in the West? The official is one of the key ‘agents’ in the
social drama of bureaucratic modernity. Modern bureaucracy is characterized by specially
trained officials operating in and over (a) fixed jurisdictional areas within (b) a hierarchic
reporting structure of relatively permanent agencies (956-957). First, bureaucratic jurisdictional
areas are governed by rules in the form of laws or administrative regulations. Germane to the
performance of their duties, and within a delimited sphere of jurisdiction, officials are invested
with authority to give commands and to leverage coercive means in accordance with the rules
defining their function. These dynamics are oriented to organizing society and social action
rationally. Thus modern bureaucracy manifests a form of social action ordered by rule-governed
behavior. Second, the jurisdictional areas and duties of bureaucratic officials are hierarchically
arranged (957). The bureau consists of a hierarchic group of officials along with lower-level
regulation writers and record keepers (957). Office hierarchy involves decision making authority
and a “channel of appeal” wherein lower offices report to and are supervised by higher ones.
Bureaucratic decisions impacting those governed by them may appeal through lower offices up
through higher ones. The point here is that such a process of appeals is highly regulated by this
hierarchy. Weber explains, “With the full development of the bureaucratic type, the office
hierarchy is monocratically organized. The principle of hierarchical office authority is found in
all bureaucratic structures: in state and ecclesiastical structures as well as in large party
organizations and private enterprises” (957). It is important to note that modern bureaucratic
society, with its monocratic office hierarchy, extends into both the public and private spheres.
Third, as the typical expression of rationally regulated association, that is of a legal system of
domination, bureaucratic forms of organization penetrate both the public sphere and the
marketplace (954, 956). Bureaucracy in the political community achieves its full development in
the modern state, while it also does so in economic life only in the structures and institutions of advanced capitalism. The elements of bureaucracy in the state constitute the bureaucratic agency, and in the marketplace, a bureaucratic enterprise (956). Fourth, what is more, the emergence of the bureau (further) divorces work and economic production from the oikos—the office “is separated from the household, business from private correspondence, and business assets from private wealth” (957). Economic activity enters a new and emerging modern domain of “business management” (957). (This point foreshadows Hannah Arendt’s discussion of the rise of the social, which is neither the private nor the public sphere, but an altogether new domain based on the paradigm of the household.)

Employment as an official within a bureaucracy depends on possessing qualifications in accordance with the rule-governed jurisdictional areas and duties (956). The bureaucratic official, especially those which are appointed, typically require special training (956, 958). Educational specialization is oriented toward the development of expertise (958). “Office management,” particularly of the specialized variety, is a distinctly modern phenomenon that “usually presupposes thorough training in a field of specialization” (958). (It is in this historical and social context that Fredrick Taylor publishes The Principles of Scientific Management in 1911. Weber notes that Taylor’s system of scientific management “involves attempts to work out rational methods” for testing a worker’s aptitude (Economy 150).) Office management is to be conducted in accordance with “general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned. Knowledge of these rules represents a special technical expertise which the officials possess.” (958). For bureaucratic management in the state or market, such expertise may be in the area of jurisprudence, administration, or business. (Later in this project, Weber’s emphasis upon management by means of specialized expertise will become
a point of engagement for Alasdair MacIntyre’s discussion of managerial expertise in *After Virtue*.) Rule-oriented expertise turns out to be central to modern bureaucratic society. “The reduction of modern office management,” Weber avers, “is deeply embedded in its nature. The theory of public administration . . . assumes that the authority to order certain matters by decree . . . entitle[s] the agency to regulate the matter abstractly” and universally, not in the concrete and particular (958). The instrumental logic of rules replaces the value rationality characteristic of practical wisdom and common sense and prevalent in traditional and charismatic systems of domination. Therefore, acquiring educational credentials and training certifications suited to the position of the official contributes to his elevated social standing in a bureaucratic society (960). Officials enjoy a career situated within conditions suited for promotion. The official expects to advance up the government or corporate hierarchy.

The Position of the Official

In a bureaucratic society, holding an office is a *vocation* (*Beruf*) (958). The official’s vocation is also understood as a “duty” (*Pflicht*), and therefore that vocation may demand not only extensive training but extensive work hours (959). Yet the rewards are significant. Whether in the public sphere or the marketplace, assuming an office is tantamount to accepting “a specific duty of fealty to the purpose of the office (*Amtstreue*) in return for the grant of a secure existence” (959). The loyalty typical of the modern office, unlike ancient and medieval forms of loyalty, is not to a person but rather a kind of devotion to “impersonal and functional purposes” (959). This is, according to Weber, decisive for bureaucratic loyalty. Not only political officials and business managers, but even priests and pastors in modern bureaucratic society are no longer defined by a personal office or personal charisma but “have become officials in the service of a
functional purpose” that has been “impersonalized” (959). Yet, as mentioned, the reward of duty and loyalty are significant: they promise ‘a secure existence.’

This security manifests in three basic forms. First and most immediately obvious, is that a vocation of an official supplies secure financial provision for material life. Whereas monetary compensation for the worker (in a money economy\textsuperscript{19}) comes in the form of a wage measured according to work performed, the official is compensated by means of a salary in accordance with his status, that is the rank of the official’s function (963). Second, in officialdom, tenure for life supplies security for officials in public bureaucracies but also for private officials whose distinction from the worker is emphasized on this point (962). Officials are often extended “legal guarantees against discretionary dismissal or transfer are developed” (962). Third, a career as an official promises a secure social standing. The social position of the private official or the public bureaucrat tends to yield a “distinctly elevate social esteem vis-à-vis the governed” (959).

Possessing trained expertise, educational credentials, and typically hailing from the economically and socially privileged strata contribute to the elevated social standing of the official.

Officialdom consists in “a guild-like closure” (960).

\textit{Extensive and Intensive Expansion of Administrative Tasks}

\textsuperscript{19} A \textit{money economy} is integral to modern bureaucracy and its compensation structure for officials based on money salaries (963). At the same time a money economy is not decisive for bureaucracy in general, just modern bureaucracy in particular (964). A system of officials, for example, may be organized around prebends rather than money (966-967). Weber discusses the fluidity, as well as factors, involved in the transition of the prebendal organization of offices to a salaried officialdom. Weber also investigates a number of other premodern bureaucracies, such as New Kingdom Egypt, the later Roman Empire especially under Diocletian, the Roman Catholic Church, and ancient China through modern times (but with prebendal and patrimonial elements combined) (964). Nevertheless, a significantly developed money economy is a normal condition for the establishment and maintenance of bureaucracy in its purest form (964). History shows, according to Weber, that “without a money economy the bureaucratic structure can hardly avoid undergoing substantial internal changes, or indeed transformation into another structure” (964). Moreover, while A fully developed money economy is not indispensable for bureaucracy, yet such an economy does offer a secure basis for continuous revenues, typically in the form of a stable and orderly system of taxation (968). The availability of continuous revenue may come through one of several systems: one of private profits, land rents, or taxation.
Where fully developed money economies and stable taxation systems exists so too do relatively higher degrees of administrative bureaucratization (968). Weber highlights that this tends to be in urban communities with fully developed money economies as well as in larger territorial states with orderly taxation systems. Bureaucratic administration flourishes, both in the private economy and in political affairs, in large modern cities and nation-states. The big state quantitatively extends the tasks of bureaucratic administration (969). Monetized bureaucratic organization facilitates the coordination of newly scaled quantities of people gathered in expanding urban centers and the new scope of control over vast territorial expanses. As an administrative technique bureaucracy makes possible, and even incentivizes (through the promise of monetary growth), the transgression of previous limits of scope and scale vis-à-vis the coordination of social action. Bureaucratic modernity exceeds previous limits of scope and scale by means of administrative techniques.

Modern bureaucratization has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions—the growth of administrative tasks is both extensive and intensive. “For the basis of bureaucratization has always been a certain development of administrative tasks, both quantitative and qualitative” (968-969). Weber explicates the extensive and intensive expansion of administrative tasks in modern bureaucratic society. Addressing the extensive expansion of administration, Weber writes, “The first such basis of bureaucratization has been the quantitative extension of administrative tasks. In politics, the big state and the mass party are the classical field of bureaucratization” (969). Not every big state, however, has produced or depended upon bureaucratic structures of administration (969-971). Neither is bureaucracy a necessary dimension of empires and imperialist expansion. By contrast to the ancient Roman and British empires, the geography of continental states, a natural condition that presents a need for massive
standing armies, largely accounts for the developments of bureaucracy there (970, 972).

Additionally, the large modern nation-state is deeply dependent upon bureaucratic administration (971). The greater its territorial size and its power on the international theater, the more unconditionally the modern state depends upon a bureaucratic basis. At the time of writing *Economy and Society*, Weber considered the United States not to be fully bureaucratized. However, with great prescience he predicted this would change the more the U. S. experienced international “friction” (e.g., World War II, the Cold War, the Vietnam War) and “the more urgent the needs for administrative unity at home” became (e.g., the intensive and extensive growth of a welfare state through the New Deal, the Great Society, and state-managed health insurance) (971). In additional to this, as party politics in the United States become increasingly driven by *professional experts* who organize election strategies and campaign tactics the more bureaucratic structures would come to “dominate politically” (971).

As significant as these quantitative and extensive expansions of administrative tasks in modern bureaucratic society, the qualitative and intensive growth of these stimulates bureaucratization more powerfully still (971). This *intensification of administrative tasks* has both political and economic, public and private, dimensions. Bureaucratic organization in ancient civilizations emerged from technical necessities and other concrete needs. Another example of this (in addition to the abovementioned need for a standing army) is the public regulation of water and of its supply in ancient Egypt (971-972). “But in the modern state,” Weber differentiates, “the increasing demands for administration also rest on the increasing complexity of civilization” (972). Weber juxtaposes modern state administration to a political community administered by notables (*honoratiores*), that is those who are capable of living “for politics without living from politics” (290). In an honorific system of legitimate domination, notables are
persons of economic and social means capable of devoting their primary attention to public affairs and who enjoy a prestige of status honor in virtue of which the public receives and trusts them as valid authorities (Weber 290, 950; Swedberg 176-177). Those historic examples of governments ruled by notables (such as Rome, Venice, and England) extended their administrative power but hardly intensified it (Weber 972). By contrast, modern bureaucratic political communities are defined in large part by their intensity of administration, that is “the assumption of as many tasks as possible by the state apparatus for continuous management and discharge in its own establishment” (972). The modern state derives much of its power from its administrative management and control over an increasing number of spheres of human life. For example, bureaucratization is intensified through economic realities. Increased wealth along with accumulating an abundance of consumptions goods by the most influential strata in society result in administrative techniques for designing one’s material or external life in accordance with that wealth. The most influential strata by extension impacts the larger society’s expectations regarding their own standard of living. This in turn generates political expectations from the modern state to make bureaucratic administrative “provision for the most varied wants which previously were either unknown or were satisfied locally or by the private economy” (972). Relatedly, the welfare state intensifies bureaucratization. Ever-expanding social welfare policies and programs are either demanded by interest groups, motivated by ideological visions, or are viewed by the state as opportunities to increase its own power (972-973). Either way, state administrative machinery intensifies as it takes on an endlessly expanding scope of human activities for continuous management.

Innovations in communication and transportation technology is another key factor germane to the intensification of bureaucratization (973). Weber refers to modern means of
communication as “pacemakers of bureaucratization” (973). As in part constitutive of modern society, Weber interprets “public roads and water-ways, railroads, the telegraph, etc.” modern means of communication (973). The significant point here is that similar to “the canals of Mesopotamia and the regulation of the Nile in the ancient Orient,” these modern means of communication require public administration (973). Modern communication and transportation technologies intensify bureaucratic administration. Referring to early twentieth century technologies, Weber observes, “The modern Occidental state can be administered the way it actually is only because the state controls the telegraph network and has the mails and railroads at its disposal” (973). Moreover, because these technologies of communication and transportation “are intimately connected with the development of an inter-local traffic of mass goods,” they are significant contributors to the full actualization of the nation-state as a distinctly modern innovation (973). Echoing the observations of Harold Innis (Empire; Bias) and James R. Beniger, Weber posits that the development of these communication means “is one of the most important prerequisites for the possibility of bureaucratic administration, though it alone is not decisive” (973). Communication and transportation technologies are (nearly) necessary but not sufficient for modern bureaucratic society in the West.

The Technical Superiority of Bureaucratic Organization

All these other causes for the advancement of bureaucratization acknowledged, the decisive factor, according to Weber, is the technical superiority of bureaucratic organization (973). In particular, Weber contrasts bureaucratic organization with administration by notables. Weber contends,

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This confirms James Carey’s association of communication and transportation technologies together as paradigmatic for the transmission view of human communication.
The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material personal costs—these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its monocratic form. As compared with all collegiate, honorific, and avocational forms of administration, trained bureaucracy is superior on all these points. (973-974, emphasis mine)

The techniques of modern, monocratic bureaucracy comprise a well-oiled administrative machine. Nineteenth century mechanization (e.g. the mechanization of the printing press) functions as a metaphor that reshapes administration (McLuhan; Postman). Moreover, bureaucratized processes and procedures turn out not only to be more precise but also more cost effective. Honorific administrative service and collegiate bodies are slower, less precise, less unified, and more expensive (974). They function with less efficiency and less like a machine. Bureaucratic organization is a technique that amplifies powers of precision, efficiency, and speed. It is no wonder that in this context Lewis Mumford developed his master metaphor of the machine while Jacques Ellul advanced his interpretive critique of la technique.

In virtue of its technical superiority as an administrative means for the rationalization of social action, fully established bureaucratic structures are among the most difficult to eradicate. In fact, they are “practically indestructible” (987). First, the bureaucratic structures, offices, and rules “harness” bureaucrats to their duties. “In contrast to the ‘notable’ performing administrative tasks as a honorific duty or as a subsidiary occupation (avocation), the professional bureaucrat is chained to his activity in his entire economic and ideological existence. In the great majority of cases he is only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an
essentially fixed route of march” (988). The machine metaphor remerges to indicate the hold bureaucratic structures have on the bureaucrat. Additionally, the habit of disciplined obedience fostered through state and private organizations by the discipline and regimen within officialdom accustom its members to its rules and regulations. Second, even after an enemy conquers a bureaucratic society, such structures and organization tends to witness a relatively smooth continuity of operation (988-989). This is because modern bureaucracy provides a potent administrative structure that is readymade for the conquering power. Bureaucracy rationally coordinates authority relations within and among jurisdictional spheres. All the enemy must do is replace the top officials within the rationally organized system of authority relations and the bureaucratic system “continues to operate” (989). Third, the bureaucratic machinery is nearly impervious to revolution. Its rational structure and technically superior control over modern means of communication, disincentivizes revolutionary overthrow of the present system. In fact, revolutions are replaced by the administrative coups d’etat, the sudden and decisive stroke of the state’s rule-making pen. Indeed, in modern bureaucracy, the pen is mightier than the sword.

Often contemporary laments about bureaucracy are directed toward the big state, that is government bureaus and their affiliates (e.g. the local post office, DMV centers, or Veterans Affairs medical facilities) as slow, inefficient, impersonal, and anti-democratic (in that unelected bureaucrats write rules that evade the legislative process and yet have the force of law) (969, 974). While in many respects this is true, bureaucracy’s superior technical functionality is incentivized primarily by a modern, (post-)industrial capitalist market economy. Such a marketplace “demands that the official business of public administration by discharged precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible” (974). It is less common for those who lament government bureaucracy to also lament corporate bureaucracy—at least until
they have a medical claim they seek to dispute with their large health insurance company or until their data and privacy are violated by a “Big Tech” company who surreptitiously buries a privilege of use within the copious fine print and overwhelming jargon of their consent agreement, which the consumer ‘voluntarily’ gives away. Even still, bureaucracy itself, and the potentiality its organizational forms unleash for society, tends not to become the object of derision quite as quickly in these cases. (This is what contemporary ‘big business’ conservatives fail to admit.) Weber observes, “The very large modern capitalist enterprises are themselves unequalled models of strict bureaucratic organization. Business management throughout rests on increasing precision, steadiness, and above all, speed of operation” (974). In addition to politics and the economy, another sphere of society that has become highly bureaucratized in accordance with technical superiority, and which has implications for both government and the marketplace, is the news media and its use of modern communications technologies. “The extraordinary increase in the speed by which public announcements, as well as economic and political facts, are transmitted exerts a steady and sharp pressure in the direction of speeding up the tempo of administrative reaction towards various situations” (974). Both in the private economy and in public administration, bureaucracy enjoys unparalleled technical superiority.  

21 In addition to politics and the economy, Weber addresses three other dimensions of modern life and society that have become highly bureaucratized in accordance with technical superiority and that are interlinked with both government and the marketplace: the news media, the law, and the military. The first is the news media and its use of modern communications technologies. “The extraordinary increase in the speed by which public announcements, as well as economic and political facts, are transmitted exerts a steady and sharp pressure in the direction of speeding up the tempo of administrative reaction towards various situations” (974). The second is the law. Bureaucratic objectivity, impersonality, calculability, and expertise establish “the foundation for the administration of a rational law conceptually systematized on the basis of ‘statutes’. . . The advance of the rationally trained expert displaced the old trial procedure which was bound to tradition or to irrational presuppositions” (975). Techno-bureaucratic experts replace traditional and charismatic jurists, judges, and juries (976-978). Finally, Bureaucratic structures involve the master or leader increasingly possessing the “concentration of the material means of management” (980). This turns out to be true not only in the state and private enterprise but also in the military. A bureaucratically organized military, whether ancient or modern, “are characterized by the fact that their equipment and provisions are supplied from the magazines of the lord (980). By contrast, agricultural tribes, armed citizens, feudal armies, and other forms horrific military service given by propertied men normally supplied their own equipment and provisions (980-981). Because bureaucratized modern warfare is “a war of
As part of its technical superiority for administration, bureaucratization also encourages specialization and objectivity. “Bureaucratization offers above all the optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations” (975). Specialized training and continual practice promote expertise. But this expertise also involves the “objective” execution of one’s office. Bureaucratic objectivity is tantamount to calculation and impersonality. The bureaucrat performs her duty in accordance with calculable rules, which promise to satisfy the demand for calculable results, and “without regard for persons” (975). These two qualities of bureaucratic objectivity go hand and hand.

When fully developed, bureaucracy also stands, in a specific sense, under the principle of sine ira ac studio [i.e. without hate and zealousness]. Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is ‘dehumanized,’ the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation. . .

The more complicated and specialized modern culture becomes, the more its external supporting apparatus demands the personally detached and strictly objective expert, in lieu of the lord of older social structures who was moved by personal sympathy and favor, by grace and gratitude. Bureaucracy offers the attitudes demanded by the external apparatus of modern culture in the most favorable combination. (975)
The bloodless, mechanistic heart of bureaucratic modernity is the elimination of the human element for the sake of calculable rules and results. The bureaucrat-expert, possessing specialized training and the proper dispositional attitudes, is the agent who dominates the stage in the social drama of a rational-legal system of authority.

Democratization and the Leveling of Social Difference

Weber contends that modern mass democracy and bureaucracy in some respects go hand and hand. One of the social effects of bureaucratic organization is that it tends to level and equalize society in a democratic fashion. “Bureaucratic organization has usually come into power on the basis of a leveling of economic and social differences” (983). The principles and conditions of modern mass democracy initially are amenable to the growth of the bureaucratic and its equalizing influence. Guided by the principles of (a) abstract rules and regularity (which resist any organization of social action based on a case-by-case approach) and (b) of equality before the law, bureaucracy opposes the democratic self-governance of smaller, more homogenous political units (e.g. the polis or civitas in Greek antiquity and in the Italian Renaissance), which feature notables in a system of honorific status, rank, and preferential treatment. Such honorific privileges are a “horror” to modern bureaucratized democracy (983).

At the same time, however, on this very point modern democracy opens itself up to a subversive principle inherent in bureaucracy. While bureaucracy opposes irregular and unequal treatment before the law, the monocratic rule (and the obedience it requires of officials and society at large) and organizational hierarchy (along with the related social status and prestige) are integral

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22 For all that is good about the principle of equality before the law, there is an economic disadvantage here. The aversion to an honorific system of privileges is connected to why bureaucracy in modern mass democracy is more expensive for the public purse, even though, as mentioned earlier, bureaucracy is in other ways more cost effective than its predecessors (983-84). By replacing notables with paid professional labor, modern mass democracy eliminates the historical supply of self-provisioning and self-equipping avocational administrative services inherent in feudal and patrimonial systems of honorific privileges (984).
to officialdom. By contrast, modern mass democracy, animated by the principle of equality, involves efforts (a) to prevent officials from developing their own status groups, (b) to limit and minimize bureaucratic authority so as to mitigate its influence upon public opinion, and (c) to restrict the growth of appointed and unelected leaders (984-985). This sets up a tension between bureaucracy and modern democracy. Here we witness Weber’s dialectical mind: Bureaucracy promotes democratization via equalization before the law, yet democracy opposes rule by bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is both a friend and an enemy to modern mass democracy.

What Counts as Knowledge? Expertise and Dilettantism

A modern bureaucratic system of authority hinges upon possession and leverage of expertise. The expert, along with the official, is another type of communicative actor in the theater of bureaucratic modernity. Another way of formulating a key part of this project’s central question is: how does modernity reveal itself through the several variations of bureaucratic agents? The expert holds great power in the context of rational-legal authority. Though it is predicated upon a notion of ‘objectivity’ and is directed by instrumental rationality, utilization and appropriation of bureaucratic expertise are hardly neutral and disinterested. Expertise and the expert are deeply mired in power position, interests, and struggles (992-993). One way this manifests is in the form of “the professional insider” who protects the private enterprise’s or public bureau’s knowledge and intentions through the practice of keeping secrets from those outside (225, 992). Possessing “official secrets,” in relation to technical expertise, “is a product of the striving for power,” argues Weber (225). As a bureaucratic “invention,” the “office secret”

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23 Weber further explains, “Under certain conditions, democracy creates palpable breaks in the bureaucratic pattern and impediments to bureaucratic organization. Hence, one must in every individual historical case analyze in which of the special directions bureaucratization has there developed” (991).
is far more than a mere functional feature of bureaucratic organization (992). Bureaucracies, “out of pure power instinct,” both conceal knowledge and appropriate expert knowledge as they battle for their own self-interest in society’s power struggles (992). Expertise is not merely a technical administrative tool but even utilized as a ready-made weapon in ideological conflicts. Max Weber, together with Alasdair MacIntyre, reveals that bureaucratic modernity is hardly characterized by value-neutral perspectives and positions but is rather a beehive of ideologically-driven activism in an emotivist social world. (This is a theme I will develop in much greater depth in chapter four of this project.) Administrative bureaucrats and other social and political actors jockey for power by means of claims to allegedly objective and neutral expert knowledge.

Because it is “technically the most highly developed power instrument in the hands of its controller,” bureaucracy is indispensable in modern society (991). Bureaucratic organization and structures enjoy a near unparallel power position in a system of rational-legal domination. The power position of bureaucracy in various societies depends upon the extent that other forms of interest and decision-making (e.g. economic interest groups, lay representatives, local establishments, or other representative bodies) are combined along with the bureaucratic elements. Invested with a legitimate claim to valid knowledge, the specialized expert is crucial to bureaucracy’s power position (991-993). Expert knowledge is power.

Compared to the bureaucratic expert, all other social and political agents and knowledge are mere instances of dilettantism from the standpoint of the superior technique and calculative rationality integral to bureaucratic modernity. According to Weber, “The political ‘master’ always finds himself, vis-à-vis the trained official, in the position of a dilettante facing the

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24 Regarding the link between bureaucracy, office secrets, and power instincts, Weber explains, “The concept of the ‘office secrete’ is the specific invention of bureaucracy, and few things it defends so fanatically as this attitude which, outside of the specific areas mentioned, cannot be justified with purely functional arguments” (992).
The expert’s specialized knowledge, in relation to his office, is the foundation for his power (994). In accordance with its claim to validity in a rational-legal system of domination, expert knowledge is superior to all other types of knowledge (992-993). Even the absolute monarch, Weber claims, is impotent before the expert’s more credible knowledge and is “to a large extent under the tutelage of the chief of the bureaucracy” (993). Weber offers more than a mere unidirectional, top-down flow of rational authority in liberal bureaucracies (“Here I Stand”). What counts as credible public knowledge and legitimate conduct is negotiated dynamically among various officials, experts, and specialists in both private and public domains. Yet, expertise alone counts as valid knowledge. As a perspective, attitude, and claim to valid knowledge, bureaucratic expertise dismisses all other ways of knowing in the world as amateurish and void of disciplined seriousness. Therefore, education must be (re-)oriented to the production of specialized expertise. Education is put into the service of achieving this specific form of economic, political, and social form of capital.

**Bureaucratized (Higher) Education**

In modern society in the West, education too undergoes a process of bureaucratization. This is part of “the far-reaching and general cultural effects” of a system of domination legitimized on rational bureaucratic grounds (Weber 998). It is the aim of this project to discern and illuminate these cultural effects—their scope and intensity particularly with respect to knowledge, ethics, and education—by making recourse not just to sociology (Weber) but also to social and political philosophy (Arendt) and the history of moral philosophy (MacIntyre). Bureaucratic modernity refashions education—its nature, purposes, and implicit vision of a life well-lived—after its own image. A bureaucratically organized society encourages specialized education featuring: testing for expertise, credentialism, (official) careerism, and educational
certificates as a pathway to upward mobility. Such an education represents not only economic opportunity but also the possibility of climbing the hierarchic ladder of social prestige and status. The bureaucratization of higher education in particular promotes specialized expertise and with it the methodization of knowledge and the rationalization of society and action.

Bureaucratization forcefully encourages a “‘rationalist’ way of life” shaped by the advance of “rational matter-of-factness” along with the “professional expert” as an integral personality type and social actor (998). This establishes the broad social situation and accompanying cultural expectations for “the nature of education and personal culture (Erziehung und Bildung)” (998). Weber observes that education under the influence of a rational bureaucratic system of domination involves “degree hunting” and “status seeking” (998). The security and social prestige that accompany the career of an official, which is available to a wide range of people across largely equalized status groups in modern bureaucratic society, make this a highly desirable aim. To become an official one must have the specialized knowledge of expertise. Educational institutions—particularly those of higher learning, from universities and colleges to technical and vocational schools—are looked to as the source of credentialing and certification for expertise (999). As these institutions increasingly assume this role in a modern bureaucratic society, they crystalize a curricular system oriented to “specialized examinations or tests of expertise (Fachprüfungswesen)” (999). Even traditional fields that fall outside of the realm of the office and the official, such as medicine, law, and methodological research, become subject to examination for expert knowledge.

Contrasting a social organization of experts with that of notables illuminates the historical uniqueness of the bureaucratized expert as a key agent in the social drama of bureaucratic modernity. Weber characterizes notables (honoratiores) as
persons (1) whose economic position permits them to hold continuous policy-making and administrative positions in an organization without (more than nominal) remuneration; (2) who enjoy social prestige of whatever derivation in such a manner that they are likely to hold office by virtue of the member’s confidence, which at first is freely given and then traditionally accorded. (290).

Notables occupy positions of privilege in an honorifically organized system of legitimate domination. It is this historically prior arrangement of authority and accompanying social structure that bureaucracy—in the context of modern mass democracy and with its system of education—seeks to replace. Social organization oriented to specialized expertise threatens an honorific system of notables. Historically speaking, the modern bureaucratic system of specialized tests of expertise signifies the “selection of the qualified from all social strata in place of the rule by notables” (999). No longer does social prestige rest upon ancestry and noble birth, access to noble prebends, or some other aristocratic qualification of nobility (1000). All are equal under the law.

At the same time, this particular replacement of ‘rule by notables’ in the end betrays democratic aspirations of social leveling. This more-widely available bureaucratic educational credentialing system will nevertheless generate a hierarchically privileged class vis-à-vis the prestige of select educational institutions and the difficulty of their system of exams (999). Efforts to make such educational credentials more widely available in the name of democratization actually has the opposite effect. “The elaboration of the diplomas from universities, business and engineering colleges,” Weber observes, “and the universal clamor for the creation of further educational certificates in all fields serve the formation of a privileged stratum in bureaus and in offices” (1000). Weber warns that in the context of a modern
bureaucratic society we should not be fooled into thinking that the demand for increased educational opportunity stems from a genuine appetite for learning and the cultivation of what is most peculiarly human about us. The aim here is for a passport to privilege and upward mobility, not broad discursive understanding. But the proliferation of such educational institutions and programs only reveals and amplifies social prestige in a bureaucratic system of organization. The expert’s specialized educational credential, especially those from premier schools, produces social benefits akin to those of former notables. It bestows upon the bureaucratic expert, especially graduates of elite educational institutions, an entitlement to a range of claims. Weber opines, “Such certificates support their holders’ [1] claims for connubium [i.e. the right to intermarry] with the notables (in business offices, too they raise hope for preferment with the boss’s daughter), [2] claims to be admitted into the circles that adhere to ‘codes of honor,’ [3] claims for a ‘status-appropriate’ salary instead of a wage according to performance, [4] claims for assured advancement and old-age insurance, and, above all, [5] claims to the monopolization of socially and economically advantageous positions” (1000). Rule by notables gives way to a socially stratified rule by experts, another hierarchic arrangement of social privilege—the passport to which a bureaucratized system of education seeks. Modern bureaucratic society does not merely eliminate a system of elites, it introduces a new one, largely by means of education. A specialized, rational system of educational certificates replaces traditional and feudal systems of domination based on nobility.

The modern marketplace prompts a “system of rational examinations for expertise irresistibly to the fore” (999). A bureaucratized market economy—one driven by superior

25 To quote Weber: “If we hear from all sides demands for the introduction of regulated curricula culminating in specialized examinations, the reason behind this is, of course, not a suddenly awakened ‘thirst for education,’ but rather the desire to limit the supply of candidates for these positions and to monopolize them for the holders of educational patents” (1000).
techniques of administration and specialized knowledge related to capital accounting and monetary calculation—demands expert training for private enterprise, that is “expertly trained technicians, clerks, etc.” (999-1000). In this way the marketplace also incentives a systems of rational tests for specialized expertise. Due to the career possibilities specialized knowledge opens, the certified graduate of a curriculum of specialized exams for expertise acquires significant social prestige, which in turn intensifies and extends that rationalist system of education (1000). The prestige associated with the “patent of education” may be turned into further economic advantage. Bureaucracy promotes the rise of status groups through the social prestige derived from the advantages of a rational system of education oriented toward the training and certification of expertise (1000-1001).

In addition to the metaphors of the official and the expert, another type of social agent strides across the stage of modern bureaucratic society and is the product of an educational system of exams, namely the specialist. The substance of education differs dramatically among the various types of legitimate domination. Similar to the expert, the specialist represents a stark contrast in societal ideals to that of the cultivated person. As a paradigmatic character type of a particular social organization, the cultivated person was the end of education and the esteem of society in earlier historical moments.26 This paradigm stands in stark contrast to the one represented by the specialist. Weber contends, “Expressed in slogans, the ‘cultivated man,’ rather than the ‘specialist,’ was the end sought by education and the basis of social esteem in the feudal, theocratic, and patrimonial structures of domination” in both Western and Eastern societies (1001). This educational ideal explains the flourishing of practical-moral reason, often from

26 In the rhetorical traditional alone, a few of the more significant examples include Isocrates’ logon paideia, Cicero’s ideal orator, Quintilian’s good person speaking well, Augustine’s loving and hermeneutically-oriented teacher, and Vico’s eloquent wisdom-lover in pragmatic contexts.
religious ground—what Weber would refer to as value rationality. As the guiding aspirational telos, such an ideal signifies “a quality of life conduct which was held to be ‘cultivated’[and which] was the goal of education, rather than a specialized training in some expertise” (1001). As a repudiation of that educational ideal, and the systems of legitimate authority that make it possible, the specialist as a type represents an education that is esteemed as technically useful (1002). Regarding the debates over education in his own day, Weber observes:

   Behind all the present discussion about the basic question of the educational system there lurks decisively the struggle of the ‘specialist’ type of man against the older type of the ‘cultivated man,’ a struggle conditioned by the irresistibly expanding bureaucratization of all public and private relations of authority and by the ever-increasing importance of experts and specialized knowledge. This struggle affects the most intimate aspects of personal culture. (1002)

Moving forward a century, much of the language in contemporary higher education today represents an attempted harmonization between these conflicting purposes and systems of legitimate domination. One such example of this is when schools boast that they offer both liberal and professional education.

   As much as modern mass democracy attempts to equalize and level social hierarchy, Weber’s interpretive analysis points to the reality that virtually any form of legitimate domination will esteem some skills, products, services, and lifestyles more than others. It is not the case that a historic, classic liberal arts education (often featuring a ‘great books’ curriculum and study of ancient languages) was elitist by contrast to our contemporary egalitarian and democratic educational system. Even in the context of modern mass democracy, today’s bureaucratized system of higher education promotes its own form of elitism oriented to
producing hierarchically valued experts and specialists trained by a curriculum of exams for expertise and specialized knowledge. Social prestige and stratified systems of social status are ineradicable, and the fact that education, as it is embedded in a social matrix of advantages and disadvantages, plays a role in this is hardly peculiar to any historical moment, ancient, medieval, or modern (1001-02). *Education, therefore, is a key cultural artifact for interpreting the condition and direction of a given society as a whole.* (To a significant extent, my endeavor in this project is a philosophical hermeneutic of late modern society vis-à-vis its informal and formal education.) The prevailing type of legitimate domination, as mentioned previously, shapes the nature and purpose of the system of education therein. Domination-specific answers to the following rudimentary questions are rendered plausible: What is the animating *telos* of education (in practice, beyond what is merely stated)? What type of educational product (that is, graduate) is most esteemed, or what kind of graduate is most desirable? How these questions are answered *in practice*—that is in the doing of education by the range of stakeholders involved—reveals the character of social prestige in a given society. The specific nature of education, along with the type of person it seeks to produce (one who is capable of a certain kind of social action), exposes what a given society values, or as Augustine might express more poignantly, reveals what a people collectively loves (*City of God* 960).

**IMPLICATIONS: THE EPISTEMIC REDUCTIONISM OF BUREAUCRATIC MODERNITY**

A system of education directed toward producing the expert and the specialist trains its graduates in ways relevant for the superior administrative techniques of modern bureaucracy (Weber). A curriculum oriented to tests for specialized knowledge certifies its graduates as possessors of expertise. As character types integral to the social drama of modern bureaucratic society, the official, expert, and specialist make recourse to instrumental rationality—particularly
calculative and methodological thought—in order that their claims and policy proposals may be received as valid knowledge. Such disciplined, specialized knowledge garners public confidence and distinguishes the expert’s claims and prescriptions apart from all other ways of knowing in the world. By comparison to expertise all other alleged knowledge claims are mere instances of capricious and sophomoric dilettantism. Morally substantive practical reason, religiously informed understanding, traditional knowledge, and hermeneutic understanding tied to *praxis*, among others, are restricted to private application alone (Aristotle; Vico, *Humanistic*; Gadamer; Lyotard; Perelman; Mootz). It is in this sense that I refer to bureaucratic modernity as epistemically reductive. While instrumental knowledge has been thoroughly publicized, all other types of knowledge have been privatized. The dominance of instrumental rationality and its claims to ‘objectivity’ in modern bureaucratic society, generally speaking, treats all other forms of knowing as merely subjective and ultimately irrational (Weber). Thus, these ways of knowing in the world have little to no public validity. Attempts to step outside this reductionist epistemic orthodoxy and make recourse to these other time-honored ways of knowing (a) in the modern economy—dominated by *money calculation* and *capital accounting* in a market economy and *calculation in kind* in a planned economy—and (b) in the modern public bureau are often scoffed by those filled with modernity’s spirit of historical hubris with respect to the achievements and knowledge of earlier historical moments. All nonspecialized knowers, past or present, are amateurish laymen (Vico, *Study Methods*). The epistemic reductionism of modern bureaucratic society, actively subverts and erodes the use and cultivation of practical reason. Modernization as a process of rationalization, ironically, ends up restricting human knowing rather than expanding it. The elevated status of expertise and specialized knowledge in the modern West represents a stark contrast to the prominence of value rationality—a form of rationality that
approximates morally substantive practical reason—in traditional and charismatic systems of legitimate domination. Integral to the communication ethics philosophy of education in this project, the cultivated person as the product of an expansive liberal arts education has become irrelevant to and unfit for the system of economic, social, and political rewards in a rational-legal system of legitimate domination. The modern economy provides few financial incentives, a modern society offers little relative prestige, and the modern state grants few positions of power to the person of practical wisdom—a quality that marked the cultivated person and was the prized possession of earlier systems of authority in the West. Rather than challenging this bureaucratized enculturation—an informal process of education effected by social organization and cultural practices—formal education merely tends to accommodate it in an effort to maintain its (perceived) relevance in modern society.

Amidst the early transition to modern society, Giambattista Vico articulates a curricular plan for yielding the highly cultivated person who speaks and acts with wisdom and eloquence in pragmatic settings. Vico offers resources for a communication ethics of higher education oriented to recuperating practical reason. As an ongoing act of thoughtful resistance, Hannah Arendt and Alasdair MacIntyre, in one form or another, call for the cultivated person amidst the dominance of specialized expertise and instrumental rationality within bureaucratic modernity. They recognize that not only does such a social and cultural system of priorities atrophy individual persons, but it also renders societies and political communities morally anemic.

Those dehumanizing consequences, ironically, would grip hold of Weber’s own Germany. One such example of a withered image of a human, who is in many respects paradigmatic for the soul sickness of Nazi Germany, is the infamous bureaucrat Adolph Eichmann. Hannah Arendt discerns in Eichmann one of the gravest historical examples of the
bureaucrat’s expert technical knowledge in operation. His cool, detached, and ‘objective’ decision making—based on the exclusive exercise of instrumental-technical rationality and coupled with superior administrative techniques, which alone were epistemically valid for the performance of his public, bureaucratic duties—exemplifies one of the most extreme perpetrations by a man who to modern bureaucratic society is otherwise so seemingly normal. Among other dynamics at play, Eichmann bracketed substantive moral judgment and relegated it to the private sphere, a move that is perfectly plausible in a public context wherein bureaucratic offices are thoroughly rationalized in terms of instrumental thought. Only a few years prior to the Eichmann trial, though, Arendt’s publication of *The Human Condition* contributed to and continues to extend the conversation about bureaucracy and modern society in the West through her own social and political philosophy. It is to this work that this project turns next in order to investigate further (a) the social, political, and economic dynamics that condition human existence in bureaucratic modernity as well as (b) the formative influence of these dynamics upon what counts as knowledge, ethical discourse and action, and formal education.
CHAPTER 3:
AN ARENDTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON MODERN BUREAUCRATIC SOCIETY AND
THE WITHERING OF THE VITA ACTIVA

In her 1958 work *The Human Condition*, the German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt embarks on an interpretive endeavor to understand the ethical and political meaning of the *vita activa* in our own historical moment. Arendt narrates an account of labor, work, and action that is significant for my project’s articulation of late modern society in the West as deeply bureaucratic. Even with the surge in interest and appearance of post-bureaucratic organization and concertive models of control and decision-making, the bureaucratic nevertheless remains an explicit point of reference still today. Modern bureaucratic society signifies, for Arendt, a decline in the realm of human affairs, which she theorizes as the pragmatic location of genuinely political speech, action, and thoughtful judgment. With the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* five years later, Arendt supplies, this time by means of an inductive approach, a rhetorical artifact through which some of the persistent challenges of modern bureaucratic society may be understood with greater fullness. The case of Adolph Eichmann, the former Nazi bureaucrat, is not a problem isolated to one man or to one murderous force in 1930s and 1940s Germany but rather symptomatic of a moral vacancy frighteningly more widespread in the modern West. From a communication ethics perspective, Eichmann is a paradigm example of the ethical outlook associated with the ‘rise of the social,’ which Arendt

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27 For a discussion of the bureaucratic in relation to the post-bureaucratic, see the articles cited from the following scholars: Karen Lee Aschcraft; Kristin Halvorsen; Damian E. Hodgson; Shawna Malvini Redden and Jennifer A. Scarduzio; Nina Overton-de Klerk and Sonja Verwey; and Brendan McSweeny.
treats in *The Human Condition*. This dissertation will pursue the link between these two texts in two distinct chapters—the first of them attending to *The Human Condition* and the second to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Taken together, the line of inquiry I am pursuing in these two chapters dedicated to Arendt’s work is the following: what is it about the formative potency of modern bureaucracy about which Arendt sends out a warning? What historical and societal dynamics function to shape the particular traits of the modern bureaucrat as a character type on the stage of modern society?

Hannah Arendt’s philosophical hermeneutic of the West coupled with her attention to speech, action, and socio-cultural institutions has proven to be of great value to communication scholars. Arendt’s work on the public sphere has been fruitful for communication ethics. According to Ronald C. Arnett, the public sphere for Arendt is a space where difference meets in the form of communicative action, public opinion, and argumentation (“Biopolitics”). Jo Sprague attends to the significance of Arendt recovery of a notion of “praxis as political-ethical action” for education (7). Slavko Splichal acknowledges how our current digital environment reflects the Arendtian ‘rise of the social’ by blurring the distinction between the public and the private in virtual space. This further problematizing political action in the late modern world, including how it intersects with and depends upon bureaucratic economic forces. With regard to the issue of bureaucracy, Arendt’s work exposes modern enthusiasm for efficiency and progress to be what Arnett refers to as a form of “artificial light” (*Communication Ethics*). Robin Patric Clair and Adrianne W. Kunkel apply Arendtian categories to the oxymoronic notion of “bureaucratic care” of child abuse victims, which is impersonal and stresses code-compliance and the completion of paperwork. Clair and Kunkel also discern threats to teachers’ judgment in the bureaucratic context of public schools that demands conformity to protocols and procedures. As
an antithesis to the technical-instrumental logic of the bureaucrat, Arendt’s elevation of thoughtfulness, judgment, and practical reason provides scaffolding for an applied notion of an ethical imagination at work in journalism. Relatedly, Ginna Husting draws upon Arendt’s notion of the ‘rise of the social’ for an understanding of televisual news in relation to mass society. A bureaucratic and technocratic, mass media culture, according to Leslie K Davis, desperately needs to cultivate not just critical intellectual skills but sound ethical judgment in the Arendtian sense, which, as Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar notes, draws upon Aristotle’s notion of phronesis and Kant’s concept of reflective judgment. Arendt’s attention to practical reason and moral judgment will turn out to be central themes in the attention I give to modern bureaucratic society from communication ethics perspective in this chapter and the next.

In an effort to comprehend the emergence and formative potency of modern bureaucracy in the West and the particular characteristics of the bureaucratic as interpreted by Arendt, I pursue three main themes in this chapter. First, she provides categories for considering a full range of activities that comprise the vita activa as well as the related issue of the privacy and publicity of those activities. In relation to the blurring of the gap between the private and the public, the rise of the social begins to reveal the significance of modern bureaucracy in Arendt’s mind. Second, when either labor, work, or action triumphs in the vita activa the general contours of a specific ethical attitude or orientation tends to prevail in the life of a community. Within these activity-attitude contexts, moral philosophers often provide a theoretical rationale for the prevailing orientation of their socio-political world. This will provide a framework for considering the dominant ethical orientations and moral philosophies that have characterized modernity and give animation to modern bureaucratic society. Third, Arendt narrates modernity as a series of disruptive priority reversals—reversals in the relationship between the vita
contemplativa and the vita activa and then within the vita activa itself. These are important movements and developments that result in the ‘rise of the social’ and the emergence of modern bureaucratic society. This chapter concludes by pointing to the value of exploring a specific rhetorical artifact to further illuminate Arendt’s sweeping historical and philosophical interpretations of human activity in the West. How do such dynamics manifest ‘on the ground’ through the concrete structures, institutions, and actors of a modern bureaucratic society? This points to the second chapter in this projected dedicated to Arendt’s understanding of how it is that modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic.

THE VITA ACTIVA: PRIVACY AND PUBLICITY IN HUMAN ACTIVITY

Ways of Life

By historical comparison, in The Human Condition Hannah Arendt observes that the range of human activity, both conceptually and practically, has narrowed in the modern age. Stemming from a concern over what may be referred to as an activity reductionism stemming from the era of Galileo and Descartes, Arendt aims to articulate the array of activities that comprise the fullness of human capacities and endeavors, giving special attention to labor, work, and action. In Greek antiquity genuinely free activities were considered uniquely human and constitutive of a way of life—a bios (12-13). By contrast the laborer was bound to the necessities of life while the craftsman was beholden to what is useful. According to Arendt, Aristotle articulated three bioi, each of which distinguished by a particular pursuit of beauty. The first way of life was of the pleasure-seeker who consumes beauty in the form of bodily pleasure. Secondly, the bios politikos entailed a life of action dedicated to the production of beautiful words and

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28 Arendt is careful to distinguish between the ‘modern age’ and the ‘modern world.’ She contends the former commenced in the seventeenth century and ran into the early twentieth century (6). The explosion of the first atomic bomb represents the inauguration of the ‘modern world’ (6).
deeds in the public realm that elevate life in the *polis*. Unlike *labor* and *work* (neither of which constituted a *bios*), *action*, as characteristic of the political way of life, is uniquely the form of human activity that takes place directly between people. Thirdly, the *bios theoretikos* represented a philosophical way of life devoted to inquiry, particularly the activity of contemplating eternal things whose beauty is unchanging, unlike beauty consumed or produced. Translated into the Latin West, the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* generally correspond to the *bios politikos* and the *bios theoretikos*, respectively (14).

Arendt discerns in Western antiquity and the middle ages a devaluation of the *vita activa* through its various associations with labor and work. Rather than labor and work being elevated in significance by their incorporation into the *vita activa*, action now is debased and “reckoned among the necessities of earthly life” (14). The contemplative way of life, which alone remains unassociated with life’s necessities, becomes the only free *bios*. Arendt attributes this tradition in Western political thought not originally to Christianity but in large part to the Platonic heritage that features both (a) the iconic conflict between the archetypal Socratic philosopher and the city (*polis*) as well as (b) an articulation of the philosopher-king as the only proper ruler of the political community (12, 14, 16). Aristotle also contributes to this in his prioritization of contemplation as a philosophical ideal. Furthermore, this transmuted notion of the *vita activa*, which ceased to be synonymous with the political way of life, came to include all human activity and was defined in terms of its opposition to the *vita contemplativa*. The contrast is no longer between a *bios* characteristic of the free person and the lack of a distinctly human way of life but

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29 It is important to note this priority for contemplation is different from the intimate association of *philosophia* with political *praxis* in the tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric, which includes Isocrates in Greece; Cicero, Quintilian, and Augustine in Rome; and Leonardo Bruni and Giambattista Vico in Italy (Walker; Ong, *Rhetoric*; Bizzell and Herzberg; Isocrates; Cicero). This broad school of thought is not characterized by the dichotomy typical of the Greek philosophical tradition hailing from the fourth century BC.
between contemplation and all activity. The *vita activa* (or the *bios politikos*), defined primarily in terms of political action, was once one of *three ways of life* (*bioi*) but insofar as it is framed in terms of the activity-contemplation binary, the *vita activa* in its entirety is demoted to *askholi* or unquiet (15). A life of activity, busyness, and motion is juxtaposed with a life of quiet and rest. The decisive distinction becomes between quiet and unquiet, rest and unrest, rather than the form of activity that defines one of several types of *bios*. Those kinds of activities that are to be valued are seriously constricted; in fact, only philosophical inactivity is truly prized. Even the discursive process of thinking gets contrasted with the contemplative abstention from activity (15-16).

Contemplation is distinguished from thought while the *vita activa* is diminished vis-à-vis the *vita contemplativa* (16). This debasement of action, which only further accelerates in the modern age, constitutes the exigence to which Arendt’s work is addressed.

Arendt’s project endeavors to recuperate the *vita activa*—generally, to articulate the value of its different forms of activity and, specifically, to reinvigorate *action* as that which reveals human excellence within and for the political community. Arendt’s exposition of the *vita activa* contests its subordination to the *vita contemplativa* and challenges the related opposition of quiet to unquiet (16-17). She argues that “the enormous weight of contemplation in the traditional hierarchy has blurred the distinctions and articulations within the *vita activa* itself and that, appearances notwithstanding, this condition has not been changed essentially by the modern break with the tradition and the eventual reversal of its hierarchical order in Marx and Nietzsche” (17). Though they give priority to the *vita activa*, modern philosophers, such as Marx and Nietzsche, obscure the distinctions between, if not altogether conflate, labor, work, and action. Both the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophical tradition, which privileges contemplation in the hierarchical order of human pursuits, and the modern reversal of this order empty the *vita activa*
of its full richness and complexity. In the process of expositing the plurality of activities related
to the human condition, Arendt also complicates the historic relationship between the *vita
contemplativa* and the *vita activa* as she traces reversals between and within them during the
modern age. Although Arendt grants an absolute priority to neither, her overriding concern with
the modern age is the emptying and shrinking of action, both practically and conceptually. (As
will be seen later, she also does express significant concern for the replacement of contemplation
with introspection in the modern age.) Against the backdrop of a modern bureaucratic society,
she seeks to recover the importance of speech, action, and thought as human activities vital to a
flourishing public sphere (3-5, 39, 94-96, 323-25). In a bureaucratized public sphere patterned
after the model of the private, speech, action, and thought are subordinated to another form of
activity, namely labor.

*Human Activities in Private and Public*

To live in a human world means that one’s life is conditioned by the presence others and
by cultural realities. Relations to others, rhetorical artifacts, and the kind and quality of activities
that order the affairs a community are conditions that situate human existence. Each person,
whether the solitudinarian or the metropolitan, stands in relation to some cultural-artifactual
world that bears witness to the presence of others. Arendt maintains that both “things and men
form the environment for each of man’s activities, which would be pointless without such
location” (22). The *human condition*, as opposed to the notion of *human nature*, shifts with
respect to time and place—that is it alters in relation to the unique features of human experience
within each spatiotemporal horizon (9-11). And it is precisely to these key shifts in the
spatiotemporal horizon of the modern age that Arendt gives her interpretive attention in order to
discern how specifically modern artifacts and organization of human relations and affairs have conditioned human life in the West.

Motivated by a concern with the character and quality of our dwelling amidst a plurality of human beings, Arendt senses something has gone awry in the modern age with respect to the kind of human activity constituting the public sphere. Our feel for the private and the public in the West has undergone profound conceptual and praxeological shifts, and this conditions our activity and the character of our plurality. Arendt identifies and investigates three broad activities that fill human life—labor, work, and action—so as to undo the modern conflation of these activities and to discern the significance of each as embedded within the late modern historical moment (7, 12, 22-23). Both labor and work are tied to the necessities of biological life (22, 28-30). Labor refers to those activities directed toward the nourishment and maintenance of individual life as well as toward the survival of the species through reproduction. Work, unlike labor, pertains to the fabrication of a range of human-made artifacts, the tendency of which is to outlive individual human life. By producing an artifactual world, work supplies a habitat that shelters humanity from the natural environment and promotes worldliness—that is an interest in the human artifice as a common world that brings people together into relation and facilitates human affairs (7, 12, 22-23, 52-55, 94-96). Unlike labor and work, which do not always require the immediate presence of others, action alone is performed directly between people “without the intermediary of things or matter” (7). Corresponding to plurality as a condition of human life, action: is the form of activity that is shared among and exists between one’s fellow humans, establishes and sustains political organization and community, and is “entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others” (12-13, 23). Rather than privileging the individual communicative agent, Arendt’s notion of action foregrounds the shared world of the political
community. Ronald C. Arnett comments that meaningfulness emerges from this communal presence of others (*Communication Ethics* 71-72). Action, as it was understood in ancient Greece prior to the Socratic school and in ancient Rome, was the political ideal that animated the public sphere (*Arendt, Human* 14-17, 37, 194-99). The elevated status of a *bios* committed to action and the coordination of a common world, nevertheless, would be degraded even in the twilight of classical Greece. The Socratic school of political thought, whose point of departure is the hostility of the polis to the philosopher as exemplified in Socrates’ execution, includes political action among life’s necessities and only the philosopher dedicated to the *bios theoretikos* (or *vita contemplativa*) constitutes a free way of life (14-17, 37). Action, the *vita activa*, and the public realm itself suffered diminishment. Much later, in the earlier stages of the modern age, work replaced action as the ultimate activity in the *vita activa*, but later labor came to replace work. Unknotting the activities of labor, work, and action is a foundational step in Arendt’s ultimate aim to recuperate the import and practice of genuine political action as the defining activity of the *vita activa*. Furthermore, the extent to which each activity is located primarily in private or public life is pivotal for the character of a community.

With respect to the private and public realms, Arendt inquires into the location of labor, work, and action, juxtaposing the modern age to Western antiquity while attending to shifts and reversals along the way. The cultural *locus* of these activities, that is whether and to what extent they are conditioned by privacy or publicity, matters greatly for the quality of that activity and of human relations (22-37). How, then, does privacy condition the myriad kinds of human activity, and what are the effects of publicity on them? The private life of the household (*oikos*) and the public affairs of the city (*polis*) represented, particularly in Western antiquity until the onset of the modern age, “two orders of human existence” (24). They existed in a kind of dialectical
tension with each other—attention was given both to the gulf between these realms as well as to
how they co-informed one another (24, 33).

As a pre-political society, the family attended to the necessities of biological life,
including concealing life and death from public observance. The household served to sustain
individual human lives and to preserve the species through reproduction. “The distinctive trait of
the household sphere,” Arendt maintains, “was that in it men lived together because they were
driven by their wants and needs. The driving force was life itself . . . which, for its individual
maintenance and its survival as the life of the species needs the company of others” (30). It is in
terms of this function—the maintenance of individual biological life and the survival of the
species—that the household as the basic economic unit derived its meaning as a site of
production and consumption. This was the administrative burden of responsibility that fell upon
the head of household: individual and species survival. In order to accomplish this, therefore,
economic activity, in contrast to political activity, was characterized by sameness of perspective
not difference, conformity of behavior not freedom of action, and the equalizing of all household
members under the paterfamilias’ rule not individual differentiation based on unique
achievements of otherwise equal citizens who neither ruled nor were ruled (31-32, 40-41, 58).
The marketplace, as a site of exchange and economic relations, then, exists as an extension of
this household activity and for the sake of biological life. The household, the locus of private
activity, is the orienting point of reference for the marketplace.

The private realm is not significant simply for the sake of its own self-contained
activities, but that without it the public realm would be naught. Arendt insists that the public
sphere depends upon the existence and substantiality of the private. In antiquity a house provided
a person with a location of one’s own in “the affairs of the world” without which participation in
that world was impossible (30-31). Thus the boundaries and boarder lines between one estate and another were treated as sacred and as an integral concern of ancient law. Additionally, the public sphere depends upon the private sphere because humans are “social” before they are “political” (32). This prepolitical familial company supplied for life’s more foundational wants and needs (30-32, 34). And yet with that said, Arendt comments, “According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home (oikia) and the family” (24). Though there is a dialectical play between the private and the public, that relationship also depends upon the existence of a gulf between them.

By contrast to the maintenance of life, both on the individual level and with respect to the survival of the species, Arendt identifies the public realm as providing another dimension of concern and expression to human existence (22-33). The public is not merely an amplification of private activity and concern on a larger and aggregated scale, as early modern liberal political theory has conceived. Rather it contributes something qualitatively different to our experience and thereby permits us to express the fullness of our humanity and the potential richness of our unique being. When the public realm is primarily defined in terms of action it permits a kind of second life, a bios politikos, in addition to the one lived in the privacy of the household (24).

This life outside of the household means contact with a greater degree of plurality than what typically characterizes experience within the privacy of the family (39-41, 58). Publicity and the second life of the public realm confront us with this perennially perplexing question, which is of particular interest to scholars of rhetoric and communication: how do we live together with one another (52)? The public sphere entails the intensifying of the human condition of plurality. No

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30 In light of Arendt’s interpretive insight, the name given to the online virtual ‘world’ that intensifies privacy rather than drawing one outward into greater publicity and self-disclosure is ironic: Second Life.
matter our geographical location or temporal moment, this question, whenever and wherever it is engaged, challenges and often confounds us most in its concrete application. How am I to live amidst these people in this place in our particular common world? This is the challenge of the public sphere and the way it qualitatively textures human existence as distinct from the domain of privacy. The public sphere is both common and plural, it is simultaneously rooted in some shared, corporately meaningful agreement as well as characterized by difference of position and perspective. Arendt frames “the common world as the common meeting ground of all, [yet] those who are present have different locations in it,” and those locations often prompt widely varying perspectives on that common world (57). The public sphere elevates human existence beyond a mere concern for individual and species survival when it consists in a heterogeneity of positions and perspectives but in relation to a common object of concern.

Moreover, the public realm is where we appear to one another and the self acquires greater solidity through “the widest possible publicity” (50). In public we appear before others and are seen and heard by them (50-52). Public knowledge—that is apprehension of events, actions, and actors—takes on the form not of certainty but of verisimilitude. Speech and action, the full understanding of which is not opaque, are of the nature of appearance. Thus, our word and deed is often misunderstood and misrepresented. Publicity illuminates our lives by means of the eyes and ears of those with whom we share the common world. Arendt explains that “the presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves” (50). Through our public interactions with others we check our interpretive grasp of the world. This check on, this assurance of, our sense of reality is central to the import of public life for expressing the full uniqueness of our humanity, but it also has implications for private life.
Matters of private life assume a new kind of reality when we speak about them publicly (50-51). By comparison to the thick and substantive reality of the public realm wherein one is seen and heard, the interests, passions, and experiences of private life remain shadowy and thin unless they find some appropriate public expression. A thoroughly private existence never moves beyond individual and subjective experience into an objective world of the common. It produces a self sheltered from exposure to publicity and an individual identity whose full unfolding is necessarily stifled in virtue of being deprived of living among others in a condition of plurality. A private existence devoid of “the implacable, bright light of the constant presence of others” results in a shadowy self that remains in a perpetual twilight—thus the importance of the public sphere (51).

This, however, is hardly to suggest that all things private are to make their way into the public in order to receive their solidity. According to Arendt’s interpretive judgment, only that which can withstand the illumination that comes from the presence of others and is “worthy of being seen or heard, can be tolerated” in the public sphere (51).\(^{31}\) Whatever is deemed relevant by this standard nevertheless must be reshaped into a suitable form fit for public appearance. Again, a central question motivating Arendt’s inquiry has to do with discerning the proper location in the human world for each kind of human activity. Neither instrumental, calculative, methodological, nor statistical thought is adequate for supplying a response. These are no more appropriate for answering this type of question than a barometer is for ascertaining the temperature. For a response to this question only some form of practical reason, particularly oriented to considerations of rhetorical decorum attentive to substance and style as a unity, will do. The social location of these activities also matters because when either labor, work, or action

\(^{31}\) Expressions of romantic love, according to Arendt, are one such example of a concern that ought to remain within the realm of the private since publicity is subversive to its authenticity (51-52).
is privileged in a given community’s public sphere, a particular ethical outlook or moral attitude tends to prevail.

PRIVILEGING LABOR, WORK, OR ACTION: PROMOTING ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS

Ultimately Arendt endeavors, by means of a historically-oriented philosophical hermeneutic of Western civilization, to interpret the political and ethical meaning of the *vita activa* in our own historical moment (72-73, 78). What has come of the ethical and political significance of labor, work, and action vis-à-vis the extent of their privacy and publicity? Additionally, how are the experiential metaphors of the human *qua* laborer, worker, and communicative actor hierarchically related to one another in the (late) modern West? Arendt interprets the human person in the various role-functions of *animal laborans*, *homo faber*, and the political animal of action and speech (*zoon politikon* as rooted in *zoon logon eikon*) (27). She traces the various historical priorities given to these human functions and the resultant impact upon our worldview. In the sections on labor, work, and action that follow, I give special attention to Arendt’s consideration of the ethical outlooks, postures, or attitudes that tend to accompany (a) the privileging of a particular kind of human activity in the *vita activa* and (b) the degree of privacy or publicity given to that activity. In other words, the prereflective practices that characterize a specific public realm are inclined to promote an axiologically-specific phenomenological perception of the human lifeworld. The routine performance of one kind of activity over others tends to develop an ethical *habitus* that is oriented in a specific value-laden direction. To borrow from Charles Taylor’s lexicon, socio-cultural practices or *cultural liturgies* give rise to a particular *social imaginary*, that is an ethically oriented imagination of the field of human action (Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*; Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*). An ethical imagination of the self and of the world of human relationships emerges from a socio-cultural
praxis that priorities a specific human activity (labor, work, or action) and the degree of privacy or publicity it receives. The notion of a social imaginary, consisting of pre-reflective shared stories and pictures of a life well lived, is not conceptually the same as a moral philosophy, which emphasizes theoretical reflection and philosophical argumentation. The latter privileges propositional knowledge along with analytic and systematic thought while the former stresses a taken-for-granted, imaginative-affective way of inhabiting the human world. Yet, social imaginaries, as shapers of public opinion and a culture’s way of life, are that in terms of which a moral philosophy becomes plausible to a historically and culturally embedded people, including its theorists. The Human Condition provokes consideration of the relationship between the performative priority given to either labor, work, or action and the shared ethical disposition or attitude, a kind of social imaginary, that tends to prevail within that common world, which then creates a receptivity to a particular form of ethical theorizing.

In the section that immediately follows below, I investigate how Arendt links: labor to a social viewpoint that elevates biological life, work to a utilitarian posture governed by instrumentality, and action to an ethical orientation of virtue and human greatness that constitutes human togetherness. Then, after addressing Arendt’s discussion of these prevalent ethical attitudes—social viewpoint, utilitarian posture, and virtue orientation—I devote the section after that to an interpretation of the connections Arendt makes between these moral attitudes, as historically and cultural embedded in the modern West, and the specifically modern ethical theories to which these attitudes are especially receptive. Ultimately, these two sections establish an architecture within which the fuller significance of bureaucracy in the late modern West may be understood.

Animal laborans: Labor and the Social Viewpoint
As mentioned above, Western antiquity, generally speaking, designated the private realm as the domain for the *maintenance of individual life* and the *survival of the species* (28-30). As the form of human activity oriented to these tasks, *labor* is beholden to the cyclical metabolism of biological life (18-19, 82-90, 96-101, 151-53). In contrast to antiquity and as a result of complex historical developments, the activity of labor is eventually elevated in the modern age as the experience of *animal laborans* comes to serve as the paradigmatic model for public activity. As an outgrowth of labor’s promoted status and this transformed public sphere, Arendt proposes that a new ethical attitude emerges, namely the *social viewpoint*. This moral outlook, and the thoroughly *socialized humanity* that corresponds with it, functions as “the viewpoint of the whole modern age” (88, 89). The social viewpoint attends exclusively to the life process itself, that is it consists of a posture that values activity insofar as it aims at *life*, which is to be understood as the cyclical, metabolic processes involved in the maintenance of individual life and the survival of the species. The social viewpoint corresponds to and expands upon Arendt’s notion of the *rise of the social*—that is a complex historical process that entails (a) a blurring of the divide between the private and the public realms coupled with (b) modeling political community and activity after the household and its aim to maintain life (28, 38-49, 85-90). The point here is that the significance of the social viewpoint is hardly limited to the private domain but has public implications. (This idea of the *social* realm and its ascendance will figure more prominently in my discussion later.) Awareness of the social viewpoint and rise of society permits a different reading of the economic thought of both Adam Smith and Karl Marx. Rather than representing primarily two opposing economic theoretical orientations, Arendt perceives great similarity between Smith and Marx in that together their thought promotes a general
elevation and expansion of labor. Prior to the modern age, this expanded view of labor, as both a practical attitude and a theoretical discourse, was foreign to Western civilization.

The significance of the social viewpoint hinges upon a surprising distinction between labor and work. Though not commonly observed, Arendt contends the phenomenal as well as etymological evidence for this distinction is strong (79-87). Ancient Greek thought was contemptuous toward labor for two reasons: the condition of labor lacked freedom from necessity and it denied one the opportunity to leave a memorable trace. First, laboring enslaved one to the necessities of the body. Activity dictated by the demands of the body was felt to be slavish, and it is this condition that the notion of a free citizen aimed to escape (81-84). In fact, the ancient institution of slavery was understood against the backdrop of this experience of labor. Second, by satisfying the metabolic needs of life-maintenance and species-survival, the laborer’s activity, unlike that of the artisan, results in no lasting product. The distinction between productive and unproductive labor paramount to both Smith and Marx—a distinction that associated ‘productivity’ with leaving a durable trace—was predicated upon what Arendt discerns as the tacit, yet more rudimentary, distinction between labor and work (87). “It is indeed the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent” (87). Consumption—rather than enduring use-objects, a lasting shelter, or semi-permanent monuments—is the aim of labor’s productivity. The distinguishing feature of ‘the labor of our body,’ which typifies animal laborans, is that it is quickly consumed and leaves little to no enduring trace behind (80-82, 85, 87-89). A distinguishing characteristic of work, as Arendt employs the term, is its ‘productivity’ in the

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32 An example of such evidence is found in John Locke whose distinction between the laboring body and the work of one’s hands resembles the ancient Greek distinction (which the German lexicon also parallels) between the craftsman and those (namely household servants/slaves and domesticated animals) who minister to life’s necessities with their animal bodies.
sense that it results in a tangible product that endures for continued use and guarantees the
durability of the world (87-89, 94). Arendt’s notion of labor refers to what Smith and Marx
discuss as ‘unproductive,’ that is, activity that does not yield an enduring product. Yet Smith and
Marx both terminologically collapse the product-producing activity of work into the concept of
labor. Arendt understands labor, along with animal laborans, as beholden to the biological life
process. The rise of “society,” that extension of the activity and expectations of the household to
a national scale, is accomplished not through the monarch-like rule of “one-man” (pater
familias) but rather the rule of “no-man” in the form of impersonal bureaucratic administration
(40). As “the most social form of government,” modern bureaucracy—which, according to
Arendt, is the latest stage of government in the modern nation-state and perhaps the most
tyannical form of rule—signifies a superior administrative technique for organizing people and
activities on an unprecedented scope and scale and functions to produce mass conformity in
service to the maintenance of life and the survival of the species (Arendt, Human 40-48; Weber
973-80). It is the organizational form that matches the social viewpoint.

Although Karl Marx advances what Arendt considers to be the most coherent articulation
of the social viewpoint, it must be remembered that she also insists this ethical outlook is the
assumed underlying posture of the entire modern age (88-89). Consider the social viewpoint’s
exclusive attention to the life process in contrast to other ethical worldviews that conceive of life
as necessary but insufficient for the good life. According to these moral philosophies, cultivation
of what is most human is needed, and the knowledge of this depends on axiologically substantive
reasoning. But the social viewpoint treats biological life itself as the ultimate ethical realization.
And it is labor that makes possible individual-life-maintenance and species-survival. Because
there is no axiological principle higher than sustaining biological life, human activities and
decisions are vindicated insofar as they result in consumable goods that feed the human organic metabolism. Bereft of a substantive imaginative vision of human life as oriented to something more than mere organic animality, decision-making, action, and the evaluation of action are conducted along instrumental lines with respect to consumption. Through rational calculation of means to the endless end of life-maintenance and species-survival, labor power, in modern economic thought and practice, functions to achieve the surplus that a modern economy, whether planned or market-based, depends upon if it hopes to supply for the consumptive needs and demands of modern bureaucratized nation-states. The scope and scale of this common, bureaucratic form of modern political organization are historically unparalleled.

If we allow Weber to extend Arendt at this point, calculative thought—in the form of both money calculation via *capital accounting* in capitalist economies and *calculation in kind* in socialist economies—is central to the administrative techniques that amplify production, in terms of its efficiency and power, to unparalleled levels. The administrative techniques of a bureaucratized public sphere—which are characterized by monocratic centralization, the official’s expertise, and specialized knowledge—coordinate human labor power in such a way that yields historically unprecedented surplus. The form of rationality animating this process and deemed valid in this socialized public sphere of *socialized humankind* is overwhelmingly instrumental. Reducing the *vita activa* to labor, or at least deprivileging all activity that is not capable of feeding the limitless metabolism of a modern economy and society, marginalizes morally substantive reasoning and practical wisdom. This is so because moral reasoning and wisdom themselves, if they are not reduced to mere instruments of the organic life process, represent attention to human goods that go beyond mere individual-life-maintenance and species-survival. By elevating *life* and its maintenance to the status of chief concern in the
socialized-economized public sphere, modern bureaucratic society and its social viewpoint neglects the good life, and the form of reasoning central to it, as a publicly shared motivating concern. With respect to communication ethics, this neglect of the good life—which pertains to a specifically human kind of life—and the accompanying marginalization of practical wisdom may be the most significant impact of the influence of the social viewpoint in late modern life.

_Homo faber: Work, the Human Artifice, and a (Perplexing) Utilitarian Posture_

While _animal laborans_ aims to supply for the consumptive metabolism of biological life, _homo faber_ endeavors to provide a stable home within the natural world, a semi-permanent resting place and shelter for humankind (136-37). The ‘work of our hands,’ unlike the ‘labor of our bodies,’ leaves an artifactual trace that endures. _Homo faber_, the human person in the capacity of a fabricator, maker, builder, and toolmaker, equips humanity with a durable world. _Homo faber_ fabricates use objects that comprise the human artifice, that is an objective environment that conditions human subjectivity. Human life is conditioned not only by nature and the presence of others but also by the products of human hands and of the tools and implements that extend the worker’s hands (Arendt, _Human_ 145-47; McLuhan). As a fabricator of useful, tangible things, the human being produces an objective world that possesses a measure of independence from its living and dying maker (Arendt, _Human_ 139). This enduring world of things, on the one hand, not only stands in contrast to the mortality of _animal laborans_ but also, on the other hand, stabilizes human life and provides solidity to human identity. Arendt explains that “the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that . . . men . . . can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world” (Arendt, _Human_ 137). Although they eventually fade and
wear, *use objects* are characterized by a durability that *consumable things*, which are grafted into the life process and the cyclical rhythm of nature’s metabolism, lack (136-38). While consumption, destruction, and decomposition depict what the ‘labor of our bodies’ yields, durability, solidity, and stability are the salient features of the ‘work of our hands.’

The human artifice constitutes a *common world of things* that mediates human relations. By inhabiting this world of artifacts, one shares a human-fabricated environment with others (52, 55). This shared world of things is an *objective in-between* that both gathers and separates people, much like the function of a table (52-53). A table simultaneously brings people together in a type relation while preventing them from colliding into, stumbling over, or suffocating one another. So too does a world of things relate and separate its members on the basis of a common artifactual environment, thereby producing and sustaining a form of community. 33 That aspect of human culture to which *homo faber* contributes primarily is the provision of a habitation consisting of human-made artifacts. 34 The human artifice, as an objective in-between, is a medium of human relations. Living in the world means that a fabricated environment, produced by *homo faber*, is between those who share a constellation of artifactual things in common.

While *animal laborans* unchecked results in the social viewpoint, Arendt proposes that *homo faber* is a socio-cultural personification of utilitarianism (154). Due to an inability to

33 As a simulacrum of the common world, mass society does not have the power to gather and separate, relate and individuate. Arendt proposes that mass society—one in which bureaucracy orchestrates conformity through nationwide housekeeping—is more like a séance in which the originally present table vanishes, leaving those formerly seated around it “no longer separated but also . . . entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible” (53).

34 But the artifactual use objects constituting this common world of things are not merely physical goods but also are (or relate to) symbolic (ethical/aesthetic/political) goods. As unavoidably cultural, the artifacts produced by *homo faber* are symbolic-semiotic and therefore also discursive-rhetorical. *Homo faber* cannot help but interact, in one way or another, with the human role-function of *zoon logon eikon* (27). For it is impossible to divorce the materiality of an object from its symbolic import. As signs, artifacts not only represent the common cultural world but also assist in generating that world as well as an understanding of it. To extrapolate from the work of James Carey, artifacts as signs are both of and for a world (29). Emphasizing the symbolic and rhetorical nature of artifactual things grants further credibility to Arendt’s claim that an objective common world not only conditions the individual and collective lives of people in that world but also gathers and relates them.
differentiate utility from meaningfulness, the fabricator’s functional attitude manifests a utilitarian worldview. With reference to the production process, all use objects, to their maker in the process of making, are ends. Yet, these products are never ends in themselves and are quickly reduced to means upon entering the world of things. Within the human artifice all ends are merely transitory ends subject to becoming appropriated as means. So too in a public sphere dominated by homo faber and the utilitarian attitude: all goods are ultimately and ever only instrumental, never intrinsic. Arendt refers to this interminable cycle of ends and means as the perplexity of utilitarianism. This perplexity inflicts homo faber who attends to the world from the standpoint of use and instrumentality. Arendt charges that they stop short of asking Gotthold Lessing’s question regarding what the use of use is (154). Similar to utilitarian moral philosophy, a society of fabricators knows not how to account for the difference between the linguistic expressions “in order to” (an orientation to means) and “for the sake of” (an orientation to ends) (154). “The perplexity of utilitarianism,” Arendt argues, “is that it gets caught in the unending chain of means and ends without ever arriving at some principle which could justify the category of means and end, that is, of utility itself. The ‘in order to’ has become the content of the ‘for the sake of’; in other words, utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness” (154). Without recourse to some principle outside of homo faber’s standard of utility and instrumentality meaninglessness ensues.

In the artifactual world, “where everything must be of some use,” instrumental thought prevails (154). It is inherent in the role-function of homo faber to instrumentalize, but doing so reduces all things to means and strips them of intrinsic worth (156). Humanity qua homo faber lacks the capacity to account for intrinsic human goods—i.e. that which is an end in itself and not a mere instrument to be used for the sake of some other end-in-transit (154). The attitude of
humankind “the user and instrumentalizer [is] to look upon everything as means to an end—upon every tree as potential wood,” for example (158). In such a world, the suggestion that meaning is an end in itself for humankind appears as “either a tautology applying to all ends or a contradiction in terms” (154). When work becomes the paradigmatic metaphor for human activity, or when *homo faber* becomes the dominant role-function for a society, it is expected that reasoning ought to be conducted along instrumental lines (154-55). While *animal laborans* is not equipped to make sense of the durability of the artifactual world and the instrumental logic of use objects, *homo faber* cannot make sense of meaning. Instrumental rationality, as the logic of means, lacks the capacity to guide and vindicate a choice of means in terms of some meaningful end or intrinsic good. This places the world thoroughly informed by the mentality of *homo faber* in the vicinity of emotivism, which, as Alasdair MacIntyre points out, involves a confusion of means and ends (*After*). The human artifice dominated by the fabricator, as an exemplar of utilitarianism, is a world without intrinsic human goods and thus without meaning. The world of *homo faber*, the fabricator and toolmaker, is ultimately a world of means without ends—a world of ‘in order to’ without ‘for the sake of,’ use without an end-in-itself, utility without meaning, instrumental thought without substantive-practical reason. (150-155).

Meaningfulness requires there to be a standard or limit outside of humanity qua *homo faber* and the attitude/logic of instrumentality that directs the finished world of artifacts and use objects (158-59). Instrumental rationality can discern this no better than a thermometer can measure barometric pressure. Substantive moral thought is necessary.

The tendency in the (early) modern age to absolutize the standards of workmanship within the *vita activa* extends instrumentalization and its degradations to every feature of human existence, including nature itself, thereby debasing the value of all things into a mere utility for
some other transitory end (156). Nothing is ever an end in itself. Generalizing the experience of fabrication, understood in terms of use objects within the human artifice, results in “the instrumentalization of the whole world and the earth, [the] limitless devaluation of everything given, [and a] process of growing meaninglessness where every end is transformed into a means” (157). Arendt’s concern here is not with instrumentality as such but with globalizing the standards of workmanship—a scenario wherein usefulness is the supreme standard in the human world. Similarly, the position for which I am arguing in this project is not one that is opposed to instrumental rationality but rather with its globalization to the invalidation of other ways of knowing in the world, which turn out to be vital for a meaningful and uniquely human existence. Arendt assists us in understanding the irreplaceable contribution of *homo faber* to the human lifeworld—namely the provision of a durable and stable home as well as a common world that mediates human relationships—along with the immense value of instrumental thought. (Use, after all, does have a meaningful use.) Though while *homo faber’s* contribution is a necessary one, it is woefully insufficient by itself for a life and public sphere that is distinctly and fully human. A meaningful human existence and thriving human communities require more than just *labor* and *work*, more than the use of mere instrumental logic, but also other human goods and other publicly valid ways of knowing in the world.

With regard to public life, the human role-function a people prioritizes shapes the nature of political activity therein. Both antiquity and modernity have sought a certain type of person or role-function to be prominent on the stage of their respective public spheres while disincentivizing other socio-political actors. The early modern age in particular sought to exclude *humanity the political animal*, that is the person of speech and action, from its public sphere so that *homo faber* might prevail, while antiquity was intent on excluding *homo faber* in order to
clear the stage for the political person (159). Privileging the experience of the fabricator, the early modern age diminished the status of political action to “vainglory” and that of political speech to “idle talk” (159). This is so because neither action nor speech attain to homo faber’s standard of productivity. (Later we will see that they also do not satisfy animal laborans’ standard of consumption.) Here political activity is repatterned after the world of workmanship. The productivity of the fabricator, not the word and deed of the political person, determines the content of the public realm. A public sphere understood primarily in terms of either animal laborans or homo faber produces, in both cases, a “non-political” community (159-60). On her own animal laborans, as a worldless nomad, can neither create nor inhabit a public place for such a realm depends on a worldly human artifice. She needs homo faber, the world-builder, for that, even if animal laborans parasitically attaches herself to the producer and the produced world as her host. Furthermore, as vital as the fabrication of a durable home and world of things is, homo faber at best provides that material conditions for political community, but her environment and the quality of the activities therein remain prepolitical.

Arendt contends that the answer given to the following question is decisive for whether a social collective is a genuine political community: what activity characterizes the content of the public place, the agora, work or action (160)? Is the agora a marketplace of craftsmen or a meeting place of citizens? For what primary activity do people congregate in the public? It was the ambition of tyrants in ancient Greece who sought to transform the agora from a site of citizenly concern over public affairs into a marketplace of exchange, similar to “the bazaars of oriental despotism” (160). The public realm of homo faber is an exchange market, not a political

35 While the focus here is on the reshaped public realm of the early modern age after the image of the fabricator, I will give attention below to Arendt’s claim about the rise of the social resulting in the reconfiguration of the public sphere after the experience of labor during the latter phase of the modern age.
realm of human affairs. It is not through speech or action that one appears here but in terms of
the work of one’s hands. Workmanship appears in the fabricator’s public sphere as showmanship
in the form of products on display. And it is on this basis that societal esteem is given and
received. A society of producers is a consociation grounded in exchange, where the products of
one’s hands, and even at times the process of producing them, is on exhibit.36 When the
experiences of homo faber determines the content of public activity, the agora becomes a
marketplace for exchange rather than a meeting place of citizens.

The Political Animal: Action and the Realm of Human Affairs and Relationships

The activities of labor and work give rise to an understanding of our humanity in terms of
the role-functions of animal laborans and homo faber. When considered, however, in terms of
the political way of life arising from the condition of plurality, another role definition of
humanity emerges that brings action, facilitated by the realm of human affairs and relationships,
into the foreground (27). It was common in Western antiquity to conceive of humanity as a
political animal, a person who acts and speaks (27, 159). This definition, as Aristotle formulates
it, consists in understanding the human person as zoon politikon, a political animal, in
combination with being also zoon logon ekhon, an animal capable of speech. Here action
depends upon speech; speech plays a mediating role in the constitution of action. Arendt points
out that “speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor”
(178). Action becomes what it is because of speech; speech transforms behavior and deeds into
action (Arnett, Communication Ethics 71-73). The condition for this speech-constituted-action,

36 However, the only kind of consociation that emerges from work as work, that emerges from the craftsman’s
isolated process of productivity (which is not to be confused with her role as a barterer of finished products) is the
company the craftsman shares with her assistants and apprentices (161-63). To become a master of any craft
requires being alone; it demands isolation. In fact, teamwork (which depends on the division of labor) destroys
workmanship. Teamwork is representative of animal laborans, while workmanship typifies the activity of homo
faber.
according to Arendt, is the political domain—the realm of human affairs and web of human relationships—characterized by both commonality and plurality (24-26, 52-58, 175-78, 183-84). This political conception of action and of the human person, an animal capable of speech, referred not to the human faculty of speech but specifically to “a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each” (27). A political bios was generated by and consisted in acting and speaking together with others. The activity of speech (lexis) and action (praxis) gave rise to the public sphere as the realm of human affairs (ta ton anthropon pragmata) (24-26). Action, mediated by speech, constructs and coordinates the realm of those affairs that are uniquely human. This form of human activity generates a genuinely political context wherein “the doer of great deeds and the speaker of great words” may appear publicly (25). Arendt articulates at least two dimensions to action’s dependence upon speech: ongoing interlocution and discursive remembrance.

In her discussion of action, Arendt presents a communicative conception of the human person, one that is in this regard resonant with the broad Isocratean and Ciceronean rhetorical tradition (Poulakous; Walker). Here human communication is integral to action; the power of speech goes far beyond the mere potential to express “immediate, identical needs and wants” for the sake of survival or biological life to its distinct role in constituting action and a genuine political domain (Arendt, Human 176). The first dimension of action’s dependence upon speech is the ongoing interlocution of the members of a political community whereby speech accomplishes human togetherness. For it is through action and speech together as a unit, Arendt proposes, that unique identity of individuals is disclosed within the web of human relationships. The emphasis here is on the political community who has the power (dynamis), derived from

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37 Politically excluded people, that is those who were denied a bios politikos, were considered aneu logou even though, of course, they continued to possess the faculty of speech (27).
Commenting on Arendt’s work, Ronald C. Arnett explains, “The ‘doer’ walks with the constant reality of others who must construct the public meaningfulness of behavior that makes what one calls ‘action’ possible” (Communication Ethics 71). The revelation of identity and the meaningfulness of a deed is not an agentic self-possession. Action owes its revelatory power primarily to words conditioned by publicity and plurality. In the interlocutionary context of the web of human relationships, the spoken word discloses and distinguishes the identity of the actor (178-79). The political activity of deliberation among citizens and dialogue among public friends reveals distinctly human uniqueness that generates the condition of plurality (Arendt, Human; Arnett; Communication Ethics 73-76). Arendt explains that “the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. The action he begins is humanly disclosed by the word . . . [and] becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do” (178-79).

The idea of “speechless action” is a misnomer, for speech constitutes action. Unlike labor or work, action requires speech in order to be what it is. In the performance and aims of these other activities, communication plays an instrumental role. By contrast to labor and work, the word in the political realm mediates action, transforming it from mere behavior, and facilitates human togetherness (178-180). Communication is integral to action, not a mere instrument of action.

Speech constitutes action and enables action to fulfill its power to disclose ‘who’ in “the human world” and to reveal individual human uniqueness (179). Everything that exists possesses otherness (alteritas), and all living things manifest distinctness. However, distinctively human distinctness is not a quality each person possesses passively but is rather an active achievement.

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38 In Sources of the Self, Charles Taylor contends that the self emerges not on its own in isolation from the context of others but inescapably through webs of interlocation.
effected by word and deed (175-181). Through word and deed humanity alone is capable of being interpretively understood not merely as a “what” but as a “who.” Speech and action, Arendt explains, “are the modes in which human beings appear to each other” as human persons rather than as mere objects (176). While action initiates something new and is “the actualization of the human condition of natality” (that is of birth and new beginnings), speech distinguishes one person from among others (178). Humans introduce originality and innovation as well as proactively express personal distinctness through communicative action, which interpretively illuminates in human uniqueness and produces human plurality. Speaking is “the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals” (178).39 In the public realm where we appear to one another and where we are with, not for or against, one another, speech and action collaboratively disclose who (or human uniqueness) and produce human togetherness (180). That is to say communicative action achieves both plurality and community, separation and relation, distinct individuation and political association. While speech may be a means to human together, it is hardly a mere means since it is one that constitutes the end of being with others; without it human togetherness is beyond realization. When people have given up on speech altogether, as in the case of war, or when speech becomes coercive and is reduced to “mere talk” that fails to reveal speech is oriented to being for or against, rather than with, others (180). Being with others, that is human togetherness, requires the disclosure of the ‘who’ made possible through speech. Stated differently, human togetherness is an achievement enacted through speech that discloses ‘who’ and by which we appear to one

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39 Arendt contends that both equality and distinction characterize human plurality, which is “the basic condition of both action and speech” (175). Equality permits the ability to understand one another and to collaborate in making plans. Distinction arises from action; through action we distinguish ourselves. If humans were all the same, that is if our needs, wishes, and thoughts were all identical, we would have no need for speech or action, no need to express otherness.
another and generate the condition of plurality. To live a life devoid of speech and action is to be “dead to the world” for such a life “has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men” (176).

And yet, although speech and action reveal who we are, we are not entirely in control nor fully aware of the personal identity we reveal. The self is not self-originating nor is individual identity a self-generated self-possession. That all word and deed disclose ‘who’ means that they reveal the intended or unintended identity that appears in that specifically human world known as the realm of human affairs (179). The disclosure of one’s own identity, Arendt explains, can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this ‘who’ in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities. On the contrary, it is more than likely that the ‘who,’ which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the daimon in Greek religion which accompanies each man through his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters. (179-80)

We neither possess nor are we capable of commandeering our own identity. As much as we may strive to carefully craft and communicatively manicure our own image as though we were our own public relations expert, we do not control the essence of the ‘who’ disclosed in our speech and action. That we do not control the revelation of our identity nor the meaning of our action announces the second dimension involved action’s dependence upon speech: discursive remembrance.

Arendt assists us in understanding that the meaningfulness action, that quality which distinguishes action from behavior, stems from the power inherent in the activity peculiar to a political community (Human 199-203; Arnett, Communication Ethics 71-73). Deeds are
recognized as action by the political community who interprets an action’s meaning. Through various forms of discursive remembrance, that is commemorative reflections upon another’s deeds, members of the political community recognize the worthiness or unworthiness of those deeds, revealing an action’s meaning. The power of meaning dwells primarily in the political community, not the communicative agent, because power exists wherever people gather together. Arnett points out that “it is the ‘storyteller,’ not the person of action, who makes life meaningful,” and that this contention “strik[es] a familiar Arendtian chord—contemplation of the story makes it possible to turn behavior into action” (72). This kind of power emerges from the political activity of acting and speaking together with others. Whenever people gather together, power (dynamis, potentia) in the political sense is potentially present. But for it to exist, power must be actualized continually through the ongoing activity of acting and speaking together. Unlike individual strength, power dwells in plurality and requires the presence of others. In contrast to force, which involves the one or the few being against all others, power is the political activity of being together with others through action facilitated by speech. Insofar as it is characterized by monocratic conformity and rule-following behavior, modern bureaucracy operates in accordance with force seeks to eliminate action and the meaning-generating power of speaking together with others.

The political community expresses this power of meaning, which transforms behavior into action, not only through an actor’s interlocution with those who see and hear her but also through, and more importantly, the “backward glance” of a range of storytelling spectators, particularly the historian (Arendt, Human 191-92, 233; Arnett, Communication Ethics 71-72, 76). On the other side of action’s power to initiate new relationships is its boundlessness and unpredictability. What an action will mean is unknown and often has multiple possibilities as it is
being performed. It is only after the act has past that its “full meaning” may be revealed most decidedly by the storyteller (192). Arendt explicates why meaning arises from spectators from the political community and not the actor-participant herself:

Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about [or what the act meant] than the participants. All accounts told by the actors themselves, though they may in rare cases give an entirely trustworthy statement of intentions, aims, and motives, become mere useful source material in the historian’s hands and can never match his story in significance and truthfulness. (192, emphasis mine)

An actor may seek to influence the meaning of her actions through subsequent interlocutionary speech, but she is hardly in control. To the actor, the meaning of the act is not in the subsequent story but rather related to her being engrossed in the act and its consequences. But this is in conflict to interest of the political community, namely the subsequent, meaningful story they may be told about that act. Arendt contends that “it is not the actor but the storyteller who perceives and ‘makes’ the story” that gives action its meaning (192). Engaging in a form of ceremonial rhetoric, it is the historian and other storytelling members of the political community who remind “us of deeds worthy of remembering” (Arnett 72). The enduring moral meaning of an action stems from the subsequent communal acceptance of an observer’s epideictic narrative that ‘praises or blames’ the doer’s deeds. As a form of discursive remembrance, the meaningful story emerging from the political community transforms a deed into an action. The web of human relationships generates the power of the meaningfulness of action.

The unpredictability of action’s meaning coupled with the uncontrollable and unreliable nature of the ‘who’ is integral to understanding why human togetherness confounds and political
action frustrates (182). In the realm of human affairs, that uniquely human world, we deal with verisimilitude in terms of the identity of actors and the meaning of action. What is revealed and interpreted about action by means of speech is apprehended in the form of appearance not essence, probable likeness not clear and certain truth. Our frustration intensifies when we think we can possess the identity and intentions of another and thereby control their subsequent thought, speech, and action. There is a basic unpredictability, unreliability, and uncertainty in all affairs that occur directly between people—a point that will prove to be of particular importance to Alasdair MacIntyre’s unmasking of the claim to knowledge that undergirds the authority of bureaucratic expertise (*After*). Political action is never as simple as an individual merely resolving, or a group mustering up enough determination, to go out there and ‘change the world.’ Nor can one subset of actors or spectators establish monologically the meaning of another actor’s or group’s action without the affirmation of the larger political community or without actors themselves speaking back as part of the political condition of ‘speaking with’ others. The world of human affairs and relationships is beyond our ability to forcibly seize it. But, there is one more key reason why action frustrates, and this has to do with the nature of human affairs as a web of human relationships.

Human relations are mediated, and Arendt draws attention to two intermediaries or *in-betweens* relevant for speech and action, one objective and the other subjective (182-83). First, the world of things generated by *homo faber* supplies an artifactual setting for speech and action as well as an environmental intermediary for human togetherness. Specific interests arise vis-à-vis these worldly objects that function as an objective intermediary for human relations. Although most speech and action in the public sphere is about the artifactual world, communicative action nevertheless discloses the personal identity of agents—a dynamic which
points to a second intermediary that gathers and binds people together in relation distinct from intercourse oriented to the human artifice. The web of human relationships is a “subjective in-between” (183). Though certainly linked to the objective world of things, this intangible, but no less real, interconnected network is a decidedly distinct intermediary that “owes its origin exclusively to men’s acting and speaking directly to one another” (183). This relational in-between is both the consequence of and the setting for action. That action commences relationships is part and parcel to its nascency (190). The true ‘product’ of action is not something made but rather the relationship it establishes (196). The web of human relationships results from the initiating potential of action and the self-disclosing capacity of speech. The realm of human affairs consists of the web of human relationships, a web that exists wherever people live together with others in a condition of plurality (183-84). Furthermore, this subjective in-between serves as the relational setting for speech and action by means of which we appear to one another. The disclosure accomplished by speech and the new beginning initiated by action “always fall into an existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt” (184).

Characterized by publicity, human action is not isolated in its effects but rather ripples outward from within the network of human togetherness. Within the realm of human affairs and relationships, human lives are interconnected. The subjective in-between is an intersubjective intermediary. This realm serves as the already meaningful context in which speech acts always take place. This already meaningful horizon is both relational and story-structured, that is structured by a historically-developed narrative tradition of a people (184-88, 191, 194).

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40 Arendt’s discussion of the web of human relationships along with individual life-stories resulting from speech and action, though different in important respects, resonates with Charles Taylor’s observation in Sources of the Self that the sources of human selfhood emerge from “webs of interlocution” wherein we are confronted with questions about the qualitatively higher and our answers to which orient us in a moral space. The idea here is that selfhood is never established outside of or apart from webs of communicative relations with others, webs in which the moral agent is embedded inescapably.
The affairs that go on directly between people, as the subjective in-between, lack the stability and solidity of worldly objects, as the objective in-between. This renders the manifestation of the ‘who’ via speech and action notoriously uncertain and unreliable. The uncertainty and unreliability in the disclosure of agentic identity adds another dimension to the frustration inherent in political action. The realm of human affairs confounds due to its nature as a subjective intermediary of human relationships, not simply because an act is inept or a body politic is dysfunctional. In fact, speech and action commonly, perhaps even overwhelmingly, fail to achieve their intended aims precisely because they are enacted within a web of human relationships, which consists of an abundance of conflicting, agonal purposes. “It is because of this already existing web of human relationships,” Arendt explains, “with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose” (184). The condition of human plurality and uniqueness of identity means that our action is often opposed. Human distinctness is integral to the very idea of action, and yet it frustrates action. Furthermore, the appearance of human beings, even those with whom we are webbed in a common world of affairs, remain at least to some extent uncertain, unstable, and unreliable to us even when we share similar aims. We are not privy to pristine clarity regarding our own personal essence no less that of others. Modern bureaucracy presents itself as a solution to this frustration-producing uncertainty, unreliability, and opposition inherent in action and the realm of human affairs—particularly as it exists on an unprecedented scope and scale in the modern nation-state. As a superior administrative technique, bureaucracy offers: conformity to overcome conflicting intentions stemming from the condition of plurality, predictability to resolve the shifting unreliability of the human will and the indeterminacy of human conduct, impersonal behavioral rules to follow in order to eliminate the uncertain manifestation of the ‘who,’ and neutral and
objective *expertise* to overcome the uncertainty of verisimilar appearances and probabilistic judgment. Bureaucratic technique, with its neutral expertise of applying means to ends, however, is not the only solution in modern society as an escape from the inherent frustrations of action and human affairs. Political engagement driven by inflexible ideological dogmatism seeks to treat people and the web of human relationships like ‘material’ for the ‘making,’ rather than as the appearance of identities to which we cannot lay claim (183, 188). The hyper-partisan activist or politician approaches the subjective in-between as the craftsmen approaches her process of production and products: she has an image in mind she intends to impose upon her object, a ‘what’ that can neither respond nor react, neither speak nor act back. Unlike two agents who speak dialogically with one another, the making process moves in only one direction, that is from potter to clay. Communicatively speaking, the primary orientation of ideological political engagement is monological not dialogical. There is no room for negotiation.41 There is no speaking *with*, no genuine argumentation and deliberation, only speaking *for* or *against.*

Interestingly, as Alasdair MacIntyre points out, if a sociopolitical movement hopes to establish its hyper-partisan agenda and maintain its power in modern society, it must make recourse, ironically, to the administrative techniques of bureaucracy that depend on a claim to neutrality (*After* 109). The surprising common ground between bureaucracy and ideology will be the subject of further discussion later in this project. For now, what matters is that both are sought as solutions to the frustrations inherent in communicative action and the realm of human affairs as such.

Esteeming speech and action over other activities in the *vita activa* tends to promote an ethic oriented to virtue and human greatness. This is so due to the distinguishing, identity-

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41 On this point it is important to note the stark contrast between Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s activism and that shaped by ideological dogmatism. Both Gandhi and King were deeply committed to negotiation.
revealing nature of communicative action. The priority given to the role-function of the human as a political animal in Greek, pre-Socratic political thought and practice as well as in Roman antiquity helps to explain why a broad moral outlook that privileges virtue and aspires to human greatness in the form of unique, performative accomplishments was so prevalent (27, 195). Due to their self-disclosing and initiating capacities, words and deeds are a means that also constitutes the end of human togetherness and political community. Both establishing and sustaining such a community depends upon the ongoing performance of human excellences by its members. These public moral excellences or virtues also become constitutive of the moral and political community. For example, human togetherness requires a willingness to risk disclosure through speaking and acting. Thus, courage is a key public virtue for being together with others in a context of human uniqueness and plurality (180). Moreover, courage (in conjunction with magnanimity) is the human excellence involving a readiness to perform great and noble deeds for the sake of the ethico-political community while risking the possibility of significant personal harm, physical or reputational (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics). The idea here is that public virtue and individual human greatness, as performative achievements of the activity of action, is for the sake of human togetherness (206).

Drawing from Pericles, Arendt maintains that politics involves a faith in dynamis—the active power of speaking and acting together within the web of human relationships, a power that must be actualized to exist (205-06).\(^4\) Whenever people reside and gather together, as in the case of cities, power in the political sense is potentially present. Such power placed action over both

\(^4\) Power dwells in plurality and requires the presence of others, but strength, on the other hand, is a capacity of the individual, such as the strength of homo faber to produce thing. But the real opposition to power is force (201-02). Power is the political activity of being together with others through activity of speaking and acting, whereas force is the one or the few being against all others. Force renders others politically powerless and its active use is characteristic of tyranny.
work and labor in the *vita activa*. While *behavior* pertains to morality and is assessed in terms of motives or intentions as well as outcomes, *action* is evaluated by the standards of greatness. And, it is the “art of politics [that] teaches men how to bring forth what is great and radiant” (206). Greatness lies neither in intentions nor in consequences but in the performance itself, in the performance of speech and action (206). Greatness exists in activity. Active performance actualizes the *teloi* of speech and action. Arendt discerns a residual of pre-philosophical Greek experience in Aristotle’s conception of *actuality* (*energeia*), which consists of “all activities that do not pursue an end (are *ateleis*) and leave no work behind . . ., but exhaust their full meaning in the performance itself” (206). The activity of speaking and acting together is the *performative task of politics*.43 A major impetus for the formation of the *polis* in ancient Greece was the pre-*polis* conviction that what made it worthwhile for human beings to live together was the “sharing of words and deeds” (197). In relation to this idea of greatness being achieved in the performance of word and deed, Arendt stresses that the concept of a *virtue* exists outside of the categories of means and ends (207). (We should recall that, after all, the categories of means and ends in the context of work reduce *homo faber* to meaninglessness.) Virtues are themselves actualities. They exist in the *doing* of uniquely human tasks, namely political activity. They are not means to some other end but are themselves constitutive of political performance itself. In the “work of man” *qua* humanity the product is identical with the performance; it, like virtues, exists in sheer actuality (207). Virtues exist in sheer actuality under the conditions made possible by the realm of human affairs and the web of human relationships. The elevation of action to the apex of the *vita activa* encourages an ethical outlook oriented to the performance of greatness and virtue. The performative realization of virtue and greatness, along with the plausibility of a

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43 Greatness is a performance. Rhetoric in the ancient world is primarily a performativ art, especially before writing deeply shaped Greek consciousness (Walker; Ong; Havelock).
related ethic, is precisely what is at stake in Arendt’s observation of the withering away of action in the late modern world. This concern for the vanishing of action resonates with MacIntyre’s concern for the vanishing of public virtues and the narrative tradition a conception of virtue signifies. (Moreover, these priorities also reflect Vico’s stress upon eloquence, prudence, and the pursuit of sublimity.) Ardent proposes that this disappearance of action and public virtues is the result of several key reversals in priority given to the contemplative life in relation to the active life and then within the vita activa itself. Modernity may be thought of as a series of disruptive priority reversals.

MODERNITY AS A SERIES OF DISRUPTIVE PRIORITY REVERSALS

Hannah Arendt observes several earthshattering reversals within the hierarchy of the vita activa in the modern age. She exercises keen interpretive sensitivity to the shifts in the assumed underlying metaphor that guides understanding. These background metaphoric understandings make plausible a specific way of thinking about human existence, including ethical discourse, as well as a specific and related approach to human activity, including ethical conduct. Of particular relevance to my overarching project are the key swings in what counts as knowledge and in the kind of ethical discourse and action legitimized. The reversals within the vita activa ramify epistemically and axiologically. But prior to the reversals within the vita activa, Arendt attends to a flip in the priority given to the vita activa vis-à-vis the vita contemplativa.

The relative priorities given to labor, work, and action in a given time and place have far reaching implications for the nature of human relations, the texture of political organization and community, and the broad contours of a moral outlook. To be clear, Arendt does not suggest that a simple, deterministically causal line can be drawn from the elevation of one activity to the specific content and meaning of moral discourse and action within a community. Her attention to
the interaction between particular artifactual-environmental conditions and historical developments, as well as between events and ideas, in shaping public ethical conviction is resonant with Alasdair MacIntyre’s insistence that morally evaluative terms, so central to the content of any moral theory and practice, can be understood rightly only in light of their embeddedness within a concrete historical and cultural context (*A Short History of Ethics*).

Arendt’s unique contribution stems from her concentration on the kind of broad ethical orientation encouraged by the elevation of one human activity over all the others as an important ingredient that interacts with a constellation of others in a specific time and place. The particular hierarchy within the *vita activa* is a deeply formative, but often overlooked, influence upon the moral meaning of thought, discourse, and action in a given pragmatic horizon. Arendt’s attention to the disruptive reversals and shifts in priorities constituting the *vita activa* in the modern age in the West is of particular relevance to my project, which makes bureaucracy a salient theme of modernity. The rise of the social as characterized by modern monocratic bureaucracy—which reduces the human condition of plurality and uniqueness to sameness, generates a mass society that has effectively become in its function one giant national family, and depends on technical-procedural-methodological-administrative expertise and calculative thought to vindicate decision-making—is largely the result of *work* triumphing over *action* followed by *labor* triumphing over *work*. But in addition to the relation of activities within the *vita activa*, the priority reversal in the relationship between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* already set a course for the nature of human activity and community in the modern age.

*The Vita Activa Replaces the Vita Contemplativa: Cartesian Universal Doubt and Introspection*

Arendt objects to the misguided position that assumes ideas are the primary determining factor in historical change and development. Instead she argues that events are (272-73). Thus
for Arendt, the pivotal moment effecting an earthshattering shift from a medieval to a modern worldview was not Descartes’ philosophy but rather Galileo’s discovery of the telescope, a technological implement fabricated by *homo faber* (257-58, 272-76). (Interestingly Alasdair MacIntyre treats Newtonian physics and its knowledge paradigm as the pivot point for modern moral philosophy (*After*).) What is significant about this discovery is that it empirically demonstrated as a fact, through experimental and technological means, what was previously speculated by astronomers Copernicus and Kepler through a more mathematical approach (260).44 Galileo’s discovery brings into focus both the significance of the instrument and the experiment in scientific discovery as well as the implications of this discovery for what will count as knowledge in the modern age (259, 274, 278, 280-84). Here the experience of *homo faber*, the experience of making, serves as the paradigm for all human knowing; humanity is thrown back on itself through the work of its hands. This new science is the “science of the Archimedean point,” that is a cosmic, universal standpoint, an absolute viewpoint for knowing (270-71, 284). The approach in Galileo’s discovery established an Archimedean point of leverage outside of humanity’s earth-bound condition for knowing. To be sure, Descartes is pivotal for modern philosophy, but Arendt shows his work is largely a philosophic response to Galileo’s discovery—which establishes the universe as the Archimedean point—and its implications for our ability to trust human sense perception and reason.

Doing philosophy on the other side of Galileo’s use of the telescope—which demonstrated not only heliocentrism but also the unreliability of unaided human observation—elevated the status of fabrication to a vital epistemic role. Arendt explains that “it was not reason but a manmade instrument, the telescope, which actually changed the physical world view; it was

44 Copernicus’ heliocentric theory, which saved the intelligibility of phenomenological appearance, was no threat to the Roman Catholic Church, but Galileo’s experiment was (260).
not contemplation, observation, and speculation which led to the new knowledge, but the active stepping in of *homo faber*, of making and fabricating” (274). As a paradigm example, the telescope, made by human hands, demonstrated humanity had been deceived—truth and reality do not disclose themselves dependably to the senses and to reason. The appearances of reality and truth are not to be trusted since neither reality nor truth manifest to human sensation or reason as they are (274-75). The relation between being and appearance lost its integrality and therefore its integrity, but technology would come to the epistemic rescue. The instruments of human making not only reveal the manifold deceptions of unaided human senses and reason but also hold out the promise of overcoming appearances. The significant implication of this new epistemic scenario is that, in virtue of the unreliability reason and the senses, modern philosophy no longer trusts that the human person is fit for reality. The distinctly modern person is one who skeptically distrusts reality’s disclosure—for reality conceals itself and deceives—and who abandons *givenness* altogether (298).

Due to the trajectory Descartes inaugurated, the beginning of philosophy in the modern age is no longer wonder (*thaumazein*), as it was in ancient and medieval imagination, but becomes doubt (273, 302). For the ancients *philosophia*, as the love of wisdom, begins with *thaumazein*, “the shocked wonder at the miracle of Being” (302). Such an encounter with the miracle of Being was “essentially speechless” in that the substance of the experience was “untranslatable into words” (302). Wonder precipitated the philosophical contemplation of truth. Following Galileo’s discovery, however, no longer did philosophers trust in the senses to perceive reality or truth to disclose itself to human reason (272-73, 279-80, 285, 287). Relatedly, the modern philosopher disabused himself of the former understanding of contemplation. The radical universal doubt commenced philosophically by Descartes resulted in a new form of
philosophical reflection. Introspection as the new method of philosophical inquiry represents a shift within the *vita contemplativa*. Through introspection, the modern philosopher interrogates the source of his doubt, namely the human “sensual and cognitive apparatus” itself. The human knower turns inward upon herself rather than outward to the world and reality outside herself. Modern humanity’s world alienation results in modern philosophy’s subjectivism. For a couple of centuries, introspection is the Cartesian-initiated-solution to the Cartesian problem of radical universal doubt. The Archimedean point moved inside of the human person.

Modern Cartesian introspection, unlike ancient and medieval contemplation of the human soul, amounts to a cognitive concern regarding the contents of consciousness (280). As a solution to the modern problem of universal doubt functioning as the new philosophical starting point, introspection holds out the promise of certainty because “nothing is involved except what the mind has produced itself; nobody is interfering but the producer of the product, man is confronted with nothing and nobody but himself. . . [M]odern philosophy had made sure in introspection that man concerns himself only with himself” (280). The human knower needs neither to rely upon reason and the senses nor to worry that an evil daemon may be deceiving her. Certainty derives from the indubitability of cognitive processes, of processes that take place within human consciousness. Descartes “new method of introspection is the certainty of the I-am” (280). The human knower, Arendt maintains, “carries his certainty, the certainty of his existence, within himself; the sheer functioning of consciousness, though it cannot possibly assure a worldly reality given to the senses and to reason, confirms beyond doubt the reality of sensations and of reasoning, that is, the reality of processes which go on in the mind” (280). As the new philosophical method, introspection promises certainty through a radical subjectivism.
Furthermore, confidence in technology made by human hands as a way of producing reliable knowledge resulted in the triumph of doing over thinking and ultimately the vita activa over the vita contemplativa. The vita activa replacing the vita contemplativa at the pinnacle of human states is perhaps, Arendt proposes, the most earth-shattering “spiritual consequence” of the scientific discoveries in the modern age (289). Yet this replacement receives a fraction of the attention it deserves relative to its historical significance. The reason for the triumph of action over contemplation stems from modern confidence in the ‘work of our hands’ to satisfy the intellectual hunger for knowledge (290). Truth and knowledge could only be attained through making or fabricating not through contemplating or observing. “After being and appearance had parted company and truth was no longer supposed to appear, to reveal and disclose itself to the mental eye of a beholder, there arose a veritable necessity to hunt for truth behind deceptive appearances” (290). One has to make in order to know. Even more basic, however, than the hierarchic replacement of contemplation by action as the highest achievable state was the elevation of doing over thinking (291-92). In the philosophical schema of the Socratic school, one largely shared by theologically informed medieval philosophy, thinking was the handmaiden of contemplating divine truth or the truth of Being. The modern reversal features thinking now serving as the handmaiden of doing, not of contemplating.45 The modern age turns from human existence and the natural world as things that are given and self-disclosing in exchange for what we ourselves have made (293). Fabrication makes knowing possible; doing facilitates thinking.

Two Reversals within the Vita Activa

In addition to the elevation of the vita activa, the modern age consisted in two significant reversals within the vita activa itself. The first reversal entails the transformation of public action

45 Arendt is clear that thought and contemplation are not synonymous. Her claim that thought had become beholden to doing rests on this distinction between thought and contemplation.
after the experience of *homo faber*. It is not political *action* that enjoys pride of place among human activities but rather making and fabricating (294-95). The coupling of technological innovation and the production of new instruments with the advancement of scientific knowledge deeply shaped the public. But scientific development came about not only through Galileo’s discoveries but also as a result of ‘the experiment’ as a methodological paradigm for discerning truth and acquiring knowledge. Significantly, scientific experimentation intensified the link to the productivity of *homo faber* and thus contributed to the related reversal within the *vita activa*. Arendt explains, “Even more decisive [than reliance upon instruments] was the element of making and fabricating present in the experiment itself, which produces its own phenomena of observation and therefore depends from the very outset upon man’s productive capacities” (295). Confidence in experimentation, along with the prominence of instruments utilized in experiments, buttressed the assumption that making is a condition for knowing. Scientific experimentation presupposed that humans could come to know non-fabricated things by “imitating” the fabrication process. Scientific experiments replicate “the natural process as though man himself were about to make nature’s objects” (295). (For example, Galileo reproduced natural occurrences of the effects of gravity by experimenting with the fall of heavy objects.) By reproducing the processes of the natural world, the primary questions driving inquiry were no longer *what* and *why* but rather *how*. What counts as knowledge in the (early) modern age is understood against the experience of making, building, and fabricating.

Not only is *homo faber* elevated in the *vita activa*, and not only does her standards of creativity and productivity alter the modern conception of knowledge, but introspection and the modern notion of process also transforms both political affairs and *homo faber* herself (296-300). First, introspection becomes the method of knowing for the public realm of human affairs.
Introspection grounds relations with others since consciousness, along with the nature of the thoughts and passions therein, is common to all people. Universal subjectivity—as Kant refers to it in his *Third Critique*—is presupposed. What people have in common is not the outer world of the human artifice or web of relationships but an inner world, an interior landscape. The ground for political relationships is an inwardness accessible only to introspection. Modern political philosophy and thought is driven by doubt regarding the accessibility of reality and an outer world and is grounded in introspective inwardness.

Second, with introspection functioning as the method of epistemic credibility, process, rather than end products, became *homo faber*’s standard for making. In the early modern age, the *vita activa* triumphed over the *vita contemplativa* due to a new constellation of the means of knowing: the utilization of technological instruments, the experiment, and introspection. But it was the introduction of the concept of process into making that consummated the abandonment of contemplation *qua* beholding as a worthy or meaningful endeavor (296, 301, 305). Within the *vita activa* the concept of process radicalized *homo faber*’s notions of instrumentality, utility, and means (305-07). The activity of fabricating was refashioned after the idea of ‘process,’ which also then became the new object of knowledge in politics as well as in science and history. Process functioned not only as the paradigm for experiments but also as a model for activity in sphere of public affairs (299-302). Arendt observes that Thomas Hobbes’ political theory is based on introspective knowledge of the process of the inner life, which served as “the standards and rules for the creation of the ‘automatic’ life of that ‘artificial man’ who is ‘the great Leviathan.’ The results yielded by introspection . . . in the nature of movements” (300). Beholden to the standard of process and means, rather than governed by ideas and images (*eidos*) oriented to specific end products, *homo faber* becomes modernized while political activity
becomes reimagined after the making process. Political action becomes identified with fabrication—that is action becomes a subset of work. The new model for acting in the public realm became a modernized *homo faber* (300). Early modern political thought and action is patterned after the making and fabricating as processes. But this high regard for *homo faber* would quickly be superseded by the rising status of *animal laborans* in the *vita activa* (306).

It would seem *homo faber*’s position would be secure at the apex of the *vita activa*, but the concept of process deprived *homo faber* of a teleological orientation in fabricating. When all is process and process is all, the product loses its significance. The ever increasing prominence of process in science, history, and political thought and doing diminished esteem for *homo faber* and did so quickly (296, 299-300, 306-07). Arendt discerns a second reversal within the *vita activa* with the elevation of laboring to the highest position, replacing work (305-307). The second reversal is made possible by the centrality of the notion of process, the elevation of which eliminates a standard to guide making, a *telos* toward which to strive. An image (*eidos*) in the maker’s mind neither guides the process of fabrication toward a final finished product nor serves as a criteria for judging the product made. What results is infinite process with no a finite end or intrinsic purpose in view. The centrality of process in what now counts as knowledge in politic, science, and history not only results in a loss of standards for fabrication but also the loss of teleological thought altogether. This abandonment of teleological thinking has had profound implications for ethical discourse and action. Process and procedure, unguided by an end purpose aside from the infinite metabolism of economic consumption, define a communication ethics shaped by the assumptions and expectations of bureaucratic modernity.
A Shifting Ethical Background: From Utility to Utilitarianism to Modern Life Philosophy

The principle of utility, the heart of *homo faber*’s worldview, was overcome not only by the modern concept of process but also by the utilitarian notion of “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” (308). In a surprising move, Arendt pits utility against utilitarianism. *Homo faber* is the fabricator of useful objects and the world of things. Utility derives its meaning in relation to the usefulness of what the fabricator produces as a predetermined end vis-à-vis the human artifice. However, once modernity’s concept of process subverts the use value or usefulness of finished products, the relationship between utility and things erodes. Gone is a world consisting of “primary values” with reference to *homo faber*, and what ensues is a “radical loss of values” (308). *Homo faber*’s standards and ideals were undermined by the elevation of process over products. *Homo faber* undergoes a transformation from “the maker of objects and the builder of the human artifice who incidentally invents tools” to a toolmaker who makes tools-that-make-tools and “who only incidentally also produces things” (309) The principle of utility here is relevant only to the process of production, not use objects. What comes to be considered *useful* is that which kindles productivity and eases the toil and drudgery of the production process, which comes to shape the understanding of happiness in the later modern age. The former standard of utility, emblematic for *homo faber*’s ethical posture, is here replaced by a modern utilitarian notion of ‘happiness’ conceived of as a ratio of pleasure and pain experienced in the processes of production and consumption (309). The link between the reversal from making-building to toolmaking—from product to process, from work to the elevation of labor—turns out to be the reduction of pain as the *useful* aim of the production process aided by tools, particularly machines and automation. Usefulness is redefined as the reduction of pain. This is what increases happiness (308-309).
Arendt’s treatment of Jeremy Bentham—whose theorizing is embedded within the rise of labor and the increasing prominence of machines and automation in the labor process—positions him as the moral philosopher of the Industrial Revolution. Here Arendt interprets the work of Bentham under the historical conditions made possible by mechanization and automation. These conditions function as the artifactual environment of the second reversal and the calculable notion of happiness. Bentham’s hedonistic calculus, that is the aggregate of pleasure in relation to the aggregate of pain, supplied a mathematical metaphor for the new science of morality. This has implications for the triad of bureaucratic modernity I am stressing in this project: the mechanization of nature, the methodization of knowledge, and the rationalization of society and action. All of which are also mathematized: the mechanistically conceived universe is expressed in mathematical terms; knowledge is mathematized in ethics with the hedonistic calculus and in modern physics with the renunciation of sense perception, and the rationalization of modern political and economic life in terms of bureaucratic administration depends on calculability (287). With regard to the emergence of society, the mechanization of the labor process permits unparalleled productivity and effects the shift from product to process via homo faber as toolmaker of tools-that-make-tools. Bentham effects the mathematization of ethics vis-à-vis calculation, a form of instrumental rationality. The genius of Bentham within the context of the modern age, according to Arendt, is that his pain-pleasure calculus established this new science of morality on a method that was not only mathematical but also rooted in introspection. One’s inner sense of pleasure and pain became the basis for calculating happiness. Both mathematical measurability and Cartesian mistrust of knowledge not derived from one’s consciousness are at play here. Bentham transforms ethical knowledge and ethical action into moral arithmetic (310). Calculative thought is imposed on ethical theory and practice. By way of comparison, Arendt
observes that the ancients believed themselves to be happy on the basis of “imagination and memory,” while the moderns rely upon a pain-pleasure calculus “to arrive at some illusory mathematical certainty of happiness” (310). With his pain-pleasure calculus, Bentham patterns ethics after the image of a mathematical method, calculative thought, and introspection. Moral philosophy becomes an exact science by isolating that inner experience that seems most easily measurable, thus making happiness capable of calculation (311). Automation combined with mechanizing the process of production offered the hope of increasing happiness for the greatest number of people because it would mitigate the pain and effort of the labor process for a society understood as an aggregate of individuals. Bentham articulated the moral philosophy that would give theoretical justification for the diminution of homo faber and the elevation of animal laborans.

Bentham’s approach of calculating inner states of pain and pleasure in the aggregate supplied the ethical framework for the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the social. The utilitarian hedonistic calculus may be understood as an interpretive response to society’s mechanized-toolmaking labor process that eases pain and toil and thus, in relation to the measure of pleasure experienced, increases happiness. It is the combination of the pain-pleasure calculus with the principle of life itself that gave this moral arithmetic its special potency (311). “What pain and pleasure, fear and desire, are actually supposed to achieve in all these systems is not happiness at all but the promotion of individual life or a guaranty of the survival of mankind” (311). Utilitarianism, in conjunction with the transformation of homo faber into a toolmaker-of-tools-that-make-tools under the influence of the concept of process, ultimately points to modern life philosophy, an ethics of organic life. Life itself, understood in terms of the metabolic animal body, becomes “the supreme standard to which everything else is referred” (311). The principle
of life—which is at the very least tacit in utilitarianism, egoism, and other forms of modern hedonism but full-blown and explicit in Marx, Nietzsche, and Bergson—is treated as a basic communicative good (311-313). Decisions and actions are vindicated in terms of it. In modern life philosophy, life and its fertility becomes the “ultimate point of reference” (313).

In ancient moral and political thought, the good life was imagined as a kind of life that is specifically human; it went beyond mere concerns of biological necessity—that is what is required for the thriving of biological existence. But with modern life philosophy, the good life becomes tantamount to the flourishing of organic life itself rather than functioning as a principle transcending mere biological life or going beyond our mere animality. Nothing particular to our humanity distinguishes a good life anymore. In modern life philosophy the human good is defined in terms of what we share as a lowest common denominator with all other animal life. The good life no longer represents the actualization of a higher moral life, a specifically human kind of life filled with semioethical significance; instead ethics itself is understood in terms of our animality—what we share in common with all other appetitive life rather than what constitutes our life as unique among the animals. The metaphor of animality informs and directs ethical vision in modernity. It is perhaps quite telling, then, that Nietzsche’s chief metaphor for his good/bad rather than good/evil, life-affirming rather than self-abnegating and life-constraining ethic of the high-stationed nobility and warrior class was that splendid blond beast, the lion as the noble beast of prey (On the Genealogy of Morals).46 In the modern age, and with the emergence of society in particular, the principle of organic life is the very substance of and controls morality. Life philosophy is the moral worldview of the human person qua animal

46 It is Nietzsche’s modern life philosophy that fills him with disgust for the principle of enemy-love, for example, so central to the political action of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, along with sympathy and pity, as integral to the stench of slave-morality that makes the air foul (Genealogy; Beyond Good and Evil).
laborans who is at home neither in the artifactual world, the objective in-between, nor in the realm of human affairs and the political web of human relationships, the subjective in-between, but in society with its endless consumptive metabolism.\textsuperscript{47}

The Emergence of Bureaucratic Society (or ‘Society’ as Inherently Bureaucratic)

How does an awareness of these reversals, which result in the rise of the social and the prevalence of modern life philosophy, equip us with greater interpretive understanding of the significance of bureaucracy in the late modern world? Arendt’s work prompts consideration of the implications of these reversals for the political and economic domains of modern bureaucratic society. The modern ethic of organic-bodily life is characteristic of \textit{animal laborans} and reflects her elevation to the pinnacle of the \textit{vita activa}. The new metaphor of organic life replaces the immediately previous metaphor of making products (312). With the rise of the social—that is the triumphing of labor over other human activities—we are reconnected to the outer world not through the human artifice, the objective in-between, nor through the web of human relationships constituted by speech and action, the subjective in-between, but through the

\textsuperscript{47} But why was it that \textit{animal laborans} emerged victorious when \textit{homo faber} fell (313)? Why should the activity of labor come to outrank all other the capacities of humankind in this second reversal within the \textit{vita activa}? Arendt contends that the elevation of life to the highest good in modern (bureaucratic) society occurred in part because of its embedding with the matrix of a Christian society (313-314). The \textit{sacredness of life} persisted in modern society even after the Christian faith was disestablished by Western secularization and desacralization (Arendt, \textit{Human} 314-15; Ong, \textit{Presence}; Taylor, \textit{Sources}). Arendt conjectures that the reason for Christianity’s victory over ancient pagan culture was due to its offer of a genuine hope of immortality for those who would have otherwise never hoped for such. Their individual life was imbued with unparalleled dignity due to the Christian conviction regarding the sacredness of life, especially human life, which offered a stark contrast to many ancient pagan practices that embodied little respect for the sanctity of human life—one of which offend modern sensibilities while others are all too eerily similar to modern degradations of human life, particularly at its beginnings and end. The Christian ethic of life’s sanctity “bestowed upon the person . . . an enormously increased importance of life on earth” (315-16). The beginning of life on earth, even if much of it is filled with hardship and wretchedness, is nevertheless a potential portal to an eternal life. With the rise of Christianity, which brought the West its central creed, namely “the immortality of individual life,” life on earth was turned into humanity’s chief end (316). Arendt’s attribution of the elevation of individual life to Christianity involves a misunderstanding, even if only this view is incomplete. Christian soteriology has its specific character in relation to its ecclesiology and eschatology. Both the \textit{people of God} in this world (the church) and the \textit{city of God} as the Christian’s eternal homeland loom large here in the Christian theology of salvation and redemption. Longevity of earthly life, no less earthly immortality, is hardly the highest good in a Christian worldview.
metabolic, biological processes of the human body, that is our animality or bodily life. This opens the door for the private to invade the public, eventually eliminating the gulf between them. Life is the principle that mediates human relations and introspection is the relevant method for deriving credible knowledge. Arendt proposes that the only solid discovery introspection produces is the process of organic bodily life. “And since this biological life, accessible in self-observation, is at the same time a metabolic process between man and nature, it is as though introspection . . . has found within man—not in his mind but in his bodily processes—enough outside matter to connect him again with the outer world” (312). With the ascendance of society in modernity, the Western person is oriented to the outer world through the processes of our organic, animal body, which we can self-observe through introspection. The rise of the social involves a significant overhaul in two key domains: politics and economics.

First, the rise of the social, which opposes both the private and public as distinct spheres, is a modern phenomenon that patterns the political community after the model of the family (28). In fact, society’s emergence coincides with the modern decline of the family, replacing in many respects the historical functions of the household (40). Society exists as a “gigantic, nationwide administration of housekeeping,” thrusting the maintenance of life, with its urgent drive to satisfy natural wants and needs, into the political sphere (28, 30). Society signifies both the

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48 The subject-object split that so perplexed philosophy in the modern age “disappears altogether in the case of a living organism, whose very survival depends upon the incorporation, the consumption, of outside matter” (312-313). Taking in the natural and artifactual world into the metabolism of the body’s life process overcomes any subject-object dualism through a kind of organic monism.

49 Also see sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim’s work Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences. They interpret the welfare state as the late modern socioeconomic and political structure suited for the institutionalized individual (i.e. those detraditionalized persons “condemned to individualization” and to embarking upon the risky venture of “a life of one’s own”) and, in many respects, as the replacement of earlier forms of social and economic support, beginning with the household (Individualization 3-4, 22-25, 48). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim observe that the welfare state has become the new private realm (or the realm of the social, if we are to translate their work into Arendtian parlance), replacing the family unit of pre-twentieth (or even pre-late nineteenth) century society and of traditional sociology (89-90).
deterioration of a genuine common world—understood as that realm of human affairs and relationships whereby we are together with a plurality of others individuated uniquely by their speech and action—along with the public irrelevance of pursuing human greatness and virtue (52). Again, our common animal bodies now function as the basis for reconnecting us to a shared outer world. Politics is no longer public but social. Or actually, the public sphere is no longer genuinely political in substance but social, no longer preoccupied with the uniquely human but with our animality. The socialized political form, viz. the modern bureaucratized nation-state, consists of a “collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family” (29). The maintenance and thriving of biological-animal life, rather than a distinctly human life, and the survival of the species, rather than either the durability of the human artifice or the immortality of great words and deeds, constitute primarily the substance of our being seen and heard by one another publicly.

The nature of authority and order in bureaucracy, as the most social form of government, is built on the model of the private, both adopting and adapting that model. The rule of a single, personal head of household in the private sphere morphs in the social realm into an impersonal and faceless monocracy—a coldly calculating and rule-governed labyrinth of an authoritative anonymity, a most tyrannical form of rule (Arendt, Human 40-41; Weber, Economy). This is because conformist, rule-following-behavior—the product of impersonal and anonymous authority that disciplines societal members into mass obedience—replaces the identity-disclosing and publicly meaningful action of persons as the political form of activity (Arendt; Weber). Coupled with the triumph of labor and modern life philosophy as the general ethical outlook

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50 Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s discussion in of the modern welfare state in Individualization is relevant here to Arendt’s portrayal of modern bureaucratic society as an economically organized collective of families into the likeness of one enormous household, as “a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping” mentioned above.
related to the social viewpoint, modern society achieves mass behavioral conformity through the techniques of bureaucratic administration. Such administrative techniques, in the context of modern bureaucratic society, both imply and function to yield the *mathematization of social reality* and *a statistical conception of human activity* (43). Though I will discuss it in greater length later, it is worth pointing out here that Alasdair MacIntyre also observes a relationship between bureaucratic administrative expertise and a mathematized and statistical conception of human conduct (*After*). But for now, we would do well to heed what may be understood as an Arendtian communication ethics warning. Modern bureaucratic administration encourages conformism, behaviorism, and automatism (a kind of technological metabolism) in human affairs in order to facilitate an endless process of individual and species survival (Arendt, *Human* 43).

Though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, a genuine public realm relies on the presence of a plurality of positions and innumerable perspectives, which are nevertheless related to an object of shared concern (58). The reality of the common world is guaranteed by a people who share an interest in a common object. Without an object of joint preoccupation, a common world can neither bud nor survive. Such a common world is the very opposite of *mass society* and bureaucratic, rule-governed conformity in which people “behave as though they were members of one family, each multiplying and prolonging the perspective of his neighbor” (58). Homogeneity and the conformity of a bureaucratized, mass society destroy the common world and hollow out the public sphere. Modern bureaucratic society forfeits not only a common object of concern but also a heterogeneity of positions and plurality of perspectives in exchange for sameness and mass uniformity, reflecting the paradigm of the private. Bureaucratic

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51 Much of this can be seen in the late modern application of a bureaucratized politics to: the establishment of public retirement programs, primary and secondary public education after the image of industrial models of organization and division, issues of public health, state-run health care and insurance, public debates over stem-cell research and euthanasia, and proposed environmental policies, to a new a few.
society subverts “the many aspects in which [the common world] presents itself to human plurality” (58). Because the public is the realm of appearance and verisimilitude, engagement with a common object of concern, which is inescapably hermeneutic and phenomenological, inevitably results in a plurality of interpretive understandings. By way of contrast to mass society, the common world simultaneously depends upon both a shared concern for a common object as well as heterogenous positions and perspectives in relation to it. The destruction of the common world by means of bureaucratic homogeneity yields a radical privatization of individuals even as it corrodes authentic privacy. In the reconfigured ‘public’ sphere, such privatized individuals no longer engage in the activity that produces the condition of plurality—neither are they seen and heard by others nor do they see and hear the self-disclosing, communicative action of others. They have instead become “imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience” (58). In a bureaucratic society, we do not genuinely interact with one another, not at least as doers of deeds and speakers of words. In fact, the public sphere has lost its power to gather and relate on the grounds of either the objective or the subjective in-between. With respect to this lost power, modern bureaucratic society is a mass society (53). Any sense of an inherited narrative tradition, which grows out of people acting and speaking with one another in the realm of human relationships and affairs, has so eroded that genuine argumentation and deliberation is hardly possible (Arendt, Human; MacIntyre, After). As a consequence, public disagreements take on the form of condemning, attacking, and dismissing and have replaced the practice of grappling with another’s position (and by extension with one’s own perspective). Sociologist James D. Hunter refers to this form of communicative engagement as a discourse of negation—a political culture characterized by “speech acts of negation,” grievance, and blame directed at “the other” and motivated by ressentiment toward and a will to
dominate one’s cultural and political opponents (*To Change the World* 166-69, 173-75). Alasdair MacIntyre also observes the “shill tone” of public discourse in modern bureaucratic society (*After*). From an Arendtian interpretation, interlocutors rightly perceive a threat to their private beliefs from publicity, from the publicization of the private; such are the dynamics of the social realm. Because those private beliefs are not rooted in shared ethico-poetic ground, that is a narrative tradition, they are denied the public quality that is the mark of genuine ‘public opinion.’ Mass, bureaucratic society’s destruction of the common world that gathers people together in relation and separation not only attempts to create a value-neutral public sphere but also simultaneously swings the door wide-open for an infiltration of ideological certainty arising from simplified stories about a political community. A shared narrative-metaphoric backdrop is necessary for ethico-rhetorical argumentation in a public sphere coordinated as a field of genuine political action (Verene; Ricoeur). In other words, such a shared background is necessary for a form of communicative engagement wherein interlocutors actually see and hear one another and through that encounter genuine difference and actualize the human condition of plurality.

Second, the life of the species is the highest aim in the rise of society, a mission which *animal laborans* shoulders and for which the modern economic domain takes special responsibility (Arendt, *Human* 321). The turn away from both individual and universal manifestations of modern hedonism, that is egoism and utilitarianism, to *social life* owes much, at least on a theoretical level, to Karl Marx. “Socialized mankind” is that condition of society in which a single principle rules: the force of the life process itself; the only aim of which is the “survival of the animal species man” (321). The life process of society, which labor aims to support, absorbs individual life, requiring it to be “submerged in the over-all life process of the species” (322). Society governed by the life process enlists bureaucracy as the administrative
technique par excellence, applying it to the economy in order to accomplish species survival and the easing of labor’s toil in the process. “The social realm,” Arendt explains, “where the life process has established its own public domain, has let loose an unnatural growth, so to speak, of the natural” (47). This ‘unleashing’ manifests economically and in the form of labor. What is left in the absence of a true public sphere is an economized political organization oriented to a society of laborers and jobholders, which is tantamount to an economy animated by the dictates of modern life philosophy. The modern social realm, rather than the private sphere of the household, is the cultural locus of labor. Through the organization and mechanization of the labor process, the Industrial Revolution accomplished not only a historically unparalleled level of productivity but also the rise of society, which is morally and spiritually oriented by modern life philosophy. The effect of the rule of this monolithic interest in economics and in an economized politics is that bureaucratic modernity qua society renders the higher capacities of humanity unnecessary, since only labor is needed. This is an issue I will take up later. What matters here is the conjunction of modern life philosophy with the rise of society, which shapes an economy uniformly orbiting around animal laborans. In both the economic and political domains, society—propelled by modern life philosophy and actualized by means of bureaucratic structures, modes of thought, and agents—corrodes the common world and its plurality, insists upon sameness and conformity, and organizes the public sphere economistically around the activity of labor.

IMPLICATIONS

Hannah Arendt’s philosophical and historical framework regarding the vita activa in the West provides a hermeneutic entry for considering the myriad and often muted ways in which modernity manifests through the bureaucratic. The modern age has witnessed a kind of activity
reductionism accompanied by ethical discourse and conduct oriented around the social viewpoint and modern life philosophy as well as by an epistemically reductive approach to what counts as knowledge. These contributors and characteristics of the rise of the social have produced a modern bureaucratic form of society in the West structured around administrative-technical expertise and instrumental-calculative logic. The nature of bureaucratic authority, patterned after the model of the private, entails rule-following obedience to a monocratic, impersonal, and complexly intricate hierarchy. Related to its bold trespassing of earlier limits of scope and scale, modern bureaucratic administration in politics and economics seeks behavioral conformity, sameness, and the uniformity of a mass society, resulting in the loss of a common world and the socialization of the public sphere.

What might an enfleshed appearance of this obsequious, rule-obedient conformity look and sound like? *The Human Condition* supplies an extraordinarily insightful aerial view of earthshattering reversals in the modern age that have resulted in the ascendance of the social and modern bureaucracy. And yet, where ‘on the ground’ are such dynamics exemplified and illustrated in the concrete form of structures, institutions, behavioral patterns, and actors of a modern bureaucratic society? While Arendt does not offer an extended discussion of a specific rhetorical artifact in *The Human Condition* to further shed light on the extent and significance of modern bureaucratic society, her work *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, published only five years later, fills in this gap. ‘Eichmann the bureaucrat’ functions as a communication ethics warning not only about the horrors of Nazi Germany but also about a threat more pervasive, insidious, and enduring. Discerning this requires attentiveness to subtly, a skill Arendt brings to bear upon her report on the deeds, words, and conscience of a specific man on trial, Adolph Eichmann.
CHAPTER 4:

THE BUREAUCRAT: AN ARENDTIAN WARNING

In 1963, just five years after the publication of *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt released her book-length version of a report on the trial of Adolph Eichmann. The first work provides grand theoretical generalizations about modern bureaucratic society, the dynamics of which enfeeble political action, meaningful speech, and thoughtful judgment. She interprets the ethical, political, and historical significance of the rise of ‘society,’ which is inherently bureaucratic and patterned after the model of the private domain. Understood as a complement to *The Human Condition*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* supplies an inductive point of entry into a consideration of the ways in which modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic. In this chapter I appropriate her account of the 1961 trial of Eichmann, the former Nazi bureaucrat, as a rhetorical artifact that sheds further light on the nature of modern bureaucratic society and the extent of its influence. Due to the problematic communication ethics position of the modern bureaucrat as a type embedded historically and sociopolitically in the rise of the social, treatment of Arendt’s report on the Eichmann trial as a rhetorical artifact warrants its own chapter in this dissertation project. For Arendt, the heinous deeds of Eichmann reveal not only the horrors of Nazi Germany but also announce a form of ethical impoverishment that is disturbingly extensive within the modern West. Eichmann functions as an unwitting herald, a communication ethics warning, about the dynamics of modern bureaucratic society that formatively shape those who thoughtlessly conform to its default patterns of word, thought, and deed. Eichmann serves as a cautionary exemplar of the ethical posture and legitimized way of knowing associated with the
‘rise of the social.’ Not only does *Eichmann in Jerusalem* relate to *The Human Condition*, but it also provides a link back to Arendt’s earlier work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which will prove to have relevance for the line of inquiry I am pursuing in this chapter. As a reminder, the questions that structure this current chapter as well as the previous one vis-à-vis the work of Arendt are: what is it about the formative potency of modern bureaucracy about which Arendt sends out a warning? What historical and societal dynamics function to shape the particular traits of the modern bureaucrat as a character type on the stage of modern society?

Through the concrete historical example of Adolph Eichmann, this chapter entails three basic moves in the overall effort to construct an Arendtian understanding of modern bureaucratic society. First, Arendt’s report on the Eichmann trial provides a rhetorical artifact for modern thoughtlessness and the withering of judgment. Although such deprivations in Eichmann’s case are tied to the specific conditions of the Nazi bureaucratic machinery, the attitudes and patterns of speech that modern bureaucracy and the rise of the social promotes are typical rather than isolated. Second, Arendt’s refusal to concede to the intellectually fashionable opinion that there was nothing historically novel *in kind* about the Nazi perpetrations, but only in degree, yields fruitful insight regarding peculiarly modern conditions that should not simply be taken for granted. This adds further dimension to her controversial claim about the ‘banality of evil.’ Third, Arendt insists upon thoughtful ethical responsibility and on the exercise and cultivation of human judgment. With respect to this end, I contend that Arendt intimates the need for a rhetorical education, a move that assists with the overarching trajectory of this dissertation. This chapter concludes with a comment that ties the work of Arendt on modern bureaucracy to that of Alasdair MacIntyre. From this a surprising link begins to emerge between the alleged neutrality of the bureaucrat and a deeply partisan mode of sociopolitical engagement. Although they are
seemingly disparate phenomena, each are manifestations of the erosion of axiologically substantive thought in modern bureaucratic society. This link will receive further articulation in the following chapter devoted to MacIntyre’s philosophical analysis of the relationship between the bureaucrat and an emotivist social world. But first attention should be given to Arendt’s report on the trial of Adolph Eichmann.

THE BUREAUCRAT: THOUGHTLESSNESS AND NON-JUDGMENT

As enormously valuable as Arendt’s sweeping philosophical interpretation of historical shifts in the public and private spheres in the West is, *The Human Condition* does not provide extended analysis of a specific cultural practice, political actor, public policy, or social institution. Doing so would further illuminate her claims and advance my investigation here on the ways in which modernity reveals itself through bureaucratic. What historically recent examples illustrate the elevation of labor over work and action in a socialized public sphere? From what cultural and political events can we gain a better understanding of the rise of the social? What institutional and praxeological effects has modern bureaucratic society produced in the concrete? Hannah Arendt would later present such a rhetorical artifact in her 1963 work *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. It is the bureaucrat—as a modern character type exemplified in the words, deeds, and conscience of the specific person Adolph Eichmann—that occupies the attention of her extended trial report. The modern bureaucrat operates under the conditions of the rise of the social. Although this particular example, derived from Nazi Germany, is extreme, Arendt discerns therein elements representative of a far more ubiquitous moral and spiritual malady that extends insidiously to the structures, institutions, priorities, pragmatic logic, and practices of the (late) modern West as a whole. For the purposes of my project, *Eichmann in
Jerusalem serves as an applied, communication ethics case for the hermeneutic architecture Arendt constructs in The Human Condition.

Thoughtlessness and the Loss of Judgment: Eichmann the Bureaucrat on Trial

Just three years after the publication of The Human Condition, Arendt went to Israel as a reporter for The New Yorker magazine, to cover the high-profile trial of Adolph Eichmann. On May 11, 1960 Eichmann, a former mid- to upper-midlevel Nazi official in the S.S. bureaucratic labyrinth, had been captured in a suburb of Buenos Aires (Eichmann 21, 70-71). Nine days later he was extradited from Argentina to Israel where his trial in the District Court of Jerusalem would begin the very next year on April 11. Arendt’s book-length account of the former Nazi bureaucrat in this high-profile case, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, serves as a useful rhetorical artifact that concretely applies and extends her thinking about modern bureaucratic society.

Arendt suspects that the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, has staged a show trial and the chief prosecutor, Gideon Hausner, serves as Ben-Gurion’s mouthpiece (Eichmann 3-7). Convinced that the great evil perpetrated against the Jews through Eichmann would have been downplayed if not altogether overlooked, as the earlier Nuremberg Trials illustrated, Ben-Gurion and Hausner contended that an international court was inadequate to render justice and only an Israeli court could achieve this. Overwhelmingly, Israel as a nation was convinced that in an international court Eichmann would have been indicted for crimes against humanity “committed on the body of the Jewish people” rather than crimes against the Jewish people (7). In contrast to the spectacle, of which Arendt considers the Prime Minister outside the courtroom and Mr. Hausner inside it to be guilty, she finds a measure of relief in the serious, impartial demeanor of the three judges. In particular Judge Moshe Landau, who presides with disciplined
judicial temperament, expresses little tolerance for histrionics. Together they know that “justice demands that the accused be prosecuted, defended, and judged, and that all the other questions of seemingly greater import—of ‘How could it happen?’ . . . ‘Why the Jews?’ . . . ‘What was the role of other nations?’ . . .—be left in abeyance” (5). Contrary to the defense’s rhetorical narratio, Arendt insists neither the Nazi regime and the German people nor the whole history of racism and anti-Semitism and the suffering of the Jews dating back to ancient Egypt are on trial in this case (5, 19). Rather, a particular man alone, one Adolph Eichmann, is on trial for his specific deeds. Judicial rhetoric consists in rending judgment on concrete particulars not on general issues or universal moral evils. Despite this, Ben-Gurion aimed to turn this trial into a lesson for the whole world but especially for Israel’s youth (8-10). “The trial was supposed to show them what it meant to live among non-Jews, to convince them that only in Israel could a Jew be safe and live an honorable life” (8). But the particular individual who would appear in the dock before them would fail to satisfy the appetite to behold the face of a diabolical monster. Rather than the devil manifesting in the form of a raging, maniacal anti-Semite, puzzlement ensued when instead a clown uttering clichéd slogans and stock phrases walked out onto the stage of the judicial theater (48-54). Arendt discerned that dynamics peculiar to modernity were at work, even if camouflaged, in the specific but representative bureaucratic figure before them.

The great riddle that unfolded in the courtroom was the coexistence, in a single person, of the capacity to perpetrate horrific evil alongside of Eichmann’s “undeniable ludicrousness” (Arendt, Eichmann 54). The Israeli court psychiatrist who examined Eichmann found him to be a ‘completely normal man, more normal, at any rate, than I am after examining him,’ the implication being that the coexistence of normality and bottomless cruelty explodes our ordinary conceptions and present the true enigma of the trial” (Elon, “Excommunication” xiv-xv). Arendt
warns that evil can even present itself as mediocre and comical (Eichmann 48-51). Eichmann’s mediocrity—his stupidity, clownishness, and inconsistency—was his salient overall quality. He was hardly a malevolently motivated mastermind. The courtroom disclosed his ignorance and extraordinarily feeble memory (60-64, 78, 80-82). His inability during cross-examination to recall what would become decisive events and pivotal (military, political, and technical-bureaucratic) decisions of the Third Reich, World War II, and the Holocaust was sensationally poor. Juxtapose this, however, with his impeccable ability to recall details of his own career trajectory and activity (53). In addition to this, “the horrible” appeared at the trial in the surprising form of comedic stupidity. Arendt describes Eichmann’s linguistic abilities as a “heroic fight with the German language” but one in which he repeatedly suffers defeat (48). For example, with great yet unwitting irony Eichmann often applied the German colloquialism “winged words,” which refers to the beautiful language of the classics, to stock phrases and slogans he recalled (49). His mind, in fact, was populated with slogans and clichés, the utterance of which proved to bring him an “extraordinary sense of elation” (53, 243, 252).

Eichmann’s repetition of slogans, empty talk, and stock phrases corresponded with his thoughtlessness and self-deceived perception of reality (49, 114, 276, 288). He showed no competency for original thought or speech born of genuine human thought but rather was a man who thought and spoke in clichés. This “inability to think,” a deficiency of inner speech, crippled his facility with the spoken word and inhibited/impeded his potential to communicate (49). “No communication was possible with him,” Arendt avers, “not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such” (49). His inability to think and to speak, two capacities which are intimately tied, rendered him incapable of inhabiting another’s standpoint (49). He lacked the
discipline and imagination involved in seeing the world from another’s perspective, including and especially those upon whom he inflicted grave suffering and evil (47-48). Such poverty of thought and speech facilitated his self-deception, a necessity for being able to live with himself. This “practice of self-deception” along with “systematic mendacity,” Arendt claims, had become part of Germany’s national character, even years after the war (52).

Propaganda, repeated slogans, and clichéd, empty speech were the means by which pretense and lies took root, Arendt contends. These insulated Eichmann from the horror of his deeds and the magnitude of his moral failure. Eichmann’s thoughtlessness warped his hold on reality, as illustrated by his inability to think beyond what he had heard at funeral orations as he awaited his own execution (288). No profundity of thought, no reflective insight, no existential wisdom was nearby to aid him in his final hour; what came to mind was only the memory lapse that this occasion was his own funeral (252). This existential clown and silly lout, when facing his own death, had recourse to nothing more than clichéd thought. What is more, he derived a certain pleasure or satisfaction from it. As he was in life, so he was in death. His final actions and words “summed up” for the world what the Jerusalem trial had to teach, what “this long course in human wickedness taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil” (252). Eichmann, as a representative consequence of the death and destruction unleashed by the Nazi’s on the Jews, Germany, and humankind, forsook something of that which is most human about us and, in his hollow triviality and puerility, found something about it to be satisfying. He stopped thinking, speaking, judging, and acting. In his silly vacancy, he shirked the weight of responsibility involved in being human. What perplexes and astounds in the case of this shell of a man is “that such remoteness from reality and such thoughtless conformity can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man—
that was, in fact the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem” (288). That Eichmann stood as an icon for *the banality of evil* depends on, among other things, what Arendt observes in him as a “strange interdependence of thoughtlessness and evil” (288).

Eichmann’s lack of genuine thought and speech, more importantly, were evident in the manner in which he attempted to defend himself. Arendt’s primary occupation was to observe, describe, and interpret Eichmann’s conscience in light of the deeds for which he was on trial (116, 132, 276-77). To all fifteen charges leveled against him, including “crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, and war crimes,” Adolph Eichmann pleaded not guilty, that is not “in the sense of the indictment,” a qualifier which tuned out to be key for how he portrayed his own actions (21). The basis of his defense was a kind of moral conventionalism.

Given that he was merely compliant with the Nazi legal code, he was guilty of no wrongdoing. He was dutybound to obey his orders, and therefore he had committed not crimes but “‘acts of state,’ over which no other state has jurisdiction” (21). Right and wrong are determined by nothing more than the existing legal code, authority of a state, or the mores of a society—a position that has no theoretical recourse to a principle by which these or other conventional standards might be judged errant or unjust. Moral conventionalism resists, at least theoretically, any notion of a moral lawfulness that binds upon all human systems of civil law and supplies ethical justification for its correction.52 In this vein of merely performing his duty in conformity with existing German ethical and legal conventions, Eichmann’s defense attorney, Dr. Servatius, proposed audaciously that had the Nazis won the war Eichmann would have been honored and

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52 This is the form of reasoning, for example, at the vital center of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech and action. By way of response to eight white religious leaders, which included a Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, and six denominationally eclectic Protestant ministers, King articulates in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” the moral grounds upon which he justifies his call to disobey specific civil laws. His argument highlights the problematic nature of what I am referring to here as ‘moral conventionalism.’ He rests his case upon a commitment to a lawfulness the standard of which places ethical expectations and demands upon human-made civil laws.
decorated, but since they had lost, he was in jeopardy of being punished capitaly (21-22). It is difficult for the logic of moral conventionalism to escape the conclusion that the might of victors makes right. In his failure to think, discern, perceive, and judge, Eichmann serves as a communication ethics warning about uncritical adherence to the conventions of the cultural moment in which one is situated and the absence of principled, axiological and epideictic ground that is more deeply rooted than those conventions. That Eichmann’s thoughtless conventionalism and defense rationale is not an isolated case is what Arendt finds to be so terrifying (276).

Eichmann’s empty talk, thoughtlessness, and lack of a guilty conscience can be understood more fully only in light of his career ambitions and functioning as a S.S. bureaucrat. This was the one area of his life that Arendt found this otherwise unimaginative and unmotivated man to have a noteworthy measure of diligence (288). Eichmann was a careerist haunted by boredom with the ordinary and a fear of his own insignificance (41-44, 53-54, 65-66). He desired a job that brought excitement and was ambitious for ascending the latter of status, both professionally and socially. The four promotions he received from 1937 to 1941 turned out to be the season that marked the real beginning of his career (65-66). His single competency was that of bureaucratic expertise (43-46, 65-69, 109, 112, 115, 120). This involved two tasks Eichmann could do well: organize and negotiate. He had a keen sense for organizational methods, administrative techniques, and an ability to negotiate procedural solutions to ‘technical’ problems and inefficiencies. His bureaucratic expertise combined with a knowledge of his opponent’s ideology, namely “Jewry” and their way of life (44). During this period, he became recognized as an expert both on the Jewish question and on immigration and expulsion in general. He was “the ‘master’ who knew how to make people move” (65). His office in Vienna
become “the model to be used in setting up of a central authority” for Jewish immigration and expulsion (65).

Eichmann’s expertise was that of finding technical and administrative solutions to a historical, moral, and political issue: “the Jewish question” (65-67). This bureaucratic expertise, along with his alleged non-malice toward the Jews, served as a key part of his own defense and sense of innocence. Eichmann repeatedly showed he liked the Jews, had worked to save as many as possible, and was disgusted by those Germans who were filled with anti-Semitic chauvinism and antipathy (60-62, 73-74, 86-90). He frequently discussed Jewish friends of his, which Arendt found to have a measure of credibility, as well as his hopes and efforts to negotiate a ‘win-win’ solution to “the Jewish problem” for both ethnic Germans and European Jews, expressing his embitterment and disappointment when no such efforts came to fruition (45, 48, 72-79). Ethnic Germans as well as other ethnic Europeans came to resent the Jewish ‘nation’ dispersed throughout Europe and wished to see them depart, while the Jews, largely in response to this society-pervading sentiment, wished to have a homeland of their own. Eichmann imagined himself as helping to provide the Jews with the very thing they desired; he expressed motivation for Jews’ own interest. His aspiration for them was that they would have “firm soil” of their own under their feet (74, 76). He used his negotiation and organizational skills to give both the ethnic Germans and the European Jews what they wanted (48). Eichmann the problem-solving bureaucrat “was there to help” the Jews and to “‘do justice to both parties’” (48).

Eichmann’s eagerness to help continued in the period after the Nazis ended their program of forced immigration but prior to their policy of physical extermination of all Jews from Western Europe. Eichmann alleged to have three ideas for ‘the Jewish problem’ (72, 77). Arendt is keenly aware Eichmann’s characterization of his own motivation in court is another
manifestation of his own thoughtless self-deception. Though he may not be a seething anti-
Semite, it is also true that genuine altruistic sentiment is not the driving consideration in
Eichmann’s professed desire ‘to help’ here; rather this bureaucratic careerist perceived in these
circumstances an opportunity to advance his own professional life. “Eichmann’s eagerness to
acquire some territory for ‘his’ Jews,” Arendt proposes, “is best understood in terms of his own
career” (75). The decisive appointment, however, which would implicate him in mass murder,
was Eichmann’s career promotion to Obersturmbannführer, that is the R.S.H.A. office IV-B-4
(70, 79). There he would coordinate the transportation of countless Jews to extermination
centers, knowing full well the role he was playing in Hitler’s Final Solution (82-84).
Nevertheless, his defense in court was that he was only informed to the extent that it was
necessary for him to do his narrow, specialized, administrative task. His was the bureaucrat’s
alibi.

As a sycophantic admirer of those of prestigious rank and elite status, Eichmann “had
always been overawed by ‘good society’” (126). In fact, he was even deferentially polite to those
German-speaking Jews who were of higher social rank and status than he. One of the few
‘convictions’ animating this morally thin man was his unwavering belief in “success, the chief
standard of ‘good society; as he knew it” (126). It was on this basis that his yearning for a career
and his relative climb up the Nazi bureaucracy was for him so meaningful. His admiration for
Hitler also stemmed from this association of success with being atop a social hierarchy. He was a
conventional man aiming for conventional success. Eichmann’s esteem for success as the
standard for good society also subverted his moral responsibility to think and to judge. The eager
approval of the Final Solution by “the elite of the good old Civil Service” assuaged his
conscience, a conscience that “spoke with a ‘respectable voice,’ with the voice of respectable
society around him” (114, 126). Given the dignified and elite status of these men, Eichmann, lowly by comparison, wondered who he was to judge them. He identified with Pontius Pilate, feeling exonerated of any guilt. “Who was he to judge? Who was he ‘to have [his] own thoughts in this matter’? Well, he was neither the first nor the last to be ruined by modesty,” Arendt states (114). By the time Eichmann, like Pilate, rhetorically posed this question to himself he was already morally lost (Elon xxi). To withhold judgment is to become ruined by a false humility that is tantamount to a failure of moral responsibility (Arendt, Eichmann 114). He deferred his responsibility to think as a moral agent to the authority of the German Reich elite. Congruent with his moral conventionalism, Eichmann delegated his moral responsibility to think and to judge to the conventionally successful and socially respectable men whose approval and status he sought. As an obsequious bureaucrat, he appeared incapable of individual thought, of the responsibility of each to think and to judge. The sober reality Arendt wants her reader to face is that Eichmann is not an instance isolated to Nazi Germany but rather reflects a distinctly modern character type integral to the structuring of modern society and thus seems so ordinary. The modern bureaucrat conditioned by the rise of the social—with its characteristic rule-following behavioral conformity and diminishment of speech and action—exercises technical-administrative rationality to the neglect of substantive moral reasoning.

Hitler’s Nazis managed to turn not just the Eichmanns of Germany and Europe into bureaucrats but even the local leaders of the very people they would seek to exterminate. This issue of Jewish cooperation by Jewish Councils, ghetto police, and Jewish commandos, perhaps more than any other, reveals the radical extent to which the Nazis were able to exploit the powers of instrumental rationality and manipulate the superior administrative technique of bureaucracy for their malevolent purposes (10-11, 115-25). They enlisted the Judenrate, the Nazi sanctioned
Jewish Councils in nearly all Jewish communities, as the extension of the Nazi organizational machinery by functioning as highly effective bureaucrats. Though their cooperation in the Final Solution was inadvertent, Arendt charged them, controversially so, with a gullible lack of perceptiveness resulting in their *complicity* with the Nazi schemes. To her these Jewish leaders showed a thoughtlessness resulting in a void of moral perspicacity and discernment. Certainly their social and existential position was precarious, yet Arendt insists they nevertheless failed to take the risk of asking important questions, a risk that demands courage. Theirs is an inadvertent moral failure—surely they were not motivated to harm their own people—but it was a moral failure nonetheless. With a disturbing degree of Germanic discipline, they meticulously preoccupied themselves with technical-administrative means to the neglect of a perceptive interrogation of the associated ends of Jewish expropriation and extermination (Arendt 115-16, 125; Elon xvi). Local Jewish leaders had become extensions of the complex and deceptive administrative machinery of the Nazis. Arendt observes that their thought and action had been reduced to that of bureaucrats, for they had thought only in terms of technical means while failing to judge both means and ends. The prevalence of this social character type on the stage of (late) modern society alarmed Arendt to the point of being compelled to alert others even though many were disgusted by her contention and in its application to the Jewish Councils.

*Bureaucratic Machinery and the Failure to Judge: An Objective Attitude, Euphemistic Speech, and Privileged Groups*

It is important to comprehend the bureaucrat, as a modern social type, in relation to a bureaucratically organized society or system. In the case of Eichmann the bureaucrat, he permitted himself, largely by abnegating his responsibility to think and judge, to be shaped deeply by the labyrinthian bureaucratic machinery of the Nazi S.S., which came to possess a
dehumanizing, totalitarian stronghold on German society. Three aspects of this bureaucratic machinery that took hold of Nazi Germany, and which are relevant to my project, include: an object attitude, euphemistic language rules, and the acceptance of privileged categories. First, in order to euthanize approximately seventy thousand ‘undesirable’ Germans and later perpetrate the horrors of the holocaust on the Jews, bureaucratic technique, thoughtless conformity, and instrumental-procedural rationality still required the assistance of the Nazi’s “objective attitude” (69, 105-110; Proctor 177, 192). This disposition of emotional detachment simultaneously concorded with and amplified the impersonality and instrumental logic of bureaucratic expertise (69). Unencumbered by the weakness and squeamishness of ordinary human feelings, the R.S.H.A. were now free to refer to concentration camps euphemistically as “administration” and extermination camps in terms of “economy” (69).

The Nazi’s exploited the objective language use, which tends to constitute the human being as a ‘what’ not as a ‘who,’ along with the allegedly value-neutral categories of thought championed by modern science and medicine. This contributed to the objective attitude permeating the Nazi bureaucracy, a posture by which one could talk about killing, namely widespread gas killings, euphemistically as a “medical matter” (69, 108). Beginning in December of 1939 through August 1941, Hitler’s euthanasia program imposed “mercy deaths” upon incurably sick, mentally sick, and genetically defective Germans (108-09, 288). The technology of the gas chambers has, in large part, a ‘medical’ origin, particularly with respect to euthanasia. This backdrop is the reason why during the trial Eichmann’s counsel referred to mass extermination in the gas chambers as a medical endeavor (108). Disguised as bathrooms and shower rooms, carbon-monoxide gas was released into what were in actual fact death rooms
Moreover, the Nazi’s disregarded public opinion of their administratively coordinated mass killings because they believed “their ‘objective and scientific’ attitude was far more advanced than the opinions held by ordinary people” (110). Regarding their euthanasia program, the euphemistic use of terms such as “medicine” and “health”—terms that derive a significant measure of credibility from the taken-for-granted social viewpoint and modern life philosophy—assists in establishing the objective attitude and in vindicating the termination of human life that does not meet a certain standard of quality. Representative of a modern ethical outlook, the principle of ‘quality of life’ actually serves as a kind of permission for taking human life.

Contrast this with a late ancient and medieval ethical understanding of the sanctity of human life, an inviolable dignity that even proscribes voluntary euthanasia or suicide. In the case of

53 Today much of the ethical opposition to this euthanasia program only extends to the fact that it was involuntary but not to the act of taking legally innocent human life as such, including one’s own. Treating the distinction between voluntary and involuntary euthanasia as though it reveals the decisive ethical consideration is typical of Enlightenment liberalism, that is such a debate takes place within the conceptual world that privileges autonomous individual choice as the fundamental ethical good. The notion of ‘quality of life,’ consistent with classical liberalism, poses as an allegedly neutral position that allows for a range of value positions without the imposition of a single one. But the disingenuous nature of this idea is that ‘quality of life’ is hardly a neutral ethical category. In fact, it ruthlessly excludes other notions that would contest it, such as the older idea of the inviolable dignity of human life.

54 From a philosophy of communication ethics perspective, two historical moments are in conflict. The 2004 drama Million Dollar Baby serves as an illuminating example. After an extended period of hospitalization, now paraplegic boxer, Maggie Fitzgerald, wishes to throw in the towel on her own life. In addition to her own failed attempts, Maggie pleads with her trainer and mentor, a kind of surrogate father figure, Frankie Dunn for assistance in ‘mercifully’ ending her life. Frankie, who comes to love Maggie like a daughter (which serves to redeem that place in his life haunted by the failed relationship with his own biological daughter), initially refuses and rebuffs Maggie, but Maggie’s desperation began to wear on him. An otherwise marginally religious and cynical character, Frankie seeks counsel from his Catholic priest regarding his moral crisis. The juxtaposition of Frankie conversing with his priest in a church with Maggie cloistered in a modern medical facility, I propose, signifies a conflict of two axiologically contradistinctive historical moments and their respective visions of a good human life. The priest physically situated in the church building warns Frankie of the danger of being forever lost existentially if he grants Maggie’s euthanistic request. The principle of the ‘dignity of human life’ guides an ethic committed to the inviolable sanctity of a creature who bears the imago Dei. By way of contrast, the hospital, replete with modern medical science and technology, communicates a priority for the alleviation and mitigation of physical suffering—a priority to which modern moral consciousness grants historically unprecedented importance (Taylor, Sources). The ethic signified therein runs counter to the (late) ancient and medieval notion of the dignity of human life. The concept of ‘quality of life’ in contemporary ethical discourse reflects the distinctly modern praxeological apotheosis. In that moment of seeking counsel from his priest in the church building, juxtaposed with Maggie’s hospital room request, Frankie is in the throes of an inner turmoil between modernity and antiquity-medievality vis-à-vis his desire to love the young woman who has become like a daughter to him. The tension here presses into a question regarding the grounds upon which a human life is counted worthy of protection and preservation. An ethic oriented to the dignity or sanctity of human life places a principled constraint upon terminating (legally innocent or non-combatant)
Hitler’s Germany, the social viewpoint and modern life philosophy in concert with bureaucratic-administrative rationality, an objective and medical disposition, and Nazi ideology of genetic superiority resulted in the extensive practice of so called mercy deaths. The implementation of Hitler’s euthanasia program relied on the pairing of an objective-medical temperament with bureaucratic-administrative techniques in order to eliminate the calculable “economic” burden on German society. But both the euthanasia program and Final Solution required strict conformity to a specific language code. (It should be recalled that Arendt perceives thoughtless, behavioral conformity to be a characteristic tendency of modern bureaucracy.) The constellation of the social viewpoint emerging from a vita activa governed by labor, modern life philosophy, the conditions of modern bureaucratic society, an objective attitude, expertise grounded in either administrative technique or medical science and technology, and the historical circumstances of modern Europe and Germany—all this contributed to increasing the plausibility and perceived justifiability of exterminating an ‘undesirable’ people, that is the cultural, economic, and political inconvenience of the Jews in Europe.

Nazi leadership recognized that implementation of the Final Solution required not just mere compliance but “active cooperation” throughout their entire bureaucratic labyrinth (112-
13). To achieve such a level of cooperation for these monstrous deeds, Reinhard Heydrich, for example, knew they would have to overcome the problem of conscience (108-09). How those coordinating and implementing this mass murder spoke about their activity would be crucial to the maintenance of an objective attitude and prohibiting interference from conscience. This serves as the second aspect of the Nazi bureaucratic machinery that took hold of Germany. In an effort to overcome the problem of conscience, the Nazis constructed strict “language rules,” portraying their murdering acts in a particular light. The Hitler-led government engaged in the redescription and manipulation of reality through the power of linguistic predication. Terms and phrases where “carefully contrived to deceive and to camouflage” the activity of killers (108). In place of the ordinary and more appropriate word “murder,” Nazis designated their activity as “grant[-ing] a mercy death” (108). As part of the effort to overcome the problem of conscience, those carrying out this extermination program were given the opportunity to see their actions as merciful since the more “humane” method of gassing had increasingly replaced the more brutal method of shooting. The aim was to avoid unnecessary suffering. In this context, “the unforgivable sin was not to kill people but to cause unnecessary pain” (109). Sparing a human being or a group of people physical pain and brutal violence, even if they were still the objects of murder, became the new content of the old moral vocabulary of ‘mercy.’ Thus when gassing was extended to the Jews as a replacement for shooting, the act must have seemed to Eichmann a genuinely improved attitude toward them by the Nazi government. But their euphemistic naming practices hardly stopped with the redefinition of mercy. Arguably the height of their nefarious audacity is revealed in the designation the Nazis gave to their gas centers of mass murder: the “Charitable Foundations for Institutional Care” (109). It is dreadfully ironic that a gas killing center would be given the name charity, a term (agape in Greek) representing the Christian
notion of unconditional love patterned after the non-reciprocal nature of divine beneficence and self-giving. Through their language rules and naming practices, the Nazi government engaged in the redescription and manipulation of reality through the power of linguistic predication.

Third, the introduction and acceptance of privileged categories was another contributing factor to the Nazi bureaucratic machinery’s ability to create hell on earth. The moral collapse of German and European society resulted in part from the Nazi’s ability to corrupt not only the persecutors but also the victims (125-26). During the trial Eichmann pointed out that though some of the witnesses testified that they negotiated with him only in order to alleviate human suffering, not once did anyone impugn him and decry his actions in the performance of his duties (131). Why did his bureaucratic role, and the activities he performed in that role, seem to provide exculpatory cover for him during and after the holocaust, even in the eyes of the witnesses at the trial? Why did so many witnesses not protest his actions as such, in the past or during the trial. What they had sought was not the alleviation of Jewish misery in general but rather an exemption from suffering based on accepted and entrenched categories of privilege (131). It was not on the basis of their humanity that petitions were made to Eichmann and other Nazis by Jews to spare Jews but on the basis of the privileged status of specific groups of Jews. What grieves Arendt about this so deeply is that these “categories had been accepted without protest by German Jewry from the very beginning” and signified “the moral collapse of respectable Jewish society” (131). This claim goes to the heart of why Arendt’s report was met with great consternation and outrage in Israel, the United States, and in the Western world in general. The charges she leveled against many who were otherwise victims of one of the greatest historic mass atrocities perpetrated by humankind against humankind were perceived as highly incendiary and insensitive (Elon). Arendt’s bold point, nevertheless, is to show the mayhem the
Nazi bureaucratic machinery inflicted upon Europe and the extent to which it victimized the victims. Arendt maintains that to the Nazis “a Jew was a Jew”; therefore, these other category distinctions of privilege were meaningless (Eichmann 132). In opportunistic fashion, the Nazis benefited from these distinctions because they assisted in assuaging “a certain uneasiness among the German population” (132). Categories that permitted exemption from suffering and death eased the conscience of German society.

What further disturbed Arendt’s moral sensibilities was the dearth of outrage grounded in the category of our common humanity. Treating some humans as having less intrinsic value and human dignity than others on the basis of ethnicity, services provided, utility, status, etc. was tacitly accepted (131-32). Requesting special exemption from suffering and death because one belonged to a privileged group implied an affirmation of the general rule of preferential treatment as legitimate and, conversely, that it was permissible and lawful to inflict suffering and death on those who did not qualify as privileged—that there was a hierarchy to human dignity (131-33). Even those victimized by the Final Solution had accepted these standards of valuing the lives of the “prominent” over the ordinary, the “famous” over the masses. What made this situation so lamentable for Arendt was that each “who demanded to have an ‘exception’ made in his case implicitly recognized the rule [that legitimized persecution and execution], but this point, apparently, was never grasped by these ‘good men,’ Jewish and Gentile, who busied themselves about all those ‘special cases’ for which preferential treatment could be asked” (132). The Nazis could also, by occasionally granting exemption on the basis of a privileged category, appear to be merciful and even generous, thereby garnering gratitude (133). As a result they ultimately had convinced the Jews of the legitimacy and lawfulness of their activity (133). In fact, even in the early 1960s, as she wrote Eichmann in Jerusalem, Arendt highlighted that the
notion of the “prominent Jew” persisted. Many Germans, particularly cultural elites, had expressed publicly a sense of grave misfortune about losing Albert Einstein to the United States, all the while failing to recognize that the exponentially greater calamity was “to kill little Hans Cohn from around the corner, even though he was no genius” (134). The widespread acceptance of categories of privilege along with the objective attitude and strict language rules comprise three dimensions of the Nazi bureaucratic machinery that gripped Germany. A significant offspring of this machinery, in concert with emergent historical conditions, was a new kind of criminal engaging in an unprecedented crime.

NOVELTIES AND BANALITIES OF MODERN BUREAUCRATIC SOCIETY

A New Criminal and an Unprecedented Crime

Much of the controversy and disagreement surrounding this trial—before, during, and after it—stemmed from how observers viewed the nature of the crime committed: was it a crime against the Jewish people or a crime against humanity, which court was competent to hear and render judgment regarding such a crime, and was the crime merely different in degree or different in kind from previous crimes perpetrated by one people upon another, among others (267-94)? Arendt insists that the hermeneutic key to understanding Eichmann—his conscience and his crime—is a proper recognition of the unprecedented nature of the deed involved (268-70, 275-77, 288-90). Eichmann participated in a crime that was uniquely shaped by new technological, technical, and political conditions, which made possible a new kind of criminal and an unprecedented crime. Acknowledging this opens up an interpretive understanding of Eichmann, who otherwise puzzles and perplexes. New conditions have generated a new kind of moral offender, a new character on the stage of the Western modern world, who confounds historically prior legal institutions and standards or moral judgment (286-294).
Some suggested that what was before the court was a “war crime,” one much greater in degree from previous war crimes, or an “inhuman act” (268-79). Others were satisfied by the concept of genocide, a neologism coined in light of the Nazi’s anti-Semitic crime that aimed to exterminate an entire people group. Yet Arendt insists that even the notion of genocide does not adequately represent the unprecedented nature of this crime (288-90). After all, antiquity and even modern colonialism and imperialism prior to Nazi Germany had attempted to exterminate entire peoples. Through a more accurate designation, Arendt resolves to place her diagnostic finger more precisely on what is unparalleled here. She proposes that the specific kind of crime the Nazis, along with Eichmann the bureaucrat, perpetrated was an *administrative massacre* (288). A constellation of new historical conditions—namely, technological developments, techniques of mass organization, and the modern nation state’s monopoly of power over these technologies and techniques—yield this new kind of criminal and unprecedented crime (273, 289). Though new and unprecedented, however, both have tremendous potential to linger with us now that they have arrived and continue to develop (and mingle with a fourth condition, namely population explosion). Moreover, the term ‘administrative massacre’ accurately accounts for the mass murder that took place *prior* to the genocide committed against European Jews. The Nazis administratively massacred the “incurably ill” and “genetically damaged” Germans among them—and this was, technically speaking, not a genocide since it was committed on the body of its own people (288). An estimated seventy thousand ethnic Germans were extinguished from the earth by Hitler’s euthanasia program before this same bureaucratic machinery, along with technological development and government resources, was later redirected toward the Jews, as it

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55 Though fear of population explosion and of an imminent overpopulation of the globe may not be as widespread a concern today as it was in the 1960s, the rough contemporary equivalent to this may be not just the gradually increasing life-span but also transhumanist ambitions for radical life extension.
can be against any category of humans (Arendt 108; Proctor 177, 188-94). All of this permitted expanded possibilities for mass liquidation of human life, a new potency for exploding previous limits of scope and scale with regard to the geographic range and the number of people effected by a program of widespread slaughter. New conditions opened up new potential to exceed previous boundaries on murderous intentions, making way for a new crime.

First, regarding these conditions, the Nazis exploited modern technological advances in their efforts to enhance the extent and reach of their euthanistic-eugenic and, later, genocidal programs. It must not be missed that the gas chambers utilized by the Nazis—from death rooms disguised as bathrooms and shower rooms to gas vans imposed on the incurably ill, physically undesirable, and genetically defective Germans—represent novel technological capabilities not available in earlier historical efforts to slaughter in mass number. As a complex of new technological developments, gas chambers were not only more ‘efficient,’ that is more people could be killed more quickly, they were, euphemistically speaking, more ‘merciful’ and ‘humane,’ that is less bloody and less painful than mass shooting.56 Gas chamber technology, however, was first invented in the United States as an instrument for eugenic euthanasia and capital punishment.57 Additionally, mass extermination in gas chambers was largely facilitated

56 Guido Knopp, in Hitler’s Hitmen (Sutton Publishing, 2002), explains that in 1943 and 1944 the Auschwitz concentration camp, whose chief purpose was mass liquidation, had a capacity for killing nine thousand human beings daily by means of its five gas chambers and five crematoria (259).
57 Scott Christianson (The Last Gasp: The Rise and Fall of the American Gas Chamber. U of California P, 2010) reveals that gas chamber technology was invented in the United States in association with the eugenics movement as well as for the purposes of capital punishment. Dan W. Brock (“Historical Aspects of Life-Sustaining Treatment and Euthanasia” in Bioethics, 4th ed., 2014) discusses the late nineteenth and early twentieth century history of the euthanasia movement. Of particular interest here is his discussion not only of the eugenic dimension of this movement but also of its early development in the United States. “Campaigns to end the lives of unwanted human beings—euthanasia in its third historical sense—emerged in the United States and Europe toward the end of the nineteenth century. . . Others spoke of the “benevolent extermination of degenerates” (Smith 1909, 50), the “inhumanity” of not relieving a “gibbering driveling idiot” from his or her misery (W. Robinson 1913, 88), and the duty to “liberate” retarded and insane persons from “tortured mentalities” (Wolbarst 1935, 332). These groups were interfering with the progressive evolution of the human race (Smith 1909).” (1855-56). This movement was deeply tied to medical science and practice. “Eugenic beliefs infused the thinking of mainstream physicians, academicians, and scientists in Germany well before their adoption by Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) as National Socialist (Nazi)
by the nineteenth century technology of the railroad system, which relied upon the steam-engine for autonomously-powered trains along with new developments in iron and steel (Beniger, Control Revolution). This key product and accelerator of the Industrial Revolution, now in the hands of Nazi Germany, became the primary means for the expedient long-distance transportation of inordinate numbers of human beings to mass killing centers (Arendt, Eichmann).

Second, Arendt’s proposed designation for this unprecedented crime makes salient the administrative techniques so central to the widespread coordination of an expansive operation of killing. Even if increased technological capabilities are available, enhanced methods of organization are another necessary component permitting the achievement of mass murder. As Max Weber discusses, bureaucracy conditioned by a modern legal-rational system of authority entails superior administrative techniques (Economy). These techniques supply new powers by expanding: the use of standardized and streamlined procedures; the application of calculative thought in economy and government; the extent of recordkeeping and written communication; and the dependence upon specialist knowledge and administrative expertise. Additionally, the monocratic nature of modern bureaucracy in general and the Nazi bureaucratic machine in particular, yields unprecedented behavior conformity and an accompanying thoughtlessness. Furthermore, the impersonal nature of bureaucracy—which could reduce human persons to policy (Shevell 1999). Physicians played a critical role in creating the concept of racial hygiene, supporting the Nazi rise to power, and administering sterilization and extermination programs (Ernst 1996; White 1996)” (1856). In Germany, “each doctor should become a “physician to the Volk” for the “perfection of the health” of the people (Lifton 1986, 30). The “biological body of the German people” should be invigorated through programs of physical fitness and the science of “race hygiene” (Ernst 1996, 574)” (1856). Illustrating Arendt’s point regarding administrative massacres as the unprecedented crime, Brock writes, “In September 1939 Hitler directed that children with severe mongolism, hydrocephaly, paralysis, and deformities must be registered. In thirty pediatric departments across Germany doctors supervised the registering, sorting out, and killing of 5,000 children (Lauter and Meyer 1982). Within months Hitler issued a decree that mentally incurable adolescents and adults should “be granted a mercy death.” That decree created an agency that orchestrated physician-directed killing of over 70,000 persons in gas chambers disguised as showers (Shevell 1999)” (1856).
numbers on a report and individual lives to mere information that may be processed, and which
often feels like the faceless “rule of Nobody”—coupled with the Nazi’s insistence on an
objective and scientific attitude and strict euphemistic language use, facilitated their frightening
callousness and dehumanizing coldness in the activities of mass murder (Arendt, *Eichmann*
; Beniger). This resulted in the “new type of criminal,” one for whom it had become nearly
impossible “to know or to feel that he is doing wrong” (Arendt 276, 289). The requirement of
obedience to monocratic orders—to commit an act upon the command of a superior—and the
performance of one’s hyper-specialized duty within a bureaucratic labyrinth buffers the
bureaucrat from a “guilty conscience” (276, 290). The same bureaucratic machinery that targeted
incurable, undesirable, and genetically defective Germans, was redirected against the
“subhuman” Jews (277). She believes the court rightly concluded that Eichmann’s crimes, along
with the rest of those who participated, could only have been carried out “by a giant bureaucracy
using the resources of government” (289; 294). In so far as it is embedded within the rise of the
social, modern bureaucracy tends not only to dehumanize its ‘citizens,’ other political personage,
and ‘customers’ but also its own officials in the performance of their task within its structure. It
is in the nature of both totalitarian government and modern bureaucracy “to make functionaries
and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men, and thus to dehumanize them” (289).
And this cog theory of action was the very ground on which Eichmann and others like him
sought to maintain their legal innocence and guilt-free conscience. However, the administration
of justice does not recognize humans as mere cogs in a deterministic societal wheel but as
potential perpetrators and thus as human beings (289). To a court of law, bureaucratic conditions
for conduct are only admissible as “circumstances” of the crime” not as an alibi just as the
“economic plight of the thief” is not a legally legitimate excuse for the act of stealing, despite
what modern psychology and sociology attempt to impose on judicial proceedings (289-90). In addition to modern technology and bureaucratic technique, modern government was another potent ingredient in the Nazi recipe of widespread death.

Third, these crimes were committed by means of modern government resources and orders, particularly those pertaining to its legal-judicial system and its monopoly on violence (Arendt, *Eichmann* 269). Closely related to bureaucracy as the organizational form that reflects a modern legal-rational system of legitimate domination, a pivotal resource of modern government is the written legal code and judicial system (Arendt, *Eichmann* 288-290, 294; Weber). The Nazis leveraged the power of law, written in accordance with euphemistic language rules, in order to decriminalize and normalize heinous acts. Related to this power to write law and to adjudicate in accordance with it, modern nation-states also enjoy a monopoly on the means of violence, as Max Weber points out in *Economy and Society* (65, 205, 901-908). No longer do consociated warriors, sword-wielding knights of feudal lords, nor household guards and tribal leaders have legitimate possession of weapons for defense. The modern nation-state has consolidated the legitimate use of violence exclusively within itself. When this monopoly is combined with a totalitarian form of government and Hitler’s “dream of a perfect bureaucracy,” an unprecedented crime becomes all the more enforceable, both in terms of violence and legality (Arendt, *Eichmann* 290). Furthermore, modern nation-states possess political control over larger expanses of territory than did city-states. When totalitarian regimes develop expansionist, that is imperialist, ambitions, the scope of devastation they can inflict increases to new heights, especially when combined with modern technology and modern administrative technique (Arendt, *Origins*; Arnett, *Communication Ethics*).
Bureaucratic Modernity and the Banality of Evil

It is the everydayness and normality of thought-patterns and actions in relation to these new historical conditions—technological innovations, administrative techniques, and the power of modern nation-states—that informs Arendt’s claim about the banality of evil. Eichmann the bureaucrat is a representative example of a much more common and widespread ethical malady—one that infected not only S.S. bureaucrats and many Germans but even the Nazi’s victims themselves. Arendt discerns this in his careerist and upwardly mobile ambitions, clichéd thoughtlessness, slogan riddled speech, clownish elation over recalling and delivering a chestnut, feeble memory, relinquishment of the moral responsibility to judge, malfunctioning conscience, embrace of an objective attitude, euphemistic language use, and acceptance of privileged categories. To be evil one does not necessarily have to superabound with racist aggression and infernal schemes. Eichmann in Jerusalem represented a hermeneutic shift from the Origins of Totalitarianism. As several commentators have noted, in the latter work Arendt applies a Kantian notion of ‘radical evil’ to the disasters of modern totalitarianism and imperialism (Birkhead; Elon; Troup). But in the case of Eichmann, Arendt observes not the radical presence of something positively malevolent but rather an absence, a vacancy. Arendt, whose doctoral dissertation was on Augustine, notices something more akin to an Augustinian notion of evil as a deprivation of goodness. Instead of a fullness of diabolical presence, with Eichmann there is a void of human fullness, a vacuous emptiness, an absence of thought and judgment—he presents as a lack of a man. Instead of an evil mastermind, an “emaciated bureaucrat” sat in the dock (Troup). Morally speaking, he was ‘thin as a rail,’ not some robust, frightfully furious presence. Arendt points us in the direction of recognizing that ultimately only good has any depth and substance. Commenting on Arendt’s notion of the banality of evil, Amos Elon explains that good
alone “can be radical; evil can never be radical, it can only be extreme, for it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension yet—and this is its horror!—it can spread like a fungus over the surface of the earth and lay waste the entire world” (xiii-xiv). In bureaucratic modernity evil appears in shirking our responsibility to think, discern, judge, and act. By contrast, human fullness requires diligent cultivation and exercise of these capacities. The banality of evil that characterizes bureaucratic modernity exist in the “extreme commonness” of: thoughtlessness in speech and action, the abdication of moral judgment, careerisms that makes the self central, euphemistic language codes, and emotional detachment from the wellbeing of others by means of an objective-scientific attitude (Arendt, Eichmann; Arnett, Communication Ethics 102).

The notion of the banality of evil addresses a dynamic that goes to the heart of bureaucratic modernity: (a) the everyday sacrificing of the faculty of judgment and practical reasoning to instrumental rationality understood as (a) a calculation of the most useful means to ends and (b) a form of administrative, technical, or procedural thought that, if unchecked by some other principle, compartmentalizes and insulates certain activities and roles from the need for thoughtful reflection over intrinsic human goods that demand observance of pragmatic limits. Unlike practical reason, administrative logic in of itself lacks the resources to constrain an objective-scientific attitude, euphemistic speech, sychophantic careerism, and categories of privilege. Administrative-procedural thought consists in calculating consequences and reasoning about the application of means to ends. To be clear, this type of thinking is not inherently problematic; in fact, it is quite valuable to a range of human activities. However, when an axiologically substantive account of intrinsic human goods no longer governs nor serves to constrain instrumental rationality, virtually no human good, including the inviolable dignity of human life, is safeguarded. All that is left to guide are the thin universals of modernity, such as
‘universal rights’ and ‘quality of life,’ along with a rootless conception of the self as an autonomous will—that is as an insubstantial, voluntaristic center of choice-making liberated from the imposition of ethical constraints.

Eichmann the bureaucrat represents not just the ethical vacuity the Nazis inflicted upon Germany and much of Europe but frighteningly something much more: the moral anemia of the modern West reflected in one of its ordinary social character types. It is not that all bureaucrats are morally hollow or that the bureaucrat as such within its narrowly defined social role and in its limited sphere is ethically bankrupt, a position sociologist Paul du Gay, in his praise of bureaucracy, attempts to attribute to Alasdair MacIntyre. But in the absence of a substantive moral order that directs the bureaucrat and conveys to her, and to the institutions and society that give her role-specific definition, the limits of her function, the bureaucratic role functions as a kind of pedagogy for the human agent who serves in it. This is a more accurate picture of MacIntyre’s concern, and it is one that resonates with Arendt’s observations. While the need for a substantive moral order to guide various social character types is true of any age, what is peculiar to the modern world, according to Arendt, is that its basic, thoroughgoing bureaucratic structure is a consequence of the historical defeat of political action and of the ethic of virtue and human greatness. An account of intrinsic human goods, and the practical reasoning required to discern and apply them in practice, ought to guide, but this is the very kind of thing bureaucratic modernity erodes—thus the need for cultivating such is all the more urgent in our historical and cultural milieu. Arendt sounds an alarm regarding the formative potential of modern bureaucratic society, a society that is oriented to stripping those who play by its logic of their capacity to make sound judgments about when and where operating and thinking in a bureaucratic manner is no longer morally appropriate and perhaps even ethically impoverished. In other words, a
substantive ethical vision must disrupt the rule-following thoughtlessness and command-obedient conformity of the bureaucrat. Bureaucratic rationality must be constrained and governed by a form of epideictically grounded thought oriented to the cultivation of practical wisdom. Practical reason ought to dictate the place, role, and limits of administrative-procedural logic. Ethically evaluative judgment should put bureaucratic thought in its place. The operation of calculative-instrumental rationality amidst the absence of practical reasoning and moral judgment is not only the heart of Eichmann’s failure to think and to judge but also a paradigm example of an all too ordinary and widespread ethical vacancy afflicting modern bureaucratic society. Arendt makes it abundantly clear that ethically substantive thought, discernment, and judgment must prevail over bureaucratic expertise and an objective attitude, lest we engage in wickedness without even the capacity to know what we have done.58 For this kind of moral

58 And this is precisely what Paul du Gay fails to recognize in his apology of and encomium to bureaucracy. He offers a half-truth regarding Weber’s evaluation of bureaucracy and transforms Weber into an ethicist who advocates for a moral conventionalism that insulates a socio-moral institution or system from evaluative judgments stemming from outside of it (Praise 4-12). This obscures Weber’s task in Economy and Society as something other than primarily descriptive socio-historical comparative analysis; it is not a defense of the superiority or moral purity of any system of legitimate domination. That bureaucracy equalizes and is therefore a friend of democracy is only part of Weber’s story. Within the context of a rational-legal system of legitimate domination, bureaucracy not only replaces the hierarchic order of an honorific society with its own form of hierarchy but also, according to Weber, promotes modern mass democracy not a pure form of democracy as Arendt describes in The Human Condition. Weber hardly offers an enthusiastic vision of modern bureaucratic society as a simple, unalloyed good and hardly leaves the bureaucratic unscathed. Furthermore, Weber himself associates bureaucracy and modern legal-rational authority with the privileging of instrumental rationality, which he links tightly to calculative thought in modern economies, over value rationality as well as over tradition and affectation as the orienting motivation for social action. The terms I use here are specific and integral to Weber’s own lexicon; they are not the external impositions of the so-called religious and romantic critics of bureaucracy.

I will further explicate du Gay’s response to Machintyre in the following chapter of this project. But for my present discussion on Arendt, it is important to note that a flaw at the center of du Gay’s argument is his unwillingness to acknowledge that some other moral vision must be at work to guide this superior administrative technique and its logic—a technique that does not exist for its own sake in the human world and hardly bestows only blessings upon modern Western humanity. In his effort to defend the “ethical dignity” of modern bureaucracy and the bureaucrat against its philosophical critics, du Gay conspicuously omits Arendt as one who morally problematizes them (Praise ix-x, 66-72). And she does so on both philosophical-theoretical and concrete-historical levels. Additionally, her critical analysis does not conform to du Gay’s categorization of moral bureau critique as predominantly religious or romantic in kind.
formation to obtain, many factors are needed. The kind of education the youth receive is a pivotal factor in this regard.

ARENDTIAN IMPLICATIONS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

The Moral Responsibility to Exercise and Cultivate Judgment

In her “Postscript” to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt stresses the centrality of the human capacity of judgment, and the related responsibility incumbent upon each individual person, for the administration of law and justice (294-298). Even when confronted with a corrupt and corrupting legal code and moral collapses in public opinion and conduct, these merely constitute the conditions for ethical judgment but are not an exemption from the responsibility to judge. Modern legal, psychological, and social thought equip us with a range of discursive categories for abdicating personal responsibility. (Arendt offers for consideration the following notions as examples of this: collective guilt, collective innocence, the *Zeitgeist*, and the Oedipus complex.) Such constructs offer universal explanations that obscure the concrete and the particular, reductively explaining all specific events and acts in terms of those abstracted globalizations (297). Her concern is that “they make judgment superfluous” (297). They manifest a thoughtlessness about the particulars of a specific case and the “individual moral responsibility” to render a judgment about it (297). An indispensable communication ethics warning from the Eichmann trial is that in the modern West bureaucratic technique, administrative expertise, and calculative thought function to erode this vital capacity for ethical thought and axiologically substantive judgment. It is the culminating aim of this project to articulate the architecture of an alternative education that would resist the de-formations of bureaucratic modernity and aim at fostering practical reason and sound moral judgment. How might we recuperate this vital capacity amidst the conditions of bureaucratic modernity? What
kind of education is capable of cultivating the human faculty of judgment and the form of
reasoning that sustains it?

As Arendt argues in *The Human Condition*, a central deficiency with modern
bureaucratic society is its *activity reductionism*. Governed by an endless labor process and
modern life philosophy, modern society treats all other human activities, aside from attending to
biological necessity, thriving, and survival, as superfluous (320-25). All endeavors are
subordinated to the ceaseless consumptive metabolism of biological life and its survival.
Instrumental rationality is the prevailing form of thought in *society* and is oriented to calculating
consequences (321-22). In late modern society human thought is now imagined to be no different
qualitatively from computer processing. Human thought, in fact, may be measured in terms of
cognitive calculations are the mere servant of the biological brain and inner pleasure conceived
of as ‘happiness’ by modern life philosophy (321). The total range of other human capacities,
such as craftsmanship, action, and thoughtful judgment, are rendered irrelevant, pointless, and
unworthy of cultivating and therefore neglected (323-25). But perhaps the chief hurdle to
offering and pursuing an alternative form of education in the late modern West is that a society
of laborers and jobholders finds little value in pursuits that do not provide economic advantage
for the consumptive metabolism of organic life—that is, when those pursuits are treated as
anything more than mere hobbies or niche avocations. The activity reductionism of late modern
bureaucratic society presents an enormous challenge, if not obstacle, to an education oriented to
the cultivation of practical reason and the faculty of judgment.

*Arendtian Intimations of a Rhetorical Education*
Bureaucratization and socialization privatize the public sphere and subvert a rhetorical way of being in the world, a way of life integral to the broad discourse education championed by the school of civic-humanistic rhetoric. Strange is the person who chooses the way of life of the poet, historian, or person of speech and action whose success especially depends upon the formation of thoughtful, substantive judgment. Perhaps stranger still is the person who would expend labor’s hard-earned money on an education dedicated to these non-laboring capacities and ways of life since they do not necessarily promise to provide for the endless metabolism of biological life as do profit-driven laboring professions in the consumptive economy of modern bureaucratic society. Arendt expresses concern for the future and her work hints at the desperate need for an education that points the youth who are immersed in a society driven by labor and organic life in the direction of humanity’s other capacities, that is those activities which enrich a distinctly and fully human existence (323-25). This Arendtian intimation articulates a vital aspects of the exigence driving this project and establishes key coordinates for what an educational antidote should entail. What kind of education can cultivate both action and thought, doing and thinking? My contention is that in our historical moment we must recover the resources of a former model of education, one that was explicitly rejected around the time when Western thought embarked upon a radical break with the past under the influence of Descartes’ universal doubt and method of introspection as the new ground for knowledge. (It is important to keep in mind that Descartes’ new philosophical ideas was inspired by the event of Galileo’s discovery, which depended a new technology, the telescope, and a new method of inquiry, the experiment.) Of relevance to Arendt’s philosophical interpretation of human activities, this former model of education was pregnant with a vision of praxis and civic life. A classic rhetorical education aimed at fostering expansive learning oriented to the cultivation of practical
reason and sound judgment for a life of wise discursive action. Arendt, in fact, points us in this direction through her invocation of Cicero.

Amidst her explication of labor and the rise of society in *The Human Condition*, Arendt not only highlights the contrast between a modern understanding of occupations with the understanding of occupations tied to a historic liberal arts education but also does so with a footnote reference to Cicero’s *De officiis* (*On Moral Duties*) (91). Although contemporary universities may advertise a ‘well-rounded liberal arts education’ through their promotional literature and slick but expensive marketing campaigns, this designation has become, from an Arendtian perspective, little more than an empty slogan. In reality what students commonly receive through the general core curriculum is an exposure to a fragmented range of specialized subjects. The fields represented by these subjects on the whole are unsure of how they relate to one another and how they contribute to an integrated educational *telos* and common vision of occupations in the public realm—aside, of course, from the goal of ‘earning a living.’ On the other hand, a classic liberal arts education was, historically speaking, closely aligned with the school of civic rhetoric, which included figures such as Isocrates, Cicero, Quintilian, and Augustine, among others. This tradition stresses the cultivation of practical reason, rhetorical knowledge linked to praxis, and probabilistic judgment. By contrast, modern *socialized* or *bureaucratized* education seeks to develop neither the prudent statesmen nor the liberal professions. Occupations that were considered *liberal*, Arendt explains, were those that required and featured “*prudentia*, the capacity for prudent judgment which is the virtue of the statesmen, [as well as those] professions of public relevance (*ad hominum utilitatem*) such as architecture, medicine, and agriculture” (*Human* 91). Typically when Arendt discusses the faculty of judgment, she has a relatively Kantian conception in mind (*Eichmann* 135-37; Arnett,
Communication Ethics 107-15). But in this context—with a reference to Cicero, the invocation of the classical notion of *prudentia*, and the ancient distinction between liberal and servile arts and occupations—Arendt is drawing upon a pre-Enlightenment intellectual tradition (*Human* 91-93). Tied to the historical developments of the modern age that result in the rise of the social, Arendt’s hermeneutic of modern society in terms of the connection between education and occupations offers us an understanding of how the liberal arts (classically and rhetorically understood as oriented to the common world) came to be diminished. But by invoking the broad tradition of rhetoric and rhetorical culture, she implicitly introduces what was historically the most prevalent model of education in the West, albeit with varying permutations, but which was attacked and abandoned in the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution (Ong, *Rhetoric* 1-103; Bizzell and Herzberg 432-47, 556-62).

There was, however, an early eighteenth century figure who resisted much of the novel direction of the Enlightenment and who serves as a kind of last representative of Renaissance civic-humanism and the broad Ciceronian tradition of rhetoric. Giambattista Vico, the chair of rhetoric at the University of Naples, stood opposed to the epistemic reductionism, privatization, and non-praxis orientation of the Cartesian model of human learning and knowing. How was he able to perceive that this approach to knowing, learning, and public life was a dead end amidst great enthusiasm for it in his own day? With remarkable prescience, his warning antedated the twentieth century philosophical critique of Cartesianism by about two hundred years. The expansive nature and civic orientation of his humanistic rhetorical education equipped him for this task. My modest hope is that this educational paradigm will equip us with a similar capacity to resist the specific degradations of bureaucratic modernity in our time, particularly with respect to what counts as knowledge, ethical discourse and action, and the nature and purpose of
education. I am not suggesting that we abstract an educational system in its purity from another
time and place, and then simply adopt it wholesale in our own time. Such nostalgic reifications
are of little benefit. Rather, through a constructive hermeneutic, we can benefit from and
appropriate those earlier resources, interpretively applying them to the concrete, spatiotemporal
specifics of our contemporary world and thereby contesting, through the pursuit of an alternative,
much of what is misguided in that world.59

To be clear, far from being able to ameliorate the deeply entrenched structures, practices,
and habitual expectations of a bureaucratic society—a society of laborers, job holders, experts,
and specialist—an educational program that draws upon rhetorical models of knowledge and
discursive action can function to resist the prevailing conventional ‘wisdom’ and simultaneously
signpost alternative ways of being in the world. It should be noted, however, that the pursuit of
these alternatives, almost surely, will be perceived as mystifying by a modern society shaped by
the process of economic consumption and a worldview centered around our animality as the
highest principle. The inevitably perplexed questions arising from those who inhabit the outlook
and priorities of modern society, are perhaps, even as difficult as those questions may be to field,
the surest sign that one is indeed cultivating those other uniquely human capacities:
workmanship, speech, action, and thought. This circumstance of receiving perplexed questions
from others motivates my reframing of the kind of inquiry that should guide an alternative
educational curriculum. My contention is that the prevailing system of education, which is suited

59 The manner in which I am suggesting an appropriation of the historic tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric draws
upon Kathleen E. Welch’s argument in The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of
Ancient Discourse. She proposes that our hermeneutic approach of ancient rhetorical texts (or nearly any text from
another time and place) should deprivilege “critiques” of texts in favor of an approach that treats texts on rhetoric (or
any textual rhetorical discourse in general) as “productive.” From a constructive hermeneutic perspective, rhetoric
(including theoretical presentation of which found in texts from earlier historical moments) is productive of practical
knowledge, social wisdom, and interpretive understanding that may revitalize praxis in our own spatiotemporal
world.
to the needs of a modern bureaucratic society of laborers, job-holders, administrative experts, and technical specialists, is driven, even if unwittingly, by the prioritization of the following question: *how can we prepare our students/graduates for ‘success’ in today’s world?* By contrast, Arendtian priorities prompt a reframing of the central, guiding question of education, especially university education as such: *in what ways should our educational curriculum unfit our students/graduates for ‘success’ in the late modern world?*\(^{60}\) A new guiding question is a first step in the direction of an educational paradigm that offers an alternative to the emptiness of modern bureaucratic society’s priorities. And it is Arendt who assists us in initiating this alternative trajectory.

ARENDT AND MACINTYRE: BUREAUCRACY, IDEOLOGY, AND EMOTIVISM

Prior to exploring a full response to this reframed question, another piece of the puzzle requires articulation if elements of bureaucratic modernity, which are vital to the inquiry driving this project, are to be more completely comprehended. Both Hannah Arendt and Alasdair MacIntyre address a specific dynamic integral to modernity and open the door for considering the relationship of this dynamic to bureaucracy. Arendt and MacIntyre both address the thinning out of human action and of the self in bureaucratic modernity. Arendt attends to historical events and philosophical developments resulting in a prevailing worldview that shapes late modern society in the West, namely the social viewpoint and modern life philosophy. MacIntyre—who is particularly attentive to the relationship between ethical discourse and action on the one hand and the concrete sociopolitical world in which that ethic is embedded on the other\(^{61}\)—directs his gaze

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\(^{60}\) I would be remiss not to acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to my former colleague, philosophy professor David DiQuattro, Ph.D. Over the course of countless conversations he shared with me a similar version of this question as a way of reframing for his students the aim of a liberal arts education. The question was constructed provocatively so as to confront students with a sharp contrast between the vision of excellence to which a classic liberal arts education points and the imaginaries of success on offer in the modern West.

\(^{61}\) To witness how MacIntyre attends to this relationship, see *A Short History of Ethics; After Virtue; Whose Justice? Which Rationality?; Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry.*
toward the nexus between emotivism, the bureaucrat, and a call for alternative ethical ground and renewed pragmatic responsiveness (*After*). In terms of the moral vision that guides expectations and communicative engagement in modern bureaucratic society, Arendt privileges modern life philosophy while MacIntyre makes emotivism salient. These two interpretive explanations do not, in my view, rival one another as much as they texture, in a complementary fashion, a hermeneutic of the late modern world in the West. It is to MacIntyre’s grappling with the mistaken departures of Enlightenment moral philosophy and its consequences in the prevailing contemporary way of life to which I will turn in the next chapter.

Before concluding this chapter, however, I would like to elude briefly to an important link between Arendt and MacIntyre that goes beyond concern for bureaucratic modes of thought and conduct in a narrow sense but to what may be considered its strange and surprising bedfellow: ideology. Unlike the alleged neutrality of the modern bureaucrat, ideology often functions as an impetus for highly partisan, inflexible modes of sociopolitical engagement that will not permit negotiation or compromise. Both bureaucracy and ideology, however, are drivers and products of *the erosion of practical reason* in modernity. Arendt and MacIntyre both address the issue of ideology in the modern world. Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, explores the role of ideology in totalitarianism and imperialism, which, as part of the following chapter, I will place in conversation with *The Human Condition* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre entertains a brief discussion of ideology and the prominence of theories of ideology amidst his analysis of our emotivist social world. How their respective thinking on ideology relates to bureaucratic modernity is a question I will pursue in the next chapter, strengthening the bridge between Arendt and MacIntyre in this project. Because of this, Arendt’s

62 Also see Arendt’s 1953 article “Ideology and Terror.”
thought will reemerge in the following chapter, which is otherwise dedicated to MacIntyre’s exposition of the moral disorder of emotivism in relation to bureaucratic modernity.
CHAPTER 5:


The central inquiry of this project aims at discerning the ways in which modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic. Integral to this pursuit, I have been giving special attention to three areas of concern, namely what counts as knowledge, ethical discourse and action, and education, university and college curricula in particular. This question and these three areas of special attention gain momentum in the work of moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre whose After Virtue begins with the problematic of a dysfunctional public discourse. In the late modern world, our communicative interactions and disputes are inherently interminable, characterized by acrimony, and prone to manipulative forms of human relations. In the context of a historical interpretation of Western moral philosophy, MacIntyre diagnoses our sociopolitical world with an ethic of emotivism. The bureaucratic manager, as a character type, is a pivotal dramatic embodiment of emotivism’s social content and extends an understanding of bureaucratic modernity. Integral to my response to the central inquiry driving this project, MacIntyre’s work proposes that modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic in the form of emotivist utterance and practice. Within the sociopolitical world of late modernity understood in terms of emotivism, a surprising link emerges between bureaucracy and ideology; the two not only compete but also complement one another. Bureaucratic modernity consists both in the bureaucratic and in the relationship between the bureaucratic and the ideological, especially with reference to the emotivism’s various sociopolitical embodiments.
Communication scholars express, on the one hand, concern for the problematic effects of bureaucratic roles, logic, and organizational structures, which are rationally governed, while, on the other, concern for the aggressive, hostile, deeply partisan, and even ostensibly irrational nature of much public discourse in the contemporary West in general and the United States in particular. These disparate phenomena, rational bureaucracy and irrational advocacy, seemingly have little to do with one another, yet in this chapter I argue with recourse to MacIntyre that they reveal something of the moral meaning of our sociopolitical context, a meaning in which both types of phenomena partake. The relation between bureaucracy and ideology reveal a single, underlying socio-ethical exigence that MacIntyre equips us to discern. Regarding the former, the first chapter of this project addresses what many communication scholars understand to be bureaucracy’s dehumanizing effects. The structures and procedures of modern bureaucratic organizations squeeze human language and speech acts into a technical mold that obscures understanding (Cicourel; Roberts and Campbell). Critical organizational schools aim to expose how communication functions to legitimize specific uses of organizational power (Mumby, “Organizing”; Sholle; Tompkins et al.). Bureaucratic forms of organization, according to Dennis K. Mumby, produce inequalities, a sense of alienation, limitations to individual autonomy, and support for the ideology of those in power (“Organizing”; “Political”). Shawna Malvini Redden and Jennifer A. Scarduzio maintain that the power dynamics of bureaucratic organizations extend to the psychological life of those who work in them by regulating emotion norms. Other communication scholars link bureaucratic discourse to failures of ethical responsibility and anti-democratic political practices (Sten Hansson; Ronald Lee and Shawn J. Spano; Lilian Radovac).

On the other hand, hostility and incivility to some may appear to be the result of abandoning cool-headed impartiality, emotionally-detached language, and rational decision-
making. Yet, sociologist Hans Haferkamp explains, empirical research reveals irrational and even anarchic tendencies in contemporary bureaucratic organizations that undermines Weber’s rationalization thesis. What is more, sociologist James D. Hunter proposes that our current political discourse in the United States is characterized by *ressentiment*, speech-acts of negation, atrocity narratives, and a Nietzschean will to dominate one’s political and cultural opponents. Within the communication field, Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson contend for the import of “dialogic civility” in a cultural context marked by plurality and a lack of shared agreement about the good. Janie M. Harden Fritz and B. L. Omdahl consider the crisis of incivility in the American workplace that has captured the attention of communication scholars. However, for the purposes of this chapter devoted to MacIntyre’s conception of the bureaucratic manager and her work tasks, Janie M. Harden Fritz’s discussion of the crisis of incivility in the American workplace is most germane of all (*Professional Civility*). This workplace predicament reflects the larger cultural crisis of legitimation and metanarrative collapse that is deeply ethical in nature—namely that there is no public agreement about the human good as a standard for ‘moral utterance and practice’ (*Fritz; Lyotard; MacIntyre, After*). The absence of an agreement, according to MacIntyre, is central to an emotivist sociopolitical world and gives rise to acrimonious human relations. Fritz addresses this exigence in *Professional Civility: Communicative Virtue at Work* by constructively appropriating the interpretive framework of MacIntyre’s virtue ethics in order to conceptually link an understanding of professions to the public virtue of civility. Fritz draws upon MacIntyre’s notions of a practice, tradition, and virtue, among others, in order to establish the professions as representative of traditions of practice. Fritz contextualizes both the bureaucratic as well as the hostile, the technical and impersonal as well as the aggressive and caustic in the workplace context within MacIntyre’s articulation of
virtue ethics situated in an emotivist cultural context. This is a crucial coupling that MacIntyre points out primarily in relation to the languishing condition of contemporary public discourse. His work opens the door for exploring the simultaneous presence of the allegedly neutral and the intensely partisan in the late modern West.

This chapter entails four main moves. First, MacIntyre begins his account of emotivism with a pragmatic exigency from the late modern sociopolitical world, namely the ethical condition of our public discourse. This prompts consideration of the ways in which our present moment is a historical aberration in terms of moral utterance and practice when juxtaposed to a genuine ethical order, both its theoretical and pragmatical levels. Second, emotivism as a moral philosophy assumes and is at home within a specific sociopolitical ecosystem. An emotivist understanding of the self and human relations is embodied in milieu-defining character types that represent metaphysical and ethical ideals. The bureaucratic manager, as one of the pivotal characterological embodiments of emotivism, plays a significant role in the overall arch of my project. Third, MacIntyre’s proposal and explications of three characters are not exhaustive but rather suggestive of the social embodiments of emotivist ethical theorizing. In light of an opening in MacIntyre’s text, I propose another embodied dimension of emotivism for consideration, one that stands in relation to the bureaucratic despite initial appearances to the contrary. This embodied element illuminates a fuller picture of bureaucratic modernity and the erosion of practical reason therein. Fourth, I conclude by pointing to the need for an alternative to two common educational ideals that prevail in the contemporary American academy. This alternative takes seriously MacIntyre’s insistence upon a curriculum capable of diagnosing the failure of the Enlightenment project, yet it also involves a turn to the rhetorical tradition. I do this
in the spirit of both a constructive hermeneutic and MacIntyre’s stress upon a living tradition as the carrier and promoter of human goods.

EMOTIVISM: AN EXPOSITION OF EARLY AND LATE MODERN ETHICS

The Shrill Tone of Public Discourse: Arbitrary Moral Utterance and Practice

Alasdair MacIntyre’s concern in After Virtue is central to that of communication ethics: attending to those goods embodied in discursive and pragmatic cultural habits (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell; Arnett, Bell, and Fritz). Not mesmerized by the glimmer of technological advancement, the sheen cast by breakthroughs in medical science, or the alleged progress of human rights and liberties via our political and social institutions, MacIntyre perceives that late modern bureaucratic society is morally languishing. Though his work is primarily a historical, theoretical argument about moral philosophy in the West, he does not begin there. Rather he establishes a pragmatic exigence from the concrete world of sociopolitical human intercourse: the shrill tone of our public discourse. The contemporary condition of moral disagreement provides pragmatic evidence that something has gone awry theoretically and societally. In fact, expressions of disagreement are “the most striking feature of contemporary moral utterance” (6). Our ethical and political debates are interminable because we lack a coherent way of adjudicating them rationally in terms of an impersonal criteria. This renders us incapable of establishing any form of substantive moral agreement. The character of moral utterance and practice is rooted in an arbitrariness that reflects a lost practical and theoretical comprehension of morality.

After Virtue opens with a ‘disquieting suggestion’: we possess mere simulacra of moral discourse and action (1-5). MacIntyre claims the present “language and practice of morality” are in a state of grave disorder (3). Though we continue to utilize ethical expressions and terms, even ones that have lingered with us from the distant past, the theoretical and sociopolitical contexts
that once gave such terminology its significance has been lost. The current state of ethical
utterance and practice is a consequence of an earlier “catastrophe” in moral philosophy that
entailed a jettisoning of those theoretical context that once gave significance to the language of
morality. The seventeenth and eighteenth century Enlightenment, as our predecessor culture,
abandoned a broad framework that had prevailed in the West since at least the time of classical
Greece. The result of this has left us bereft of the theoretical and pragmatic contexts that gave
moral speech and action their significance. In our historical moment, “we have—very largely, if
not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality” (2). We live in
a time ‘after virtue.’

Yet the current academic disciplines are incapable of discerning this catastrophe and the
resulting ethical disorder. Academic fields of study, as they are conceived of and practiced today,
are but themselves symptoms of the earlier catastrophe, having been established after it.
Therefore, these forms of inquiry lack the resources to discern it as such. In particular, the
impoverished state of moral philosophy and practice remains invisible to those disciplines
alleging a value-neutral standpoint. Such a catastrophe is “unrecognized by the academic
curriculum,” and this is how the disorder reproduces itself (4). Students are ‘nurtured’ by an
education which has as its assumed moral vision a fragmented, decontextualized simulacrum of
ethical thought, word, and deed. This contextualizes the educational formation of, to invoke
Weber, bureaucratic officials and specialists equipped with technical, administrative expertise
that promises to lead to an upwardly mobile career. The contemporary educational curriculum
and co-curriculum is oriented to the production of careerists who thrive in the contemporary
bureaucratized economy—bureaucratized in the senses that both Weber and Arendt speaks of
this as peculiarly modern. In addition to this, institutions of higher education produce another
dispositional embodiment that populates the late modern sociopolitical theater. MacIntyre’s claim that the late modern academic disciplines and university curricula that nurture society’s young adults will turn out to be crucial for my proposal later on regarding the educational and sociopolitical flipside of the bureaucrat.

The philosophical diagnosis MacIntyre gives to the grave state of disorder in which moral utterance and practice finds itself in the late modern world is the ethics of emotivism (11-22). Far more than a general designation given to social phenomena, emotivism describes an ethical theory that contends all evaluative and moral judgments “are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (12). Unlike factual judgments, which are true or false, moral judgments, according to emotivist doctrine, are merely assertions of attitudinal inclination or desiderative predilection and thus neither true nor false. Neither is it possible to secure agreement over matters of evaluative or moral judgment through a process of reasoning. In an emotivist world, if agreement is to be secured, it is accomplished “by producing certain non-rational effects on the emotions or attitudes of those who disagree with one. We use moral judgments not only to express our own feelings and attitudes [of approval or disapproval], but also precisely to produce such effects in others” (12). Among the many concerns MacIntyre has with emotivist theory is the inescapable implication that moral agents seek to inflict feelings of guilt and shame, as the non-rationally produced emotional effects of their judgments, in order to strong arm others to accept their viewpoint. A common means of producing such non-rational effects is pejorative labeling of opponent’s positions, which includes an ever expanding lexicon of neologisms, demeaning

63 MacIntyre engages the theorizing of those philosophers who serve as significant founders and exponents of emotivism: F. P. Ramsey (1931), Austin Duncan-Jones, C. L. Stevenson (1945) (12, 17). All of whom were pupils of the intuitionist G. E. Moore who authored the 1903 work Principia Ethica, which supplied an important theoretical pivot toward an emotivist moral framework (14-18).
sloganeering, and intimidation tactics such as mobbing. This scenario of emotivist discourse opens the sociopolitical world to manipulative form of human relation—a dynamic that plagues the late modern public sphere.

MacIntyre proposes that one of the most striking features of contemporary public discourse is the extent to which so much of it entails expressions of disagreement, often strident and acrimonious in character (6-8). In the absence of a communally agreed upon standard for reasoned judgments, moral and political debates are interminable. By this MacIntyre means that without a shared conception of moral order (or broad vision of the human good / of intrinsic human goods) to serve as an evaluative criteria for judgments, there appears to be no “terminus,” no resolution-establishing end point, for these debates (6). There is a conceptual incommensurability at the heart of standards employed for expressions of disagreement. Examples of rival standards that function as the basis of (caustic) expressions of disagreement include: equality versus liberty, rights versus utility/universalizability, and justice and innocence versus success and survival (6-8, 62-72). Advocates not only advance rival conclusions but also invoke and assert rival premises in defense or pursuit of their sociopolitical agenda. “From our rival conclusions we can argue back to our rival premises; but when we do arrive at our premises argument ceases and the invocation of one premise against another becomes a matter of pure assertion and counter-assertion. Hence perhaps the slightly shrill tone of some much moral debate” (8). Our first premises are conceptually incommensurable, that is they lack a common standard of adjudication. There is no established way of settling rival claims. In this context, the invocation of a principle for one’s position thinly masks a willful expression of a criteria-less preference. “Corresponding to the interminability of public argument there is at least the appearance of a disquieting private arbitrariness. It is small wonder if we become defensive and
therefore shrill” (8). In true emotivist fashion, the contentious and acerbic discourse of the late modern sociopolitical world is, according to MacIntyre, an indicator of an arbitrariness that haunts our private and public moral beliefs. The character of such public discourse is a byproduct of our lost comprehension of morality, both theoretically and pragmatically. Eventually MacIntyre will point out the stark contrast between an emotivist social world and those characterized by a shared narrative tradition. The conceptual incommensurability, arbitrary willfulness, and contentious acrimony at the heart of emotivist thought and practice reflects the absence of a coherent, though hardly monolithic, narrative tradition as a common point of evaluative and moral reference. Moral utterances are arbitrary because a defining feature of an emotivist culture is its axiological groundlessness. Alleged moral judgments are anchored by nothing more than a rootless, autonomous individualism. The emotivist self is self-referential, that is self-defining or self-authoring., a self of pure will. By contrast a culture oriented by a narrative tradition provides an ethico-poetic, axiological-metaphoric ground as common point of reference for the actions, debates, arguments, and judgments of its members. Prior to explicating MacIntyre’s notion of a narrative tradition, however, a few further comments are crucial to this project for an understanding of the significance of emotivism to bureaucratic modernity.

Emotivism purports to be an ethical theory about the meaning of sentences that render moral judgments; it attempts to “give an account of all value judgments whatsoever” (12). MacIntyre treats D. L. Stevenson as the most significant proponent of such an ethical theory. Stevenson argues that the statement ‘This is good’ is tantamount to ‘I approve of this and so should you.’ (12). This type of statement as a form of judgment has a twofold function: first, to express the speaker’s attitude, and second, to influence the hearer’s attitude. There is an equivalence between the two. Emotivism as a theory of the meaning of sentences fails, however,
for three reasons (12-14). First, to be a valid theory of the meaning of a certain type of sentences, namely those whose function it is to express moral approval or disapproval, emotivism would have to identify and characterize the feelings and attitudes that are expressed as a function of those sentences. However, emotivist moral theorists are silent on this. Besides, attempts to do so invites a ‘vacuous circularity.’ Second, it treats expressions of personal preference and expressions that are evaluative (including morally evaluative) as equivalent when these two kinds of expression derive their peculiar function from their contrast with one another. Thus emotivism’s task is doomed for failure from the outset. Third, it confuses the meaning of sentences that function to express approval/disapproval with the use of those sentences. The use of these sentences which express moral judgment has to do with function how they are used by a speaker and what their effect is upon their hearers. If considered to be a theory of use, emotivism would permit consideration of manipulative uses of sentences to produce non-rational effects on their hears that may be concealed by their meaning. As a theory of the meaning of statements expressing moral judgment, emotivism comes up wanting. However, it does offer a cogent theory of use but one that is tied to a specific stage in the decline of ethical thought and practice in the post-Enlightenment world (18). Emotivism provides no criteria for moral judgment nor an understanding of the meaning of sentences pronouncing a moral judgment.

If emotivism is true, then there are no rational means for securing agreement or resolving debates. Agreement and resolution, or perhaps more accurately compliance and imposition, are achieved as a byproduct of the use of sentences making a moral judgment, not as a byproduct of their meaning. In an emotivist sociopolitical world, expressions of approval or disapproval produce non-rational effects upon the emotions of the interlocutor or opponent. This is evident in the contemporary practices of *ad hominem* labeling of one’s opponents and of branding them and
their positions with a seemingly endless supply of pejorative neologisms that foreclose dialogue
and mutual understanding. Respect for the human condition of plurality, and the varying
positions and perspectives that accompany it as Hannah Arendt describes, is no longer valued or
tolerated (Human Condition). ‘Unimpeded’ by a conception of the common good that demands
promoting even the good of one’s political opponent, one co-culture must impose their dogma
upon the larger culture, shaming them and utilizing the coercive means of the law until they
conform to it. As sociologist James D. Hunter proposes, public discourse in the late modern
political culture, particularly in a U.S. context, is characterized by a functional Nietzscheanism
that consists in a will to dominate one’s sociopolitical opponents (To Change the World 166-69,
173-75, 275). The activity of communicatively negating another whose perspective differs is
justified by a perception of injury and anecdotes of grievance. It is these phenomena of
manipulative human intercourse about which MacIntyre’s explication of an emotivist world
seeks to make sense.

Given the absence of shared criteria for moral judgments coupled with the prevalence of
statements expressing approval/disapproval but whose use is to produce non-rational effects
upon one’s hearer, an emotivist social world is particularly vulnerable to manipulative forms of
human interactions and relations. Alasdair MacIntyre contends that a defining feature our
emotivist sociopolitical world is “the obliteration of any genuine distinction between
manipulative and non-manipulative social relations” (23). Emotivism lends itself to treating other
people as means rather than as ends that necessitate limits to one’s own preferences. MacIntyre
reasons, “To treat someone else as a means is to seek to make him or her an instrument of my
purposes by adducing whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or
that occasion. The generalizations of the sociology and psychology of persuasion are what I shall
need to guide me, not the standards of a normative rationality” (24). But in the context of an emotivist sociopolitical world, this distinction between treating people as means versus treating them as ends disappears. Here MacIntyre exposes emotivism for the version of moral instrumentalism that it is (24). For the only purpose of statements of moral evaluation is that they may be used to express one’s own preferences and to influence the feelings and attitudes of others in accordance with one’s own. A sociopolitical arena in which emotivism characterizes an understanding of the self and others is one in which the overriding dynamic is “the attempt of one will to align the attitudes, feelings, preference, and choices of another with its own. Others are always means, never ends” (24). The obliteration of this crucial distinction adds dimension to what has been stated above in relation to Arendt’s and Hunter’s work. The prevalence of ad hominem attacks on those with a differing perspective and the branding of opposing positions and people with pejorative neologisms, speech acts that begrudge the human condition of plurality, and ressentiment that manifests in discursive negation of one’s rivals reflect the elimination of this all important ethical distinction (23-25). The public domain is imagined as “nothing but a meeting place for individual wills, each with its own set of attitudes and preferences and who understand that world solely as an arena for the achievement of their own satisfaction” (25). In an emotivist social world, people need not be more than an instrument for achieving one’s own arbitrary preference.

Our prevailing and haunting arbitrariness manifests not only in the acrimonious contention of our public discourse generally—a disturbing uneasiness resulting from our axiological groundlessness—but also in the specific structuring, character types, and attitudinal postures that comprise our sociopolitical universe. MacIntyre makes a case that the erasure of this distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative relationships and interactions is
embodied socially in a few key archetypal characters: the rich aesthete, the bureaucratic manager, and the therapist. The various characters of the modern emotivist self attempt to conceal the arbitrariness of their decisions. But what MacIntyre reveals about emotivism’s defining and persistent arbitrariness, even in these characters, will come to have great import for my later proposal of another emotivist characteristic, which depends upon a link between bureaucracy and another manifestation of concealing and masking in the late modern West.

The contemporary sociopolitical world is bifurcated into the organizational and the individual. These are presented as the only available options to those within this emotivist political schema: to be among “the self-defined protagonists of individual liberty” or to side with “the self-defined protagonists of planning and regulation, of the goods which are available through bureaucratic organization” (34-35). But what seems to be a most rudimentary opposition turns out to conceal an agreement deeper still,

namely that there are only two alternative modes of social life open to us, one in which the free and arbitrary choices of individuals are sovereign and one in which the bureaucracy is sovereign, precisely so that it may limit the free and arbitrary choices of individual. Given this deep cultural agreement, it is unsurprising that the politics of modern societies oscillate between a freedom which is nothing but a lack of regulation of individual behavior and forms of collectivist control designed only to limit the anarchy of self-interest. (35)

In the emotivist sociopolitical world of late modernity an underlining arbitrariness presents itself both individualism and bureaucracy, which are simultaneously adversaries and collaborators. In light of this insight, MacIntyre designates this surprising partnership with the oxymoronic name “bureaucratic individualism” (35). The emotivist self is at home in the culture of bureaucratic
individualism, which is defined by the deep agreement that there are only two alternative modes of life available to us. Both of these modes, individualism and bureaucracy, implicitly acknowledge, in the absence of an agreed upon criteria for moral judgment, an intractable arbitrariness in the sphere of human choice and conduct. The only difference is in where their proponents land on how to deal with it. There is neither a shared vision of moral order nor a genuine common good. The emotivist self and an emotivist theory of moral judgment—whether that of Stevenson, Nietzsche, or Sartre—are bereft of an axiologically substantive notion of human life as a whole and therefore cannot escape the haunting arbitrariness of the late modern lifeworld of bureaucratic individualism. Such arbitrariness is not merely a characteristic of human agency in all times and places but rather is the specific historical product of a long historical process that results in a condition that is distinctly modern. MacIntyre unfolds an understanding of bureaucratic modernity in which the self, the forms of moral discourse, and the shape of moral judgment have been transformed so as to be uniquely characterized by a persistent and poignant arbitrariness.

The Failure of the Enlightenment Moral Project

How did modern Western societies become emotivist? The decisive moment in MacIntyre’s historical account is modern moral philosophy’s rejection of a teleological conception of the human person. The specifically modern understanding of science developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was inaugurated in part by the rejection of Aristotle’s physics, a paradigm that largely prevailed for approximately two millennia. But this new understanding of nature did not remain limited to the natural sciences. Modern moral philosophers extended this conception of nature to humans vis-à-vis ethics. This entailed dispensing with a view of human nature as pregnant with ends or purposes the realization of
which meant the fulfillment of our humanity. Prior to the Enlightenment, the dominant tradition in the West, broadly conceived, understood the good life to entail the actualization of distinctly human potential. By abandoning this teleological conception of the human person, modern moral philosophy disabused itself of the notion of human life as a whole. On the post-Enlightenment side of the historical trajectory, this loss, however, is perceived not as a loss but rather is celebrated as a “self-congratulatory gain” (34). With the invention of the autonomous individual “freed on the one hand from the social bonds of those constraining hierarchies which the modern world rejected at its birth and on the other hand from what modernity has taken to be the superstition of teleology” (34). The emotivist self, that “peculiarly modern self,” is a self liberated from traditional structures of social identity and teleology (34). With the rejection of teleology, two historical dimensions of ethics evaporates. First, an imaginative understanding of “human life as ordered to a given end” that enframes one’s life as whole fades (34). Second, the concept of virtue—an excellence of character that enables successful performance in a practice or the successful pursuit of the final telos that defines a good individual human life—becomes of little relevance. The dismissal of the broad tradition of virtue ethics results in the vanishing of a sense for the narrative unity of a human life; it no longer has the structure of a story.

The Virtues and Life as a Narrative Whole

Of what does a substantive moral order, both theoretical and practical, consist according to MacIntyre? Of what did the Enlightenment departure from such a moral order involve? MacIntyre weaves a historical account that illuminates both the comparison point against which he assesses an emotivist sociopolitical world as well as precisely what the departure from a more coherent moral order entailed. What emerges is an alternative conception of ethics to that of the dominant discourse and practice of bureaucratic individualism. In contradistinction to this
simulacrum of genuine morality and ethical social order, the broad, multifarious virtue ethics school of thought and practice is equipped with substantive criteria for action, decision-making, and moral judgment. As a quick sketch of this previous vision of moral order and the departure from it, I would like to give brief attention to four coordinates in MacIntyre’s more detailed explication: teleology, a narrative understanding of selfhood, the concept of a virtue, and the notion of a narrative tradition.

First, in the tradition of ethics that draws from the expansive conceptual categories articulated notably by Aristotle, but which reaches all the way back to heroic society, a teleological conception of the human person is decisive. A substantive moral vision of the human-as-s/he-could-be was the integrating feature of the episodes and individual actions of a human life. In other words, virtue ethics facilitates an understanding of one’s life as a narrative unity rather than treating ethics as episodic. In contrast to modern ethics curricula that frequently center around ‘hot topics,’ such as the death penalty, euthanasia, abortion, and the justice of war, among others, virtue ethics places its emphasis upon the kind of person one is becoming vis-à-vis those ends embedded in the kind of creatures we are. Rather than a series of episodes for making monumental choices that may occur at most only a few times in a typical lifespan, virtue ethics imagines human life as a kind of quest. “The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest” (219). This is what provides life as a moral endeavor with its unity, “the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life” (218). Human life is a quest for that final, overarching good in light of which all other goods are ordered and toward which all life episodes are to be directed. And yet the medieval notion of a quest involves the pursuit of a final good that is not “already adequately characterized, as miners search for gold or geologists for oil” (219).
Second, closely related to a teleological and non-episodic orientation to ethics, MacIntyre argues for a *narrative understanding of selfhood* in contradistinction to psychologistic, empirical, analytic, and existential conceptions (214-18, 221). The key distinction is that the former acknowledges the inescapable operation of dramatic resources in the background of the actions and episodes of our lives that shape personal identity. These resources—which include the notion of a story, a form of unity that is the unity of a character, and a self with a history—are concerned with far more than mere psychological continuity, psychological states, and all-or-nothing *strict identity*. The drama of the human world consists of a set of stock stories and characters, and these predate each of us. MacIntyre explains,

> We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters—roles into which we have been drafted—and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys . . . that children learn or mis-learn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. *Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words*. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. *Mythology*, in its original sense, *is at the heart of things*. Vico was right and so was Joyce. And so too of course is that moral tradition from heroic society to its medieval heirs according to which the telling of stories has a key part in educating us into the virtues. (216, emphasis mine)
Understanding who we are and our relations to others is a task that involves discerning those scripts and characters that shape our own and others identities. They constitute the drama of our social world. It is in this sense that the human person is a storytelling animal in her words and deeds. Our actions embody stories, and through our words we construct both fictitious and historic narratives.

There is no absolute begin to the life of an agent, rather each life begins in medias res (215). Our actions and lives are embedded in some history or another (214). What MacIntyre means here by history is “an enacted dramatic narrative in which the characters are also the authors. In virtue of being part of a history, humanity is “a teller of stories that aspire to truth” (216). A far cry from any notion of self-authorship or autonomous agency, MacIntyre insists that the key question here is not pertaining to what one is going to do but rather how one answers the question about the story or stories one inhabits. This is basic to belonging to human communities. We are “characters in enacted narratives,” the meaningful content and structure of which makes our individual lives intelligible (217).

The reason MacIntyre gives for the priority of narration in human communication is that conversation is the ordinary and near ubiquitous context within which individual speech-acts receive their meaning (210-11). Conversations are the form of human interactions in general and are the sense in which not only our words speak but so to do our deeds. This conversational substratum render human deeds and speech-acts as dramatically “enacted narratives (211).

MacIntyre is attentive to both the individual and the communal dimension of a narrative conception of selfhood (214-22). Each person is the subject of a personal history—a story that is

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64 Based on MacIntyre’s narrative conception of selfhood, Walter R. Fisher advanced a “narrative paradigm” of human communication, which proposes that storytelling or narration is the most basic form of human communication (“Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm”; “Narrative Paradigm”; “Clarifying”).
lived out from birth to death and that is attributable to a single person and none other (217). This individual dimension is hardly insular, however, for one is who one is largely due to who others take one to be. Nevertheless this story is tied uniquely to a single person. The specific meaning of an individual person’s life stems from that life being understood in terms of having ‘a point’ to it—that is, whether is perceived as moving “towards a climax or a telos” (217). Janie M. Harden Fritz brings the work of Hannah Arendt’s to bear on MacIntyre’s by suggesting through the notion of the moral unity of a human life both the private and the public spheres—as representative of roles, responsibilities, and areas of human engagement—are preserved as distinct domains of potentially rival practices and yet brought into an order that has a meaningful point (Professional 40-42). The myriad activities and roles a person has in private and public derive their meaning from the unity of a human life as a whole. Without this the episodes of our lives are atomized, and the self is fragmented and dispersed.

Furthermore, MacIntyre maintains that to be the subject of such a story is “to be accountable for the actions and experiences which compose a narratable life” (After 217). A narrative concept of the self obligates one to be accountable for words and deeds performed at times and places different from the very moment in which one is being asked about them. I am more than who I am right now in this isolated moment. “The self, MacIntyre explains, “inhabits a character whose unity is given as the unity of a character” (217). That we may be asked to give an account for our actions or may ask another to do so points to the communal dimension of a narrative concept of selfhood (218-22). As the subject of the story inextricably linked to my life as the actions are to a character in a novel, the meaningful content of my life story consists in large part of the meaningful content of other’s life stories. MacIntyre states, “I am part of their story, as they are pare of mine. The narrative of any one life is part of an interlocking set of
narratives” (218). This interlocking consists in no small measure of asking for and being asked to give an account of one’s words and deeds. Personal identity is publicly informed and communally constructed. Not only do we give an account of our actions but others give accounts of our actions as well. Narratives are constituted in relation to “the accountability of the self,” a subject of whom a story is being told (218). Stating what we said or did and why we did it entails the construction of a meaningful narrative account of our actions. This gives our actions a continuity and intelligibility.

Stories told about subjects understood as consisting in the unity of a character are shared and are not the exclusive possession of the one to whose life it is attached. Cultural and historical narratives of what a good life entails function as a benchmark that shapes the way we tell and enact stories and give accounts about our own life and that of others (206-09, 215, 221-23). It is in virtue of neglecting this public narrative background that MacIntyre claims existentialists, empiricists, and analytic philosophers have erred in their accounting for personal identity (212, 214-17, 221). Culturally embedded historical narratives shape individual identity, and this is the more basic ground that orients choices about how one acts or speaks in a given episode. Ethico-poetic narratives are an expression of epideictic rhetoric. As Jeffery Walker argues, *epideiktikon* precedes and grounds *pragmatikon*. Such narratives also shape how we account for our own actions and those of others as well as how others account for our actions and their own. Narrative backgrounds situate discursive action and speech-acts that takes place in the foreground. The publicity and communality of a narrative conception of the self picks up further momentum with MacIntyre’s notion of a narrative tradition. Before discussing this coordinate, MacIntyre’s understanding of a virtue extends the consideration of the self as possessing the unity of a character in the meaningful whole of a story.
Third, as means relates to ends, the concept of a virtue relates to a teleological conception of a human life and the meaning of a whole life as possessing the unity of a story (219-20). Virtues however, are not mere means but are rather means that partially constitute the final end of a good human life. Virtues are the character qualities that enable one to pursue her potential well. MacIntyre describes them as “those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good” (219). In relation to a vision of moral order, the virtues are those qualities that resist the reduction of moral utterance and practice to criteria-less preferences of arbitrary desire and a shifting will. To borrow an Augustinian metaphor and to invoke the medieval concept of a quest, virtues are those character excellences, defined in terms of ordered loves, that enable one’s gaze to remain fixed on her ultimate destination, all the while safeguarding one from derailing distractions and pitfalls as she sojourns through this world (City of God). The journey not only requires moral excellences but is itself potentially formative of the qualities it demands. “A quest is always an education” (219). It is in terms of virtues and vices that the human subject as a character has unity and moral continuity across the temporally dispersed episodes of her life’s voyage. Moving from metaphors of sojourning back to everyday human communities, the final purposes and secondary goods that define households and political bodies will greatly determine what qualities those communities require in order to be sustained. The purposes and goods that define ends are decisive for what human excellences are admitted into that group’s catalogue of virtues and their specific social content. The virtues that characterize the tradition of a community function to equip its members with the character traits
believed to be necessary for pursuing together and sharing in common those purposes and goods toward which the community is oriented. It is this notion of a tradition that provides the final coordinate for this brief snapshot of what a substantive account of moral order entails.

Fourth, in virtue of our inescapable historical and social embeddedness, humans are “bearers of a particular social identity,” an identity which is defined by the conversationally structured narrative background of a specific moral community as well as by that community’s catalogue and content of virtues. This points to MacIntyre’s notion of a tradition. Despite the protestations of the emotivist self, we are the heirs of a cultural heritage and are the un-choosing recipients of “imputed characters—roles into which we have been drafted” (216). Agentic choice and individual autonomy are hardly the most decisive factors in setting a moral course for personal identity. In this way philosophy of communication ethics privileges not the communicative agent but rather the socio-epideictic embeddedness that conditions and orients the thought, judgment, and action of that agent. We are not insulated self-initiators and self-determiners of the self that we are. The self is derivative, not originative as emotivism fancies (Arnett, Communication Ethics 6-16). But the confession of the self shaped by emotivism and bureaucratic individualism is, “I am what I myself choose to be. I can always, if I wish to, put in question what are taken to be the merely contingent social features of my existence” (MacIntyre, After Virtue 220). In actual fact, however, our social identity and roles give moral orientation and are our ethical starting points. As Charles Taylor explains, our initiation into a moral space results from our embeddedness in webs of interlocution wherein we are confronted with questions about the qualitatively higher (Sources). We respond to these questions by making qualitative distinctions, which gives us orientation in a moral space. Also articulating a communally embedded notion of the self, MacIntyre argues that such sociopolitical givens that
precede us are “in part what gives [one’s] life its own moral particularity” \(\text{(After 220)}\). Whether we explicitly choose to accept those givens or not, personal identity is inescapably shaped by the family into which one is born, the country of which one is a citizen (especially a natural-born citizen as compared to someone who is naturalized much later in life through choice), and the myriad other social particularities and roles \textit{imputed} to us. Emotivism entails a view of the self as “detachable from its social and historical roles and statuses” \(\text{(221)}\). Narrative selfhood stands in stark contrast to a Sartrean existential self to whom a history and sociopolitical particulars are always peripheral and detachable \(\text{(214, 221)}\). Instead we begin from moral particularities that are pregnant with histories. Here the contrast between the \textit{ahistorical and asocial emotivist conception of the self} and narrative selfhood are quite evident. The story of a single life, and the personal identity associated with it, is embedded in and derived from a larger, communally shared narrative from which that individual life derives its identity. Narrative selfhood acknowledges, “I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide. Notice the rebellion against my identity is always one possible mode of expressing it” \(\text{(221)}\). The self’s moral identity significantly and inescapably derives from communal memberships, present and historical.

The identity arising from these memberships is not, however, a determined destiny but rather serve as the ethical particularities from which one may quest for the good. Who we are is a result of what we inherit and how we respond to that inheritance, but we should not pretend we can disassociate ourselves from it. What is more, we should recognize that our primary moral position is one of responsiveness. MacIntyre states poignantly that “whether I like it or not, whether I recognizes it or not, [I am] one of the bearers of a tradition,” which is both historically
extended into the past and anticipates the future with a specific disposition (221). A tradition contextualizes the exercise of both reason and the virtues (221-22). Contrary to Enlightenment schools of moral and political thought, reason and tradition are hardly opposed but rather the latter is the unavoidable ethical milieu that houses reasoning. And the virtues that are integral to a tradition assist in mediating the self’s relationship to the past. Furthermore, these larger sociopolitical or cultural traditions function as the setting for practices of which institutions are the bearers. But the merit of MacIntyre’s insistence upon the relations among personal identity, moral thought and practice, and a tradition depends largely upon what he understands a tradition to be.

MacIntyre advances the idea of a living tradition, which he defines as “an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitutes that tradition” (222). It should be noted that a living tradition: (a) is communicated in the form of an argument, not as a fiat demanding unquestioned obeisance, (b) is historically dynamic, and (c) involves conflict and contestation rather than strict homogeneity (222-23). A salubrious tradition is one that is “partially constituted by an argument about the goods the purpose of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose” (222). Traditions in good order possess “continuities of conflict” (222). In the present day, neither self-avowed liberals nor modern conservatives embrace tradition in this rooted and dynamic sense. Liberals are suspicious of a past that might constrain the present or future, while conservatives merely champion an older version of liberal individualism, which itself represents a decided turn away from rootedness in the past.

The notion of a tradition is crucial for comprehending the historical and sociopolitical embeddedness of selfhood and moral utterance and practice. The goods internal to practices,
which I discuss below, and the goods integral to the moral unity of a single life as a whole are always embedded within some tradition, which has a history and is sociopolitically located. MacIntyre insists that this embedding, understood as a “narrative phenomenon,” is decisive (222). That each person’s life history is ordinarily embedded in “the larger and longer histories of a number of traditions” permits that life to become meaningfully understood (222). The moral significance of an individual life story is indebted to the broader narrative tradition—which includes its history and sociopolitical embodiments and in which that life story is rooted. A third function of the virtues, which constitutes their “point and purpose,” comes into view at this juncture (223). In addition to nourishing and facilitating the relationships involved in the attainment of the goods internal to practices and to sustaining a person’s pursuit of that overarching good that brings the unity of a story to a single life, the virtues also function to sustain those living traditions that provide practices and individual lives with their larger narrative framework and historical context. Without the relevant ethical and intellectual virtues, traditions would degenerate or fade. The cultivation and exercise of contextually relevant virtues is a principle way in which traditions, along with practices, institutions, and individual lives as the “contemporary embodiments” of traditions, are preserved in good order (223).

To the sociopolitically and historically disembedded emotivist self, articulations of the value of traditions of any kind appear to be a form of nostalgia that results in a halo effect cast upon the past. But the recognition that ethical reasoning and moral formation necessarily involve an interaction with a historically extended and sociopolitically embodied tradition is hardly reducible to a variety of “conservative antiquarianism” (223). A living tradition is neither static nor calcified. For “an adequate sense of tradition manifest itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available to the present” (223). Deliberative rhetorical
praxis in the foreground, with its temporal orientation toward decision about the future, is rooted in an epideictic discourse in the background. But the flow of influence does not move in only one direction. Deliberative speech also has the potential to reshape that epideictic discourse on which it depends, extending the narrative tradition as it proceeds into the future. It is in this sense of both historical rootedness coupled with an evolving and unspecified future that a tradition is living. A living tradition extends “a not-yet-completed narrative” (223).

To sustain such vitality, a living tradition requires not only truthfulness, courage, justice, and the relevant intellectual virtues but also another virtue that MacIntyre leaves unnamed. He defines this tradition-sustaining-excellence as “the virtue of having an adequate sense of the traditions to which one belongs or which confront one” (223). It involves a philosophical hermeneutic of the past, present, and future. As a kind of discernment capable of interpreting the narrative significance of a cultural arena for action, this virtue informs and shapes practical reasoning. The unnamed virtue to which MacIntyre bears witness here, I contend, points to the rhetorical tradition and its resources, many of which stem from conceiving of the following as unities: philosophical reflection and action, intellectual theorizing and pragmatic argumentation, wisdom and eloquence.65 Later in this chapter and then more fully in the next, I propose that the rhetorical tradition has resources for furthering the substance of and even more precisely

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65 This virtue involves a form of knowledge with at least two dimensions or uses—namely selecting the relevant principles or doctrines and applying them to the particulars of the case at hand. Such knowledge may be thought of as a combination of common sense, which Hans-Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics draws upon with reference to Giambattista Vico, and rhetorical knowledge. Rhetorical knowledge is a form of knowing that emerges from doing and is oriented toward praxis (Mootz; Ong, “Province”). Praxis, that is performative engagement in an activity as distinct from theoretical reflection upon it, produces its own kind of understanding that permits discerning judgments to be made with regard to action. Rhetorical knowledge is a kind of philosophical comportment within a practice or life pursuit. What traditions require in order to be sustained and extended is for their adherents to exercise both a kind of common-sense-philosophical-hermeneutics of a practice or of one’s life as a whole along with a pragmatic judgment rooted in rhetorical knowledge.
identifying MacIntyre’s unnamed virtues. But first the various sociopolitical embodiments of emotivism need to be explicated.

A CHARACTEROLOGY OF THE EMOTIVIST SELF: EPIDEICTIC EMBODIMENTS

Moral Philosophy Presupposes a Sociology

In *A Short History of Ethics*, MacIntyre insists that moral language and concepts are historically situated and culturally embedded. Moral concepts inevitably remain misconceived or unintelligible when detached from their concrete socio-historical particularity. Investigating the political structures, social institutions, routine cultural liturgies, and behavioral rules reveals the situatedness that grants evaluative concepts their specific meaning. Ethical terminology and evaluative predicates take on their specific meaning in the context of a particular moral community. Since the meaning of language shifts over time and in relation to institutionalized, rule-structured practices, moral concepts cannot be abstracted from their historical context. Insisting upon the embeddedness of moral language and practice turns out to be a significant theme in MacIntyre’s ethical corpus.

A key formulation of this idea of the embeddedness of moral meaning reemerges in *After Virtue*. MacIntyre proposes that “a moral philosophy . . . characteristically presupposes a sociology” (23). A moral philosophy explicitly or implicitly provides an account of the ways that philosophy is and may be embodied concretely in the sociopolitical world from which it emerges and to which it addresses (23-30). Those philosophies that do not detail what its social embodiments are, however, have not yet been fully understood. Every sociopolitical horizon, MacIntyre explains, has a *set of stock roles that are peculiar to it*. Going beyond the generic roles that appear widely in societies, such as that of parents, children, rules, and many occupations, those roles that uniquely reveal the ethical meaning of a sociopolitical world are
specifically designated as *characters.* A poetic tradition supplies its cultural audience with a set of stock characters. MacIntyre employs the term ‘character’ here to address both the dramatic and ethical dimension of what a society’s set of stock characters discloses about that society. This unites the poetic and the ethical, constituting the epideictic ground of meaning with which embodied characters are pregnant. The characterological comportments that define the meaning of a sociopolitical world enables consideration of axiological and narrative resources as an inseparable unity in the concrete. The salient point here is that characters supply the specific attitudinal and pragmatic embodiments of a moral philosophy in a given concrete world of human activity that manifests the *ethical* and *strored* significance of that philosophy and that world. Characters are “the moral representatives of their culture,” embodying the specific drama of that world (28). It is in this combined sense of ethics and poetics that I also refer to these characters as *epideictic embodiments.*

MacIntyre insists that comprehending a specific set of stock character is a hermeneutic and evaluative key to the significance and legitimacy of an ethical theory (23-30). It provides a semio-rhetorical point of entry for interpreting the motivations and meanings of actors in a given pragmatic field. Any moral philosophy that does not investigate the unique set of stock characters that serve as that philosophy’s sociopolitical embodiment must be made explicit in order for its significance and merits to be evaluated. Moral philosophy since G. E. Moore has neglected on of its key tasks; late modern ethical theorizing on the whole has been narrowed and conducted without reference to the kind of self that attitudinally and pragmatically represents that ethic. In true twentieth century fashion, emotivist ethicists have not explicitly articulated such epideictically-structured, characterological embodiments of the self in an emotivist sociopolitical arena. MacIntyre embarks on this task in order to reveal the full significance of
emotivism as a moral philosophy. MacIntyre identifies the rich aesthete, the therapist, and the bureaucrat as ethico-dramatic characters that embody metaphysical and moral ideals on the emotivist sociopolitical stage. Prior to addressing each of these characters distinctly, we should consider certain features of our emotivist ecosystem they all share.

_Keys to the Social Context of Emotivism_

MacIntyre proposes several keys to understanding the sociopolitical context of emotivism and its related epideictic embodiments. First, emotivism is reflected in the contemporary bifurcation of the sociopolitical world into the communal-organizational and the individual (34-35). This binary opposition finds its inner representation in the emotivist self that conceived apart from its social roles and responsibilities and from any communion with those of the past. The emotivist self is asocial and ahistorical because it is self-referential. Therefore the sociopolitical world into which the self is gathered intrinsically has nothing to do with our individual good – individualism and bureaucratic collectivism (34-35). The obligations of our sociopolitical roles are incommensurable with the individual self. These are the conceptual assumptions that undergird political debates in the modern West between individualism and collectivism. Either the arbitrary choices of individuals are sovereign and inviolable or collectivist controls are sovereign and arbitrarily limits the free choices of individuals. _Autonomous individualism_ appears in the political advocacy for freedom understood as the lack of regulations and the absence of constraints upon the individual. _Bureaucratic collectivism_ aims to control the anarchy of self-interest. Neither is capable of a coherent account of a ‘common good’ or of a substantive conception of human life as a narrative whole with a meaningful point or end. These contemporary political bifurcations nevertheless mask an underlying agreement. Individualism and bureaucracy are simultaneously “antagonists” and “partners” (35). This insight prompts
MacIntyre to designate this agreement as the seemingly oxymoronic bureaucratic individualism. Both apotheosize an arbitrary expression of the will and share common assumptions about the self. This will be important for the attitudinal embodiment I propose later in this chapter, a disposition that stand in relation to bureau-managerial expertise.

Second, emotivism cannot be treated as identical to any particular moral attitude, point of view, or specific ethical content, such as maxims, because its judgments are ultimately criterion-less (31-32, 34). Emotivism depends on arbitrary criteria for moral discourse. The modern self, which is to say the emotivist self, possesses no limits upon which to make moral judgments. Such limits are only derived from an impersonal criteria that grounds moral reasoning and rational decision-making. This is precisely what emotivism lacks. “Everything may be criticized from whatever standpoint the self has adopted, including the self’s choice of standpoint to adopt” (31). The absence of rational criteria external to an agent’s arbitrary desires results in what MacIntyre refers to as a “democratization of moral agency” since such a self is limited neither by social roles and responsibilities nor by cultural and institutional practices (31, 32). This self-referential adoption of standpoint may expressed through two, seemingly incompatible, extremes of the democratized self, a self which MacIntyre treats as bereft of any “necessary social content . . . [or] social identity” and which “can then be anything, can assume any role or take any point of view, because it is in and of itself nothing” (32). The first is represented by Jean-Paul Sartre who treats the self as an open center of infinite possibilities that is free and distinct from any social roles it may momentarily occupy. In contrast to traditional societies in which group identification and obligation is not considered to be an accidental quality, Sartre’s self is a kind of social ghost that is not visible to any social collective, a social stranger that is not tied to any identity defining community. Erving Goffman represents that second option in his reduction of
the self to its social roles; the self is identical to its social roles. He “has liquidated the self into its role-playing, arguing that the self is no more than ‘a peg’ on which the clothes of the role are hung” (32). The self is an empty box that the society fills. However, there is a fundamental agreement beneath the surface level disagreement of these two: “both see the self as entirely set over against the social world” (32). The self possesses no coherent history in light of which its transitions from one state of moral commitment to another has meaningful sense; the modern self has no continuity through time.66

Third, and the most significant of these keys for this chapter, emotivism entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations (23–25). In the absence of impersonal criteria for moral utterance and practice, the emotivist self, in its various social manifestations, is a self-referential self. The modern self is conceived of as without and as not requiring historical or cultural ground under foot. The haunting arbitrariness of moral decisions and judgments this entails deprives human relations of an axiologically substantive limit for speech and action. In the absence of impersonal criteria—such as a conception of human life, both individually and corporately, as ordered to a given end—other people may be treated as mere means to the satisfaction of one’s own desired intentions (23-24, 34). This opens the door to a “moral instrumentalism” wherein all that guides one’s decisions and actions are “the generalizations of the sociology and psychology of persuasion” rather than “the standards of a normative rationality” (24). Evaluative utterance and moral judgment have no genuine ethical meaning but rather are used to express one’s own preferences or attitudes and to transform the feelings or preferences of others (11-14, 24). Thus if shaming another person or group publicly or if utilizing euphemistic language and crafting

66 Contrast this self with the portrait of Augustine and his many “conversions” in Confessions.
slogans that mislead is effective for shifting public opinion and achieving the political actors’ purposes, then, as the saying goes, *by all means*. Rather than engaging another’s positions or actions by *means* of reasoned argumentation, emotivist discourse assumes the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative means is illusory. No substantive impersonal criteria supplies axiological standards for moral reasoning and judgment. In the absence of recourse to an impersonal criteria for ethical reasoning, discourse, and action, human relations come to be characterized by the achievement of one’s will through *the ability to influence the wills of others by nearly any means*. MacIntyre contends that moral and political discourse in an emotivist ecosystem consists in persuading the attitudes and decisions of others to align with one’s own will, approaching other humans as a means to one’s own arbitrary preferences (24). The implications for applied communication contexts are staggering. From integrated marketing and political communication to interpersonal and intercultural communication, if guided by the default modes of an emotivist milieu, we are incapable of giving an account for what qualifies communicative interactions with others as manipulative and nonmanipulative. With recourse to MacIntyre, Fritz’s treats the crisis of civility in the workplace as a tangible manifestation of the loss of an agreed upon impersonal criteria, in the form of an overarching good for human life, for moral utterance and of the obliterated distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative public relationships (*Professional*). As a mode of ‘moral’ engagement, ethical instrumentalism produces manipulative human relations because there are no ethical standards to guide action and by which to distinguish between manipulative and non-manipulative social intercourse. For these reasons, a manipulative mode of human engagement has prevailed in an emotivist sociopolitical world. In sum, keeping these keys to an emotivist sociopolitical world in mind brings further understanding to MacIntyre’s discussion characters as representatives of that world.
In an effort to complete one of the key tasks of a moral philosophy, which emotivist ethicists on the whole omit, MacIntyre proposes three archetypal characters that exemplify the social embodiments of emotivism: the Rich Aesthete, the Therapist, and the Bureaucratic Manager (24-31). These characters embody the key features of an emotivist cultural but usually in different social settings and in the service of specific social interests vis-à-vis the loss of a capacity to distinguish between manipulative and nonmanipulative relations (24, 30). Each of these characters conceals an underlying arbitrariness to their pragmatic decisions. For the purposes of my project, I will provide brief explanation of the first two characters but a more extended discussion of the third one in order to further an understanding of bureaucratic modernity.

The Rich Aesthete and her attitude reflects the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations in the social environments characterized by pleasurable entertainment as an antidote to the problem of enjoyment in life yet with a tie to the conditions of the modern marketplace (24-25). The rich aesthete aims to counteract the boredom and malaise of modern life through leisure experiences that provide entertainment. Whether they will the good of others or not in their pursuit of self-entertainment is not a matter of evaluative or moral judgment. Furthermore, the well-to-do seeker of pleasurable experiences derives the means to do so from a characteristically modern abundance of wealth. Relatedly, her leisure activities are informed by the metaphor of consumption (24). She consumes and is

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67 In his book *Acedia and Its Discontents: Metaphysical Boredom in an Empire of Desire*, philosopher R. J. Snell interprets this late modern phenomenon of malaise and boredom in terms of the vice of *acedia* or sloth. Distinguishing this character deficit from mere laziness, Snell contends that sloth entails a repugnance toward being, a disgust with ‘the everyday,’ and the wish to escape the limits with which reality confronts human willing and existence.
consumed by others, manifesting the underlying *structure* of manipulative social intercourse and moral instrumentalism in an emotivist ecosystem. The agora, functioning either as a meeting place of public affairs or as marketplace, is the site wherein the wills of autonomous individuals collide in the pursuit of their own pleasurable entertainment. The aesthetic attitude gives rise to an interpretation of “reality as a series of opportunities for [one’s] enjoyment” and of boredom as “the last enemy” to be overcome (25). It is this attitude of the rich aesthete, regardless of whether one is actually wealthy or not, that matters since this character type represents a defining aspiration of an emotivist sociopolitical world.

Another moral representative of an emotivist culture is the Therapist whose interest is preoccupied with a certain category of techniques set within in the environment of personal life (30-31). In the absence of a distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative modes, the therapist grabs hold of the psychology of persuasion all the while she is bereft of the normative standards that inform practical-moral reasoning. While the rich aesthete enjoys an endless supply of means that are in search of ends upon which they may be lavished, the therapist is defined in terms of those techniques that are effective for producing the desired end of enjoyable inner subjective states. “Psychological effectiveness” is a matter of mastering those techniques the psychology of persuasion makes available to us for influencing our mental and emotional condition and “transforming neurotic symptoms into directed energy, maladjusted individuals into well-adjusted ones” (30, 31). It is not the case that the mental health profession of counseling and therapy is inherently problematic or uniquely representative of an emotivist culture. What is, however, ethically problematic and specifically representative of emotivism’s evaluative and moral arbitrariness is the therapeutic mode as a paradigmatic attitude that
reshapes other cultural spheres such as education, religion, and politics. With a new set of expectations and standards imposed upon these and other spheres, effective application of techniques and overall success within them is evaluated in terms of achieving subjectively desirable inner states. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the therapist for an understanding of emotivism. Yet, the final character on which MacIntyre elaborates, the bureaucratic manager, is of paramount significance for comprehending the relationship between emotivism and bureaucratic modernity.

The Bureaucratic Manager

A third character appears in the milieu of modern organizational life with its bureaucratic structures, in both the political and economic spheres, and whose particular interest is work and its tasks (25). MacIntyre considers the Manager to be the “dominant figure of the contemporary scene” (74). The obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative human relations appears in the realm of leisure for the rich aesthete, the milieu of personal life for the therapist, and the socio-institutional environment of political and economic relationships for the bureaucratic manager (30). Three aspects about this figure who looms large on the emotivist sociopolitical stage will shape my discussion here: bureaucratic-administrative rationality, the justification of managerial authority, and social scientific expertise.

First, the manager’s success depends in large part upon skill in the exercise of administrative logic. In contrast to the aesthete who is in search of ends, the bureaucratic

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68 Sociologist Christian Smith’s characterization of much late modern religious understanding and expression in the contemporary United States as “moralistic therapeutic deism” points to ways in which the therapeutic mode invades and reinterprets religious understanding and practice. In *The Revolt of the Elites*, Christopher Lasch also highlights the ascendency of the therapeutic in contemporary American culture in general and in religious understanding in particular.

69 There is potential here for considering MacIntyre’s discussion of therapeutic effectiveness and success as reflective of an emotivist sociopolitical world alongside of Hannah Arendt’s explication of the pain-pleasure calculus as an ‘ethical’ standard vis-à-vis modern moral philosophy and the rise of the social, which I discuss in chapter 3.
manager, like the therapist, aims at finding the most effective means for predetermined, but arbitrarily chosen, ends. In fact, “the manager treats ends as given, as outside his scope” (30). With this characterological propensity, we have returned once again to the central moral flaw Arendt discerns in Eichmann the bureaucrat—the failure to think morally and to render judgments about the purposes toward which one’s individual efforts are being directed. Ends are prescribe to the bureaucratic manager who must utilize the most efficient and effective techniques for achieving those goals. The ability to effectively allocate and reallocate an organization’s “available resources, both human and non-human,” toward the ends given to them, is one of the chief responsibilities that defines the character of the bureaucratic manager (25). MacIntyre explains that the bureaucratic manager’s “concern is with technique, with effectiveness in transforming raw materials into final products, unskilled labor into skilled labor, investment into profits,” political problems into administrative successes (30).

In her orientation to means rather than ends, the form of rationality employed by the bureaucratic manager is instrumental and its myriad varieties. MacIntyre succinctly defines \textit{bureaucratic rationality} as “the rationality of matching means to ends economically and efficiently” (25). This entails calculative, procedural, methodological, technical, and administrative modes of thinking and decision-making. That the therapist and the manager restrict themselves to only those matters wherein rational agreement is possible establishes their authority and status as “uncontested figures” (30). In virtue of their role, both the therapist and the manager are incapable of moral deliberation and argumentation because, according to their own perception of the matter, they allegedly engage in discourse that pertains to “the realm of fact, the realm of means, the realm of measurable effectiveness” (30). Both the therapist and the manager claim to be able to \textit{measure} the effectiveness of their use of techniques—the former in
terms of a calculation regarding one’s own subjective inner states and the latter in terms of quantifiable outcomes of political or marketplace work. Bureaucratic rationality and the claim to be able to measure and assess the effectiveness of means applied to ends turns out to be pivotal for managerial authority and its justification.\textsuperscript{70}

Second, the manner in which managerial authority is justified is another aspect that reveals the significance of the bureaucratic manager. As a locus for the prevalence of bureaucratic rationality, the modern organization, both public-civic and private-economic, is a key environment that gives rise to the moral content of emotivism (27-31). With the rejection of a teleological conception of the human person—that is one whose nature is pregnant with those ends the achievement of which enframes one’s life as a narrative whole—the adoption of another set of ends toward which action is to be directed became a key problem with which modern moral philosophy grappled. With emotivism, as with Nietzsche, selection of moral values or ends for action is vindicated on thoroughly subjective grounds. Emotivism makes the adoption of ends or values a matter of irreducible choice. Modern bureaucracy, and the managerial authority on which it depends, exists in an emotivist ecosystem as an attempt to redress this underlying arbitrariness. But managerial justification merely conceals the arbitrary preference at the groundless source of choice of ends in terms of which bureaucratic rationality attempts to apply the most effective means. In Nietzschean fashion, will triumphs over reason in the individual

\textsuperscript{70} The increasing imposition of assessment upon learning in educational institutions of nearly all types—from the construction of measurable learning outcomes or objectives, the delineation of competencies in the form of rubrics, and the implementation of assessment methods and instruments to satisfying accrediting agencies—is a key marker of the bureaucratization of education in general and higher education in particular. The expansion of such efforts makes it difficult to argue that we presently have moved altogether beyond bureaucratic modernity to a thoroughly postbureaucratic organization of society and institutions. What we have instead is a hypertextuality of organizational forms, as I discuss in the first chapter of this dissertation project. Brendan McSweeny’s essay “Are We Living in a Post-Bureaucratic Epoch?” encourages such a line of thought. McSweeny’s research shows that though there has been an ascendance of postbureaucratic forms of organization, the bureaucratic still persists, thereby contesting the thesis of epochal transformation central to much discussion of the postbureaucratic. It is not that the postbureaucratic replaces the bureaucratic but that former has emerged and now exists alongside of the latter.
agent’s selection of values (26-27, 109, 113-15). MacIntyre observes an unsuspecting link between Nietzschean willfulness and Weberian bureaucracy. The second chapter of this project is dedicated to an understanding of Max Weber’s characterization of modern society as distinct from its predecessors. Modern bureaucracy, in both political and economic organizations, is the predominant concrete structural manifestation of the uniquely modern rational-legal system of authority. *Economy and Society* is a comparative, historical analysis—one that is primarily descriptive in nature, descriptive of the ways societal systems of authority are legitimized and organized. But MacIntyre identifies another thread in Weberian thought on the whole: the influence of Nietzsche upon Weber’s assumptions about morality in general and the individual’s adoption of ‘values’ as ends for action in particular. In virtue of this, MacIntyre charges that “Weber’s thought embodies just those dichotomies which emotivism embodies, and obliterates just those distinction to which emotivism has to be blind” (26). This further establishes for MacIntyre the arbitrary preference and exercise of power at the core of instrumental-bureaucratic rationality.

A contemporary person might object to the accusation that only the Nietzschean’s or emotivist’s choice of ends is uniquely arbitrary—more specifically, that ancient and medieval ethics, specifically the broad tradition of the virtues, also entails an individual’s arbitrary selection of ends even if those ends are communally agreed upon (118). They might contend that such manner of selection is the inescapable situation for moral agents as such, not a situation peculiar to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment moral thought and practice. The assumption here is that the agent’s adoption of the virtue ethics tradition—or even that a tradition’s historically adopted understanding of virtues—entails an irreducible choice of ends without any rational grounds. This objection, however, involves question begging. It requires that all come to
the table of conversation about ends as Nietzscheans or as his existentialist and emotivist successors (117). This objection assumes, but neither acknowledges nor argumentatively defends, emotivism as its starting point. What the contemporary objector takes for granted as true is that teleology is a superstition. Such an objector presupposes a certain, non-neutral conception of the self not only as ahistorical and asocial but also as ateleological. It is from this condition that such a self must then exercise her will in the selection of standards and purposes for her action in the absence of rational justification for it. It is only from the standpoint of already presupposing such an understanding of the self that the contemporary objector imagines the Aristotelian, Augustinian, Thomist, and Jewish and Islamic eudaemonist to similarly make what is at root an irreducibly arbitrary choice of the will (After Virtue 117-120; Three Rival Versions 105-08). It imposes upon them an assumption they do not make, namely that the situation of the self is inherently non-teleological in the broad Aristotelian sense and therefore choice about ends is inescapably subjective, arbitrary, and a matter of an irreducible will. Therein lies the tautology of the contemporary objector who assumes and imposes an ‘emotivist self’ in order to argue that the situation of their opponents is the same as their own, namely being confronted with an irrational choice of the will, the irrational adoption of value positions and standards (113-14). But those drawing from what MacIntyre refers to as the classical tradition with its teleological view of humankind, a viewpoint of which Aristotle is both an inheritor and a stimulus, presuppose at root a different conception of the self and of the world that self inhabits (119-20). It is in virtue of this teleological conception of the human person, along with our social and historical embeddedness, that gives rise to a notion of narrative selfhood (After Virtue; Three Rival Versions 62-63, 137-40, 196-97). Unlike the emotivist self, narrative selfhood as discussed by MacIntyre presupposes that a human person is the kind of creature whose very being is
pregnant with an *overarching point or purpose* the achievement of which equips her with the ability to understand her life in terms of a narrative unity. This final end is given; it is not the product of the choice of an individual or communal will but is to be discovered through moral inquiry of a theoretical and practical nature (*Three Rival Versions* 62-63, 67, 80, 138-39). Presupposing the existence of such a final end emerges from beginning with a decidedly different conception of the self. The contemporary objection that all moral agents, even the non-emotivist and non-Nietzschean, are in a situation of arbitrary, subjective choice in fact begs the question by first assuming an emotivist, and therefore basically Nietzschean, imaginary of the self.

The justification provided for managerial authority is an attempt in the various settings of modern bureaucratic structures to compensate for the irreducible arbitrary choice of ends that characterizes emotivism (26-27). But it is not the bureaucratic manager alone who seek seeks the authority and power modern bureaucracy affords in an ecosystem of moral arbitrariness. MacIntyre argues that as contemporary “Marxists organize and move toward power they always do and have become Weberians in substance, even if they remain Marxists in rhetoric; for in our culture we know of no organized movement towards power which is not bureaucratic and managerial in mode and we know of no justifications for authority which are not Weberian in form” (109). What unites the manager, the justification of managerial authority, and allegedly neutral bureaucratic rationality with deeply partisan political attitudes and activity, whether on the left or the right, is an emotivist conception of the self as ateleological, asocial, and ahistorical. Such an understanding of the self assumes that the moral agent’s basic situation is one characterized by an irreducible and arbitrary will that makes irrational choices regarding the adoption of those values and ends that will guide action. In this dissertation concerning
bureaucratic modernity, I propose that ideological certitude turns out to be the flipside to bureaucratic expertise on the same emotivist coin. Modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic in the form of an emotivism that confronts individuals and communities with a socio-moral situation of arbitrary choice, to which social scientific expertise and ideology are presented as remedies. The common agreement between them, however, is over a shared conception of the self and the irrational adoption of value positions.

Third, in addition to the vindication of managerial authority and its relation to bureaucratic rationality, the legitimacy of the bureaucratic manager in an emotivist ecosystem hinges significantly upon a notion of social scientific expertise. The nearly uncontestable authority of “managerial expertise” owes its status to a conception of the social sciences as offering a set of lawlike generalizations akin to the natural sciences (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 88). Over the past two of centuries, the aspiration of the social sciences on the whole, MacIntyre avers, is to supply law-like generalizations for the social world and its phenomena that “do not differ in their logical form from those applicable to natural phenomena in general” (88). It is to such law-like generalizations that the techno-bureaucratic, managerial expert alleges to appeal as the basis for its persuasive force in private and public life.71 The manager is propped up by the central claim of characteristically modern social sciences. The point of social scientific law-like

71 The generalizations of the sociology and psychology of persuasion mentioned earlier guide through descriptive analysis of human conduct. These descriptions become prescriptive through the dictates of effectiveness and its calculable poofs, which ultimately conceal an agent’s or group’s arbitrary preferences of will. This aspect of the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative human relations correlates with emotivist characters. The generalizations of the psychology of persuasion perhaps correspond more to the rich aesthete in the social context of leisure and to the therapist in the social context of personal life. The generalizations of the sociology of persuasive influence appear to be more relevant to the bureaucratic manager in the context of modern organizational life, in both private and public sectors. The claim that ethically normative standards have become supplanted by the sociology of persuasion in an emotivist milieu, provides a bridge for considering the grounds of vindication for managerial authority in relation to social science expertise as merely a mask for arbitrary preference. For social scientific expertise attends to facts devoid of considerations of value and is incapable of supplying anything that approximates “the standards of normative rationality” (24, 84-108).
generalizations is to provide decision-making guidance for a sociopolitical people who meet one another in the public sphere and marketplace with incommensurable ethical starting points.

The social sciences, with their law-like character, are seen as a remedy for decision-making by arbitrary preference, which ensues from the loss of shared, public ethical ground. In modern society and its political and economic organizations, the social sciences equip the possessor of their knowledge to advise and to manage. MacIntyre explains, “For the central function of the social scientist as expert advisor or manager is to predict the outcomes of alternative policies, and if his predictions do not derive from a knowledge of law-like generalizations, the status of the social scientist as predictor becomes endangered” (89). And, this record of predictions turns out to be quite poor because the “social sciences are predictively weak” (89). This is so because human conduct is indeterminate and because human affairs has multiple sources of unpredictability (90-102). The measure of predictability in human affairs that does exist, such as the necessity of coordinate social activities, has very little to do with the findings of the modern social sciences. What is more, that modern social scientific communities are extraordinarily tolerant of conflicting claims about human affairs and the allegedly law-like social world stands in stark contrast to how natural scientific communities respond to such occurrences wherein such conflicts must be resolved in one form another. What cannot happen in the later kind of communities is an allowance of both claims to exist simultaneously as they are. The failure to discover any such law-like generalizations comparable to those found in the natural sciences, claims MacIntyre, is in reality the salient fact of the social sciences. “The alleged laws,” claims MacIntyre, “all turn out to be false” (88). In the end, what postures as a solution to the problem of criterion-less choice turns out to be another symptom of the emotivist disorder, merely masking the arbitrariness at the root of bureaucratic modernity. In the absence
of a broadly shared narrative tradition, bureaucratic rationality, managerial authority, and social scientific expertise condition the manager in modern organizational life. Practical reason has been replaced and largely forgotten. It is no longer a publicly recognizable source of advisement and leadership in society and organizations.


Immersed within the lifeworld of emotivism, it may be difficult for us to imagine what a different form of rationality and manner of structuring organizational life may entail. What would a contrast to this managerial mode vis-à-vis bureaucratic rationality and social scientific expertise look like? MacIntyre’s account of a practice contains within it an understanding of internal and external goods that permits subsequently a conception of the relationship between instrumental forms of thought and moral-practical ways of thinking, which is integral to the purposes of this dissertation (After 187-196). He defines a practice as “a socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended” (187). The game of football is a practice as is chess, fields of inquiry such as physics or history, and fine arts such as painting, among others, but merely throwing a football around in the backyard is not. The significance of this definition of a practice to my present discussion is that it contextualizes an understanding of goods internal to array of human social activities. The excellent performance of those activities entails the achievement of the goods internal to them. Thus MacIntyre argues that with regard to practices, “the authority of both goods and standards
operates in such a way as to rule out all subjectivist and emotivist analyses of judgment” (190). Practice-internal-goods and related standards of excellence supply benchmarks against which choices and actions may be evaluated in accordance with non-arbitrary criteria. Furthermore, virtues are human qualities that equip us to achieve goods internal to practices and thus characterize the community of a practice—that is virtues characterize the relationship among the practice’s practitioners. MacIntyre argues that a practice thus defined requires at the very least some notion of justice, honesty/truthfulness, and courage. These virtues partially constitute the very notion of communities of practice as such. Without these and possibly other virtues—the specific content of and relation among which will vary significantly based on differing spatiotemporal contexts—such communities would never form nor could they be sustained.

While virtues are necessary they are not sufficient for the successful achievement of goods internal to practices. Among other things, technical skills are also required. While successful performance in a practice cannot be reduced to technical execution, relevant techniques and skills are vital in nearly any practice, yet they ought to serve the attainment of those practice-internal-goods.

Practices, according to MacIntyre, ought not to be confused with institutions (188-98). Practices and institutions share an intimate relation, one consisting of both mutual dependence and conflict simultaneously—which has implications for the relationship between practice-internal and practice-external goods. Institutions are necessary because in most cases they are bearers and preservers of practices. “For no practices,” MacIntyre maintains, “can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions” (194). The continued existence of a practice in the human world requires aid from institutional resources, that is goods internal to the existence and administration of institutional life. Integral to their raison d'etre, institutions aims at procuring
and leveraging material and symbolic resources, such as money, fame, status, and power. Without these institution-internal-goods, institutions would not exist. But these institutional goods are extrinsic to the very practice they are deployed to support and sustain. To the pursuits within a practice and to the goods that define it, money and power, for example, are external rewards. They do not constitute the activities of the practice as such. Institutions depend upon and facilitate the possibility for the continuous performance of a practice. Though the resources they pursue are internal to their own existence, money, power, status, and fame are external rewards vis-à-vis the practice. External rewards are not genuine indicators of the successful achievement of practice-internal-goods. The role of the virtues within a practice is to safeguard its practitioners from being derailed by the enticements of goods internal to institutions and thereby distracted from pursuing the practice’s internal goods. Virtues facilitate successful pursuit of the practice in accordance with its standards of excellence and provide for the subordination of institutional goods to the goods of a practice.

Practices not only depend upon institutions but the goods internal to institutions often compete with goods internal to practices. Practice-internal-goods and institutional goods have an intimate relation of both cooperation and competition. MacIntyre explains complex intimacy:

Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions—and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question—that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable of the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential function of the virtues is
clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.

Yet if institutions do have corrupting power, the making and sustaining of forms of human community—and therefore of institutions—itself has all the characteristics of a practice. (194)

Practices represent a cooperative form of human activity, yet they benefit enormously from the competitiveness of institutions. This sets up a potential threat to practices. Practices need institutions to procure institutional goods, but those goods that are internal to intuitions and the competitive sociopolitical arena in which institutions operate are precisely those that are external to practices. The further significance of the role of technical skills reemerges here in relation to virtues. Techniques and skills are often part of practices but are also vital to the administration of institutions and the achievement of institutional goods. Practices must not only guard against being defined predominantly or exclusively in terms of technical skills but also against an intrusion of technical skills so important to the administration of institutions.

Practice-internal-goods stand in relation to institution-internal-goods as practical reason stands in relation to instrumental rationality. The argument running throughout this project is not one of opposition to instrumental thought as such but to its dominance over moral-practical reasoning. Bureaucratic modernity, understood in relation to the emotivist sociopolitical milieu of the late modern West, ruptures the intimacy between technical-instrumental thought and substantive-practical thought vis-à-vis human conduct and decision-making, marginalizing and subordinating the latter in relation to the former. In modern bureaucratic society this cripples an individual’s and a community’s capacity to consider a course of action in terms of goods internal to practices and in terms of intrinsic human goods related to one’s life as a narrative unity, the
unity of a whole. Instrumental rationality is incapable of such an axiologically substantive account. It is an altogether different from of thinking. In the absence or sever diminishment of practical reason, the form of thought that comes to dominate in an emotivist order, which is structured by unconstrained expressions of criteria-less preference, is (nearly) exclusively nothing more than an application of means to an arbitrarily desired end. Filling this void of axiologically-substantive reasoning in relation to an epideictically-rooted narrative tradition, another simulacrum of morality appears in the embodied form of a sociopolitical character type on the dramatic stage of modern bureaucratic society.

While MacIntyres’ account of a practice provides an alternative to the form of decision-making, rationality, and organizational life represented by the bureaucratic manager, there is another alternative that merits attention here. However, this other attitudinal comportment is not an alternative to emotivism but rather another, albeit contrasting, mode within it that also manifests the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative forms of social intercourse.

ELABORATING EMOTIVISM’S SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTENT

Protest, Indignation, and Ideology

It is important to restate that MacIntyre never claims the three characters he outlines are the only ethico-dramatic embodiments of an emotivist sociopolitical world. Rather they represent a first significant step in spelling out the social content of emotivist moral philosophy, a vital task emotivist ethicists themselves have neglected. MacIntyre discusses additional embodied elements, from attitudes to activities, that manifest the key features of an emotivist ecosystem, especially the dynamic of making illusory the pragmatic distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative human relationships. MacIntyre’s comments on protest, indignation, and
(theories of) ideology serve as significant intimations for my purposes here (64, 68-72, 86, 109-10). Bureaucratic authority, rationality, and expertise define one end of the emotivist spectrum while a decidedly adversarial and advocatistical attitude defines the other. In this sense, both alleged bureaucratic neutrality and combative partisanship participate in the same moral horizon and as a consequence contribute to the shrill tone of public discourse. While neither protest, indignation, nor ideology are themselves characters, they nevertheless represent a mode of engagement shaped by the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative kinds of human relations. These remarks merit further attention in order to expand both our comprehension of the ethical drama of emotivism and our understanding of bureaucratic modernity.

While discussing the incommensurability of the language of *rights* with the language of *utility*—the incommensurability of ‘natural rights’ and ‘human rights’ with defenses given in terms of the collective aggregate of an optimal pleasure-pain ratio on the individual level—MacIntyre observes the rise of protest in contemporary sociopolitical life (62-72). The culture of bureaucratic individualism presents *autonomous individualism* and *bureaucratic collectivism* as though they were the only available options for one’s mode of life. The former make their public appeals in terms of rights while the later advance their cause in terms of utility. Each claims to provide an objective criteria for action but in actual fact supplies only a mask for arbitrary preference. In emotivist fashion, their characteristic moral statements provide not a *meaningful* account of impersonal criteria for moral and evaluative judgment but rather conceptual and linguistic resources for instrumental persuasive *use* in moral and political debates. MacIntyre explains,
The concept of rights was generated to serve one set of purposes as part of the social invention of the autonomous moral agent; the concept of utility was devised for quite another set of purposes. And both were elaborated in a situation in which substitute artifacts for the concepts of an older and more traditional morality were required, substitutes that had to have a radically innovative character if they were to give even an appearance of performing their new social functions. Hence when claims invoking rights are matched against claims appealing to utility or when either or both are matched against claims based on some traditional concepts of justice, it is not surprising that there is no rational way of deciding which type of claim is to be given priority or how one is to be weighted against the other. Moral incommensurability is itself the product of a particular historical conjunction. (70)

In the absence of a common measure for achieving even the possibility of a reasoned resolution between rival sociopolitical claims, protest and indignation have become the instruments for victory, and manipulatively persuasive ones at that. The discourses of rights and of utility are leveraged in an effort to produce non-rational effects upon the emotions and feelings in the court of public opinion. For the purpose of achieving their agenda, sociopolitical actors make recourse to a sociology and psychology of persuasion that serves as a replacement for an impersonal moral criteria as the source for reasoned adjudication for sociopolitical conflicts. Once again, such a political milieu opens the door for manipulative relations. The language of rights and utility instantiates a simulacrum of rationality and “conceals the arbitrariness of the will and power at work in its resolution” (71).

It is no wonder that in the politics of modern societies indignation and protest would ensue as persuasive weapons for triumphing over one’s opponents given one’s own party
allegiances in the interminable debates that characterize bureaucratic individualism. MacIntyre identifies contemporary protest as a social embodiment of emotivism, particularly insofar it is put to ideological uses (64, 68-72). In contrast to earlier expressions of protest, which involved bearing witness to something in a positive sense, characteristically modern protest entails a posture of witnessing against. In light of this, indignation is the typical ethos of late modern protest, which is predominantly negative in its sense and practice. Indignant protest in an emotivist ecosystem tends to be “a reaction to the alleged invasion of someone’s rights in the name of someone else’s utility” (71). The tone of such communicative engagement is acrimonious, an attitude stemming from the impossibility of winning or losing the argument on the basis of reasoning together—impossible due to the nature of the emotivist opposition of rights and utility. It turns out that protesters in actual fact speak primarily to one another since their premises and conclusions cannot be vindicated rationally by the general public as an audience. Modern indignation and protest is fundamentally monologic. MacIntyre explains, “The effects of incommensurability ensure that protestors rarely have anyone else to talk to but themselves” (71). The outward directedness of their utterances aims at producing non-rational effects upon public sentiment. By this means victory may be achieved. In the emotivist politics of modern societies, public discourse in the form of indignant protestation is often effective vis-à-vis a sociology and psychology of persuasion but it is not “rationally effective” (71). In the absence of a genuine narrative tradition and an impersonal criteria for judgment and decision-

72 Interestingly, the models of nonviolent resistance championed by Mahatma (Mohandas Karamchand) Gandhi in India and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States specifically sought to guard against revenge-seeking and hostility in their organized protests. In addition to seeking the good of their oppressors by aiming at their moral transformation, Gandhi and King took their adherents through intense processes of self-scrutiny and self-purification so that they would not become like their oppressors. Furthermore, their models insisted upon negation, that is speaking directly to and with one’s opponents or oppressors in an effort to negotiate a new social harmony. It is important to note that, taken together, their approach represents an altogether distinct mode of protest than that of late modern emotivism.
making, such as a concept of the human good, indignant protest becomes the emotivist instrument put to a variety of ideological uses.

According to modern theories, an ideology entails professed beliefs that in fact disguise an arbitrary sociopolitical agenda and permit the rationalization of manipulative modes of human intercourse (109-10). MacIntyre concerns himself, however, not just with modern ideologies as emotivist embodiments but also with modern theories of ideology themselves as guilty of the same. Uses of modern theories of ideology in the end are often but one more social embodiment of the Enlightenment project’s failure to establish a rational, secular basis for ethics. MacIntyre contends that the meaning Karl Marx gave to the term ‘ideology’ along with his use of it turned out to be a prototype of later social science. Modern theories of ideology offer their own version of law-like generalizations for the sociopolitical world. Standard theories of ideology “link the material conditions and class structures of societies as kinds of cause to ideologically informed beliefs as kinds of effect. This is the import of Marx’s and Engel’s early formulations in The German Ideology” (110). Such theories, however, misrepresent the knowledge they claim, declaring to have discovered a set of law-like generalizations for human affairs. Those theories function as “a disguised expression of arbitrary preference. In fact the theory of ideology turns out itself to be one more example of the very phenomenon which its proponents aspired to understand” (110). Through claims of having discovered lawfulness in human affairs those theories mask assertions of criteria-less will and power. It is not only the exercise of ideologies that leverage modern moral utterances as instruments for persuasive use in our interminable political debates, but even the critical interpretation and application of theories of ideology themselves are guilty of the same moral arbitrariness. In the politics of modern emotivist societies, protest is a persuasive tactic employed by ideologically motivated agents, which often
includes theorizers of ideology, and propelled by the emotion of indignation arising from a
despair of rational recourse for settling otherwise interminable ethico-political debates. I propose
that ideological certitude, understood in terms of indignation, protest, and (theories of) ideology,
is another dispositional embodiment in the sociopolitical drama of the late modern world, an
epideictic dynamic which further elucidates the social content of emotivism.

Arendtian Extensions of MacIntyre on Ideology

Relevant to my overall project on bureaucratic modernity and to my proposal of
ideological certitude as an emotivist attitudinal embodiment, Hannah Arendt’s corpus addresses
modernity not only in the form of bureaucratic society and the bureaucrat but also in the form of
ideology. For this reason and at this juncture I would like to place Alasdair MacIntyre into
conversation with Hannah Arendt for an extended understanding of ideology and of the place of
ideology in advanced modernity—a socio-ethical context which consists of manipulative human
relationships expressed by both bureaucratic expertise and ideological certainty. The work of
both MacIntyre and Arendt address the substance of both characters. Arendt extends MacIntyre’s
discussion of ideology beyond the notion of masking arbitrary will and power.

In The Origins of Totalitarianism, Arendt seeks to expand our comprehension of
totalitarianism through an understanding of its relation to ideology. While ideologies are not by
themselves totalitarian, they do indeed “contain totalitarian elements, but these [elements of
ideologies] are fully developed only by totalitarian movements” (470). This totalizing inclination
pertains to ideology as such, not just to racism and communism, the specific ideologies to which
Arendt attends in her book. By offering a total explanation, ideologies are simplifiers of reality
that close us off to reality’s novelty and revelatory potential. In The End of Ideology, Daniel Bell

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73 Arendt also addresses the issue of ideology in her essay “Ideology and Terror.”
contends that simplifying the complexities of human affairs as well as the ambiguities of lived human experience, with its empirical conditions and concrete particularities, paves the way for the dangers of ideology (13-17). According to Arendt, the hubris of ideologies is found in “pretend[ing] to know the mysteries of the whole historical process—the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future—because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas” (469). The very term itself signifies “the logic of an idea” (469). Ardent describes the manner in which the logic of ideology proceeds. “Ideological thinking orders facts into an absolutely logical procedure which starts from an axiomatically accepted premise, deducing everything else from it; that is, it proceeds with a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality” (471). Understood as an inflexible totalizing explanation, the logic of an idea becomes the manner of interpreting events and actions that ultimately disregards them in their particularity and idea-defying complexities and ambiguities. Arendt expounds, “Once it has established its premise, its point of departure, experiences no longer interfere with ideological thinking, nor can it be taught by reality” (471). Corroborating Arendt’s perspective, Daniel Bell explains that “ideology looks at the world with eyes wide shut, a closed system which prefabricates answers to any question that might be asked” (End xi). The logic of an idea closes one off to others and to the complexities, ambiguities, and mysteries of life.

Arendt maintains that along with a logic analogous to an idea, ideological thought treats historical events and sociopolitical actions as possessing a lawfulness analogous to nature (Origins). This resonates with MacIntyre’s criticism of theories of ideology, namely their alleged claim to have discovered a set of law-like generalizations for the social world. This concept of lawfulness, according to Arendt, provides the rationale by which ideology applies an

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74 In this respect, there is a powerful likeness here between bureaucratic, social scientific expertise and the ideological beneath their surface differences.
Idea and its logic to historical and sociopolitical events as a total explanation of them (469-471). Ideology imbues the human agent with a sense of lawlike certainty. There is little to no room for proposals, arguments, or conclusions that fail to conform to this law. With reference to Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Janie M. Harden Fritz distinguishes between, on the one hand, a publicly agreed upon narrative tradition that invites participation and is dialogic and, on the other hand, an ideology, which is monologic, totalizing, and “tolerates no opposition” (*Professional Civility* 161). In light of this rigid, totalizing logic, opponents and their viewpoints may be dismissed summarily and thoroughly. Such obstinace to empirical experience is what prompts Arendt to observe that “ideologies are never interested in the miracle of being” (469). Ultimately what ideology disregards is the particular. The posture of ideological certitude imposes, with lawlike inflexibility, a global perspective onto the particular case so that the particular case is nothing other than an instance of the global.

In sum, Arendt contends that ideologies: make a claim to total explanation, emancipate thought from experience and reality, approach human affairs as though possessing a lawfulness akin to scientific laws, and involve reasoning by means of consistent, self-generated (i.e. non-experiential) argumentation that proceeds from axiomatic first premises by way of logical deduction (470-471). Couple this with MacIntyre’s emphasis on ideologies as presenting simulacra of ethics that disguise what is at root an arbitrary will. The ecosystem of emotivism entails the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative human relationships resulting from the lack of an impersonal criteria for moral utterance, practice, and judgment. Placing MacIntyre into conversation with Arendt regarding the notion of ideology contributes to the spelling out of emotivism’s socio-dramatic content vis-à-vis ideological certitude.
Ideological Certitude as the Flipside of the Emotivist Coin

While the alleged neutrality and detached impersonality of the bureaucratic manager seem to have little to do with the partisanship and advocacy arising from ideological certitude, they are in fact related as two manifestations of an emotivist moral philosophy in the concrete. Aside from the surface level dissimilarities, ideological certitude is to bureaucratic expertise the flipside of the same emotivist coin. Each one reveals common central features of emotivism. Each results from the failure of the Enlightenment moral project and from the absence of impersonal criteria for ethical judgment; each reflects the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative relationships; each leverages the psychology and sociology of persuasion as a replacement for ‘the standards of normative rationality’; each alleges that its claims and prescriptions have a lawfulness analogous to that which characterizes the natural-physical world; each fails to acknowledge the arbitrary will and criteria-less preferences concealed behind their decisions and exercise of power; and each participates in the interminable debates of ‘rights’ versus ‘utility.’

The seemingly unflinching conviction and trenchant rhetoric of modern ideological certainty conceals an arbitrariness that goes to the heart of the early modern project to establish morality on a secular, rational basis and its rejection of the tradition of which Aristotle is an exemplar. MacIntyre rightly observes that protagonists of modern causes in the sociopolitical drama of emotivism resist the accusation that they present an ethical mask and yet are awfully swift in leveling such an indictment against their opponents (71-72). This points back to the pragmatic exigence with which MacIntyre begins: the shill tone of public discourse in the modern sociopolitical world. This acrimonious, hyper-partisan, and ideological element within emotivism’s sociopolitical embodiments also shapes the nature of education. Within an emotivist
ecosystem, it is unsurprising that the contemporary academy would be influenced not only by the bureaucratic but also the ideological.

Much of contemporary higher education is still shaped deeply by bureaucratic corporations and government bureaucracies as loci for an office-holding career (85-87). Modern politics, for example, seeks civil servants who can make government and governing more scientific (85). “Government insists more and more,” MacIntyre observes, “that its civil servants themselves have the kind of education that will qualify them as experts” (85). An education that will yield such qualifications is also desired in the private sector. The aim of such an education is to produce the ethos of the manager—the graduate equipped with bureaucratic rationality, and the calculative-instrumental thought inherent therein, and social scientific expertise. In the sociopolitical and economic competition between rival companies and rival agencies, bureaucratic expertise is what counts as knowledge; such knowledge is a commodity that universities allege to produce and credential (73, 85-86). This influence in American higher education, however, is hardly the whole story. Other dynamics of an emotivist sociopolitical ecosystem are at work in universities and colleges, manifesting in the production of ideological certitude that alleges to offer the antidote to contemporary society’s intractable problems and injustices.

If higher education in actual practice, despite what it may allege, tends to produce the kinds of attitudes and persons demanded by the political and economic dimensions of its society, then contemporary universities not only end up fostering bureaucratic rationality and expertise but also the certain logic of an idea. Rather than aiming to cultivate in their students an expansive

75 MacIntyre contends that “civil servants and managers alike justify themselves and their claims to authority, power and money by invoking their own competence as scientific managers of social change” (86). This viewpoint, he proposes, is a key ideology of modern emotivist society, which, according to MacIntyre, Weber expressed in his theory of bureaucracy.
erudition capable of inheriting a living tradition with discerning care and capable of equipping them to foster strong civic, marketplace, and household communities, all too often an emotivist society’s hyper-partisan discourse is leveraged in an effort to channel students in the direction of one political cause or another. Education is reduced to one or another, and often competing, programmatic prescription for world-transformation. A genuine liberal arts education should complicate the world rather than reduce it to binaries. An alternative approach and ideal is needed as a modest remedy for the bureaucratic and ideological dimensions of emotivism that shape our sociopolitical world, including the realm of higher education.

IN SEARCH OF AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL IDEAL

In a famous remark, Karl Marx contended that philosophers have merely sought to interpret and understand the world while their goal all along should have been rather to transform it. Such is the mindset, explicit or not, that still animates contemporary ideologies on both the political right and left. While it is debatable as to whether Western philosophy and philosophers can be reduced as a whole to Marx’s characterization, what if it is at least a salient tendency stemming from the Platonic tradition, which cast a major shadow on subsequent Occidental philosophizing? But even if we grant a measure of verity to Marx’s claim, is his model of public engagement and his conception of philosophy’s public role the only one available? Is it possible that the marginalization of the rhetorical tradition under the conditions of modernity left Marx’s field of hermeneutic vision bereft of alternatives between mere philosophical interpretation of the world on the one hand and activism that tends towards revolution on the other? My contention in this project is that the tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric altogether rejects this binary, in large part because it affirms the unity of philosophy and rhetoric, of wisdom and eloquence, and supplies an alternative to merely interpreting the world and ambitiously seeking to revolutionize
it. It also offers an alternative educational ideal to that of bureaucratic rationality and expertise and ideological fervor. Before I turn to this tradition more explicitly, however, MacIntyre intimates this educational model.

MacIntyre offers at least two ways in which a classic liberal arts education should complicate the world: first, by introducing students to conflicting, rival understandings of justice (and rationality) and second, by problematizing student’s understanding of themselves morally. First, in Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Alasdair MacIntyre investigates multiple rival conceptions of justice and their histories of development—from that of Homeric society, Plato and Aristotle to that of Augustine, Aquinas, Hume amidst the Scottish Enlightenment, and modern liberalism. Western culture hardly presents a monolithic notion of justice. For contemporary heirs of one conceptual lineage of justice to assume that when they invoke ‘justice’ for their contemporary cause involves, at the very least, historical and theoretical misunderstanding or misrepresentation. With respect to the more prominent conceptions of justice and rationality that animate an emotivist society and the modern academy therein, MacIntyre contends for the impossibility of a coherent understanding of justice if the conceptual lineage involved owes a debt to the Enlightenment project in moral (and political) philosophy. Such proponents are left with a conceptual and pragmatic incommensurability characterized by theoretical fragmentation and the absence of a coherent vision of our lives as a whole in public and in private (MacIntyre, After Virtue; MacIntyre Whose Justice). Of particular relevance to an animating concern of this project, namely the condition of university curricula in bureaucratic modernity and its emotivist flipside, ideological certitude, MacIntyre explains, “For what many of us are educated into is, not a coherent way of thinking and judging, but one constructed out of an amalgam of social and cultural fragments inherited both from different traditions from which
our culture was originally derived . . . and from different stage in and aspects of the development of modernity” (MacIntyre, Whose Justice 2). This adds dimension to the Arendt’s concern about the withering of thoughtfulness and of judgment in bureaucratic modernity. As a consequence of the gravely disordered state of moral thought, discourse, and practice, the university curriculum under the influence of emotivism is incapable of discerning the disaster stemming from the failure of the Enlightenment project (MacIntyre, After Virtue). Such is an ‘education’ in conflicting tradition-fragments, theoretical and pragmatic incoherence, and ideological simplifications of the sociopolitical world.

Resonating with MacIntyre and pointing more explicitly in the direction of the rhetorical tradition, Chaim Perelman, in Justice, Law, and Argument, problematizes justice, concrete justice in particular, as a confused notion (2-22). He identifies six formulae of concrete justice whose character is irreconcilable. What is more, equity also, due to its conceptual and pragmatic interrelation with justice, is hardly conceptual homogeneous. Stemming from various extended traditions and complex histories, there is no singular understanding of justice and equity. Rather, the pragmatic challenge into which university students, especially those studying rhetoric and communication, ought to be invited into is that we are inheritors of multiple meanings of justice and equity. It is incumbent upon (communication) instructors to assist students in recognizing this and making sense of it both theoretically and in its pragmatic implications for speech and action in the contemporary world. This is not to suggest that an instructor should not argue for a particular conception of justice and rationality but that a university education ought to assist students in locating their own perspective among the alternatives and to see the real challenge presented by rival conceptions. This will help to

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76 In Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, MacIntyre contends that achieving an understanding justice entails comprehending what practical reason requires in the concrete.
safeguard against explicitly or implicitly creating a strawperson out of alternative understandings of justice and practical rationality.

Alasdair MacIntyre’s approach in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* models no less than advocacy for a particular understanding of justice and practical reason, yet he does so with broad erudition that investigates the complex histories of theory and practices of his own and rival traditions. MacIntyre most certainly disagrees with his opponents—utilitarians, Kantians, Marxists, and Neitzscheans—but he does so by undertaking the rigorous intellectual labor of engaging their work on its own terms, accounting for the embedded social and theoretical problems to which their work is a response, and explicating the historical lineage and particular conversation into which they fall. An education whose stated or unstated ideal is either the bureaucratic or the ideological fails to engage in this type of inquiry and discourse. What MacIntyre models in his scholarship is a form of erudition that exemplifies the pedagogy of *dissoi logoi*, contradictory reasons or conflicting argumentation, so central to the rhetorical tradition and its general approach to education. Again, the contrast to the education students receive through much university curricula in our emotivist ecosystem could hardly be more stark. I am not suggesting that the average undergraduate is intellectually ready to read MacIntyre’s *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, though some may be. Rather, a university education should present a similar, level-appropriate presentation of rival conceptions of justice and practical reason and their histories. This will not only assist students in discerning their own ground in

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77 In an interview regarding his work *How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds* (2017), Alan Jacobs discusses a debate format at the Long Now Foundation (an organization dedicated to foster long-term thinking) in which before a participant can argue her own position and scrutinize the position of her opponent she must first interview her opponent for about ten minutes. Then the participant must present a truthful summary of her opponent’s position and receive her opponent’s approval that the position has indeed been presented fairly and truthfully. In an effort to express a concern for truthfulness, a diminishing practice in the contemporary media and political environment. A good example of this may be found in the debate on synthetic biology between Drew Endy and Jim Thomas: [http://longnow.org/seminars/02008/nov/17/synthetic-biology-debate/](http://longnow.org/seminars/02008/nov/17/synthetic-biology-debate/).
relation to other voices in this conversation but may also generate greater humility, though not necessarily less conviction, with respect to their own conclusions. Such a posture opens one up to actually dialogue with their opponents rather than simply dismiss or vilify them in the manner of indignant protest.

Instruction informed by MacIntyre’s or Perelman’s treatment of justice, points students in the direction of cultivating public virtues. By contrast, education shaped by emotivism substitutes training in expertise or in a cause for a vision for becoming a certain kind of human being understood in terms of substantive qualities. Employability and political causes have replaced character as the moral aim of education. Aside from organizational techniques and the tactics and strategies needed to achieve the cause-related goals, the emotivist university offers little explicit vision for the moral qualities they hope to produce in their graduates. My own perspective is that this neglect to articulate human qualities as the point of their curriculum contributes to the shrill tone of public discourse, which is animated by acrimony, indignation, and speech-acts of negation (MacIntyre, After Virtue; Hunter).

Second, related to the absence of aspirational moral character encouraging heightened self-awareness, a classic liberal arts education should complicate one’s own motivations and aims, even those who believe themselves to be on the side of ‘the cause.’ An education that is tailored to our humanity should prompt us to confess with Augustine that “I am problem to myself” (Confessions; MacIntyre, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? 154-158). My temporally distended consciousness struggles and strains to comprehend the meaningful whole of my identity across the episodes of my life (Ricoeur). Furthermore, such an education should prod us in the quest for wisdom by challenging us to wrestle with the following acknowledgements as enduring, fundamental human problems: ‘I find that I am far too often woefully incapable of
bringing about my own desired self-reform. Why is this so? Who am I, and what am I? If I am honest, my life is a story of playing the part of both the victim and the victimizer, both an advocate for righteous causes and an unwitting contributor to problematic ones. The human heart is a deep abyss; who can comprehend it? A genuine liberal arts education should *problematize the self* for its students as a *shared human predicament* rather than to identify the core malady in the world as merely stemming from one particular partisan camp to which we are opposed. A modern university education often encourages critique. But when such an education aims at producing the bureaucratic manager or ideological fervor that critique tends to be selective and therefore not critical enough. Even the one who champions a righteous cause does not cease to be an *ongoing* problem to herself. Especially without aiming for the cultivation of character rooted in a substantive moral tradition, the technical specialist will have little recourse to the thoughtfulness of which Arendt speaks while the partisan champion of causes can escape questions regarding the mode in which she advocates. In other words, are the means of advocacy constitutive of the end for which one strives. Such a question is one about character and public virtues. To question in this way would involve a phenomenological shift in attention from unjust external sociopolitical structures and their internalizations to the human condition itself as a wellspring of problematic tendencies. Moreover, this is a shared condition that allows no one to escape in safe retreat into the binarily imagined camp of the ‘good guys.’ I am most certainly not advance some version of moral equivalence with respect to all offenses and perpetrations. Doing such is not only intellectually untenable but also intensifies the suffering of those who are victimized by asymmetrical wrongdoing. But, what I am insisting upon is that an education that

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78 See MacIntyre’s discussion in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* regarding the novelty of and contribution made by Augustine’s moral psychology of the will (154-58). His account of the will in relation to human desires and knowledge provides a distinct hermeneutic entrance, especially to that of Plato and Aristotle, for considering the problem of ethical incontinence and why we often do the very thing we hoped not do (154-58).
only problematizes the external sociopolitical world in such a way that only implicates some
groups and lets others off the hook is only half an education, and an ethical disservice at that. It
allows all students to escape the haunting reality that there is a wellspring of other-disregard or
neighbor-blindness in every person. A classical liberal arts education confronts this through an
explicit concern for human character and public virtues—an understanding of which that
emerges from expansive learning—in contrast to emphases upon technical expertise or some
ideological agenda. Ethical instruction oriented around specific causes is distinct from instruction
that invites a concern for the kind of person one is and is becoming in relation to a substantive
moral vision of a good human life. As I discussed earlier in relation to MacIntyre, virtue ethics
places its emphasis upon the kind of person one is becoming in relation to those purposes
embedded in the kind of creatures we are. To do this requires an axiologically substantive vision
of moral order and of the unity of a good human life.

A genuine liberal arts education invites, in fact even insists upon, the virtue of humility,
the first step of which is the confession that as a human being I share with others a common
struggle: I am a multifaceted, multidimensional problem unto myself and others suffer because
of this even when I envision myself as an advocate for a genuinely good cause. Beginning with
this common human problem of the self to itself opens the door for honest self-examination and
serves as a more rudimentary ground for restoring sociopolitical peace in an environment
otherwise characterized by shrill utterances and indignant protests. Such humility allows
interpersonal relations to begin not with suspicion and mistrust of the other but rather with an
appropriate and healthy mistrust of oneself and a suspicion of one’s own motives. In this spirit
one may ask: what virtues, what habits of mind and heart, do I need to restrain my often
unconscious, automatic, prereflective impulse to dominate others and assert my will over them?
To be sure, such self-scrutinizing attention is hardly the whole of a rhetorical education, but it is an indispensable aspect of the cultivation of sapientia, eloquentia, and prudentia, qualities and capabilities which are central to Giambattista Vico’s educational vision. Vico provides an alternative to the ideals animating a university education under the influence of bureaucratic modernity understood in terms of emotivism: rational-bureaucratic expertise and ideological assurance. Placing curricular focus on the formation of practical wisdom and substantive reasoning, i.e. reasoning over intrinsic human goods, recognizes that one of the first issues that must be addressed is the self—its aporias, contradictions, and seemingly endless wellspring of ethical incontinence—as a shared human struggle. Taking an honest account of one’s life, who can deny it? If there is one so bold, she should indiscriminately ask her family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and previous romantic partners if they too would draw a similar conclusion about her record of moral spotlessness. Presented as an educational model, MacIntyre complicates the world by instigating the lineage of rival claims of justice and rationality. He also points us in the direction of an Augustinian theme of a problematized conception of the self. **IMPLICATIONS**

Education informed by the bureaucratic or the ideological sees little value in expansive intellectual and ethical formation. With recourse to Vico and the tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric, I propose an alternative educational telos that seeks neither expert knowledge nor an ideological program but instead aims at cultivating prudential wisdom. As metaphor for a rhetorical way of being in the world, Vico’s educational paradigm understood in terms of expansive human knowledge, eloquent speech, and prudent action redresses the intellectual and ethical impoverishment of educational approaches directed toward either the bureaucratic or the ideological, the expert specialist or the partisan possessor of the logic of an idea. This rhetorical
tradition, specifically the school of civic-humanistic rhetoric, provides for an alternative ideal—
example expressions of which include Isocrates’ rhetor who speaks for the polis, Cicero’s ideal
orator, and Quintilian’s good person speaking well. These resonate to some degree with Arendt’s
thoughtfulness manifesting in great words and deeds and MacIntyre’s member of communities of
intellectual and moral virtues.

As a significant and later representative of this tradition, Vico resisted following the
eighteenth century intellectual heard down the path of Enlightenment. He serves as an articulator
of the paradigm of wisdom-speaking eloquence, which has its roots antiquity (Walker). The goal
of a rhetorical education is neither mere interpretive understanding nor an equipment for world-
change but rather expansive and discerning erudition coupled with wise discursive action. A
rhetorical education in the civic-humanist tradition aims to produce a certain kind of person so
as to place the civic world and the marketplace, not to mention households, in the hands of good
human beings equipped with both wisdom and eloquence. The orientation of such women and
men is not toward an abstracted and rigidly universalized ‘logic of an idea’ but rather toward the
concrete and particular. Furthermore, as moral representatives of a narrative self, their aim is
primarily to steward, not to revolutionize, the living cultural tradition of which they are
inheritors. All this requires a rhetorical education aiming at expansive intellectual cultivation
coupled with eloquent speech and moral formation oriented to practical reason and public
virtues.
Bureaucratic Modernity and the Erosion of Practical Reason: A Rhetorical Education as an Antidote

CHAPTER 6:

RECOVERING PRACTICAL REASON: VICO’S RHETORICAL EDUCATION

The central inquiry of this project aims at discerning the ways in which modernity reveals itself through the bureaucratic. Integral to this pursuit, I have given special attention to three areas of concern, namely what counts as knowledge, ethical discourse and action, and education, that of universities and colleges in particular. Bureaucratic modernity represents a process of cultural formation, one that reshapes knowledge, ethics, and formal education for its own purposes and after its own vision of human life and model of sociopolitical community. For all of the benefits bureaucratic organization, expertise, and rationality afford—a superior administrative technique, resources for mass coordination of human activities, information processing, and procedural efficiencies, to name a few—the impact on knowing, morality, and learning, represents on the whole, from both Arendtian and MacIntyrean perspectives, a decline in private and public affairs. In light of this, where might we turn for at least a modest source of hope? This chapter aims at articulating broad contours of an alternative to the default modes of bureaucratic modernity. For this I turn to Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), the chair of rhetoric at the University of Naples, who may be considered a last bastion of the rhetorical humanism of the Italian Renaissance. As an eloquent exponent of an expansive, civic-humanistic education in his own historical moment, he provides a curricular vision we should consider and appropriate for our own temporal horizon as part of the effort to rejuvenate knowledge, ethics, and higher education. Vico’s priorities—wide-ranging study, eloquent expression, and prudent action—establish coordinates for a communication ethics philosophy of higher education.
In his Preface to *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, Donald Phillip Verene, the director of the Institute for Vico Studies at Emory University, underscores the renaissance of Vico studies among English-speaking scholars in the twentieth century (ix-x, xiv-xvi). But while the *New Science*, has rightfully garnered attention, Verene notes that “in the new Vico literature one of the least-examined aspects of Vico’s thought and one of its most creative aspects are his views on human education” (xix). In his work *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanistic Tradition*, Ernesto Grassi maintains that Vico’s conception of human knowledge, and thus his philosophy of education, flows from a view of rhetoric and *ars topica* as discursively basic to philosophical thought, formal logic, and critical thinking. Verene develops Grassi’s notion of “rhetoric as philosophy” (“Philosophical Rhetoric”; “Philosophy”; “Sociopath”). That rhetoric is equipped to serve as philosophy’s discursive source is attributable to rhetoric’s intimate tie to the poetic domain (Grassi). In other words, rhetoric does not merely refer to techniques of persuasion but rather is the broad epideictic art of discourse linked to poetics (Walker; Grassi; Verene, “Philosophical Rhetoric”). This vision of rhetoric-as-philosophy draws upon the imaginative resources of metaphors and common topics. Furthermore, with poetico-epideictic ground under its feet, rhetoric-as-philosophy walks into the practical field of human action, argumentation, judgment, and decision-making, thereby framing an understanding of practical wisdom (*prudentia*). Vico’s philosophy of education unites expansive erudition and discursive action, the language arts and the realm of human affairs. His rhetorical conception of human knowledge provides an opening for a communication ethics philosophy of higher education. As the culminating statement of this project, I propose that such a communication ethics offers signposts that indicate pathways for a modest recovery of substantive moral reasoning and practical wisdom.
This chapter explicates four themes related to Vico’s educational orations that are significant for addressing the exigence of bureaucratic modernity with respect to knowledge, ethics, and education. First, Vico’s philosophy of education in his historical context prompts consideration of why his rhetorical conception of human knowledge and learning matters for our present moment. For the next three sections of this chapter, I adopt Verene’s proposal that Vico’s orations on education can be framed in terms of the interrelations among three basic metaphors: sapientia, eloquentia, and prudentia. Second, in the classical tradition of the seven liberal arts and the Italian Renaissance tradition of studia humanitatis, Vico articulates the significance of a comprehensive education in all arts and sciences for the cultivation of expansive human wisdom (sapientia). In doing so, he not only echoes Ciceronean educational priorities but also indicates that Cicero’s own erudition epitomizes Vico’s animating ideal. Third, far more than mere linguistic style or verbal ornamentation, eloquence is facility in giving appropriate articulation to the whole of subject. Thus eloquentia is the natural counterpart of sapientia, a capstone area of study, and integral to a rhetorical conception of human knowledge. Fourth, expansive human wisdom and eloquence find their fulfillment in prudential conduct in human affairs. Because Vico envisions prudentia as tied to the civic good it also takes on the form of jurisprudentia, wisdom of the whole narrative tradition that manifests in the promotion of commonwealth. Vico’s comprehensive education in the arts and sciences aims at fostering a rhetorical way of being in pragmatic contexts and thereby promotes the recuperation of practical reason.

**A RHETORICAL CONCEPTION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND AFFAIRS**

*Vico’s Orations on Education*

In his orations on education, which were subsequently published in four texts, Vico lays out his rhetorically oriented, civic-humanistic philosophy of education. The first eight of these
orations were given in fulfillment of his duties as the Royal Professor of Eloquence at the University of Naples. Vico inaugurated the academic year on the Feast Day of St. Luke with an address on the purposes of higher education. *On Humanistic Education* consists of the first six speeches, which were delivered between 1699 and 1707. His seventh oration in 1708, later published in writing the very next year as *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, was “dedicated to the Austrian king and delivered in the presence of his viceroy, Cardinal Grimani, because in 1707 the Austrians had occupied Naples, putting an end to the previous Spanish rule” (Verene, “Introduction” 12). In 1732, nearly twenty-five years after the previous inaugural lecture, Vico continued to develop his philosophy of education with another oration at the same Royal Academy of Naples entitled *On the Heroic Mind*. This eighth oration was delivered just two years after the second edition of Vico’s most reputed work, *The New Science*. Lastly, *The Academies and the Relation between Eloquence and Philosophy* was delivered in 1737 to the scholarly society referred to as the Academy of Oziosi. Though he lives for another seven years, this would become Vico’s final philosophical work. The approach taken in this chapter is to treat Vico’s educational lectures as constituting a coherent outlook on the aims, subjects, and order of his program of studies.

The import of Vico’s earliest work, *On Humanistic Education*, derives largely from the fact that, as Verene indicates, “all the topics developed in these later works are broached in the first six orations” (13). Rather than a mere sequence of isolated lectures, Vico presents what he conceived of as “a single, multifaceted argument about the tradition of humane letters and its importance for modern education” (13). *On the Study Methods of Our Time and On the Heroic Mind* extend this argument. Vico translator, Elio Gianturco considers *On the Heroic Mind*, Vico’s final inaugural address at the University of Naples, to be “the logical prolongation of the
De nostri,” the previous oration (xxii). Furthermore, his lecture to the scholarly Academy of Oziosi in 1937 continues this train of thought. Though given little scholarly attention, “The Academies and the Relation between Philosophy and Eloquence,” is Vico’s last public statement on his philosophy of education (xvii-xviii). Stressing the continuity of this lecture to scholars with his earlier addresses to university students, Gianturco proposes that “The Academies and the Relations” may be viewed as part of an educational “trilogy” along with On the Study Methods and On the Heroic Mind (xviii). A persistent concern for education is found in nearly all Vico’s works. Even the New Science is driven, according to Verene, by Vico’s pedagogical interests and is thus valuable for comprehending his philosophy of education (“Introduction” 11).

In his educational orations, Vico reasons from as well as offers a living tradition of moral, civic, and rhetorical thought and practice—a tradition that the newly emerging modern schools of thought abandoned. Through this Vico offers a modest antidote for the recuperation of moral reasoning and practical wisdom in our own historical moment characterized by instrumental rationality, bureaucratic expertise, and an arbitrariness that haunts moral utterance and practice.

**Resisting the Degradations of Modernity through a Rhetorical Education**

In response to the degradations of bureaucratic modernity, philosophers Hannah Arendt and Alasdair MacIntyre show considerable concern for education. While Arendt advocates for education that substantially contributes to the formation of sound judgment, thoughtful action, and a loving responsibility for the world we share in common, MacIntyre calls for alternative communities dedicated to the cultivation of intellectual and moral virtues for the good of Western culture (Arendt, “Crisis”; Arendt, *Human*; Arendt, *Eichmann*; Maier; MacIntyre, *After*). Educational theorist Neil Postman contends that a key effect of late modern bureaucratic society and its refashioned educational outlook is an anti-historical, anti-philosophical, and anti-
linguistic attitude (*Technopoly* 189, 192, 194). Education in the context of bureaucratic modernity is averse to the humanities. In order to refashion formal education and attain genuine knowledge in all fields of study, we must, Postman maintains, recover the import of historical understanding, philosophical coherence, and symbolic expression. For every subject has a history, articulates or assumes a philosophy, and depends deeply on the relationship of language to reality, meaning, and knowledge (188-95). Vico’s educational philosophy in many respects not only agrees with but also anticipates much of Arendt’s, MacIntyre’s, and Postman’s critical analyses, preceding them by over two centuries. In addition to the overlap in perspective, Vico, as a professor of eloquence, offers a distinctly rhetorical contribution to this conversation. Moreover, his plan of studies satisfies, and to some extent exceeds, the requirements MacIntyre lays out for genuine moral thought, utterance, and practice—safeguarding against the pitfalls of *bureaucratic expertise* and *ideological certitude*, both of which are plagued by the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative human relations.

As a late representative of Italian Renaissance humanism and the rhetorical conception of education and civil society associated with it, Vico offered in his own time a way of resisting what Elio Gianturco refers to as “methodological monism,” or the Cartesian methodization of all human knowing, and the epistemic reductionism central to the modern *rationalization of society and action* (xxx). As Arendt and MacIntyre reveal, these tendencies in Vico’s own time are historical antecedents to the approaches to knowledge, conduct, and education promoted in bureaucratic modernity. What is remarkable is that Vico discerned deeply problematic tendencies in the vision of knowledge and education among those filled with the modern spirit of historical progress. This spirit—fueled by epistemic novelty, scientific discovery, and technological
innovation—saw little worth in the intellectual achievements of earlier ages and had a particular Cartesian critical and analytic texture (Study Methods 13-18, 21-30).

Both Arendt and MacIntyre point to early modern philosophy and science as the historical fork in the road that eventually led to the diminishment of substantive moral reasoning and practical wisdom. Arendt points toward Galileo’s discovery and Descartes’ subsequent attempt to make sense of this event for human knowing. MacIntyre attributes the void of a genuine public morality in our time to the Enlightenment denunciation of a teleological conception of the human person and a notion of narrative selfhood. What Arendt and MacIntyre observed retrospectively, Vico addressed while it was still emerging. Amidst the groundswell of enthusiasm for Cartesian philosophy, science, and method, Vico spoke words of warning about snubbing the wisdom of the ancients, according to which rhetoric figured prominently.

I hold the opinion that if eloquence does not regain the luster of the Latins and Greeks in our time, when our sciences have made progress equal to and perhaps even greater than theirs, it will be because the sciences are taught completely stripped of every badge of eloquence. And, for all that Cartesian philosophy would claim to have corrected of the erroneous order of thought of which the Scholastics were guilty, placing the total force of its proofs in the geometric method, such a method is so subtle and drawn out that it by chance attention to one proposition is broken, it is completely lost to whoever is listening to comprehend anything of the whole of what is being said. (“Academy” 87).

The ability to give appropriate and beautiful expression to the whole of a subject was precisely the definition Vico gave to eloquence, an art ignored and even disparaged amidst enthusiasm for distinctly modern forms of study. Vico repeatedly acknowledged certain advantages of modern inquiry and innovation; he his hardly nostalgic or technophobic. But he wanted to retain
simultaneously the wisdom and achievements of the ancients, which would curtail the excesses of modern tendencies and produce a genuine historical advantage. This is the overarching theme of his seventh oration, *Study Methods*. Vico warned that what was being gained in science, mathematics, and technology was matched, if not surpassed, by losses in those arts that nourished the human spirit and contributed to our common life (*Heroic* 888-89, 891-94). Yet, those zealous for modern program paid little attention to such a dour, historically-minding, and backward glancing voice. It was not for another two hundred years, amidst the recovery of an understanding of philosophy that was hermeneutic, rhetorical, and oriented toward human action in the world, that Vico once again appeared in philosophical circles to offer keen insight. It is my contention that Vico’s prescience in recognizing the futility of the new model of knowledge and education, along with its implications for ethics and civil society, is due in large measure to his rhetorical sensibilities. For Vico rhetoric linked *philosophia*—a love of wisdom that embraced learning in all the arts and science—with human affairs.

Through a civic-humanistic curriculum inclusive of all arts and sciences, which involve multiple ways of knowing, Vico’s education—which I designate and explicate in this chapter as a *rhetorical education*—aims to “heal” and “perfect” the human spirit through the cultivation of wisdom, eloquence, and prudence (*Heroic* 891, 893; *Humanistic*; *Study Methods*). In stark contrast to the Cartesian influence upon modern education reflected in the *Port-Royal Logic*, published in 1662, Vico stresses the significance of rhetorical studies against the backdrop of the classic liberal arts and *studia humanitatis* (Vico, *Study Methods* 16-20; Verene, “Introduction” 2-3, 6). From the cultivation of memory, imagination, and common sense early on as preparatory for *ars topica*, the art of argumentation, and practical judgment to the study of eloquence a
capstone subject, Vico’s system of education is deeply rhetorical (Humanistic 137-39; Study Methods 13-20, 24, 78).

Because eloquence is a capstone subject of study, bridging expansive learning in the liberal arts and sciences to pragmatic civic engagement, I designate Vico’s program of studies as a rhetorical education (Study Methods). As Verene explicitly states, Vico’s civic-humanistic philosophy of education offers a “rhetorical concept of human knowledge tied to how we make sense together as language-using animals” (“Introduction” 9). This rhetorical conception of human knowing sharply contrasts with a Cartesian model of education, which promotes “the reduction of all thought and language to a single method of right reasoning, such that anything that was not subject to placement within the steps of this method was excluded from human knowledge, or at least discounted as illusion or as basically unimportant” (Verene, “Introduction” 9). Rhetorical and poetic resources, according to Ernesto Grassi, are more basic to human thought than formal logic and critical thinking (Rhetoric 5-8). There are two interconnected themes worthy of comment here, one regarding method and the other regarding the significance of a rhetorical conception of human knowing.

First, the impulse toward a single method, as Arendt would remind us, is compelled by a more basic assumption: radical universal doubt. Beginning with skepticism—toward the ability of our senses to report accurately about reality and of the mind to apprehend the good, true, and beautiful—generates a perceived need for a reliable method in order to overcome doubt and establish certain knowledge (Human Condition). Cartesianism, explains Grassi, radically doubts that which is sensuous and imaginative in the “attempt to derive scientific thought from original, independent, underived principles” (6). A Cartesian education entails the reduction of all thought and language; thought and language are subjected to the absolute rule of method. In contrast to
the ambiguity that characterizes our understanding of things and the meaning of words by which
we understand them, “Cartesian method fits res perfectly with verbum by leaving out all that is
problematic in the human soul” (Verene, “Introduction” 11). By contrast, as Verene observes,
“Vico associates truth with life, and there is no method for life or the discovery of its means, its
right conduct, and so on” (9). Vico addresses this error more fully in On the Most Ancient
Wisdom of the Italians.

Second, and even more important for my overall project, a rhetorical concept of human
knowledge depends upon the derivation of philosophy from rhetoric and the relation of rhetoric
to poetics (Verene, “Philosophical Rhetoric”). Ernesto Grass undertakes what may be considered
a constructive hermeneutic of the much neglected Latin philosophical tradition (Rhetoric;
Renaissance; “Topical Philosophy”). Arguing for Vico’s contemporary philosophical
significance, not just his mere historical significance, Grassi contends that human knowledge
depends upon the discovery of “a relationship, a similitudo, between what the senses reveal to
us” and our existential questions and need for meaning (Rhetoric 4, 6-7; Renaissance 19-25).
This does not come through what Vico refers to as “critical” thought, “philosophical criticism,”
or “speculative criticism” (Grassi, Rhetoric 7; Study Methods 13-20). Rather than coming
through inferences—drawn from formal logic and deductive reasoning—similitudo is possible
“only through an original in-sight as invention and discovery,” which Grassi identifies as
rhetorical inventio (7). Rhetorical invention is more basic to human thought than purely rational
and abstract thought. Vico recognizes, similar to Aristotle at least in this respect, that this first
and most important canon of rhetoric depends on metaphoric resources. Metaphors, which derive
from the poetic domain, equip the human imagination with an image of the world (Grassi,
Rhetoric 4-7, 10-17, 32-34; Grassi, Renaissance 23-36, 41-45). Elaborating on Grassi’s
reflection concerning the intersection of rhetoric and poetics, Verene observes, “To initiate a thought in a fundamental sense, to make a beginning point, we require an image, a metaphor. The power of the metaphor is to bring together a similarity in dissimilars, which requires *ingenium*” (“Philosophical Rhetoric” 32). Since the time of the Italian Renaissance and the turn toward Enlightenment critical philosophy, educational efforts to foster the metaphoric power of ingenuity have dried up. Verene observes that “since Descartes, the focus of thought and education has turned from *ars topica* to *ars critica*. Grassi wishes to revive *ars topica* and make it the centerpiece of rhetorical study” (33). Philosophical thought depends on grounding metaphors. Such images are integral to that complex of mental equipment on which persuasion and argumentation necessarily depends (32-33). Central to a rhetorical conception of human knowing is the claim that rhetorical invention, philosophical argumentation, and formal logic have a tropic-metaphoric basis.

Metaphors provide the initiating point from which human reasoning proceeds and therefore informs the art of topics. Vico stresses *ars topica*, which depends on initiating images of the world, for the invention of arguments (*Study Methods* 13-20). He contrasts *ars topica* with rationalistic philosophical criticism. In light of this, Grassi interprets Vico as offering a “topical philosophy” as a corrective to a Cartesian-styled “critical philosophy” (*Rhetoric* 8; “Topical Philosophy” 1-17). Topical philosophy frames rhetoric-as-philosophy and announces a rhetorical conception of human knowledge. Rhetoric here, as proposed by Grassi, is certainly “not, nor can it be the art, the technique of an exterior persuasion; it is rather the speech which is the basis of the rational thought” (*Rhetoric* 20). Rhetoric is interior to philosophical thought, thereby making philosophy possible. Metaphor, the image, provides “the beginning from which reason can act” (Verene, “Philosophical Rhetoric” 32). Linking rhetoric and poetics as the ground of
philosophical thought is, according to Grassi a characteristic Latin move, common in Roman
antiquity and Italian Renaissance humanism (*Rhetoric; Renaissance; “Topical Philosophy”). Due
to the unity of rhetoric and poetics, a rhetorical education also enables the recovery of metaphor,
which is the fertile ground from which the art of topics and common sense grow. Because of this,
a rhetorical education is also deeply oriented to practical reason and sound judgment in human
affairs. A rhetorical conception of knowledge is linked to civic life and the recovery of
*prudentia*.

*An Education for the Civic Good*

Although he defends the metaphoric basis of all human thought, Vico’s curriculum of
comprehensive learning advocates for multiple forms of knowledge, which proves to be valuable
for the realm of human affairs. This is part of his aversion to methodological monism. In
opposition to Cartesian influences, Vico’s seventh inaugural oration warns against abandoning
the wisdom of the ancients for modern intellectual and experimental innovations (Verene,
“Introduction” 6-7). According to Vico, modernity had become “an island of certainty and
specific knowledge, surrounded by an ocean of uncertainty and lost wisdom” (11). Resisting
antiquarianism and presentism, he sought to hold together both ancient wisdom and modern
innovation, championing multiple ways of inquiring, knowing, and producing. Modern science
and technology brought novel insights regarding experimentation, methods, and specialties. But
the arts of composition, speech, and memory are those that are necessary for conducting human
affairs. For the sake of both the private and public good, these arts must not be abandoned in the
name of “progress” or any other smug attitude of superiority toward one’s historical predecessors
(*Heroic Mind* 893, 900-01).
Questions pertaining to the ends of education in the broader context of human culture and society are ultimately ethical. Integral to Vico’s humanistic rhetorical education is its civic mission (*Humanistic* 92-105; *Study Methods* 35, 49-55, 60). This opens the door for the recuperation of civic action so important to Hannah Arendt and does so without capitulating to models of bureaucratic expertise and ideological certitude (*Human Condition*). Vico roots his rhetorical educational ideal in a substantive ethical vision that anchors the sociopolitical utility of the liberal arts and humanities. Of particular relevance to communication ethics, Vico’s rhetorical education is not only humanistic and expansive but also oriented to civic life. Those who are fortunate enough to drink deeply from the educational fount of human wisdom bear a civic obligation to serve their fellow citizens through the institutions that coordinate their common life (*Humanistic* 91, 95-99). Motivated by a sense of solidarity and love, the proper sociopolitical usefulness of an extensive liberal and humanistic education is service to “the common good of the citizenry” (95, 101-05). The result of Vico’s case for the liberal arts and humanities is a communication ethic at the intersection of education and civic life. Educational institutions as facilitators of practices and habits are protectors and promoters not only of practice-internal goods but also of intrinsic human goods (MacIntyre, *After*; Arnett, Fritz, and Bell). Vico aims to produce the person of noble character who in a spirit of gratitude embraces her civic obligation. In a Vichian rhetorical education oriented to civic life, the good and the useful meet.

Vico’s curricular philosophy repels the various allurements that result in the privatization of education’s purpose: “riches and wealth,” positions of influence for the sake of “honor and power,” and tranquil pleasure of learning for its own sake that retreats from common life and the common good (*Heroic* 887-88). By directing the acquisition of knowledge in every subject
toward eloquent speech and prudent action, students are equipped for a life of discursive action in human affairs that aims at strengthening the common welfare (*Study Methods*). Furthermore, Vico repeatedly commences the articulation of his program of studies with a substantive conception of the human person rooted in religious and philosophical ground. For Vico, the divine source of and purpose for human existence provides direction for what is to be considered a morally successful life in its personal and communal dimensions (*Humanistic; Study Methods; Heroic; Academies*). In light of this, he exhorts his students to disciplined study in all fields of learning for the following reason: they are born for wisdom (*Humanistic 40*). The human intellect, though inclined to error and falsehood, exists for the apprehension of truth, while human character, beset by vices and inordinate appetites, thirsts for virtue and goodness (*Humanistic; Study Methods; Heroic*). Vico envisions education as aiming at nothing less than the attenuation and amelioration of the human condition (*Humanistic 128-129; Heroic 889, 891-92*). Students ought to pursue their studies not only for the sake of their own personal flourishing but also “for the blessedness of the human race” (*Heroic 888*). The personal benefits received from a rhetorical education are in actual fact common goods that are to be communicated through discursive engagement in public affairs. These Vichian priorities establish a communication ethics philosophy of higher education. Vico draws deeply from a living tradition of ethical, political, and rhetorical thought and practice. His educational philosophy commences with a substantive conception of the human person that serves as the criterion not only for moral utterance and practice but also for an educational program of studies and a vision of civil society.

79 The university has, for Vico, the following purpose: “you have come together here, ailing as you are in mind and soul, for the treatment, the healing, the perfection to your better nature” (*Heroic 891*).
EXPANSIVE ERUDITION

Philosophia and Self-Knowledge

Vico’s philosophy of education commences with the love of wisdom. With the ascendance of method, rational criticism, and narrow specialization in modernist models of education, Vico’s prioritization of *philosophia* invokes the educational vision of “the classical and humanist tradition that was being lost” already in his own time (Verene, “Introduction” 12; *Study Methods; Heroic*). Rather than method, Vico contended that the love of wisdom is the basis for pedagogy and that pedagogy is not method but rather *philosophia* (Verene, “Introduction” 12). For Vico, *philosophia* has not only philosophical connotations but also religious ones. Moreover, it resists the circumscription of wisdom’s pursuit to a single discipline. The quest for wisdom is expansively multidisciplinary but finds integrative coherence in the call to ‘know thyself.’ Verene explains that the inaugural orations Vico delivered at the University of Naples “launch[ed] the beginnings of his philosophy. He planned to publish them as part of a book” (12). These intentions further vindicate the task in this chapter of considering Vico’s eight inaugural orations, along with his lecture to the scholars of the Academy of Oziosi, as a unified statement of his educational philosophy. The first six orations can be interpreted as Vico actively formulating and developing his own philosophy of education that begins with the pursuit of wisdom and the call to self-knowledge. This lays the groundwork for Vico’s comprehensive education that aims at *sapientia*.

The Italian literati, Vico explains, refer to “a university as a *Sapientia*” (*Heroic* 891). Extensive wisdom inclusive of all the arts and science is the university’s *raison d’etre*. Vico’s first oration formulates this institutional aim in terms of a notion of self-knowledge, which represents the kind of expansive human wisdom (*sapientia*) that all-embracing learning is
capable of yielding (*Humanistic*). He presents self-knowledge as (a) a source of educational motivation, (b) a humanistic conception, and (c) appropriate to the powers of the human spirit. First, rhetorically attuned to his student audience who is well equipped for the educational endeavor, Vico addresses the desire for advantages, fame, and honor—a theme he repeats later in *On the Heroic Mind*. But then Vico upholds a motivation greater still, one that can do justice to the significance and demands of learning in the liberal arts and sciences. Framing their endeavor in terms of the reward of self-knowledge, Vico seeks to elevate their gazes. He exhorts them by proclaiming that humans are the kind of creatures who are made for wisdom (*Humanistic* 49; *Heroic*). By contrast a fool is one who rebels against that for which he is born, namely wisdom (*Humanistic* 57-58). Vico contends “there is no enemy more dangerous and treacherous to its adversary than the fool to himself” (58). The fool wages a self-destructive war against himself, against his own spirit, against his own intellect, memory, imagination, senses (60-65). This metaphor of combat offers a stark image of a self divided against itself. It heightens consciousness of what is a stake in the call to pursue human wisdom understood as humanistic self-knowledge. He reasons that “knowledge of oneself is for everyone the greatest incentive to acquire the universe of learning in the shortest possible time” (*Humanistic* 38). Other incentives may have their value, but an expansive education productive of self-knowledge is higher still.

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80 Attaining the fruits of a liberal arts education is at last, Vico contends, a matter of the will for those who have every natural endowment of the human spirit along with all the advantages of socio-economic opportunity, competent teachers, and learned scholarly role models who embody the disciplines of inquiry to emulate (*Humanistic* 50-52). He warns about impediments to the will in the pursuit of human wisdom and truth in the liberal arts—namely detrimental attitudes; competing motives such as material profit, diversionary enjoyment, and ostentation; and falling prey to deceit. Vico exposes deceit as a form of academic hubris that takes on at least two prominent manifestations: the imposter who pretends to be more learned than he is; the show-off who is learned not for the sake of wisdom and good action with a gentle spirit “but for pointless ostentation” (76). Members of the republic of letters must covenant to resist and eradicate these and all forms of vice, competing motives, and deception from their academic studies and instead pursue honesty and humility (72, 76). Here again, moral philosophy plays a central in Vico’s educational rationale. Third, falling prey to deceit hinders the pursuit of wisdom and truth understood as self-knowledge.
The invitation to self-knowledge is a call to receive a cultural heritage by means of broad learning. From a communication ethics hermeneutic, a culture’s heritage, which the liberal arts carries and conveys, is a profound and far reaching source of narrative selfhood, as MacIntyre explains in *After Virtue*. In this way Vico is working with a sociopolitical and historical conception of the self, a feature of the classical tradition in contradistinction both to emotivism and to the ethical thought and practice stemming from Encyclopedic and Genealogical versions of moral inquiry (*Humanistic; MacIntyre, After; MacIntyre, Three Rival*).

Second, Vico’s notion of self-knowledge is philosophical, ethical, and religious in nature (*Humanistic; Study Methods; Heroic*). It is far from a mere psychological or introspective construct but is rather informed by an Italian Renaissance notion of *studia humanitatis*. Vico invokes the inspiring immemorial refrain ‘know thyself’ as expressive of education’s primary purposes: sapientia. The Delphic injunction to self-understanding is, according to Vico, the most important among the “wisest precept” for the attainment of a happy or blessed life (*Humanistic* 38–40). Through this invocation, Vico decidedly situates his humanist educational ideal in the context of moral philosophy—a move integral to the tradition of civically oriented rhetoric. Vico’s philosophy of education dwells at the intersection of philosophy of communication ethics and civic rhetoric. The alleged origins of this ethical injunction etched upon the temple to Apollo in Delphi were many, including several renowned pre-Socratic philosophers. As is more commonly known, this two word phrase became an important theme in the philosophical dialogues of Plato. Though subsequently informed by the philosophical tradition, it is important to recognize, as Vico does, that the phrase “know thyself” emerges from religious ground. General consent attributed the injunction to the Pythian oracle, the high priestess at Delphi who was considered an important source of authority for Greek culture. That the ideal of self-
knowledge enjoys an association with a historically significant religious institution is not lost on Vico. The exhortation to wisdom framed in terms of self-knowledge emerges historically from an epideictic storehouse—an *epos* carrying wise words, religious *mythos*, and proverbial sayings—before it becomes a philosophical motif within the discursive realm of argumentation (Walker; Verene “Philosophical Rhetoric”; Verene “Philosophy”). Once again, a poetic image of the world precedes rational thought.

Both a philosophical and a religious threads texture Vico’s ethically oriented educational ideal. To make this clear, Vico draws upon Cicero who not only articulates the goal of *sapientia* but also exemplifies it. For Vico, Cicero is “the most eloquent of the wise men, or the wisest of the eloquent men” and capable of elaborating the “divine force” of the Delphic inscription (*Humanistic* 38, 39). Cicero interprets this injunction as a “divine command” that means “know your own spirit” (39). Self-knowledge framed in terms of a contextualized understanding the human spirit serves as an integrating aim all studies in the liberal arts and sciences. Given the divine origin of the human spirit, its cultivation for Vico is a sacred trust and a sufficient source of educational motivation. Anchoring his educational vision in what MacIntyre refers to as a teleological conception of the human person, Vico enjoins, “Know thyself, therefore, O youth, so that you can attain wisdom, since you are born for wisdom” (*Humanistic* 40). Vico offers an ethical *telos* for education rooted in philosophical and religious ground concerning the kind of creatures we are. *Sapientia* understood in terms of self-knowledge announces an education shaped by a rhetorically inclined moral philosophy that makes possible a complex unity among

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81 Vico also articulates both a philosophical and theological ground for education in *On the Heroic Mind*. This theme is also present, though to a lesser extent, in *On the Study Methods of Our Time*.

82 This is a particularly overt theme in his first, second, and eighth inaugural orations (*Humanistic; Heroic*).
the myriad studies that comprise an education in the liberal arts and sciences. Furthermore, this Vichian educational architecture, especially when placed in conversation with Alasdair MacIntyre’s work, gives rise to considering philosophy of communication ethics as specifically attentive to the epideictic soil that roots those goods that are internal to the educational practices of inquiry and instruction. Integral to this is an understanding of human life as a narrative whole. Philosophy of communication ethics supplies an overarching “unitary spirit” to life and learning neither (Study Methods 74-77). Vico expresses the difference between sapiential coherence and intellectual simplifications that feign at coherence in terms of a humanistic paradigm of self-knowledge, which rests on his understanding of the human spirit (Humanistic; Study Methods).

Third, amidst his exhortation to pursue humanistic self-knowledge, Vico provides a brief philosophical exposition of the human spirit’s powers (Humanistic). For it is these powers that make the goal of self-knowledge possible. Here he presses into Cicero’s interpretation of the Delphic inscription as a divine injunction to understand your own spirit. Expounding upon the religious ground for his rhetorical educational oriented to self-knowledge, Vico affirms that through the human spirit one encounters “the image of Almighty God” (40). The academic expedition to know oneself should lead one to marvel at the human spirit with a sense of wonder. Arendt would remind us that Vico’s non-Cartesianism aligns him with the ancient and medieval philosophical traditions that begin not with radical universal doubt regarding the mind and the senses but with a sense of “shocked wonder at the miracle of Being,” which discloses itself to human sensation and reason (Human 302). For Vico the human spirit or mind is an expansive notion that charts a different course from that of Descartes’ mind-body dualism. Explicating the

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83 In On the Study Methods of Our Time, Vico argues for the harmonization and coherence of an education consisting in the many academic disciplines (74-81). He repeats this theme in On the Heroic Mind, stressing the study of all branches of knowledge and their relations (890-91, 893, 897-98).
human spirit or mind, Vico begins with the faculty of phantasy, which is rooted in the bodily senses. Phantasy or imagination is that “power that fashions the images of things” (Humanistic 42). Through the power of phantasy, humans imagined the pantheon of ancient gods as well as the heroes. Through the sense images we can conjure up in the imagination, the spirit can cover much mental ground “with unbelievable swiftness” (43). Vico illustrates: “I would just mention the land of Magellan, and you have already walked there. . . I would just name an ocean and you have already crossed it by swimming” (43). Human imagination, with its images tied to the human senses, equips human thought with metaphors. We think in metaphors, and they carry great mental freight for us and swiftly. The metaphorical nature of human thought is rudimentary to poetic narration, rhetorical invention, which depends upon commonplaces (topoi), and philosophical argumentation (Grassi, Rhetoric; Grassi, Renaissance; Verene, “Philosophy”; Lakoff and Johnson).

Vico also ties together the human capacities for reasoning, aesthetic judgments, religious knowing (Humanistic 43-46). But the final power of the human spirit relevant here is memory, which serves as a vital basis for the capacity of speech. Imagination equips the mind with images and metaphors; memory equips it with words and ideas. While phantasy is a wonderful capacity of the human spirit, memory is greater still (47-48). Nothing, Vico claims, is “more admirable and divine than the most copious treasure chest of words and ideas of things in the human mind” (47). Memory is the wellspring of all our words and ideas, and thus it is the basis for discursive action in the world. Moreover, Vico’s repetition in mentioning ‘words’ and ‘ideas’ together intimates an important theme in the tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric going back to Isocrates, Cicero, and Augustine—the unity of linguistic signs and thought. Human thought is mediated by language. This emphasis on speech situates the ideal of self-knowledge within a cultural and
civic framework. Civic laws and the coordination of an ethico-political community are constituted by speech, which was understood as a gift from the gods in pagan antiquity. Drawing from the renowned Greek orator Demosthenes, Vico treats laws as a great product of the human spirit—specifically of memory and the faculty of speech—since they are at the heart of human sociality and political community. Through its supply of words and ideas, memory facilitates the human capacity for speech. Memory grounds human affairs, the civic realm of speech (e.g. words and ideas) and discursive action (e.g. laws, institutions, and human affairs). In virtue of the powers of the human spirit, humanistic self-knowledge is attainable. The student is amply equipped for learning in the liberal arts and sciences (40, 49-52).

*Sapientia and Knowledge of the Whole*

We are made for wisdom, insists Vico. Error and ignorance are inimical to the mind as smoke is to the eyes (Humanistic 49). They prevent us from knowing ourselves, leaving us bereft of wisdom. Therefore, let us not deny, Vico exhorts, the human spirit that for which it is made; give all due effort to the search for truth and the cultivation of wisdom. Education shaped by the ideals of bureaucratic modernity, such as narrow specialization and technical expertise, denies the human spirit that for which it longs. Fostering human wisdom requires striving for the whole and aiming to comprehend things human and divine, which is not attainable by means of technique or right procedure (Humanistic; Heroic Mind). It is precisely this love of wisdom and search for truth that resists the reduction of education to procedural and methodological rationality. Yet this is what has come to control much thought and practice in the contemporary academy—from enthusiasm for rubrics to the tyranny of assessment culture. This exigence is a motivating concern of my project. Verene explains that “the search for truth has classically

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84 It is intriguing that Vico’s remarks here resemble those found in Isocrates’ hymn to logos in *Nicoles* and Cicero’s paean to oratory in *De Oratore*. 
always placed the human in relation to something beyond the reach of any method or form of self-contained, step-by-step thinking and analyzing” (“Introduction” 2). The Cartesian insistence upon right method for certain knowledge, a kind of intellectual technique, is an ancestral predecessor to the reduction of academic learning to procedural thought. By way of an alternative, wisdom is a uniquely human pursuit, and it is wisdom that a Vichian rhetorical education aims to nurture.

Though he discourages his students from being motivated in their pursuits by wealth, honor, or mere privatized pleasure, Vico does not shy away from the reward of a position in the affairs of the political community. “You too can become part of the administration of the state,” he appeals (Humanistic 52). His purpose is not to dangle before ambitious eyes the opportunity for political power (Heroic). Instead, his appeal to a sociopolitical reward stems from the decided civic orientation of the tradition of humanistic rhetoric. The purpose of a liberal arts and science education for the individual student is the cultivation of human wisdom understood as self-knowledge. However, self-knowledge is intimately tied to and depends upon the whole universe of thought and practice within which an individual person’s life is embedded. Interrelated with this personal goal of self-knowledge, civic rhetoric also aims at the general welfare, a theme I will explicate more fully later. But for now it is important to point out that a civic orientation is part of the embedded structure of a Vichian expansive education. As a sociopolitical good, such an education is intended ultimately for civic peace and tranquility. Working for a flourishing civic order, however, requires an understanding of customary ways of thinking and habitual modes of conduct—not for the sake of merely preserving the status quo but for a constructive interpretive understanding of the epideictic ground that (mal-)nourishes a given human world. A philosophical hermeneutic of that culture and civic community, made possible through a
comprehensive education, is preparatory for strengthening civic bonds and the common good. It fosters an appreciation for what is good and just in a civic order as well as an awareness of where it suffers—which also has the effect of subduing a revolutionary spirit that seeks to raze the existing order into a pile of rubble and found a new one out of whole cloth.

The achievement of communal goods is integral to broad liberal arts study in the civic-humanistic tradition and the individual goal of self-knowledge. Vico impresses upon his student audience that the common good depends on them becoming most erudite persons of the whole cultural order and that their civil society rewards such persons. The school of civic rhetoric recognizes that a key question for any society is: what system of rewards exists to incentivize achievement in liberal arts learning and the cultivation of wise self-knowledge? To our late modern bureaucratic society, there is little to no concern for rewarding achievement in liberal learning. In fact, the very question is puzzling. We are incapable of providing an account of such goods. Additionally, a concern for incentivizing liberal and humanistic learning does not square with bureaucratic modernity’s understanding of a successful human life. Nevertheless, the vital point here is that a rhetorical education, steeped in the liberal arts and sciences and oriented toward humanistic self-knowledge, is a preparation for civic responsibility.

Vico’s humanistic educational ideal of self-knowledge depends on acquiring a sense of the whole. Vico exhorts students to strive for “the universe of knowledge,” a notion that involves an energetic pursuit of knowledge in the many disciplines as well as an understanding of how those disciplines relate to one another and “all contribute to that sum total [of human knowledge], wisdom in its entirety” (Heroic Mind 890-91, 893, 897-98). Such an education inoculates against the epistemic reductionism of bureaucratic modernity. It promotes recognition of multiple valid ways of knowing in the world, both theoretically and pragmatically. Each
category of arts and sciences represents a distinct way of understanding that contributes to the whole of human knowledge (sapientia). The expanse of human knowledge is not reducible to a singular method (Study Methods). Vico’s comprehensive curriculum sought to subvert the exclusive claim to knowledge by Cartesians in his own time and serves as a partial but significant antidote to the supremacy of instrumental-bureaucratic rationality in our own time.

This striving for the whole of human knowledge is the inverse of the narrow specialization characteristic of late modern scientific and technological societies. Aiming instead for the complex unity of the universe of knowledge has the potential to produce the person of “unalloyed wisdom” (Heroic 898). Self-knowledge understood in terms of a cultivated sense for the whole depends on a substantive conception of the human person and supplies what is in MacIntyre’s ethical framework an impersonal criteria for moral and evaluative judgment (After). Vico repeatedly offers such a conception and his educational prescriptions and vision of society flow from it (Humanistic; Study Methods; Heroic). In the context of bureaucratic modernity, such a humanistic educational ideal largely has been lost, and nearly all education suffers for it. Higher education on the whole instead aims at producing bureaucratic rationality and expertise or ideological certitude—the lineage of both is in part traceable to Cartesian universal doubt, which delegitimizes practical reason as a publicly valid way of knowing (Arendt, “Human”). The loss of this civic-humanistic ideal reflects the failure of the Enlightenment moral project and the emotivist reduction of choice and judgment to arbitrary preference (MacIntyre).

Verene expresses concern that such a humanistic-rhetorical vision of education has been lost in the contemporary scientific and technological West world (“Introduction”). This loss is related, I contend, to the void of any shared sense of the good that would function to ground such a common educational ideal—thus my reasoning for recourse to Arendt, MacIntyre, and Vico in
this project. No living tradition supplies a shared educational *telos*, broadly conceived. Perhaps the only exception to this, in the words of Verene, may be the coordination of society so as to have people move along with technology, to train the mind and socialize the spirit to a world of techniques. But since there is no goal, no *telos*, education in both the sciences and the liberal arts suffers and becomes confused. We have, as Ernst Cassirer has called it, a ‘Crisis in Man’s Knowledge of Himself,’ because no dominant context is present in which to understand the human being in modern life. (10)

With this remark Verene intimates the conditions of bureaucratic modernity, namely the form of instrumental-bureaucratic rationality the undergirds notions of technique in the late modern world. What we are bereft of in this context is a substantive understanding of the self and its sources, as Charles Taylor discusses in his *Sources of the Self*. Walker Percy shows keen awareness of this when he satirically remarks on how it is that “you can survive in the Cosmos about which you know more and more while knowing less and less about yourself” and “why it is that of all the billions and billions of strange objects in the Cosmos . . . you are beyond doubt the strangest” (*Lost in the Cosmos* 1). This crisis of ignorance, according to Verene, is a consequence of forsaking self-knowledge, with its sense of the whole, as the aim of education (“Introduction”). Without something akin to Vico’s priority on cultivating in the human spirit a sense of the whole, studies not only in the humanities but also in the natural and social sciences lack an overarching purpose (10). Toward what intrinsic human goods are these studies to be directed as their end (*telos*) in the human community? In bureaucratic modernity, characterized by the ascendance of instrumental rationality and social scientific expertise, the humanities have been “confused” and refashioned after the image of the sciences by searching for legitimacy through “some alternative procedure” in the absence of self-knowledge as an ideal (10).
Skepticism regarding the human self is the assumed starting point and initial posture. Education, if it is to humanize, requires an account of the human person arising from ethical ground.

THE UNITY OF PHILOSOPHY AND RHETORIC

*Eloquentia*

A second metaphor structuring Vico’s humanistic educational ideal is the notion of *eloquentia*. Far more than mere linguistic ornamentation, eloquence for Vico is facility in speaking “about the whole of the subject” (Verene, “Introduction” 7). It is the ability to give wisdom verbal articulation. If the goal of *sapientia* is *philosophia* or the love of wisdom, then it must also strive for eloquence, for *eloquentia* is “love of the word as the medium of wisdom” (8). Human speech achieves eloquence when it is “complete” and “encompass[es] all the dimensions of a subject . . . but brings the listener always back to the point and brings the whole of the topic well into view” (7). While attending to the dialectic between the parts and the whole, *eloquentia* reinforces a sense of the whole carried by *sapientia*—the whole is the aim of human wisdom. In fact, eloquence is wisdom “ornately and copiously delivered in words appropriate to the common opinion” of a given narrative tradition and sociopolitical body (Study Methods 78).

This explains why, in the Ciceronean-Augustinian tradition, wisdom and eloquence are an inseparable unit (Troup). Vico’s rhetorical sensibilities shine through in his attentiveness to mediation and the significance of speech as the medium of wisdom. The love of wisdom requires “the love of eloquence,” which affirms thought and language as a natural unity (8). Therefore, not only is the union of wisdom and eloquence of paramount importance here but so too is the union of objects of knowledge and language. In true Augustinian fashion, there is a tight connection between things (*res*) and words (*verbum*) (Verene 7; Christian Doctrine). Human
thought and knowledge is mediated through the linguistic word. That we know things through linguistic signs elevates the significance of studying the art of eloquence.

However, because eloquence entails facility in expressing the whole of a subject verbal articulation, Vico positions it toward the conclusion of a student’s education. Attentive to the sequence of studies, Vico insists that eloquence should be undertaken only after one becomes “well versed in all fields of knowledge” (*Study Methods* 78). Vico invokes the authority of Francis Bacon who advised the same to King James regarding the place of eloquence in a university curriculum. Eloquence is a capstone subject that prepares graduates for a life of discursive action (69-70, 78-80). Eloquence is necessary for human wisdom, and through this unity of word and wisdom, *eloquentia* as the curricular apex commences the eventual movement of *philosophia* into the realm of human affairs. Because of its orientation toward human affairs and its dependence upon a rhetorical conception of human knowledge I refer to Vico’s expansive program of studies as a *rhetorical education*.

*Grammatico-Poetics, Ars Topica, and Rhetorical Ways of Knowing*

Whereas eloquence is a capstone, poetics is the bedrock and cornerstone. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Vico contends for and works from a position that facility with metaphors is more basic to human knowledge than rational argumentation and philosophical criticism. This position also points to Vico’s insistence upon attentiveness to the sequence of studies for youth, a recurring theme in his educational orations and writings (*Humanistic; Study Methods*). Vico maintains that an order of education must be attuned to those faculties that are weakest and strongest at particular developmental periods (*Humanistic*). Human reason is weakest while young, but imagination and memory are strong. Youth are disproportionately oriented to their five senses, which provide sensory images for the imagination or what Vico refers to as
As a complement to their language arts curriculum, ancient adolescents cultivated logic and the power of reasoning indirectly through study geometry, which brings the abstract into the sensory realm of space (Study Methods 14). Success in the science of geometry depends upon the imagination’s ability to call images to mind. Because of the strength of their imagination and memory, education in adolescence should consist in expanding student’s vocabulary, increasing their store of metaphors, and immersing their mind with stories. Their mind and spirit should be populated with an abundance of grammatico-poetic resources as the rudimentary building blocks for subsequent studies, eventual including eloquence, and ultimately the rhetorical task of communicative action in pragmatic civic contexts. Vico’s rhetorical conception of human knowledge begins with equipping memory with words and imagination with images.

In his effort to assess the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the ancient order of studies to that in his own contemporary moment, Vico observes a striking reversal. Philosophical criticism, also referred to as speculative or rationalistic criticism, has come to dominate the educational models in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century and is the intellectual instrument youth are required to learn first (Study Methods 13-20). The modern purpose of speculative criticism is to purge the mind not only of falsehood but also of even “the mere suspicion of error” (13). This move joins probabilistic knowledge with erroneous thought under one and the same category of falsity. The mind, according to Cartesians, must be cleared of both error and “secondary verities and ideas which are based on probability alone” (13). This

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85 In this section, Vico specifies “youths,” “adolescents,” “young people,” and “young men” as the recipients he has in mind of an education that should emphasize nurturing the imagination, memory, common sense, and facility with topics as opposed to one focused on speculative criticism (13-14, 19). It seems he has the late teenager and perhaps early twentysomething in mind, a stage in life prior to full “adulthood” when “young minds” are still too “immature” for an education primarily steeped in “abstract intellectualism” and “philosophical criticism” (13, 14).
poses a direct threat to common sense, which is grounded in verisimilitude. Vico insists that memory and imagination of youth should be nurtured in common sense because it is the grounding standard that guides eloquence and “the criterion of practical judgment,” also referred to as prudence (13, 14). Memory and imagination are the most potent capacities of the spirit among the young. Moreover, strength of imagination, is a significant sign of future intellectual potential. Vico’s observation here echoes Aristotle’s position that creative facility with metaphors, perceptiveness in discerning similarity among dissimilarities, is the surest indicator of genius (Poetics 1459a). A deep and extensive educational investment should be made in an adolescent’s memory and imagination; for it nurtures common sense (Study Methods 13-14).

Premature stress upon philosophical criticism leaves the imagination and memory malnourished and subverts the development of common sense. Modern criticism is a form of “abstract intellectualism” that, when pursued prematurely and employed universally, undermines facility in eloquence (13). This is precisely what Vico witnessed in the modern education of his own time under the influence of the Cartesian Enlightenment. While embracing the contributions to human knowledge and society made by aspects of a modern course of studies, Vico sought tenaciously to preserve those grammatico-poetic arts, as well as relevant sciences, that would fortify memory and imagination—this for the good of the individual human spirit and the civic community. The art of topics in particular is an essential bridge between the poetic and the pragmatic.

The premature and excessive emphasis on philosophical criticism and abstract intellectualism is detrimental to the student’s ability to rightfully judge the validity of arguments. Exercising good judgment with respect to arguments requires the prior, more basic knowledge pertaining to the activity of inventing arguments, namely the imagination’s wealth of metaphors
or images of the world. Metaphors are the *sine qua non* of the art of topics, an art upon which the rhetorical activity of inventing arguments depends (*Study Methods* 14-20). In his own day advocates for a modern educational program were motivated by the ideal of a “critically endowed” individual, a cultivated endowment “sufficient” for lifelong, autodidactic learning on any subject (14). Modernity reinterpreted the educated person in terms of *ars critica* rather than *ars topica* (Verene, “Philosophical” 33). In our own present social and historical context, promotional efforts to vindicate a liberal arts education in terms of “critical thinking” to the neglect of an emphasis upon moral reasoning is not altogether different from Vico’s concern. As discussed earlier, Grassi observes a link between an emphasis on “critical thinking” in our time with the prominence given to criticism in Vico’s time (*Rhetoric*). Vico recognizes that the instrument of Cartesian-fashioned criticism and abstract analysis has propelled advances in scientific knowledge previously unavailable to the ancients (*Study Methods* 14-20). For this reason, among others, an overwhelming percentage of educational and social incentives in his day were directed toward rationalistic criticism as *ars critica* to the neglect of the art of topics (Verene, “Philosophical”). Though such a plan of studies yields historically unprecedented scientific and technological advancements—which ultimately made plausible the subsequent social viewpoint and modern life philosophy as Arendt explains—Vico perceived that *ars topica* was being sacrificed to the detriment of civic life (Vico, *Study Methods*; Arendt, *Human*).

The inventive art of topics is concerned with the ability to discover lines of argumentation by means of schematized forms of human reasoning (Vico, *Study Methods* 14-20). As an art, it address the reality that human life in general and human affairs in particular are characterized by uncertainty, by events and action falling within the domain of the probable not

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86 In our own late modern bureaucratic society, such an education in critical thinking and oriented to techno-scientific development holds the promise of well-paying jobs and a secure career.
the predictable. In contradistinction to a modernist notion of social scientific predictability and its relation to bureaucratic rationality, the art of topics and probabilistic knowledge are key features of a rhetorical conception of human knowing (MacIntyre, After). This art aims to produce the eloquent and prudent citizen not the bureaucratic expert. As integral to the larger art of rhetoric, *ars topica* equips the person of discursive action with categories of thought and patterns of reasoning for occasions of largely unrehearsed and extemporaneous speech in order to accomplish tasks in pragmatic contexts. Such a person must have recourse to the available means of “persuasion inherent in any question or case” (Vico, *Study Methods* 15). By contrast, the modern intellectual tool of philosophical criticism proceeds slowly and in a manner of cool, detached analysis. Vico highlights what is at stake:

> In pressing, urgent affairs, which do not admit of delay or postponement, as most frequently occurs in our law courts[, for example,] . . . it is the orator’s business to give *immediate* assistance to the accused, who is usually granted only a few hours in which to plead his defense. Our experts in philosophical criticism, instead, whenever they are confronted with some dubious point, are wont to say: ‘Give me some time to think it over!’ (15)

*Ars topica* and *ars critica* are attuned not only to different temporal and epistemic conditions but also to opposing forms of verbalization. An education that features the art of topics aims at the cultivation of eloquence and its utilization under pragmatic conditions constrained by temporal urgency and filled with uncertainty. Speculative criticism seeks certainty, precision, and the eradication of falsity and therefore requires an abundance of time for painstaking analysis. In terms of verbalization, *ars topica* fosters eloquence, while criticism seeks the elusive goal of ‘true speech.’
Due to the centrality of the audience and the myriad opinions and motivations therein, the person of eloquence must be able to present the full range of *topoi* “in order to be sure of having touched all the soul-strings” of the listeners (15). Vico invokes Cicero’s overwhelming rhetorical success in legislative and judicial bodies, which he attributes to Cicero’s specific skill in proceeding through the whole set of *topoi* in a given case, including “those points of [seemingly] little weight” (16). Vico’s point is that human beings, creatures who are not reducible to centers of raw cogitation, often “unmoved by forceful and compelling reasons can be jolted from their apathy, and made to change their minds by means of some trifling line of argument” (15). At the point of decision-making, skill at influencing the motivations of another depends on the art of topics. As an inventive resource for rhetorical argumentation and discursive action, *ars topica*, unlike speculative criticism, aims at eloquent speech in temporally constrained pragmatic situations and at prudent decisions made inescapably upon the basis of probability, not certainty.

Nevertheless, Vico’s dialectical mind will not permit the exclusion of philosophical criticism altogether in the name of the *ars topica* (*Study Methods* 17-19). This move reveals Vico’s advocacy for epistemic plurality, differentiating his posture toward human knowledge from Cartesian methodological monism and the epistemic reductionism of bureaucratic modernity with respect to instrumental rationality. While the art of topics fosters eloquence and probable knowledge, intellectual criticism facilitates truth. Vico warns that an education in *ars topica* and rhetorical invention alone results in either relativism or skeptical doublemindedness. Such roadblocks to knowledge of things human and divine are driven by an excessive priority granted to *dissoi logoi*—that pedagogical method and pragmatic strategy related to the ability to debate “on either side of any proposed argument” (19). It must be said that *dissoi logoi* depends

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87 Vico has ancient Academic Skepticism in mind here and mentions Carneades of Cyrene (214-129 B.C.) specifically (18-19).
upon the art of topics and is an indispensable pedagogy for a rhetorical education. In fact, it is a vital intellectual antidote to ideological certitude, promoting humility regarding one’s own position and respectful fairness toward another’s. That said, philosophical criticism presents *dissoi logoi* and other resources of rhetorical invention with an appropriate limit. It aids in safeguarding the mind from pernicious forms of sophism. However, an education primarily driven by philosophical criticism, denigrates probabilistic knowledge and stifles eloquence understood as a temporally-constrained, pragmatic-communicative facility.

Vico is a proponent of multiple ways of knowing in the world. His embrace of the advantages to be gleaned from both the ancient and modern plans of studies—though in their appropriate sequence—takes him back to the theme of *sapientia* and its intersection with *eloquentia*. As a safeguard against the respective limitations and deficiencies of *ars topica* and *ars critica*, especially when one is elevated disproportionately, young people ought to be instructed in “the totality of sciences and arts, and their intellectual powers should be developed to the full” (*Study Methods* 19). If such a curriculum is set in place, students “will become familiar with the art of argument, drawn from the *ars topica*” (19). And, it was this inventive art, which grounds the subsequent development of *eloquentia*, that Cartesian modernists neglected and denigrated. Privileging the art of topics in earlier stages of higher education will nourish common sense and lay the groundwork for later develop in eloquence and prudence. However, in the later stages of their education students should also learn speculative criticism in order that they may “apply the fullness of their personal judgment to what they have been taught” (19).

Unlike the absolute priority given to intellectual criticism in the *Port-Royal Logic*, studying *ars critica* should follow only after common sense and judgment has been properly fostered (19-20). Placing logic, as a direct object of study, toward the conclusion of an educational sequence,
mitigates the defects of modern education. Situated in a broad education inclusive of both invention and criticism in their proper sequence, students will learn topics, *dissoi logoi*, common sense judgment and eloquence, while being less likely to succumb either to Cartesian epistemic reductionism or to relativism and doublemindedness—less inclined to deny a legitimate and vital role to probabilistic knowledge while simultaneously less inclined to be denied a grasp of truth.

The cultivation of *eloquentia* as a capstone pursuit of a comprehensive education depends upon a memory rich with words for speaking and an imagination populated with images for metaphorizing; the inventive *art of topics* and method of *dissoi logo*; the rhetorical art of argumentation, and common sense judgment. Eloquence, as with argumentation, depends upon a grammatico-poetic bedrock of words and images, language and ideas, figures and tropes. Such is the import of grammar in the trivium for dialectic and rhetoric. Thought, reasoning, argumentation, and eloquent speech are rooted in *the grammar of language*. As one of three motifs integral to a Vichian rhetorical education, eloquence contributes to a meaningful curricular whole. *Spatientia*—the cultivation of which depends upon an all-embracing education in the liberal arts and sciences and draws from the best of ancient and modern plans of studies—aims toward and seeks its fulfilment in *eloquentia* and *prudentia*. Wide-ranging human knowledge (*sapientia*) and the love of wisdom (*philosophia*) ought to manifest in a love of the word as the medium of wisdom (*eloquentia*) as well as in a prudent conduct of life in personal and public affairs (*prudential/jurisprudentia*). Vico contends that such a plan of studies offers the best hope for yielding the following educational ideal: the person who is “exact in science, clever in practical matters, fluent in eloquence, imaginative in understanding poetry or painting, and strong in memorizing what they have learned in their legal studies” (19). The art of eloquence as an educational capstone serves functions as a nexus to the prudent conduct of life.
PRACTICAL WISDOM AS AN EDUCATIONAL IDEAL

The previous section of this chapter considered the unity of philosophy and rhetoric, *philosophia-sapientia* with *eloquentia*. The current section considers another unity: of an expansive education with civic affairs, of *philosophia* with *praxis*, of contemplation with action. As a representative of the school of civic-humanistic rhetoric, Vico understands *sapientia* as achieving its fulfillment in *prudentia* or “the prudent conduct of life” (*Study Methods* 35). I want to consider Vico’s emphasis here as offering an educational ideal rooted in a communication ethics of practical wisdom.

*An Ethics of the Prudential*

An education in humane letters and the sciences ought to produce true knowledge for our minds (*sapientia*), eloquence for our speech (*eloquentia*), and virtues of character for our spirits that manifest in a prudent conduct of life (*prudentia*) (*Humanistic* 129, 137-38). Upon first glance the third metaphor in Vico’s educational philosophy, *prudentia*, may appear to be a mere repetition of the first. But prudence is far more oriented to action and the concrete than *sapientia*, which stands for comprehensive human learning. Yet, prudence too is a significant dimension of ‘knowing thyself.’ As Verene articulates, “The love of wisdom, or philosophy, is in essence the love of prudent or wise conduct in the *polis*, the civil world” (“Introduction” 8). The proper yield of *sapientia* is wise conduct in personal and public affair (*Study Methods* 47-53, 60, 69-70, 74-80). In the emphasis on *sapientia*, Vico’s educational ideal draws deeply from the philosophical tradition, though not to the exclusion of wisdom-loving orators (Verene, “Introduction” 2-5). With *eloquentia* a more specifically rhetorical theme emerges, and it is in this sense that Vico’s education is to be understood as a rhetorical one (*Study Methods*). In addition to giving articulation to the whole, eloquence is a capstone also because it is preparatory for a life of
prudent communicative action. Verene explains, “Prudent action is based on the interconnection among sapientia (wisdom), eloquentia (eloquence), and prudentia (prudence) as formulated by Cicero. Any situation must be grasped first in terms of what it is. Then the whole of it must be put into words . . . Once what is in question is so formulated and [considered], we have a basis to act” (“Sociopaths” 217). Given this humanistic-pragmatic purpose, Vico resists the various privatizations of education’s telos—from private financial gain and social prestige to a reclusive enjoyment of learning solipsistically isolated from the common good (Heroic 887).

Stressing prudentia links philosophy and rhetoric through an emphasis upon ethics, law, and discursive action in the public sphere. “The vision that prudentia introduces in human affairs requires the individual to have sapientia, a wisdom of the whole, and to be able for himself and for others to put this whole into words, to have eloquentia” (Verene, “Introduction” 9). In contrast to an education oriented to narrow specialization—resonant with Weber’s emphasis upon the training of specialists in late modern bureaucratic society—Vico’s stress upon a broad education in all the arts and sciences is one specifically oriented to human affairs in general and the common welfare in particular (Study Methods 69-70, 74-77, 80); Heroic 887). Vico contends specifically that both sapientia and eloquentia ought to be channeled ultimately in the service of public interest rather than toward private claims and gain. Not only are wide-ranging, multidisciplinary studies themselves presented as a “coherent body of learning” but so too is life itself, in private and public, characterized by a “unitary spirit” among distinct activities and domains that co-inform one another (Study Methods 76, 77). The constellation of sapientia, eloquentia, and prudentia impresses upon Vico’s audience the unity of rhetoric and philosophy presented in a broad, civically oriented liberal arts education, thereby supplying an alternate model to bureaucratic modernity’s educational fragmentation and incoherence (Verene,
“Introduction”). Philosophy and rhetoric are not oppositions but inseparably linked in a *studia humanitatis* that aims at human affairs and the civic good.

Integral to the communication ethics approach taken in this chapter, Vico observes the lack of attention in his own day given to ethical instruction, an observation with striking parallels to our own contemporary moment: “But the greatest drawback of our educational methods is that we pay an excessive amount of attention to the natural sciences and not enough to ethics. Our chief fault is that we disregard the part of ethics, which treats of human character, of its dispositions, its passions, and of the manner of adjusting those factors to public life and eloquence” (*Study Methods* 33). Vico witnessed modern curricula ignoring ethical instruction and the cultivation of practical wisdom, substantive moral reasoning, and excellences of character. Not only does this observation speak to the disproportionate contemporary enthusiasm for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), but it resonates with MacIntyre’s emphasis on the virtues tradition, with its attention to moral formation, and Arendt’s emphasis on action in the civic realm of public affairs. In late modernity, Arendt and MacIntyre echo what Vico discerned in early modernity. And, Vico echoes Cicero’s insistence upon moral philosophy and psychology as integral to the educational of the complete orator (*De Oratore*). Vico conceives of ethical studies as broadly encompassing and oriented toward cultural and political life. Ethics to him is primarily concerned not with intellectually clarifying ethical concepts and terms, addressing specific issues, or bureaucratic codes of compliance. Rather ethics for Vico pertains to “the art of seemly conduct in life, the most difficult of all arts” (*Study Methods* 33). Vico has primarily public affairs in mind, but his concern for conduct also includes private affairs. The direction of an individual human life as a whole is hardly isolated from what Arendt refers to as the web of human relations and affairs. The task of ethics, as MacIntyre implores,
must include an account of the sociopolitical world from which that theory emerges and of which that theory seeks to offer an account, even if that account aims to contest that sociopolitical world in some way. Regarding the civic realm, Vico explains, “As a consequence of this neglect [of ethics], a noble and important branch of studies, i.e., the science of politics, lies almost abandoned and untended” (33). Modern education had begun to omit ethics and politics from its curricula. The result was the failure to foster in students both prudentia and jurisprudentia. Modern education itself, and its interrelation with bureaucratized society, has been a key contributing factor to the erosion of practical reason. In the late modern West, forsaking the study and practice of non-bureaucratized politics and public virtues is precisely what Arendt laments in the rise of the social, the decline of civic action, and the withering of judgment and thoughtfulness (Arendt, Human; Arendt, Eichmann). An education that cultivates the doer of great deeds and speaker of wise words, the person of prudence and eloquence, is sought after little in the sociopolitical milieu shaped by bureaucratic modernity (Arendt; Vico). The late modern predominance of instrumental rationality—which Arendt discusses as the scientific and objective attitude and the endless metabolism of the social viewpoint and MacIntyre exposes as social scientific expertise and bureaucratic rationality—has subverted the public validity of practical reason, not to mention its perceived private relevance. Vico knew the significance of robust ethical instruction in the curriculum for the strengthening of prudentia.

In fact, the momentum of my project climaxes in a communication ethics framework for an interpretive understanding of bureaucratic modernity and a modest antidote to its deformative power and affect upon practical reason and moral wisdom. I will pursue such an understanding and antidote by considering: the unity of expansive erudition with human affairs, Vico’s discussion of prudence and jurisprudence, and a Vichian inspired character type that may
function as an alternative educational ideal to bureaucratic expertise and ideological certitude. A broad learning steeped in the liberal arts and sciences expressed though eloquentia and fulfilled in “the prudent conduct of life” in private and public affairs (Study Methods 35). Such an ideal satisfies the Arendtian call for the cultivation of sound judgment and thoughtful action (Human; Eichmann). An expansive education culminating in eloquence and prudence exemplifies MacIntyre’s outline of moral discourse and practice that is rooted in a substantive concept of the human person and capable of conceiving of one’s life as a narrative whole vis-à-vis a sociopolitical and historical self embedded within a living tradition (After). It is in light of such a concept of the human that Vico prescribes a curriculum of comprehensive learning fulfilled in eloquentia and prudentia (Humanistic; Study Methods; Heroic).

Prudence as the Culmination of Expansive Learning

Vico advances a conception of philosophia as oriented toward civic affairs (SM 49-50; Humanistic). With respect to the graduate, sapientia achieves its fulfillment in prudentia: “the prudent conduct of life” (Study Methods 35). In order to comprehend the significance of prudentia in light of sapientia, we return to Vico’s theme of modern education privileging deduction and abstraction to the neglect of induction and the concrete, speculative-rationalistic criticism and abstract knowledge to the diminishment of ars topica and common sense. In dialectical fashion, Vico insists that expansive human wisdom requires attention to the concrete, sapientia understood as liberal and humanistic self-knowledge requires prudent attentiveness to

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88 In his fourth oration, Vico addresses the sociopolitical utility of a wide-ranging liberal and humanistic education (Humanistic). Relatedly, habits of service are habituated during one’s education as a member of the republic of letters—that association united around scholarship and inquiry (Humanistic 72, 76-79). The educational community functions as an incubator of civic virtue. The republic of letters requires its citizens to flee from deceit and embrace a collegial spirit of friendship centered around truthful speech about one’s own and others’ work and ideas (Humanistic 82-84, 90). Scholastic good faith entails the virtues of truthfulness in speech, intellectual generosity in the form of public praise, and a humane disposition to help colleagues. Vico frames scholarship with an ethical vision that privileges service. Service is central to the meaning of membership in the community of letters.
the particulars of lived human experience. He is concerned that the excessive priority given to the natural sciences in his own time—and what has flowered into STEM in our own time—in capacitates students and graduates for the wise conduct of life in public and private affairs. In a phrase, it erodes practical reason, or it at least allows prudence to wither. Here the intersection of sapientia with eloquenta and prudentia emerges to the fore. An education reductively oriented to a speculative, abstract, and deductive form of knowledge internal to the modern natural sciences along with philosophical criticism fails to equip graduates “to conduct themselves with sufficient wisdom and prudence; nor can they infuse into their speech a familiarity with human psychology or permeate their utterances with passion” (33-34). Ars critica is incapable of yielding eloquence or prudence.

In order to achieve sapientia that culminates in prudent conduct in public and private affairs, Vico expounds upon the need for ethical studies. He does so by proposing four types of people with regard to the kind of knowledge they possess or lack: the fool, the astute ignoramus, the learned but imprudent person, and the sage (34-35). The fool possesses knowledge of neither the general explanatory theory nor the particular instance. In her life conduct she exudes neither abstract knowledge—which depends upon speculation and deduction and is capable of the highest verity with regard to truth—nor prudence, which is probabilistic in character, attends inductively to the particular, depends on common sense, and is capable of a verisimilitude, a ‘lawier’ but nevertheless credible verity. The astute ignoramus favors an inductive approach to knowledge and thus is highly attentive to the particular. But because she is incapable of a speculative coherence, she is unable to locate her concrete and particular knowledge within the context of a larger meaningful whole. She recognizes the lowest type of verity yet is imperceptive of the highest truths. Vico considers Cartesian-influenced modernist education to
produce the learned person destitute of prudence. Such a plan of studies involves a thoroughgoing priority for the highest verity and its insistence upon understanding the particular in terms of what may be deduced about it from general truths and abstract knowledge. The learned but imprudent person “travel[s] in a straight line from general truths to particular ones[ and] bulls his way through the tortuous paths of life” (35). Probabilistic knowledge, common sense, and inductive insights from lived human experience are eschewed in an attempt to satisfy the requirement for pristine, unadulterated epistemic verity.

The sage, however, derives general and eternal truths from verities manifest in the particular and concrete (34). With regard to ethics and the conduct of life, the sage attends to eternal truths present within the shifting, uncertain, and unpredictable conditions of temporal human life. Vico expresses that

the sage who, through all the obliquities and uncertainties of human actions and events, keeps his eye steadily focused on eternal truth, manages to follow a roundabout way whenever he cannot travel in a straight line, and makes decisions, in the field of action, which, in the course of time, prove to be as profitable as the nature of things permits. (35)

The sage embraces the dialectical relationship between general knowledge and particular knowledge—the abstract verities of critical “science” and the verisimilitude of “prudence,” deduction and induction, necessary logic and probabilistic logic, speculative theoretical reflection and concrete experience (34, 35). But when it comes to ethics and politics, prudent conduct in private and public affairs does not depend upon the abstract criterion of scientific reasoning but upon reasoning about those goods constitutive of personal and communal flourishing. Vico demarcates the pragmatic terrain of the prudent sage from that of the bureaucratic expert who relies upon a social scientific notion of law-like predictability in human
affairs akin to that in the natural sciences. The contemporary bureaucrat is a later permutation of the early modern impulse to establish all human knowledge as well as sociopolitical life on scientific, abstract, critical, and universalizable/generalizable criteria. In his own time, and on the frontend of the Age of Enlightenment, Vico perceives the erroneous and enervating tendency to establish, reductively so, all of human life and knowledge on the singular, “abstract criterion of reasoning that obtains in the domain of science” (35). Vico’s prescient warning anticipates, by about two centuries, the many twentieth century philosophical critiques of the Enlightenment’s moral and epistemic project. His understanding of the relationship among sapientia, eloquenta, and prudentia as a humanistic educational ideal as well as the ground for civic life safeguards him from sailing down the epistemic and moral river that leads into the closed basin of the Enlightenment whose waters do not sustain much life.

As the Latin cognate for the Greek notion of phronesis, prudentia is wisdom in action, a morally decorous combination of discerning judgment and good conduct (Verene, “Introduction” 8). For Vico true education does not conclude with a “search for purely theoretical knowledge. Self-knowledge is always moral in the sense of being practical wisdom, a wisdom that directs the human being in life” (8-9). Self-knowledge is ultimately a moral category. As final preparation for performing the duties of adulthood and conducting an active public life, students need to cultivate “wise judgment in human affairs” (Humanistic 133). Such wise judgment is in large part the fruit of education oriented toward knowledge of things human and divine, toward an expansive self-knowledge steeped in the liberal and humane arts (137). Knowledge of human and divine things facilitates a steady course of life that steers clear of “the shoals of [baseless] opinion” and “the hidden rocks of error” (137). Vico explains that because “fools do not have the skill of knowing the true, they are ignorant of the true limits that set apart good from evil, which
is the knowledge of the source of all human practical wisdom” (137). Vico conceives of intellectual knowledge as related to the conduct of a good life. The proper use of intellectual knowledge is the conduct of a good life and service to human affairs. The one who desires and is habituated to the true more readily desires and accultivates to the good (138). Sapientia turns out to shape and inform prudentia. Intellectual virtues and moral virtues, though distinct, are not sealed off from each other; in fact, they interpenetrate. Sapientia is the source of prudentia, while prudentia is the goal of sapientia. Together they aim at a flourishing human life in both private and public affairs (137-8). It is to this notion of prudence in human affairs that I would like to turn—namely, prudentia as jurisprudentia.

Prudentia and Jurisprudentia

Analogous to the idea of providentia—the wisdom and sustaining care manifested in divine acts—prudentia also entails wise human actions in public affairs. In its public expression in relation to law and politics, Vico portrays prudence as jurisprudence. In light of this connection, “jurisprudence is philosophy” (8). Verene explains, “Jurisprudence is prudence guided by law or right (ius), the proper conduct of communal life, just as prudence or practical wisdom is what is required by any individual in order to have wisdom in particular affairs” (8). Here another unity emerges, the one between knowledge and action. For Vico, jurisprudence, when understood as comprehending the wisdom of a legal-judicial tradition as a whole, grounds public action in human affairs. What may be referred to as a philosophical hermeneutics of the law ought to anchor conduct in human affairs (Mootz). As a pragmatic form of knowing, jurisprudentia carries the idea of praxis. Wisdom-informed practice addresses extensive general knowledge to the particular and the located in public action. The fruition of a broad liberal arts education that aims at self-knowledge (sapientia) is prudent conduct in the realm of civic affairs
(jurisprudentia)—mirroring providence in the world. Vico’s curriculum in liberal and humane studies is designed to produce nothing less than the steward of a prosperous public order. The goal of liberal arts studies is to seek wisdom for the strengthening of sociopolitical communities. An expansive education oriented toward the good of social, political, and economic institutions and practices characterizes the school of civic-humanistic rhetoric.

Vico promotes a textured conception of prudence with both moral and civic dimensions (138). Wishing that his students, having cultivated knowledge of things divine, develop prudence for human affairs, Vico explicates the idea of jurisprudence. Fostering the moral dimension of prudence forms the person while the civil dimension shapes the citizen.89 “Therefore, having been imbued with the knowledge of divine things, may you learn prudence in human affairs, first, the moral, which forms man, then the civil, which forms the citizen” (138). The moral-personal and civic dimensions are hardly sealed off from one another, and as such reflects an Isocratean-Ciceronian priority regarding the import of prudence vis-à-vis civic affairs (Isocrates, Nicocles; Cicero, De Oratore). Jurisprudence entails knowledge of the good oriented toward justice and knowledge of human affairs oriented toward the common good (133). It the form of prudence manifested in public affairs (139). Jurisprudence is the fruit of the fusion of philosophia-sapientia and eloquentia, the unity of philosophy and rhetoric. The rapprochement of philosophy and rhetoric in Greco-Roman antiquity yielded jurisprudence. Vico’s Study Methods, as well as his later speech “The Academies and the Relation between Philosophy and Eloquence,” explicates this theme, contending that jurisprudence was tantamount to expansive

89 For Vico, the moral dimension of prudence involves not only an understanding of customs and moral philosophy but also moral theology. The fruit of study in moral theology, its “dogmas and customs,” equips one “to guide princes as their advisers in ordering and administering public affairs with the wisest counsel” (138). Jurisprudence involves knowledge of moral theology, because we are interpreting the right within a Christian commonwealth” (133).
human wisdom (*Study* 37, 49; “Academics”; *Humanistic* 139n). Jurisprudence understood through the intersection of philosophy and rhetoric was an even more overt theme in Roman thought and practice than it was in the Greek tradition.

In the Roman Republic, the jurist was the paragon of jurisprudential wisdom. While discussing the historical transformations of Roman jurisprudence, Vico observes a basic distinction between the Greek and the Roman general orientations to law (*Study Methods* 47-70). In Greece philosophers were the ones who gave instruction in the philosophy of law. In addition to the philosopher of law, Greek legal professions included two kinds of practitioners: legislators and forensic orators. By contrast, in Rome “the philosophers themselves were jurists” (49). This was so because to the Romans law represented the wisdom of their whole tradition. The Roman jurist was the embodiment of *sapientia*. Knowledge of law was the special province of the patricians (50-53). They concealed jurisprudential knowledge and law texts from those outside of the *collegia* of jurists. They insisted that to qualify as a jurist one needed to possess knowledge of the three kinds of Roman law: sacral, public, and private. These three types were grounded in the Law of the Twelve Tables and constituted the single art of jurisprudence (52-53, 55-56, 63). The requirement of such knowledge resulted in broadly learned jurists with expansive philosophical, historical, and precedential understanding, distinguishing them from forensic orators. Unlike orators who were without recourse to knowledge of the law’s letter, jurists were trained in the “science of the just” (53, 56). Jurisprudence served as the basis of a jurist’s activities, from pleading in court to giving legal consultation to clients. Jurisprudence for the Romans shared the same definition that the Greeks gave to wisdom: “a knowledge of divine and human affairs” (50, 53). Roman law and the art of law, namely jurisprudence, served as the epideictic ground of human affairs both public and private.
Furthermore, wisdom for the Romans was primarily a matter of praxis (49-50, 75). Vico explains that “sapientia corresponded perfectly to justice and statesmanship” (49). Theoria and praxis were an inseparable, mutually co-informing unity. The Romans understood and excelled in “the art of government and of justice, not by talking about it, but by direct experiences in public affairs” (49). Their pragmatic engagement generated what Francis J. Mootz refers to as rhetorical knowledge, a philosophical comportment that arises from within a practice. They sought to improve their legal wisdom “by scrupulously taking on public duties” (Vico, Study Methods 50). It was not until old age, after a long active life in public affairs, that the law then became primarily an object of contemplation. As theoretically-informed, practical knowledge, jurisprudence was the fulfillment and goal of sapientia.

With the decline of the Roman Republic and the ascendance of the Empire, the number of laws and legal text proliferated as the patricians were stripped of their role as guardians over the few secret books of law (56-59, 63). Legal practice shifted from the strict interpretation of textual wording to a focus on case law. When the science of justice governed legal proceedings, statues and formal laws as general provisions were well-defined, few in number, and applicable to a nearly infinite number of circumstantial facts. As a result the number of laws and law books increased dramatically as did the number of legal rules that address “extremely picayune and trifling questions” (63). Modern legal codes to those outside of Europe, Vico observes, are an object of ridicule for their “pedantic meticulousness” (63). Perfect compliance with, let alone awareness of, the vast number of rules is impossible. In our own late modern bureaucratic society legitimized on rational-legal grounds, societal members daily break legal rules unwittingly. The proliferation of laws and books of law results in the trivialization of the law. The law is no longer the embodiment of sapiential jurisprudentia that aims at commonwealth but
rather a technical code that seeks compliance and that is more oriented toward private interest. The early Romans had comparatively few laws, but the ones they had addressed matters of great significance. The entire Law of the Twelve Tables was memorized by Roman boys and was contained in a single thin book.

Two advantages of the modern system of law, according to Vico, is that it requires the modern jurist to have a broader ranging facility with judicial argumentation along with multiple forms of legal knowledge: theoretical (legal norms), empirical (case law history), and factual (60). Yet, the glaring weakness for Vico is the separation of modern jurisprudence from philosophy. Jurisprudence is no longer understood as the goal and fulfilment of sapientia and thus ceases to be the pragmatic aim of wisdom-loving. The modern legal expert is “deficient in the knowledge of how to set in order and maintain a commonwealth through laws; this knowledge, as the source of all jurisprudence, should be taught first . . . by practical experience in the discharge of governmental duties” (60). Commonwealth depends upon a jurisprudence rooted in philosophia and oriented to praxis. Jurisprudence enables justice, which is the “constant care for the common good” (67). Thus for Vico, an expansive education in all arts and sciences (sapientia) should produce an eloquence (eloquentia) that aims at public interest and a prudence capable of strengthening commonwealth (jurisprudentia).

Vico persistently highlights comparative advantages between the ancients and the moderns, yet the central problematic of the Study Methods reveals itself here in relation to jurisprudence. Although modern education and modern law enjoy certain advantages, they “have been unable to avoid the drawbacks incident to” those advantages (64). The early modern lawyer or jurist has been privatized in a disintegrated legal system (62-63, 69-70). According to Vico, the fragmentation of modern law is on the whole a great disadvantage. Ecclesiastical (formally
sacral) law is the exclusive province of theologians and church leaders, while “government councils monopolize public law” and jurists or lawyers attend to private law and interests alone (63, 70). In antiquity, sacral and private law were branches of public law and thus also a matter of public concern and relevant to human affairs. Jurisprudence was the form of wisdom relevant to all types of all and to human affairs, both public and private. Jurisprudentia as the philosophically-inclined art of law promotes the common good and commonwealth. The sapiential and prudential jurist of Roman antiquity, whose understanding was shaped by the epideictic ground of the whole tradition, represented a rhetorical way of inhabiting pragmatic contexts in both private and public affairs. It is this rhetorical manner of pragmatic engagement—which depends on a rhetorical conception of human knowledge and is produced through a rhetorical education—that provides abundant resources for the recuperation of moral reasoning and practical wisdom in our own historical moment. This ideal may be typologically represented in the character of the prudent jurist.

The Prudent Jurist

An assumption driving much of my discussion in previous chapters is that educational institutions—not only in their stated aims and curricula but also in their implicit ideals and attitudes—are deeply formative of the kinds of people we become. Vico’s curricular program of studies in all the arts and sciences, grounded in a communication ethics of eloquent speech and prudent action in human affairs, presents an alternative to distinctly modernist approaches to education (Humanistic; Study Methods; Heroic). His civic-humanistic rhetorical education, dependent upon a rhetorical conception of human knowledge, aims at producing a different character type to those in late modernity defined by bureaucratic expertise and ideological certitude. My proposal is that a Vichian rhetorical educational ideal finds expression in the
attempt to produce the prudent jurist. I am not at all arguing that students should enter into a legal profession, though, of course, that is fitting for some. Instead the characterological notion of the prudent jurist represents the kind of capacities and orientation that Vico’s understanding of jurisprudentia carries. Put differently, the prudent jurist is a symbol of a rhetorical way of being in a variety of pragmatic contexts and roles. Responding to a potential objector to his emphasis on an education oriented to eloquence and public prudence, Vico clarifies that his aim in not to produce a “courtier,” a mere obsequious adviser or attendant to rulers (Study Methods 37-38). Rather he states emphatically that his aim is to develop the graduate who will “act as a philosopher, even at court” (38). Vico aspires to produce the wisdom-lover who exercises eloquence and prudence in pragmatic contexts. Not only does Vico’s Study Methods allow for a broad application of eloquent and prudential wisdom to pragmatic contexts in general, including private and economic affairs, but On the Heroic Mind reinforces such an interpretation. The mission of a Vichian education is first civic in priority and oriented to the commonwealth, but it is also broader in scope and concerned with the flourishing of humanity at large (889). A Vichian rhetorical education seeks to walk sapientia, eloquentia, and prudentia into civic roles and activities, marketplace vocations, and personal affairs. The prudent jurist, as a broad character type, stands for this ideal. It represents, above all, the sociopolitical character who brings to bear upon her speech, action, judgment, and concrete decision-making an expansive, axiologically substantive understanding of the epideictic ground that holds together the moral and political community. The prudent jurist is not meant here as a narrow vocational ideal but rather indicates the embodiment of jurisprudentia in action working for the common good of the sociopolitical community (49-51, 60). The prudent jurist represents an ideal for the recuperation of practical
reason—a shared concern among Arendt and MacIntyre—and, with it, the recuperation of action, which is the salient concern of Arendt’s *The Human Condition*.

Vico expresses the ideal of *prudentia* and *jurisprudentia*—and its union with *sapientia* and *eloquentia*—when he describes his educational aim as producing the philosopher at court (*Study Methods* 37-38). As an image-metaphor, Vico offers for our imagination a character type, an invention resource for our discourse and action, that represents a mode of engagement in the marketplace and public sphere that serves as a genuine counter-model to those others on the two sides of the emotivist coin of bureaucratic modernity: *bureaucratic expertise-rationality* and *ideological certitude*. Vico’s work opens for our consideration an interpretive understanding of the *prudent jurist* as an educational aim and as a paradigm for public engagement. This character signifies a way of being in pragmatic contexts that makes recourse neither to social scientific expertise nor to binary simplifications of human reality and sweeping universalized theories of history that disregard the concrete particular. Instead the prudent jurist: brings an expansive erudition (*sapientia*) and poetic-discursive facility (*eloquentia*) to bear; makes recourse to narrative traditions and common sense understandings; and exercises sound judgment and morally substantive, probabilistic reasoning (*prudentia*) based on concrete circumstances in situations characterized by verisimilitude and uncertainty. And, it is Cicero that serves repeatedly as Vico’s concrete, historical exemplar (*Humanistic*; *Study Methods*). Cicero is for Vico the ‘prudent jurist’ in my sense of the term; he is the eloquent wisdom-lover who embodies *jurisprudentia* in pragmatic settings for the sake of commonwealth.

**IMPLICATIONS**

A communication ethics philosophy of (higher) education championed by the school of civic-humanist rhetoric offers opportunity for the recuperation of practical reason and prudential
wisdom. By drawing from the tradition of civic-humanistic rhetoric, we can begin to envision an alternative educational telos that seeks neither specialized expertise nor ideological certitude but instead aims at cultivating the eloquent wisdom-lover in pragmatic contexts. The prudent jurist stands as a metaphor for a rhetorical way of being in the world. Vico’s educational paradigm and characterological ideal potentially redress the curricular deformations ensuing from bureaucratic modernity. He articulated an alternative to education characterized by rationalistic and abstract criticism, epistemic reductionism, methodological monism, and belief in the mythos of historical progress.

As a late Italian Renaissance advocate for wisdom-speaking eloquence, Vico’s civic-humanistic system of education aims at a rhetorical way of speaking and acting in pragmatic contexts. The strength and vitality of human communities—from political and economic relations to households—hinges upon the exercise of wisdom and eloquence. A Vichian rhetorical education strives to place the institutions and practices that constitute our shared life in the prudent care of good human beings. In a word, it seeks to promote the civic welfare. For this reason, such a broad discourse education endeavors to nurture comprehensive human knowledge (sapientia), eloquent speech (eloquentia), and practical wisdom (prudentia).
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