8-2018

Establishing Influence and Authority in Ancient Civilizations and Modern Politics: The Rhetoric of Oracles and the Oracular Maneuvers of Political Action Committees

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Citation

Establishing Influence and Authority in Ancient Civilizations and Modern Politics:
The Rhetoric of Oracles and the Oracular Maneuvers of Political Action Committees

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

by

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Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric and Writing, 2014

August 2018
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract

While most animals communicate in order to convey environmental information such as danger or where food is located, humans have evolved and developed an articulated language for a myriad of uses, and our language is the basis for how we shape and maintain reality. Language can be used to teach, express an attitude or affiliation to a group, and give us a sense of our state of being, but it can also be used to manipulate a narrative in order to gain power over others. This project argues that Political Action Committees (PACs), and the language that they use in advertising for or against a candidate or legislation, function as modern-day oracles in that they use language to obtain authority and power. In many ancient and archaic societies oracles were considered authoritative and trusted voices, and, therefore, were able to have a substantial influence on the culture in which they operated; oracles were instrumental in providing information on the best course of action to take in one's life, where a government should send a colony, and they had the ability to keep widespread empires working toward the same objectives. Like oracles, PACs can influence what course of action a voter might take, or influence how the government operates, and even influence how groups of like-minded people, separated by distance and time, work toward the same objectives. PACs, therefore, can be seen to have similar functions in our modern culture as oracles had in their own cultures.

Dedication:

To my family: Mark, Annabelle, and Jackson.
Thank you for your support and patience.

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Introduction

To study the rhetoric of politics, one can easily get mired in language that manipulates reality in an attempt to control what is seen and heard by citizens. When one looks at the communicative efforts of specific political parties, and particularly those of the non-aligned, yet partisan, super Political Action Committees (PACs), the tactics employed tend toward half-truths, fear mongering, and conspiracies. The rhetoric of these super PACs has what could be considered an oracular effect on the public, which is of particular concern to this project. Although oracles are commonly thought of as persons who act as divine conduits for the gods, or perhaps, a particular place where petitioners might go to seek divine prophecy, for this research I will be using the term "oracle" by an alternative, figurative definition found in the Oxford English Dictionary: an utterance of great wisdom, significance, or import; an opinion or declaration regarded as authoritative and infallible ("Oracle").

While oracles have historically been employed to keep citizens in widespread kingdoms working collaboratively to serve the main ruler, and in other instances were used as tools against perceived enemies, they all relied on the idea that there was infallibility, or at least probability in the message, and that that message and how it was interpreted was the ultimate authority. Taking into consideration the past and ever-evolving political rhetoric of PACs, and their operations in both visual and print media, this project will seek to argue that PACs act in much the same way that ancient oracles did, and, therefore, function as modern-day oracles.

Analysis

The ability to persuade an audience to believe a half-truth, or conspiracy, relies on the assumptions that the communicator makes about the audience as auditors of information, what might be called an enthymematic structure, assumptions that are ultimately based on circumstance and probability. For example, one of the most frequent responses made by the

oracle at Delphi was "It is better and more good…" (Walsh 59), with the assumption being made that the petitioner understood, or could at the very least discern what was meant by 'better and more good.' When these communications were brought into civic forums, they were used as a way to transform debates in deciding what was the better or best thing to do (Walsh 64), and were considered to mirror the gods own debates about the fate of mankind. This can also be considered as a formula employed by PACs in that it is understood, based on assumptions, that an audience should be able to debate and discern what is 'better and more good' based on the information being given to them.

The prospect that the communications of PACs are enthymematic in nature, or based upon assumptions guided by political ideologies, will serve as an underlying theme for this research and argument; an ideology is simply a "mental framework – the language, "concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation" that a group deploys to make sense of and define the world or some aspect of it" (qtd. in Foss 209). Ideologies concerning politics, religion, and science (just to name a few) undergird how we define the world around us because an ideology is based on our beliefs and values; however, ideologies are also evaluative – those that have possible alternative judgments (Foss 209) – and, therefore, can change and mutate considering what assumptions we make about the world based on our perceived reality. Language plays an important role in developing an ideology and a reality, so semiotics will be the main critical lens used in uncovering the power that the rhetoric of oracles and PACs had/have on a society. Semiology is the study of signs and how they function, and can provide insight into the meaning and ideology contained within an artifact (Foss 211). I will examine how these two types of entities, oracles and super PACs, create the authority by which an audience will be swayed to believe, or be taken in by, certain communications because

"communication creates reality" (Foss 97), and symbols, both visual and textual, can create "a shared reality or community consciousness" (Foss 97).

Research and Argument

This research will be concerned with demonstrating how ancient oracles functioned rhetorically in a particular society, and then attempt to connect those functions to the rhetorical functions of PACs in our modern-day society. In an attempt to follow a logical trajectory through to the main argument, chapters will move through in-depth discussions dedicated to these subjects: the symbolism of language, and its effects on human behavior; oracles, and their function within ancient and archaic societies; the legal and legislative background concerning PACs and super PACs, and how they function in modern society, along with a brief critical analysis of the print and visual rhetoric of PACs; in the next chapter I will connect oracles to PACs, and argue that PACs function as modern-day oracles; and a final chapter dedicated to an overview of the importance of understanding and studying rhetoric, and how the study of the rhetoric of PACs can be particularly beneficial if used in the writing classroom.

Delving first into human communication, the discussion will center on language as a symbolic act and one that creates meaning for humans. This may be the most important chapter for this work as language can, when used either semantically or poetically, shape our reality, as there must be some agreement between the communicator and the auditor, or interpreter, as to how to understand the words being used, and how those words function to make meaning for the auditor based on his or her own reality. Gorgias even likened language to medicine in the *Encomium of Helen*, asserting that "[t]he power of speech bears the same relation to the ordering of the mind as the ordering of drugs bears to the constitution of bodies" (qtd. in Walsh 62). Bringing that idea into the modern arena, Kenneth Burke posits that a word can convey an attitude or emotional value, but meaning, whether reasonable or unreasonable, "contains an

implicit program of action" (90), and can have far-ranging effects on the auditor depending on how the symbology is used. Therefore, language and the way we use it creates systems whereby we understand the world around us, creating our own realities, and it is this symbology that enables entities such as oracles or PACs to manipulate that reality. It is also important to remember that what is said is as important as what is not, as both explicit and implicit meaning function to create reality for the auditor.

Chapter two will be dedicated to explicating how ancient oracles were used by political leaders to transform the political landscape, as well as to manipulate and/or to unite citizens. Again, oracles are generally thought of as a divine conduit for the god(s) in ancient cultures, and in looking at two specific, yet wholly different cultures, those divine messages were used many times for political reasons; tying back to language, and the symbolism therein, oracles played an important role in how a society functioned. For example, the ancient Greek oracles, and in particular the Delphic oracle, were considered as a "foundation in the collective knowledge and values" (Walsh 64) of Greek society, the undergirding of faith in that culture, but were also useful for transforming the debates within public forums into what "was the "better" or "best" thing to do" (Walsh 64); and the Incan empire used oracles to keep a widespread kingdom working as one whole, tying each local group, and their ancestors, to the capital city of Cuzco, and to the main oracle, the Sun oracle, which was considered to be the founding ancestor to whom the ruling king was directly related (Gose 5). So, while oracles were divine in nature, they were used as political tools as well, and were, therefore, important in shaping the political landscape of those cultures.

The next chapter will be devoted to delving into the issues concerning PACs and their histories, as well as discussing the effects of the Citizens United case and other legislation on this particular form of political rhetoric. Citizens United was, at its most basic, a First Amendment

argument. The man who wrote the case believed that everyone, including large corporations and unions, deserved the right of free speech, and that more corporate and union money being poured into campaigns meant more information for citizens; those citizens would then be able to glean the actual truth from any communication (Bennett), which parallels with the Greek notion of choosing the 'best' or 'better' course of action. There is also the fact that super PACs no longer need to disclose donors, so, in effect, a few very wealthy individuals could change the face of politics and no one would be the wiser; as with oracles, a few can have control over the many using the symbols of language. In this chapter, I will also discuss the textual and visual rhetoric within electronic PAC communications by analyzing two commercials used in the 2016 presidential election season – one from a conservative PAC and one from a liberal PAC. Language and symbology will again be important for this task as language is a universal: the same rhetoric can be used in Florida, Oregon, or any other state in-between, and the same can be said for visual rhetoric in PAC communications because the symbology of both of these types of communications is to evoke an emotional response.

As with previous chapters, the next chapter will attempt to make explicit the argument that PACs function as modern-day oracles by showing that they can effect change by using rhetoric as a way to create reality within a community/society. A sound-bite is often all the news many of us hear, or the narratives that are pushed onto our social media platforms based on what an algorithm has decided our preferences, and many people consider this news to be authoritative and significant – especially if it fits their particular world views – and PACs have learned to use this knowledge to push their ideas of what is 'better' or 'best.' This biases the narrative, and sends citizens further into their ideological bubbles, which in turn makes it easier for a PAC's rhetoric to become seen as infallible wisdom, rather than opinion based on a half-truth meant to evoke an emotional response. And because PACs are changing these national narratives using

the ubiquitous platforms of TV, social media, and mailings, politicians must also change their own talking points in order to get elected by their constituents – those constituents who have, very possibly, been swayed by the PAC rhetoric – which cements the misleading narrative even further into the consciousness of the voters. Since the Citizens United case, PACs have become powerful political entities that have the authority to push their own ideas of what is 'better' or 'best,' controlling ideological narratives within our communities, thus pushing them into the same status of authority that ancient oracles had within the societies in which they were used.

The political landscape is changing, in some cases drastically, and PACs have played a big part in that. Gerrymandering and political mud-slinging have always been part of the system, but the rhetoric of PACs has become significant and authoritative – the few manipulating the many. Most recently, we have seen the manipulation of our democracy by a foreign government, and other outside entities, who, though not officially PACs, were able to put advertisements on social media that some believe affected the outcome of the last presidential race; this will be discussed as an issue that is directly related to political communications, political ideologies, and how rhetoric is being used on citizens of the US. In the brief concluding chapter, I will discuss the importance of teaching students to understand how rhetoric is used, and how this can help undermine the effects of false or misleading information being used by PACs and, now, foreign governments. It is important to investigate how we understand what the symbols of language mean to each of us individually, and how that might be used to manipulate us and send us further into our ideological bubbles. It is also important to understand and investigate that symbolism when we feel a cognitive dissonance toward it, and studying the communications of PACs, and, in particular, ones that deviate from our own specific political ideology, can be beneficial for that investigation. This does not need to be a political classroom, but rather one that allows inquiry into what has become a far-reaching and entrenched form of communication that has the ability

to change, irrevocably, the political landscape of this country. It seems far more important than ever, considering our current political climate, that the rhetoric of politics is studied and understood as a tool that can be used for manipulating a narrative or starting a conversation.

Chapter I: Language Creates Meaning and Shapes Reality for Its Users

What is language and why does it hold such importance for the human animal? Humans have gone through many evolutionary changes over the millennia, but it is our language that separates us from other animals. It is true that other species use vocal methods of communication, but those communications are generally used in order to convey environmental information – for instance, meerkats use specific sounds such as barking or whistling to express danger – but what other animals lack in their communications is articulation (Barber et al. 1); articulation simply means that human language has structure "given by the contrast between vowels and consonants […] enabl[ing] us to divide a human utterance into words" (Barber et al. 1). This in turn limits the noises made by animals other than humans to more straightforward communications that involve less meaning. That is not to say that certain animals other than humans do not have intelligent and complex forms of communication, either – dolphins have shown the ability to understand the importance of words and word order, and have even "been credited with 'sentence comprehension'" (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 163), but they do not create words to explain about other words (Burke 14). Nor can we exclude humans from the use of general noises to communicate – putting up a hand in the air and whistling to summon a taxi (which is essentially an agreement between the taxi driver and the caller that one is 'asking' for a ride) – but those human noises and gestures are only a small part of the overall specialized communicative abilities of our species, whereas other species do not exhibit this type of specialization within their languages. This distinctive ability to communicate has created a unique evolutionary niche for humans - where animals have evolved to inhabit a specific ecological niche, articulate language has allowed humans to spread to every ecological corner of the earth and even into space – and some scientists who study the human brain believe that this

difference between articulate language and animal 'language' is tied specifically to our ancestors' use of tools, and the cognitive development of self from that use.

That language is a tool, too, cannot be overlooked. Although, Kenneth Burke believes that to simply define language as a tool does not fully take into account what language does for the human animal – language is a species of action of such instrumental value that it "may even have been responsible for the survival of language itself" (15). As an instrument of human ingenuity, language is used to teach, give directions, order food or other products, and a myriad of other mundane daily tasks, but we also use it to convey how we feel and think. And a word, or words, whether used poetically or semantically, can convey a specific meaning – a word can have emotional value (love/fear), express an attitude (spirited/angry), express affiliation to, or categorize, a group (hippy/hippies), and give us or our spaces a sense of our state of being (female/male/neuter). Linguists have even been able "to reconstruct aspects of prehistoric culture and civilization" (Hock and Joseph 535) based on language (comparative linguistics), and even though this method has limitations as far as accuracy, we can still get a sense of how language has worked to help create communities and societies, as well as how we as humans may have progressed to reach our present state of being.

Language, as the Ancient Greeks believed, has the power to create knowledge, and through our cognitive processes working in tandem with our physical processes, language can create a reality specific to the user's understanding of meaning in that language. In other words, we harness the power of a language for our individual needs in any given situation as a symbolic action to convey meaning and shape reality.

Acquiring a Language

In human evolutionary history, we have gone from hunter-gatherers to agriculture-based societies to our present technologically advanced civilization, and at each turn our capacity for

cognitive growth has appeared to subsidize that change; as Henri Bergson asserted, "the history of the evolution of life, incomplete as it yet is, already reveals to us how the intellect has been formed, along a line which ascends through the vertebrate series up to man" (xix). Our understanding of the brain and how it functions, however, is an ongoing process, and Noam Chomsky predicted that our understanding of the higher mental processes such as language may have "many surprises [that] lie along the way to what seems a distant goal" (61). Yet in trying to reach that goal, scientists at the Riken Brain Science Institute, Atsushi Iriki and Miki Taoka, speculate that humans have been able to adjust to new environments as a result of the "dramatic expansion of the […] brain and new functional brain areas" (10), directly related to what is called, "'Niche-construction' [which] denotes an evolutionary process whereby the activities of organisms modify their habitat, to which in turn the organisms evolve to adapt, thus creating their own 'ecological niche' in the environment" (10). Iriki and Taoka also propose that not only did we at each step on the evolutionary ladder create an 'ecological niche' by incorporating tools into the fundamental structure of the human environment (11), we also created a 'neural niche' in which externalized tools were "assimilated into the body schema" (12), and a 'cognitive niche' in which the brain was able to reconcile the abstract causal relationships required for human tool-use behaviors (14); and at each step humans were driven to create tools suitable to their environments, and eventually articulated language, based on the capacity for these niches to work in response to each other, or what these scientists are calling "triadic niche construction" (Iriki and Taoka 10). The argument for "triadic niche construction" comes from the hypothesis that humans began first using motor tools (hands/sticks/rocks), then moved up to sensory tools (eyes/mirror/camera), which were followed by brain tools (memory/thoughts) incorporated as a third level (Iriki and Taoka 12), and that these "coevolutionary interdependencies" led humans to construct those ever more complex tools (Iriki and Taoka 10), thus laying the foundation for the

evolution of communication through language. Yet one might ask: were humans predisposed to language? Was there some innate genetic capacity that our brains carried, or is language something we simply learned to use as we did with other tools?

Scientists are aware of two specific regions in the brain (Broca and Wernike, named for the scientists who discovered them), which cause difficulties in the language abilities of those who have damaged those areas. These regions, when damaged, cause language disorders whereby one might have serious problems with grammar, or construct sentences that are grammatically correct but have little to no meaning (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 150). There are also known to be certain regions of the brain which "store verbs, other regions store nouns, and there even seems to be a neurological difference between handling nouns referring to animate and inanimate objects" (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 151). Does this point to the fact that humans have a predisposition for language, and, if so, how do we learn to understand language and use it correctly? Behaviorists believe that language is learned through trial and error (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 152), while others believe that "there is some instinctive 'knowledge' hard-wired into the human brain" (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 152), but the case for both seems to be more compelling, as can be seen through empirical evidence. Certain cases throughout history point to the idea that without linguistic input one cannot learn to speak, and suggest "that there is a 'critical period,' ending about puberty, when the window for learning a mother tongue closes" (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 152). This appears to position the question of whether language is innate or learned squarely in the center as both sides have merit – without an innate "'language acquisition device'" (LAD) in the human brain, no amount of linguistic input could trigger the process of learning a language, and without linguistic input the LAD has no purpose (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 154). But how does linguistic input trigger the LAD?

This is where a universal grammar comes in. Universal grammar relates back to the concept that humans are born with an organ (LAD) in the brain which allows for language acquisition, and that that organ is predisposed to understanding grammatical structures before receiving linguistic input. The complexity of a language – consider the grammatical rules surrounding construction – is such that one requires a large pool of information in order to construct and speak the language correctly, yet children already seem equipped with a unique ability to acquire these rules without much instruction. As a child is not born knowing a specific language, but learns the mother tongue of the country he or she is raised in, "it must be that the basic structure of language is essentially uniform and is coming from the inside, not from the outside" (Chomsky 93). Generative grammar is also a part of this innate ability to learn a language in that, as Chomsky has posited, "knowing a language amounts to tacitly possessing a recursive generative procedure" (3), whereby grammatical rules governing each natural language seem to be hardwired into the human brain, which allows for a child, regardless of his or her genetic origins, to learn any human language (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 149). However, lest we forget, the LAD, universal grammar, and generative grammar would only amount to specialized regions/functions of the brain without linguistic input.

As already discussed, humans must have linguistic input in order to acquire a language, regardless of each person's genetic predisposition for language acquisition. What has not been explored is the concept that language is cultural not genetic. If language were genetic, "cultural evolution could not be faster than genetic evolution: linguistic innovations, such as the word *screwdriver*, would have to be genetically assimilated before they could be used" (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 154). The fact that a language is cultural explains why there is no universal language (which might be the case if language were genetic), but also explains why a child will learn the language that he or she grows up surrounded by, the mother tongue, rather than a

random set of words and rules that have no significance within the culture of birth. This does not signal that one is predisposed to the language of a parent(s), it simply refers back to the notion that one is equipped with an initial cognitive state, or the mind at birth (LAD, universal grammar), and that each person will eventually reach "the stable state that corresponds to the native knowledge of a natural language" (Chomsky 8). For instance, pidgin, a form of communication that arises when two or more groups of adults that do not speak the same language come into contact, will eventually become a Creole language when children of those adults assimilate the pidgin and begin to create grammatical structures that constitute a natural language (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 155). Thus, we can see that linguistic input is distinctive to a given culture or community, the native knowledge, which is passed down from generation to generation, and this knowledge gives each of us a role to play in our respective cultures and communities.

The Symbolism of Language

Some might see language as a window on the mind, or perhaps a system whereby humans can signal each other, or even just the set of rules that govern our communicative interactions with each other, but, whether some or all of those are true, language is a unique act that permits humans to inhabit and evolve within our sphere of existence. Language, both verbal and nonverbal, is the construct by which humans have created the reality that encompasses our every day, and the symbolism that binds us to that reality. It may even be posited that human evolution, from our animalistic selves to our symbol using selves (triadic niche construction), has allowed us to 'create' a 'self,' an ego, thus allowing us to depart from simple primitive survival, and evolve into an animal that conceptualizes reality through symbols. As Kenneth Burke asserts, "what is our reality for today […] but all this clutter of symbols about the past combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the

present?" (5); or, as Wilhelm von Humboldt said in 1848, "man lives with the world about him principally, indeed … exclusively, as language presents it" (qtd. in Trager 31). Yet, as we are such physical beings, we tend to underestimate or forget the fact that language, a system of symbols that stands in for direct experience, represents the reality we inhabit daily.

The basic structure of any word comes down to each phoneme (the mental construct for a distinct unit of sound that is significant – rather that purely incidental – in a language), and how those are placed together in order to form that word; phonemes, then, are used to create morphemes, which are the smallest meaningful units of language that can be put together to form a words – for example: *in* and *go* are distinct words on their own, but can also be used as subunits in a longer word such as *ingoing* when the suffix *-ing* is added. Morphemes, including affixes, therefore convey particular meaning(s) in a way that individual linguistic sounds alone do not (for instance, the English, the phoneme /f/ -- though recognizable to English speakers – does not carry a particular meaning on its own). Words are symbols for things, places, actions, feelings, and so on, and we put those words together either orally or in written form in order to form sentences (generally in the subject/verb/object formation, a formula which universal grammar asserts is innate), and sentences turn into paragraphs, that turn into lengthy discussions, that turn into essays, books, journals, letters, and a myriad of other types of communications – in other words, language represents our reality from the most basic sounds to the most intricate of word configurations. It is staggering to imagine that humans alone, among all animal species, have the cognitive and vocal apparatus that makes them capable of this feat of articulation. Speech is such a central feature of what it means to be human, that most human beings even with a vision or hearing disorder (or both – Helen Keller and others) are still capable of partaking in this marvel of cognitive and physical engineering. However, one must also take into account,

beyond words, that emotions and other issues concerning our ultimate objectives in communicating always factor into the understanding of our created reality.

Which brings up the question: why do we communicate? Is it simply because, as Burke says, we take "a natural delight in exercising [our] power with symbols" just as we delight in the ability of our physical bodies to move freely (295)? Perhaps, in that we can show our love or hate for someone, we can command a dog to sit, enthrall an audience with a beautiful song, or protest something we see as an injustice, but communicating with our fellow humans is more than just using this power we have with language – our communications have repercussions, both positive and negative.

Studies have been done in order to better understand how young children understand and use language for acquiring knowledge, discovering, teaching others, and, at times, manipulating others to effect a particular outcome. A particular study was done to better understand whether cues that are related to a specific object by semantic affiliation could "function as a source of knowledge about this target object in the absence of other (e.g. direct perceptual) evidence" (Sodian and Schneider 697); for example, if a target object is hidden within a group of dollhouses, and the object is a policeman, then one would be more likely to find the object in a house marked with a police car than a house marked with some other label such as a football (Sodian and Schneider 699). It was discovered that by the age of four, children were able to understand that visual cues related to the placement of an object were significant in locating the object, but were unable to manipulate this evidence when asked to do so in order to help or deceive a competitor because they did not understand the significance of the relation between cue and object; whereas, by the age of six, due to a more developed ability to understand the importance of semantic and semiotic relations, children were able to manipulate cues in order to deceive a competitor (Sodian and Schneider 698). What this shows us is that from an early age

language, both verbal and nonverbal, plays an important role in the cognitive development of communication strategies, as well as the fact that these strategies can impact negatively or positively on our fellow humans. In light of this evidence, it appears that, as we become more sophisticated communicators, we begin to manipulate language in order to get others to notice particular ideas, thoughts, or concepts, while other ideas, thoughts, or concepts are left unnoticed or even forgotten.

Language and Effective Communication

To be an effective communicator, one must deliberately choose information that will convey a specific message to a specific audience, and this ability to strategically present information in order to effectively impact an audience is called "*representative* information – information that is both consistent with the concept being communicated and also unlikely to support another concept a listener might consider" (Rhodes et. al. 1). In examining Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, which divides rhetoric into two significant classifications – "artistic" (appeals to logos: logical/rational; pathos: emotional; ethos: ethical) and "inartistic" (interpreting available evidence) (Bizzell and Herzberg 171), while further dividing logical/rational appeals into "enthymeme," "maxim," and "example" (Bizzell and Herzberg 171), we get a sense that becoming an effective communicator can be an immense undertaking. Aristotle also divided the kinds of speeches to be given into judicial, deliberative, and epideictic, as well as other divisions too numerous to go into here, and we can relate his theories back to the concept of "representative information": Aristotle believed that a rhetorician should be able to use any available means of persuasion in any given situation to convince an audience to take a certain position. So, from Ancient Greece to modern-day thought, effective communication relies on the ability of the speaker to deliberately choose specific information, or the correct information, in

order to persuade, alter, impress, or transform an audience because authority is constructed through language.

Words are framed from the sound(s) each letter takes, and the articulation of these sounds is of utmost importance for the actual understanding of the words being used, but words can and do have emotional implications depending on the perceptions of the communicator and auditor (the person receiving the communication), as well as the rhetorical situation (the full circumstances encompassing any communicative act, i.e. the speaker/writer, purpose, audience, context). If one is taking a yoga class and the instructor ends the class by bowing to the students and saying "Namaste," the perception is that the instructor is thanking the students and wishing them well, which fits the rhetorical situation; however, if one were to end, for example, a meeting of mathematics professors by saying "Namaste," he or she might be perceived as foolish because this phrase does not fit the rhetorical situation. In those examples of the rhetorical situation we can see how, at a very basic level, emotions play a part in our communications: the latter might suggest to the listener the notion that the speaker is idiotic or foolish (as stated), thereby nullifying any positive outcome from the meeting itself, and the former suggests that a positive outcome will continue to be positive. However, it has also been postulated by Descartes, David Hume, Sartre, and other philosophers that there is a relation between our emotions, bodily sensations, and cognition (Ahmed 5), which suggests that both verbal and non-verbal language has an effect on how we perceive reality.

Emotions, as created by language, might be associated with weakness, or perhaps even viewed as the antithesis to logic and reason. In an evolutionary sense, emotions might be seen as belonging to our more primitive selves that "[persist] in the present" (Ahmed 3), and when we "risk" emotions we become less, which is associated with the feminine (Ahmed 3). Categorizing our emotions, then, becomes an important step in the development of social hierarchies because

no one wants to risk being viewed as less or weak. So, as Sara Ahmed asserts, "emotions become attributes of bodies as a way of transforming what is 'lower' or 'higher' into bodily traits" (4), and one's ability to control emotions situates one in the higher category. For instance, women are generally seen as the weaker or 'lower' sex because they are considered more emotional, so the feminine is generally deemed a 'lower' or more primitive level (Ahmed 3); and this allows for the genderizing spaces and things through persistent association of body types (or sexes) with other referents (for instance, kitchen = female, garage = male; clarinet = female, tuba = male). In other words, "emotions involve appraisals, judgments, attitudes [which] are irreducible to bodily sensations [and yet] feelings [can] take the 'shape' of the contact we have with objects" (Ahmed 5). This bodily imprint of emotions is said to be attributable to the physical reactions we have to objects and our surroundings in apprehending our world. For example, fear can be recognized as the bodily reactions of a rising heart rate and sweating, but can also be considered the cognitive function of saving one from danger, yet those emotions "then move outwards towards objects and others, and […] might even return to [the self]" (Ahmed 9). What Ahmed is suggesting here is that emotions are not simply a function of our psyche or cognitive functions, but socially and culturally situated, whereby the "'I' and the 'we' are shaped" (Ahmed 10), and that emotions are not "'in[side]'" any of us, "but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (Ahmed 10). For example, in our recent political debates concerning immigration to the United States, we have heard the slogan, "build that wall," whereby the wall represents fears about crime, terrorism, and loss of a national identity (generally white, western European) – the physical wall delineates, and is analogous to, our individual and social emotions. And this is an important concept in addressing emotions, communicators, and auditors: analogy and metaphor play significant roles in the discourse,

reasoning, and decision making of an effective communicator when analyzing the rhetorical situation.

Typically, analogies are used as tools to compare two concepts, especially in order to clarify a concept that might be hard to understand, while keeping in mind that the two concepts must have some common ground. For example, a common analogy would be something along the lines of: "busy as a bee"; whereas, a more intricate analogy might lean towards the metaphorical such as this one from William Shakespeare's "Hamlet": "Brevity is the soul of wit." We must also keep in mind that an analogy or metaphor must be apt to the situation – one cannot say, "busy as sloth" because sloths move slowly and never appear to be busy (unless the communicator's intention is irony). So, a metaphor must be both conventional and apt in order for people to be able to process it with ease; the term used is "metaphor processing fluency" (Thibodeau and Durgin 206), which relates to "conceptual metaphor theory" (Gibbs and Santa Cruz 299) in that a listener, once a metaphor has been spoken, "automatically searches for relevant conceptual knowledge to understand what the speaker means" (Gibbs and Santa Cruz 299). Memory retrieval is also important for the processing of analogies, much for the same reasons as it is involved in the processing of metaphor (plus, the two are linked as far as their function), so an effective communicator must consider the auditor's knowledge and emotional leanings in deciding what types of analogy or metaphor to use. Research has been found to support the idea that the goal of the communicator is a factor when choosing to use an analogy, so "when analogizers are addressing a general audience unfamiliar with the target topic, they will use sources from other domains" (Blanchette and Dunbar 731). Referring back to the concepts discussed above, the supposition that emotions and feelings can take the shape of the contact that we have with objects, an analogy or metaphor that relates a communication to the reality shaped by our contacts with people or objects through our use of language is an important component in

inducing an emotional effect on the listener, thereby making an effective communication. In simpler terms, "[a]nalogy may be a powerful way of mapping emotional connotations on to previously neutral objects and events" (Blanchette and Dunbar 735).

Because language does not fossilize, we cannot know exactly the reasons our ancestors first began to speak, but from humans' earliest communications (e.g. cave paintings or the first written epic tale, *Gilgamesh*), to our modern communications (e.g. TV, newspapers, social media, etc.), language can 'tell' us so much about our evolutionary past. Humans have evolved from simple tool using animals, into animals that use language as a construct for knowing and feeling – language is how we construct and express our reality. As seen through that lens, our 'reality' is overwhelmingly made up of symbols, verbal and nonverbal, and, in contrast to the earlier discussion that humans created language as a tool, in our current state might we not propose that our language is now creating us? Are we now susceptible "to the ways of demagogic spellbinders [that can fill us] with fantastic hatreds for alien populations [we] know about mainly by mere hearsay, or with all sorts of unsettling new expectations, most of which could not possibly turn out as promised" (Burke 5)? Language, as we can see, is one of the deciding factors in human evolution to date, perhaps even the most important, and it continues to be a principal factor in our construction of our daily reality.

Chapter II: Oracles: Shaping Reality and Politics

Oracles, as we think of them today, have some specific connotations: they are a message of divine prophesy sent down by a god, or gods, many times in answer to a question(s) posed by a petitioner; and/or we think of the physical body of the person through which the divine prophesy was given to the petitioner. Both point to the idea that some otherworldly force is in charge of our destiny, and, in our modern perception, we find this notion difficult as it "undermines our very notion of human agency as something personal, bounded, and coherent" (Gose 1). Oracles functioned as authoritative voices for actions such as colonization, war, laws, usurpation of one god in favor of another, petty disputes, as well as navigational tools for how one should behave daily. It is important to interject here, though, that a god (or gods) was thought to be in control of natural phenomena as well as human fate, so religion and politics occupied the same sphere, and divine will, in some cases – and this is crucial to remember – suspiciously resembled the will of the people. What can be posited from this is that oracles functioned as socio-political entities that aided citizens in confronting the unknown and risky future of the world in which they lived, and provided a sense of community for the ordinary men and women living in that world. Therefore, what was spoken by an oracle had direct consequences on the society or culture in which it operated, and could be considered the knowledge-center of that civilization, whereby the oracle and its surroundings functioned somewhat like our modern media in creating reality for its citizens (think back to Burke's assertion that reality is a made up of the symbols of the past combined with what we know about the present). While many ancient cultures operated with and around oracles, I will use the oracle at Delphi and the oracles of the Incan civilization in an attempt to show a cross section of civilizations separated by time and space that functioned under the auspices of an oracle, both of

which will provide evidence that oracles did in fact have a direct impact as authoritative voices on the civilizations in which they functioned.

Delphic oracle

The origin myths surrounding Delphi vary in the telling, but the outcome is always the same: Delphi is shown to be the center of the world, and Apollo becomes the god speaking the oracles through the Pythia. In Aeschylus' *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the oracle did not exist until Apollo went looking for a spiritual center for men, and finds it "at Crisa under snowy Parnassus" where he slay the she-serpent Pytho (Fontenrose 1; Parke and Wormell 3; Walsh 58). However, we must take into account that those origin myths come under the purview of the Hellenic mythos, and archaeologists have found that Delphi was, presumably, used in prehellenic times – also as a center for rituals. This evidence comes in the form of myth – for example, before Apollo took up residence, Ge [Earth] and her daughter Themis spoke oracles on the site (Fontenrose 1); or, in order to find the exact center of the earth, Zeus released two eagles from opposite ends of the world, and they met at Delphi (Parke and Wormell 1) – but also in the form of artifacts such as a lioness's head rhyton, a shrine to Athena Pronaia, traces that Poseidon was worshipped there along with the Earth goddess, and an Omphalos (an egg shaped stone associated with the Earth goddess) directly on the spot that was considered the "'navel' […] or center of the earth" as determined by Zeus' eagles (Parke and Wormell 5-6). Not only were the surrounding precincts sacred from prehistory through to the Hellenic era, Delphi, in the fifth and fourth centuries, became powerful enough to host the quadrennial athletic competitions called the Pythian games that rivaled, but came in second to, the Olympic games (Bowden 13). What the myths, in concomitance with the artifacts and the games, tell us is that Delphi held an important place in the hearts and minds of ancient Greeks from prehellenic through Hellenic times, eventually becoming a Panhellenic shrine (Neer 64), which helps us begin to better

understand why the wealthy and powerful, as well as regular citizens, came to the oracle for guidance.

The oracle at Delphi did not operate every day, all year long, and there is no concrete evidence as to the procedure for consulting the oracle, nor how the oracles were delivered. And while many Greek city-states consulted the oracle for political reasons, I will focus here on how Athens harnessed the power of the oracle to cross the divide between fate and human agency. The utterances of the Pythia have provided scholars with some insights into the symbolic uses of language in a culture whereby the oracle provided "technical support for the statesmen debating the future of Athens in the boulos" (Walsh 55-6), and yet "frustrated attempts to form an Athenian identity based on the logical dichotomies of techne/tuche [agency/fate], cosmos/chaos, and muthos/logos" (Walsh 57). The ideas encased in those terms were of utmost importance to Greek identity – cosmos is the polis, the 'us', chaos is everything else (women included) (Walsh 66); muthos is mythology, or stories and dialogue, whereas logos is reason, order, and speech Walsh 68); techne is agency over one's life, tuche is fate dealt out by the gods (Walsh 60) – with control being the pivotal factor undergirding the ideas in those terms. So the question is (and perhaps we are still grappling with this question in our modern era): are humans controlled by our own agency and powers of reason, or do the gods and fate control us?

If we examine the language used between the petitioner and the Pythia, we know that the petitioner would enquire of the oracle, most likely using the "traditional form 'Is it better and more good that such and such a course be adopted?'" (Parke and Wormell 18), and the Pythia would respond that it was better to adopt the course of action, or, if she "was presented with two alternatives […] she would designate one as *lôion kai ameinon* [it is better]" (Walsh 59). The issue here is in the use of the term 'better' – better than what? Since 'better' "presupposes alternatives" (Walsh 59), we are left with a picture of Apollo debating his options, and this

response "presents human goodness not as a matter of what is ultimately ideal, but as *steering the best course through life's contingencies*" (Walsh 60, italics mine). Human debate in the polis, therefore, was a "replica of the paradigmatic universe created and inhabited by the gods" (qtd in Walsh 63), whereby the gods debated human fate on Mount Olympus just as humans debated their own fate in the boulos. This view gives us an understanding of how the Athenians were able to bring the oracle into public debate, "[b]y suggesting the god of Delphi weighs his options just as we do, Isocrates teaches us not only the uncertainty that pervades all experience – human and divine – but also the supernatural power of logos to create public reality" (Walsh 63). Athenians, by debating human fate [*tuche*] concerning what course was best, were able to have agency [*techne*] over their lives. Indeed, one of the most famous oracles concerns a request from the Lydian king, Croesus, who, after presenting the oracle with many gifts in order to get a favorable response to his question regarding defeating a barbarian army, was told that if he crossed the river Halys, he would destroy an empire (Walsh 64). Taking his fate into his own hands, Croesus crossed the river and his empire was the one destroyed. In this oracle, we get a glimpse of the Greek need to have agency over fate; however, by 'purchasing' that agency, and not debating the best course, Apollo punished the man who tried to control divine power by buying it (Walsh 64). Whatever the case may be, we know that "for a thousand years of recorded history the Greeks and Romans, sometimes as private individuals, sometimes as official ambassadors came to Delphi to consult the prophetess," and that, "it had its ups and downs in accordance with the piety or skepticism of the Greeks and *it shared the rise and fall of Hellenic civilization to which it contributed no slight part*" (Parke and Wormell 2, italics mine). In other words, the oracle was as responsible for creating reality for the Greeks as the Greeks were themselves.

It is also important to note that some of the preeminent sanctuaries in the Greek world were graced with treasure houses from different poleis, thus giving those cities extraordinary

standing within the precincts of the Panhellenic temples. In particular, Athens had one of these "*extraterritorial* dedications" (Neer 64), or treasure houses, within the precincts of the temple at Delphi, which "epitomiz[ed] the efforts of a new and democratic government to extend control over the religious activities of its elite citizens" (Neer 64). These buildings, which were located far from the cities that paid for them, are said to have "played an important role in the consolidation of both civic and aristocratic ideologies in Archaic and Classical Greece" (Neer 64). The physical aspects of the treasury house were also decidedly political – from the visual rhetoric of the metopes, to the dedications housed within, the treasury was a paradigmatic example of inclusiveness aimed at Athenian citizens, and othering or Orientalizing anyone who was not, thus creating a rhetoric that lead to Athenian empire (Neer 77). Again, we can see the prestige that Delphi had in the Greek world as a center of spiritual power, and how Athens, by erecting the treasury, "took the polis into the heart of the shrine" (Neer 85), giving its citizens prestige by association.

What seems to be certain, is that the Delphic oracle had power over Greek citizens, as well as the poleis they lived under, and this power had the ability to influence where Greeks lived and worked, who they went to war with, and what laws they lived under. We have seen that the Athenians erected a treasury house to hold votives from wealthy citizens, but also as visual recognition of the Athenian polis and its citizens – "the glory remains collective, civic as opposed to individual" (Neer 88). We know that poleis would send colonies abroad on word from the oracle, and go where the oracle told them; or a colony might invent a myth at a later date, which would tie them to Delphi, thereby giving the colony prestige. The Ancient Greek world was not lightly influenced by its oracles, and Delphi, in particular, was responsible for the rise and fall, fortunes and misfortunes, of citizens and non-citizens alike.

Incan oracles

Despite the fact that Incan oracles filled a somewhat different niche within their culture than the Delphic oracle had in Greek culture, they still functioned as socio-political entities that had a direct impact on the governing and daily lives of citizens. Incan oracles were linked to deities, just as Apollo was the deity associated with Delphi, but those deities were their dead ancestors; typically the deity in question was the previous divine king, but could also be the deceased founders of local villages or groups; in some cases, oracles were the children who were sacrificed to the cult of the Sun and became deities upon their deaths (the Sun god was the principal deity whose oracle was located in the main city, Cuzco) (Gose 2-3). The reasoning behind so many different oracles was that groups without representation wanted a voice in the governing of the empire; those groups outside of the current sovereign's ruling group, such as the previous king's wives and their families, would attach themselves "to the oracular cult of a previous divine king" as an effective way to have their interests represented and have some influence over the living ruler (Gose 2), because "oracles were a major vehicle of political consultation and representation under the Inkas" (Gose 8). Conquered peoples were also in need of representation, and, while they were allowed to keep their 'oracles,' those oracles became subject to the Sun god. While this system may seem fragmentary, too many voices trying to speak to, and seek, power, all oracles were essentially subordinate to the Sun oracle in Cuzco, which allowed the Inka (sovereign ruler) to rule a far-flung empire.

To better understand this system of kingship and oracles, we can look back at the origin story of the Inca and their relationship to the Sun god through the first ruler. The origin myth of the Incas follows the tropes that are involved with other origin myths: the first ancestor undertakes a perilous journey that tests his abilities, he then enters a realm as an outsider, conquers its people, and, through this victory, becomes the 'first' ruler, which also gives his

subsequent generations the right to rule as well (Bauer 8) (this could also be said of Apollo at Delphi). In the case of the Incas, the first ancestor, Manco Capac, who was said to be the son of the sun, arose from a cave on the periphery of what would become the Incan empire, he then travelled to Cuzco where he fought the original inhabitants for control and won, thus becoming the first ruler (Bauer 8); Manco Capac also married his sister Mama Ocllo, and their offspring became the lineage that every subsequent ruler claimed kinship with, thereby making each ruling king doubly divine (Bauer 8). Each ruler after Manco Capac, then, became the physical embodiment of the divine king through ancestry; however, to be a legitimate king, succession must first be affirmed by the Sun oracle, followed by the ancestral oracles from previous ruling families who would ratify the succession (Gose 5), and "once installed, Inka rulers consulted oracles before making most military, diplomatic, and administrative decisions" (Gose 5). The Sun oracle was the authority, and, at times, even the ruling Inka needed its intervention.

It is important to remember, though, that all oracles, including the Sun oracle, were always subject to the main ruler in Cuzco; although, the priest of the Sun oracle had almost as much power as the Inka, and was considered "second in rank only to the Inka himself" (Gose 22). An oracle that went against the Inka could find itself and its priest in dire circumstances. For instance, when the oracle of Huamachuco, identified as Catequil, predicted that Atahuallpa would come to a bad end in his war of succession with his brother, Huascar, Atahuallpa became so angry that he beheaded the oracle's high priest, broke the head off of Catequil's "idol, and burned the entire shrine until nothing but powder remained" (Gose 23). There is also the case of the ruler Huayna Capac, who, when he took power, was boycotted by all the oracles save one – Pariacaca – who foretold the coming of the Spaniards (Gose 24). This alarming prediction, and the fact that no other oracle would speak to him, dislocated Huayna from previous divine kings, so Huayna ordered that all the smaller oracles in the kingdom be destroyed; significantly, he left

the more powerful ones intact due to the fact that he no longer had the power to take these

oracles on and win (Gose 24) – if Huayna were to destroy all of the oracles, minor and powerful

alike, he would have set the kingdom "back hundreds of years by flattening the sedimented

hierarchies and lines of communication that made it governable" (Gose 24). Too much

fragmentation of the oracular network, in other words, would have led to civic unrest, and

possibly civil war, so the ruling Inka would need to recentralize power, or he would have to

reassert his power by "living up to the myth of Andean divine kingship in which the sovereign,

by sheer force of his exemplary personality, encompasses and even expands his entire realm"

(Gose 25). In order to stay relevant and powerful in his ever expanding realm, the ruling Inka

needed the support of his oracles, or lose his relevancy and power by the sheer weight of oracular

dissension.

The visual rhetoric of oracular ritual tradition is also important in understanding the

hierarchy of Incan politics. Sarah Ahmed asserts that our relationships to objects through our

emotions shapes the 'surface' of our worldview, inevitably shaping the "'I' and 'we'" (10), and

we can see this idea in the ritualistic behavior surrounding oracles in the Incan world. Not only

did oracles enjoy "considerable material backing from Inka and provincial elites, who built

temples and plazas for them" (Gose 8), one of the most important yearly rituals included

bringing all of the provincial mummies to Cuzco, so that they could 'talk' to the Sun oracle and

display allegiance to the ruler (Gose 6). Another ritual took place daily, whereby the mummified

Inka rulers would give oracles to their descendants during "festive drinking in the plaza of Cuzco"

(Gose 8). During this daily festive drinking, a captain would be in charge of the mummy and

became the surrogate for the mummy – the captain would drink corn beer in the mummy's name,

and, once the captain was intoxicated, he would go into a trance and speak for the mummy,

which "heightened the mutual identification [of] mummy and "captain"" (Gose 8). We can see

here that the captain, while infused with the essence of the dead king, actually became the dead king, and that "[o]racular speech was an unqualified good because it signified a particularly intense form of the desired life-giving relation between a dead sovereign and his people" (Gose 9). Therefore, *kama* (existence) and the entire semantic field of kama, *camaquen* (source of life) and *camasca* (animated or infused) (Gose 9), which was backed up by theology and ritual, consistently linked existence, animation, and material prosperity with notions of hierarchy, command, and oracular communication" (Gose 10). If we think back to Ahmed's assertion, we can see that the objects (mummies, rituals) in relation to the psychic ('ingesting' the essence of the oracle, thoughts uttered by the oracle) shaped the worldview of the citizens by the previously stated links, and created the 'I' and 'we' so important for citizenship. As previously stated, the ruling Inka needed the support of his oracles, but the oracles could never usurp the power of the king – oracles were ultimately subjects of the living king, and though they were possessed by the spirit of a dead sovereign or sacrificed child, the incumbent ruler was always the center and head of the kingdom.

Both the Delphic oracle and the oracles of the Incas provided their respective cultures with an authoritative voice and the means for political control over a population. The Delphic oracle told Greeks where to colonize, what laws or actions were 'best,' and was considered as a foundation of, and collective for, knowledge. The Incan oracles gave citizens a representative voice, but also gave the ruler an authority to rule those citizens. What we can surmise from these two examples is that oracles had direct authority, and, consequentially, a certain control over the daily lives of citizens and ruling elite alike, thereby playing an important role in how a particular society functioned daily – just as super PACs have an authoritative voice in politics and play an important role in how our democracy functions.

Chapter III: Political Action Committees

At its most basic, a Political Action Committee (PAC) is an entity that typically supports a specific candidate and/or political party through different means such as monetary donations, and media advertising. They, too, are socio-political entities that affect politics through the guise of aiding citizens by providing extra-campaign knowledge and information. Traditional PACs have been around since the 1940s, and were established first by unions in reaction "to provisions in the Smith-Connolly Act of 1943 and Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 that prohibited unions from contributing money from their own treasuries to political candidates in federal elections" (Gulati 410). So, unions set up outside entities (PACs), whereby employees and others with a stake in the union(s) could contribute money that would be used to further the political interests of the union. Business organizations followed suit and started creating their own PACs in the 1960s, and in 1971 legislation was enacted (the Federal Election Campaign Act) requiring all PACs to register with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and file reports on contributions and expenditures (Gulati 410). A PAC can be in regular coordination with a candidate, either for the purpose of getting the candidate elected, to work with a candidate on a specific issue, or both, but this type of PAC is limited to "$5000 per election" in monetary contributions either from a donor or funneled to a candidate (Gulati 410; Greivenkamp 1445). However, a PAC can no longer be defined in these simple terms thanks to court cases such as *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow.org.*, which have given rise to *independent expenditure-only committees* – Super PACs.

The Supreme Court's decision in *Citizen's United v. Federal Elections Commission* effectively created super PACs by lifting the bans on corporations and unions using monies from their treasuries for independent expenditures, thereby allowing those institutions to spend unlimited amounts on advertising that advocates for the defeat or election of a candidate. The case of *Citizens United v. FEC* was essentially a First Amendment case brought by the nonprofit

corporation Citizens United, whereby the Court judged that "the Government may not suppress political speech based on the speaker's corporate identity. No sufficient governmental interest justifies limits on the political speech of nonprofit or for-profit corporations" (Citizens United *v.* Federal Elections Commission 6), exhorting, "[s]peech restrictions based on the identity of the speaker are all too often simply a means to control content" (Citizens United *v.* Federal Elections Commission 31). However, the court did uphold federal election law which states that independent expenditures may not be spent in coordination with a candidate, therefore, super PACs are still restricted from coordinating with or donating money to a candidate, or to anyone working directly for a candidate, so that there is no appearance of collusion or corruption (Greivenkamp 1445-46; Gulati 411). SpeechNow.org, a nonprofit group of individuals "seek[ing] to pool their resources to make independent expenditures expressly advocating the election or defeat of federal candidates" (SpeechNow.org v. FEC), also brought a First Amendment case against the FEC, whereby it contended that it is unconstitutional to require SpeechNow.org to register as a political committee because those committees are limited in the amount that can be contributed; their contention was based on the fact that each person is donating to the group as an individual, therefore, limiting contributions also means placing limitations on each person's individual free speech. While a California District Court upheld the contribution limits, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia (DC) overturned that decision based on the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Citizens United* case; the US District Court for DC, in a final judgment, declared that contribution limits cannot be applied against SpeechNow.org nor anyone who wants to contribute to SpeechNow.org (SpeechNow.org v. FEC) lest those limits chill political speech. What these two cases have done is allow unlimited cash to flow into the political marketplace, and, as a result, our daily lives have been flooded

with all types of campaign rhetoric on such platforms as television advertising, mailers, and social media.

There are some who suggest that this cash flow will damage our democracy by allowing a small number of wealthy individuals to sway political elections through large contributions to PACs and Super PACs; others suggest that the more money that flows in will positively affect politics by allowing more information to be distributed to the public, thereby making the public more informed and better able to choose who to vote for; and yet others suggest that we may soon find out that all of this money flowing into PACs makes no difference at all. As for the first two suggestions, we might take a page out the Greek playbook when it came to the Delphic oracle: as Plato suggested, bringing the oracle into the polis spurred debate (Walsh 72), and language used by a good person gave one access to the truth (Walsh 60), therefore, the more money that pours in to politics, the more language that can pour out, the more debate is spurred on. Whereas the sophists believed that language operated independently of truth and goodness, and instead created illusions enabling a speaker to manipulate an audience (Walsh 60), therefore, the more money pouring into politics, the more language can be used as a tool to manipulate an audience. The third suggestion should be recognized, too, as plausible as social media platforms and streaming services become more prolific, and "[t]o bastardize Mark Twain, a clever meme can travel around the world while an attack ad is putting its shoes on" (Rowland), therefore, more money pouring into politics does not ensure either truth or goodness, and language can still be used to manipulate an audience. The fact remains, however, that the rise of PACs in the 1940s, and Super PACs in the 2000s, and the money they have invested in political rhetoric over the decades, both in textual and visual media, have had a decided effect on how Americans view politics. Research into this subject indicates that while there is little evidence showing that political advertisements "improve voter knowledge and interest in campaigns" (Huber and

Arceneaux 978), this type of "advertising may reinforce the correlation between personal and partisan positions on the issues […] it is therefore the presence of campaign advertising, rather than its partisan balance, that is the means by which citizens are affected by the campaign [of a presidential contender]" (Huber and Arceneaux 965). This suggests that the rhetorical maneuvers of political advertising should be considered a factor as to why we have moved further into our ideological corners.

That the political landscape has changed is evident by looking at our recent election cycles. If we believe that language is symbolic of our reality, and our ideologies are framed by the language "that a group deploys to make sense of and define the world or some aspect of it" (Foss 209), then popular slogans such as "Make America Great Again" and others, can give us insight into the fundamental beliefs, the ideologies, of groups who use this type of rhetoric. In the next section, I will analyze both the textual and visual media of PACs and super PACs in an attempt to deconstruct and better understand the ideological leanings of the groups involved in this type of political engagement and rhetoric.

Analysis of PAC Rhetoric

Today, Americans are inundated with advertisements for consumer products, and this is also true of political 'products.' Every four years the big 'product' is the presidential contests, but we also have congressional races for the federal government and state governments (depending on the terms, these election years will vary), and there are local elections, judicial elections, and elections to raise taxes to support local projects such as school or road improvements – all products that need to be 'sold' to the electorate, the consumers. While there are certain tropes used in every election – pride in country/state/city, community safety (i.e. fear of the Other), and working together for the betterment of our communities to name a few – each candidate, campaign, or group must decide when and how to use these tropes to effect the best

outcome for their agendas. And it is particularly easy to get data through the United States Census Bureau relating to the electorate in order to understand and profile any given voting area in any given state. For example, on the Census Bureau website one can find out the statistical data on age, race, poverty status, education level, and household income for each district in each state, but there is also information on which states are employing the most workers in the solar power industry, in what cities people are most likely to cycle to work rather than drive, housing industry statistics, trends in family living arrangements, and many others. Not only can a candidate, campaign, or group acquire statistical data in order to manipulate a message, there is also the fact that we now have a color coding system for how states typically vote – red for republican, blue for democrat, and purple for any state that could go either way. All of this information can help groups like PACs and super PACs pinpoint and steer their messages for specific communities, or, if it is a national issue like gun control or abortion, these groups know what kind of message to put out in each state to get the most benefit from their ad dollars and "define the world" (Foss 209) for their audience.

As an example of this, the Governor of Arkansas, Asa Hutchinson, and his traditional PAC have released a television commercial detailing the fact that during his tenure he has defunded Planned Parenthood, and in another commercial he explains that he is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment; in the latter commercial, he touts the facts that he signed into law the enhanced conceal carry legislation that allows guns onto college campuses, and that he worked with the NRA on school safety measures. Both of these are well known conservative political issues (although school safety is a universal issue it depends, again, on what 'color' state you live in as to how the issue might be dealt with) that the governor, as a republican in a red state, can promote with the knowledge that the voters who might be in opposition to his legislative agenda are just a small part of the overall electorate in the state of Arkansas, and

instead of harming his candidacy, these facts will, in all likelihood, help him get reelected. That type of commercial is typical of the traditional PAC, one that directly coordinates with a candidate, or is run by the candidate, in order to get that candidate elected, and we can see commercials like this in every state during election cycles – anytime we hear a candidate actually speaking in an commercial, or in a voice over at the end of the commercial saying that "I am (insert name here) and I approve this message" we know that a traditional PAC is behind it. Super PACs, on the other hand, cannot directly coordinate with a candidate or campaign in order to avoid the appearance of corruption, so their advertising takes on a different role in the political landscape; however, just like politicians, super PACs also have agendas, such as supporting a political party and specific candidates, judicial nominees, or legislation, and by deconstructing their visual and textual rhetoric, we can better understand how a commercial, mailer, or social media ad might become an authoritative 'voice' for voters (just as oracles were authoritative voices for the societies in which they operated). I will first discuss how the name of a super PAC can affect voters' view of the group, and then I will analyze the visual and textual rhetoric from two super PAC television commercials – one conservative leaning and the other liberal leaning.

Analysis

Naming a PAC

Choosing a name can help in establishing credibility and authority with an audience. Consider the super PAC *Citizens United* and what the name implies about their group: a citizen is someone who was born in the US, or perhaps has legally become a naturalized citizen, and has certain rights guaranteed to him or her as such; being united means to come together for a common objective. Therefore, when we hear the term *Citizens United* we might think of a group of like-minded people, legal citizens of this country, who are united together for a common goal, and we/I, as citizens, are automatically part of the group – we/I belong. If we think back to the

typical tropes used for political rhetoric, we see that this fits the pride in country trope, but also the community safety trope: I belong to the community, I am not Other, and there is safety in the group as long as we keep the 'other' out. Super PACs tend toward names that might influence potential supporters, or somehow influence the messages they release to the electorate as their name generally appears on any advertising, so we see such names as *Winning Our Liberty and Future* (WOLF PAC), *Make America Strong and Secure* (MASS PAC), and *Yesterday's Optimism Unto the Next Generation* (YOUNG PAC) just to name a few. As one can see, even the acronyms fit into the idea of some of the traditional tropes: does one want to 'belong' to a 'wolf pack,' or perhaps to a group that infers a large 'mass' of Americans, or maybe to a group of 'young' people? Not all PACs label themselves in such an ingenious fashion as those above, and some names are simply the initials of their full name strung together as in the case of the SEIU PEA (Service Employees International Union on Political Education), but each name has significance and authority for a group, whether it is distinctive or not. In this postmodern era, where we are ever more fragmented as a society, and logic and fact have been supplanted by fake news and opinion, it feels ever more important to belong to our groups – groups that fit in with our ideological leanings and that help us feel grounded in our realities; and yet this group-think is part of the problem, fragmenting society further by pushing us into bubbles and further isolating us from anyone with different ideals, and Othering people within our own communities who do not agree with our group.

PAC Advertising

In the realm of politics, a voting stance can be simplified down into two categories: one is either for or against someone or something. In the realm of super PAC advertising, we can also simplify ads in two categories: attack ads, which some have called "a no-holds-barred take down of an opposing candidate" (Nichols and McChestney 12), and ads that take a more positive

stance by promoting the good a candidate has done, or promoting some other issue on a ballot that one should vote for because the issue will have positive effects on our community. In the case of the latter we generally hear such words as 'our values,' 'protecting/protection,' 'constitution/constitutional,' 'hope,' 'justice,' 'accountability,' and 'working together' just to name a few. These words hold power for the hearer, suggesting affiliation, safety, optimism, and confidence, and, as previously discussed, being able to choose the correct wording will aid in persuading and transforming an audience through language, and thereby creating authority for the speaker, as well as shaping the 'I' and 'we' that are culturally and socially situated (Ahmed 10). Research on presidential campaign advertising suggests that, "[c]ampaign advertisements appear to have substantial persuasive effects" (Huber and Arceneaux 974), so the textual and visual rhetoric released by super PACs is having a persuasive effect on how people vote, and, in the process, this rhetoric may be changing how campaign agendas are viewed.

In the 2016 presidential cycle, we heard campaign rhetoric from nominees that was unorthodox for a presidential election, but super PAC advertising was indicative of what we have seen in years past. In particular, attack ads used language and graphics that would induce an emotional response in the viewer, and, either explicitly or implicitly, indicate whom the viewer should vote for or against. One example of an attack ad came from American Crossroads, a conservative super PAC founded and run by Karl Rove (a political strategist who worked for the George W. Bush campaign), in which Hillary Clinton and her 'scandals' were the focus. The commercial opens with a picture of Clinton frowning, the background is black, there is an orange light shining on her from above, and the text, "Scandal follows Hillary Like a Shadow," is foregrounded over the picture (and the word "Scandal" is surrounded by a dark yellow rectangle); as the commercial moves forward we hear Clinton's voice saying, "I feel like I am the most transparent politician of all time. I feel like you know a lot more about me than you

know about anybody else," and as she speaks there are pictures of Clinton from different years (always smiling) scrolling by in different frames, and those pictures of Clinton's figure create a shadow on a cement wall behind her, and in that shadow and in each frame, we see text of each 'scandal' and the year it was perpetrated. The last frame of the commercial takes us back to the original picture of Clinton frowning, but now there is no light above her head and the foregrounded text says "#NeverHillary" with Clinton's voice speaking "stay tuned, there will be a lot more…" (American Crossroads: #NeverHillary). What we can posit from 'reading' this artifact is that American Crossroads wants us to believe that Clinton is a criminal and a hypocrite who will continue to break the law, therefore, we should not vote for her to be president. The black background suggests something hidden or unseen; yellow is typically the color of cowardice, so the word 'scandal' (itself a negative 'symbol') surrounded by this color is significant; showing Clinton smiling while her 'scandals' flash behind her in her shadow suggests that she is laughing about the fact that she has gotten away with criminal activity; the wall behind Clinton is suggestive of a prison wall, which further inculcates the idea that she is a criminal ("Lock her up!" was, and still is, a common refrain heard at Trump rallies, which reinforces that idea); and the voice-overs suggest that when Clinton says she is the most transparent politician of all time, what we really only know about is her scandals, so she is a hypocrite for touting her transparency. What this commercial does not want the viewer to consider is that Clinton has been acquitted of any wrongdoing in each 'scandal,' that she graduated from Yale Law School with honors, has worked as a public servant for years, and has been an advocate for children, women, and families. The language and graphics of this commercial create an aura of criminality surrounding Clinton, which is in contrast to our ideals as Americans – our values revolve around the ideals of a law-abiding citizenry, which is encased in our Constitution, and if one breaks with those values then one is no longer part of the group.

The target audience is, in all likelihood, conservatives who already believe Clinton is unfit for the office of president, but also anyone who might be undecided about whom they will vote for.

Another example of an attack ad comes from Priorities USA, and in this commercial Donald Trump is the focus. However, in this commercial the candidate himself plays a small role, and Republicans speaking against him play the large role. The ad begins with Mitt Romney speaking at a political forum at the Hinckley Institute for Politics explaining that Trump is alarming our allies with his bombast, and "fueling the enmity of our enemies"; next is Robert Gates, who was Secretary of Defense for presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, who says he worries about Trump's admiration for Putin; General Michael Hayden, former CIA director under George W. Bush, then comes on to say that Trump presents a clear and present danger; Hayden is followed by South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, who warns the viewer that "Trump does not have the temperament nor judgement to control himself." In the next segment the viewer is shown Trump at a rally in Iowa saying he "loves war in a way," which is followed by Florida Senator Marco Rubio expressing his fear that we are about to "turn over the nuclear codes of the United States to and erratic individual." The final frames are a black background over which the words Donald Trump / Unfit To Be President are displayed, and a voice-over explaining the Priorities USA is responsible for the advertising (Anti Donald Trump ads aired by Priorities USA Action during August 2016). The explicit reading of this artifact is that Donald Trump is unfit for the office of president; implicitly, however, this artifact is telling us that it is not just liberals who do not want Trump in office, but also highly respected conservatives are concerned for the well-being of the United States. By showing a cross-section of conservative politicians, and other government officials who also lean toward conservative policies, the viewer is being warned that to elect Trump would put the citizens of the US in danger, perhaps sending us into a nuclear war, as well as alienating us from our allies. What this

ad does not want the viewer to consider is the fact that what these respected conservatives are advancing is a stance taken by liberals – that Donald Trump is unfit for office. This ad also seems to be targeting conservatives (and perhaps even independents or libertarians) who might be still be undecided on whom to vote for, with the expectation to sway their vote away from Trump (to which candidate it is unclear, but many believe that Clinton was the most qualified person to ever run for president, so that could also be an implicit scheme in this ad).

In considering the textual and visual rhetoric involved in getting messages out to the electorate, as stated already, super PACs can research voter and community data in order to pattern messages that are suitable for specific communities, but this is not always necessary if the message considers a universally accepted issue as its target. For example, a super PAC targeting the economic future of the US as it concerns our debt would not necessarily need to pattern a different message for different media markets, simply because our national debt and how it gets paid (taxes) is a concern and/or fear for all citizens; they would simply need to change the name of the politician they want you to vote for in each district/state/presidential race (although, what programs our taxes are spent on can be a problematic topic, so a message might need to be patterned to avoid certain topics concerning the debt). On the other hand, the debate over gun control is so divisive that a message concerning this topic would need to be patterned to specifically target a community/group in a given media market, and an advertisement seen in one area might not be aired in another due to the differences in how groups or communities view this issue. And targeting specific audiences, with specific language and visuals is precisely how super PACs influence politics.

Chapter IV: Super PACs as Modern-Day Oracles

How do we connect with each other over space and time? We reach out by calling each other, texting, and keeping social media profiles, but we also connect through our shared histories and origin stories, and our favorite television shows, movies, music, products, and leaders. Popular shows such as *Seinfeld*, or movies such as *The Avengers,* books that top *The New York Times* best seller list, or a song by the Beatles, as well as our many religious institutions, all have in common a large following by the general public, so, while we might not know each other personally, we are connected by these cultural entities. The same can be said for politics, but here we factionalize ourselves by party, thus splitting our connections down invisible lines, and, instead of inhabiting a general arena of cultural connections like those above, we climb into our filter bubbles and disconnect with anyone who does not share our views. Our cultural entities help indoctrinate us into groups by the myths (a myth is at its most basic a traditional story concerning the history of a person or persons that explains some social phenomenon) and rituals (ceremonial series of actions) inherent in those institutions, creating a group identity, and an individual who does not adhere to those rituals is penalized as a defector from the group (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 147). And to each group, politics is a symbolic reflection of individual involvement in the community, a ritual whereby one conforms to the group. Therefore, "[p]olitical forms thus come to symbolize what large masses of men need to believe about the state to reassure themselves" (Edelman 2) that acquiescing to governmental control will assure "social harmony" (Edelman 2). What governs us socially, then, is our endorsement of the rituals and myths that create a group loyalty, and those rituals and myths strengthen the cohesion and cooperation between individuals in a community. Oracles and super PACs, by using myth and ritual establish themselves as authoritative voices in the world in which they speak, and function to create a sense of community for the groups of men and women

to whom they speak, thus creating a group identity and helping those groups steer through life's unknown and risky future. Yet establishing the myths and rituals that enable a group to transform into an authoritative voice takes a number of forces working in tandem in order to develop a position of power within a community.

Wealth is one aspect, and an essential one, in constructing an entity that can cultivate power within a group. In industrialized nations, those that own land and/or businesses "have more options available to them" than the people who work for them (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 148) as far as power structures are concerned, and different social classes will "develop myth and ritual to strengthen their struggle to realize their interests" (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 148). In the analysis of super PAC advertisements, we saw that Hillary Clinton is demonized as someone who has been plagued by scandals, and will continue to be plagued by scandals, thereby creating a myth surrounding her actions; the rituals involved would be the "lock her up" chanting at political rallies, and exercising our right to vote by voting against her. One could argue that the super PACs working against her did so because, traditionally, Clinton, as a democrat, supports legislation and programs in support of working class people, and not the top ten percent of earners, so the super PACs developed the myth against Clinton in order to realize their interests. Super PACs raised over a billion dollars in 2016, and spent a majority of what they raised on independent expenditures, which are "ads that expressly advocate for the election or defeat of a candidate, and are aimed at the electorate as a whole" (Total Outside Spending by Election Cycle, Excluding Party Committees). So we can see, first, that wealth is playing an ever larger role in modern politics, and, second, how social class might affect the amount of money going into a super PAC as someone who owns a business or land would be able to donate more money to a specific PAC. This, in turn, might give that PAC a louder 'voice' with which to promote an agenda, and promoting an agenda is where myths and rituals are

created by the group; and here group means both communicator and auditor as a whole because the story created by the communicator must be adopted by the auditor for the story to become myth.

Oracles also dealt in wealth and social class. Apollo's temple at Delphi sat in the midst of the wealth of treasuries built by different poleis, one of those treasuries being built by Athens, whereby the wealth of the polis could be on display (wealthy citizens donated 'artifacts' in order to be 'seen' as having importance within the group (Neer 65)), which in turn gave prestige to Athens since Delphi had prestige in the Greek world as a foundation of morals, laws, and knowledge (Walsh 64). We also know that presenting the oracle with many gifts was thought to give one a favorable reply, as in the case of Croesus, so a poor citizen who could not give many gifts might get a less favorable reply than a someone with more wealth (or a less wealthy person might use all of his wealth to get a favorable reply, and thereby lose what little wealth he had to get an oracle that might prove unhelpful). The most powerful Incan oracles (other than the Sun oracle) were associated with the previous ruler, and all the attendant wealth the remaining family had accumulated (generally a family estate on which to farm and live as well as the actual monetary wealth), so these families had more authority within the ruling system than an oracle from a small rural town (Gose 2). Wealth, then, can be seen as an asset for establishing power and keeping it, but wealth also bolsters the rituals that accompany power, and can aid in keeping power concentrated within specific groups. Super PACs need money to advance an agenda through advertising and electioneering, and those that can afford to donate large sums of money have an advantage over how that agenda is promoted; oracles use wealth to foster prestige, and, by extension, centralize the centers of knowledge and power in cultures that tend toward separate factions. Wealth can aid in keeping power concentrated within specific groups. Wealth, however, does not work as a separate entity, but works with such aspects as drama, visuals, and language

(which is the most important aspect in becoming an authoritative voice) to create authority and power, myth and ritual for a group.

In Ancient Greece, playwrights of comedy were able to address current events, therefore did not follow the more formal style of tragedies (Cartwright): however, Drama mirrored divination in that tragic plays were mythological in nature, and divination was a source of the myths that dramas were based on (Drama was also the opposite of logos, and yet mythos (drama) and logos are intimately connected in the Greek world as has already been discussed). Incan oracles were also steeped in dramatic acting, in that the representative of an oracle had to put on a show, sometimes daily, by drinking corn beer and speaking for the mummy while in a trance state; once a year all oracles, rural and urban, would meet in the main square in Cuzco in order to 'talk' to the main Sun oracle in order to display allegiance to the Inka. The rituals of divination, along with the drama of acting or drinking oneself into a trance provided citizens with visual evidence to legitimize the mythological structures undergirding daily life, thereby further inculcating those myths into the community consciousness, and giving authority and power to certain leaders or groups.

PACs, too, have a certain dramatic flair, and mirror the politics of the specific group to which they are connected. In the analysis of PAC commercials, we saw that the visual and textual rhetoric was employed in such a way as to garner a negative emotional response, and through that dramatic language and those visuals, to advance an agenda. The drama created in those commercials becomes mythical in that stories are created, which mythologize the actions of a candidate (e.g. Clinton is scandal ridden; Trump is unfit for office), and those myths make it possible for rituals to be enacted (in particular, voting for or against a candidate). The Delphic oracles led to myths surrounding leaders (Croesus, Theseus), and the Incan oracles mythologized the actions of former and current leaders, and were integral on bestowing power on the leaders or

rulers of their particular society, and could help those leaders/rulers keep that power. PACs and super PACs mythologize leaders (both positively and negatively depending on their aims), and can give support and power to leaders they deem worthy and help those leaders keep that power by the mythologies they create and the rituals that are enacted based on those myths. So we can see here how the drama surrounding both oracles and PACs can have direct consequences on the power structures within the societies in which they function.

Murray Edelman, in his book *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, advances the thesis that, "mass publics respond to currently conspicuous political symbols: not to "fact," and not to moral codes embedded in the character or soul, but to gestures and speeches that make up the drama of the state" (172); this suggests that we are more readily moved to action (ritual) by myth, a drama created by political symbolism, than we are by fact, or morals, or character. And the symbols used in politics can "represent a history with strong emotional and ideological associations [and] become easy objects upon which to displace private emotions, especially strong anxieties and hopes" (Edelman 5). So, we externalize our emotions and objectify anything we associate with those emotions in what Ahmed explains as an "'inside out' model of emotions" (9), whereby emotions are not "regarded as psychological states, but social and cultural practices" (9). For instance, the idea of 'nation,' which is consistently and dramatically used in PAC rhetoric as a trope to convey 'belonging' and 'one against many,' has emotional, social, and cultural significance for the citizens of this nation, and can even take on mythological proportions: the nation is seen in a favorable light as a sovereign *body* that at times protects or needs protecting, and individuals make up the *body*. We then positively identify that *body* with our own and give an emotional value to the idea of being part of this *body*, and each citizen also identifies other 'citizens' as being part of this whole as well (anyone not from this *body* is 'other' and, therefore, it is easy to give a negative emotional value to 'them'). Therefore, similar to the Greek and Incan

oracles, a super PAC can use the notion of 'nation,' and the emotional value bestowed upon it, in the dramatic and symbolic rituals of politics to create myths that objectify our emotions and confer authority on anyone we believe to have the 'nation's' best interests at heart.

The symbols of wealth and ritual, myth and emotion, are important aspects in gaining power and authority, and visual rhetoric is interwoven into all of them, but if we humans did not have articulated language none of those concepts would even exist. Language is a symbolic action used to create meaning and shape reality for humans, so the language used by oracles and super PACs must be chosen deliberately to fit this notion in order to gain power and authority. Each sound and word has a symbolic significance to the hearer, and "also evokes an attitude, a set of impressions, or a pattern of events associated through time, through space, through logic, or through imagination with the symbol" (Edelman 6), and symbols can be grouped into two categories: referential and condensation symbols (Edelman 6). Referential symbols point to the objective components in a situation or even within an object, such as statistical data or cost figures, and aid in "the logical thinking about the situation and in manipulating it," whereas condensation symbols, "evoke the emotions associated with the situation" (Edelman 6). So, while referential symbols are useful in introducing the facts of a situation, they do not hold the attention of an audience in the same way that a condensation symbol can because our "emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects" (Ahmed 10), and "for spectators of the political scene every act contributes to a pattern of ongoing events that spells threat or reassurance [and] [n]o matter what incidents occur and which of these are reported, they will fit nicely as evidence to support people's preconceived hopes and fears" (Edelman 13). Each word, each sound, can symbolically stand in for the fears and/or hopes of a given audience, creating specific reactions in the hearer – if a politician, law, or civic institution is presented as a threat to one's well-being (or the 'nation' as a proxy for the individual), one might have an

adverse physical reaction, and act in a manner that one believes will create security and stability – even if the referential symbols might present evidence to refute the perceived threat. Conversely, if a politician, law, or civic institution is presented as principled or praiseworthy, one might have a positive reaction and act in a suitable manner – even if the referential symbols present evidence refuting the perceived 'goodness' of the person, law or institution in question. So, while referential symbols give us facts and figures, and condensational symbols give us emotions, both give us the ability to choose the 'best' course of actions. Yet if these symbols are manipulated in a sophistic manner, the 'best' course may not be the one we think.

A language can also have emotional value for a speaker by conferring 'belonging' on anyone who speaks it (although, it must be spoken perfectly and any accent must fit an already accepted group or area), and yet expose anyone who does not speak it as *other*. For example, in the US there are groups of people who have attempted for years to get legislation passed declaring American English as the official language of the country, so anyone not speaking this language would not be considered part of the 'community,' and, therefore, not able to partake in all the benefits granted to those who belong. Authority and power, then, are gained when one is able to use the correct language, style it correctly for the audience (referentially or condensationally), and speak that language as a native.

If we go back once again to the Ancient Greeks, we can see how language was a mechanism for gaining authority and power within society. The Sophists were early philosophers who believed that "[c]ertainty or absolute truth is not available to humans […] but probable knowledge can be refined by pitting opposing positions against one another and examining the arguments thus brought forward" (Bizzell and Herzberg 22). Because this exploration required language to consider opposing positions, and the Sophists believed that language cannot be objective because it "is fraught with emotional and cultural baggage […] probable knowledge,

based in our deceptive, limited sensory organism, is all that humans can achieve anyway" (Bizzell and Herzberg 23). Therefore, the Sophists would travel the countryside teaching those who could pay in the belief that anyone could improve himself under Sophist tutelage, and, in so doing, the Sophists undermined the "traditional privileges of the aristocracy" (Bizzell and Herzberg 22). In other words, the Sophists believed that anyone could be taught to use language as a persuasive tool to argue for or against anything, and that this was the ultimate method to gain knowledge and power. In examining the oracle at Delphi, we know that language played an important role for both the petitioner and the utterance of the Pythia. The most common form of address was the "Is it better? It is better" formula, and that "better" suggests alternatives, which, like the Sophists and other Greek rhetoricians such as Aristotle, allows for debate based on probabilities in which the best course through life might be determined. Super PACs also use a similar method in trying to steer an audience to take the best course of action in that their rhetoric tries to persuade an audience that the 'best' or 'better' course to take is the one advanced by the PAC. Although, it could be suggested that the roles are reversed, and the PAC is the petitioner in this scenario in trying to get the public to think/vote and certain way, the PAC is simply giving knowledge to a group of people who might be questioning what the best course might be in any given situation (i.e. voting for the correct politician or legislation). This mirrors the fact that oracles were considered repositories of knowledge, and they would dole out that knowledge to citizens, and those citizens would then choose what course to take.

All political language has the power to change how citizens view the government, but PACs and super PACs inhabit a special niche in the political landscape. PACs have been advocating for specific politicians for more than seventy years, and super PACs, while only having been around for eight years, are now spending unlimited monies on advocating for or against politicians, judges, legislation, and civic policies such as environmental regulations and

protections. Oracles also inhabited a special niche within the cultures where they operated: the Delphic oracle was able to bring to the Greeks a way to use language to further the best or better path through life, and in this way also give them some agency over their fate; the Incan oracles were able to stabilize a far reaching and expanding empire for the main ruler in Cuzco, and yet they also provided a type of representation for ordinary citizens. PACs and super PACs, like oracles, are authoritative voices within the culture where they operate, and thus have the power to change minds, manipulate messages, and allow people to feel as if they have some control over their lives; by using the correct symbology (language) styled to fit any situation an oracle could, and a PAC can, convey meaning and shape reality for the auditors of this information.

Chapter V: Language and Writing: Discovering Meaning in Our Created Reality

As each person grows and develops into an adult, he or she is surrounded by authoritative voices who have the power to guide, punish, teach, and, in general, try to assure that we make it to our next birthday. And these voices – our parents and family members, teachers and religious leaders – traditionally have our best interests at heart, and that is why we trust these voices. Just as animals bark, whistle, or roar to impart environmental information, humans, with our unique ability to communicate through articulated language, are also imparting our shared wisdom of our environment in order to ensure that each of us grows up with at least the minimum amount of skills to be able to function as adults. We are taught how to walk and talk; we are taught how to read, write, and do math; we are taught how to avoid dangerous situations; we are taught to follow the rules of our home and the laws of our country; and we are taught to be kind and generous. All of those actions require that we have some basic understanding of language because language is the repository of all of our shared knowledge and understanding of the world. This is why Bergson and Burke, Iriki and Taoka, Maynard Smith and Szathmáry, Chomsky and von Humboldt, and many others have studied and continue to study language – it creates who we are by contextually 'shaping' our emotions, our thoughts, and our interactions with others by allowing us to name those things, which in turn creates the reality we live in every day. Yet the fact that language creates our reality can have negative repercussions in that language can be used to manipulate, obfuscate, and separate us down ideological lines, so it is important to study and understand the complexities of meaning in human language.

The parallels between writing and language are fairly obvious: without a language, there would be no writing – at least as we know it today. However, the simplicity in that statement does not begin to illustrate the complexities that writing in a language encapsulates. I could sit down and string some words together, and come up with a sentence that has meaning – subject,

verb, object – but if that sentence has created no context, no value or knowledge for the person

reading it, then I am not a *writer*. Writing is about problem-finding and -solving (or at least

making the effort to solve a problem), and creating meaning for an audience by "represent[ing]

[a] problem not only in more breadth, but in depth" (Flower and Hayes 29). Yet novice writers

struggle with this idea, and seem more comfortable when an instructor or professor hands them a

detailed assignment that they can read several times, and, by doing so, find some clue(s) that

strikes a chord and reminds them "of a topic on which they had something to say," but in their

writing, "they never [move] beyond the sketchy, conventional representation of audience and

assignment with which they started" (Flower and Hayes 26). This leaves anyone who teaches

writing (not to mention English department faculty who are tasked with building the programs

that determine what types of assignments are taught in the writing classroom) struggling to

discover inventive ways to engage students in the process of exploration and discovery, defining

a problem "even within the constraints of an assignment" (Flower and Hayes 31), and, eventually,

helping them "create inspiration instead of wait for it" (Flower and Hayes 31). But what is the

catalyst that sends one down the path of discovery, and how does one move into an exploration

of a problem?

One theory is that of cognitive dissonance. The classical theory of cognitive dissonance

suggests that, "when two related cognitions are mutually inconsistent, one of them will change to

restore consistency" (Neuman and Tabak 252), and it is in the inconsistency where a problem

might be found. A relatively newer theory advanced by Social Sciences professor Michael Billig

stresses that, "the discursive, argumentative, and social aspects of psychological phenomena [are

actually] an interactional problem" (Neuman and Tabak 253), an approach that is similar to the

"impression management theory [which] suggests that people do not really change their attitudes

because of an inconsistency but try to create a favorable impression […] by appearing to have

attitudes that are consistent with their behavior" (Neuman and Tabak 253). What Billig is trying to assert is that if inconsistency is an interactional problem and not cognitive, then we should "not look for a simple change in belief but "look at the ways people resolve or dismiss inconsistency without any fundamental changes of belief"" (qtd. in Neuman and Tabak 253). Human activity and reality is negotiated through our verbal communications, and a rhetorical approach to studying a cognitive dissonance, which "leans on a discursive paradigm that emphasizes the discursive nature of human beings, the active construction of meaning, and the contextual nature of human activity" (Neuman and Tabak 254), would allow the student to work through a process of discovery by using language as a medium for exploring the problems of inconsistency or dissonance within his or her personal sphere of existence. PAC and super PAC rhetoric, if used as part of a lesson plan, could aid as a starting point for exploring inconsistencies and beliefs, and how those are negotiated through language and authority.

We are brought up with the voices of authority surrounding us daily, and these are voices that we generally trust if not always agree with; and this trust and agreement (or disagreement) is fundamental in how we view our world. We are, perhaps, naïve to the fact, especially as we grow up, that others may have diverging viewpoints, and, while we can trust the authority of a parent or teacher (generally), there are authoritative voices in this world whose agendas are not always straightforward, but are, nevertheless, able to persuade and influence our world view based on deceptive language. PACs and super PACs are part of this group of authoritative voices, and the rhetoric that they deal in can bias one's beliefs and worldview. As seen in the analysis of super PAC communications, these organizations are adept at both explicit and implicit messages, and advertising (especially negative) released by these groups has been shown to change how people feel about political candidates and the parties they represent (Jordon Brooks and Murov; Dowling and Wichowsky; Banda and Windett). As with the study of canonical literature, and the

authoritative voices of such authors as Shakespeare, Milton, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Homer, Virgil, and many others too numerous to name, we should also study the cultural 'literature' that impacts and shapes our daily reality, and PACs and super PACs are part of that 'literature.' By exploring the authority of these groups, and using the rhetoric to discover inconsistencies between message and reality, students might come to an understanding of cultural mythology and ritual, and, perhaps, might become less susceptible to "the ways of demagogic spellbinders" filling our heads with "hearsay" and "fantastic hatreds" (Burke 5).

In order for students to recognize that language is the repository of all human knowledge, they must first understand how language is used in making authority, and how that authority directly impacts our knowledge and our reality. Just as the eye needs visual stimuli to develop properly, language acquisition needs linguistic stimuli (Maynard Smith and Szathmáry 151), so to introduce PAC and super PAC rhetoric into a student's sphere of linguistic knowledge we can properly develop his or her understanding of how language is used to manipulate, shape, and create political reality for humans. The study of PAC and super PAC rhetoric would fit into any pedagogy – classical rhetoric, cognitivist, expressivist, social constructivist, etc. – and not just a political one simply because one can study the product, the process, discourse communities, and how social, economic, and political forces can effect language and its uses. PAC's and super PAC's advertising, and the language they use to promote their agenda, has become imbedded in the political rhetoric of this country over the last seventy-eight years, and designated these groups as voices of authority – voices that can change how we view reality, or harden already passionate beliefs, just as oracles did in the cultures they operated within. The rhetoric of PACs and super PACs, like a wall, can be "ambiguous, two-faced. What [is] inside it and what [is] outside it depend[s] upon which side of it you [are] on" (Le Guin 1). Yet we might be able to better understand rhetoric, and lessen the impact of the oracular maneuvers of PACs and super

PACs, if we study the use of language as reality maker, and refute the voices of PACs and super PACs as authorities of anything but personal agendas and exploiters of the political system. This is by no means a comprehensive overview of how this type of language might be used in one's pedagogy, but my hope is that I have given some basic information on where one might start.

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