

Mencius and Aristotle as “Deep-Ecological” Theorists of Rhetoric

1.1 Rhetoric and Deep Ecology

To the extent that this book draws on the philosophy of deep ecology to study rhetoric, it implies an expansion of our understanding of rhetoric past rationalistic conceptions focused on the form and content of rhetoric (arguments, claims, proofs, etc.) to ecological conceptions focused on rhetorical situation—the affective and conative *flows* of persuasivity through groups that make rhetorical persuasion possible. The former conception of rhetoric is the one that dominated the field in the West for two thousand years, and lingers on as the default definition; the latter shifts the conceptual focus from argumentative structures to what Jenny Edbauer (2005, p. 9) calls “a framework of *affective ecologies* that recontextualizes rhetorics in their temporal, historical, and lived fluxes.” Troping rhetorical situation as a network (Shaviro, 2003; Edbauer, 2005, pp. 9–10), as a “radically *distributed act*” (Syverson, 1999; Edbauer, 2005, p. 12), as a verb, and as a viral economy, Edbauer (*ibid.*, p. 14) suggests that “a given rhetoric is not *contained* by the elements that comprise its rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor, audience, constraints). Rather, a rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities that are circulating in the social field. Moreover, this same rhetoric will go on to evolve in *aparallel* ways: between two ‘species’ that have absolutely nothing to do with each other. What is shared between them is *not* the situation, but certain contagions and energy.”

This passage adumbrates my main concerns as a theorist and intellectual historian of rhetoric: rhetorical situation as an ecology; persuasivity

(to *pithanon*) as the circulation of “viral intensities” or energies through groups; that circulation specifically as an energy-exchange, a circulatory or reticulatory flow of energy-transfers that in §4.12 I call the *somatic exchange* (see the Glossary). In addition, however, I bring to bear on the affective ecologies of persuasivity the specific philosophical articulation of ecological theory offered by Arne Naess (1995, p. 33):

N1: Self-realization!

H1: The higher the Self-realization attained by anyone, the broader and deeper the identification with others.

H2: The higher the level of Self-realization attained by anyone, the more its further increase depends on the Self-realization of others.

H3: Complete Self-realization of anyone depends on that of all.

N2: Self-realization by all living beings!

(N = norm; H = hypothesis)

As we will see in §2.2, what Naess here calls empathy-based “identification” *is* the becoming-communal movement of rhetoric ecologically understood; and though Naess does not mention Kenneth Burke’s name or work, it is at least historically grounded in Burke’s (1950/1969) radical reading of Aristotle’s rhetorical theory. Naess (*ibid.*, pp. 15–16) gives the example of intense affective identification with a flea that falls into acid and dies in agony; Mencius (1A7) illustrates precisely the same collectivizing disposition through the story of King Xuan of Qi (齊宣王, r. 342–324 BCE), whose empathetic identification with an ox being led to slaughter he praised (though he also goes on to chide the king for caring more about the ox than about his subjects; and in 7A45 he says specifically that an exemplary person will experience intimacy [*qin* 親] with family members, fellow-feeling [*ren* 仁] with all humans, and a lower level of “love” [*ai* 愛] for animals and other living things).

Because I am primarily interested here not generally in deep ecology but in the deep ecology specifically of rhetoric, this is as far as I follow Naess; I will not be exploring his next set of norms and hypotheses (*ibid.*, p. 35):

H4: Diversity of life increases Self-realization potentials.

N3: Diversity of life!

H5: Complexity of life increases Self-realization potentials.

N4: Complexity of life!

H6: Life resources of the Earth are limited.

H7: Symbiosis maximizes realization potentials under conditions of limited resources.

N5: Symbiosis!

This would be the bioecosophical application of Naess’s philosophical intervention; my concern is with affective ecologies.

Still, thinking affective ecologies more deeply will suggest some ways in which a concern with affective deep social ecologies only keeps bringing us back into the vicinity of the kind of global or planetary deep-ecological thinking that Naess engages:

- [1] Let the primary affective ecology be an ecology of social value that reticulates evaluative affect through the community in a becoming-conative form.
 - Since the evaluative affect is circulating through a group—since it is an affective *ecology*—it reflects not individuated but collective value, and:
 - Since as Aristotle insists we are social animals, so that we care so much about group approval and disapproval that the mere *feeling* of evaluation becomes by default conative pressure, therefore:
- [1a] Let the becoming-conativity of affect mean that evaluative affect begins as a *feeling* of value—approving or disapproving, honoring or dishonoring, praising or condemning—that is then *used-and-taken* as social pressure (collective conation) to conform to group norms.
- [1b] Let this affective-becoming-conative ecology also be understood as becoming-cognitive, in the sense that it is always moving toward conscious awareness, without necessarily depending for its effectiveness on such awareness (both individuals and groups may participate in such ecologies without recognizing or being able to articulate their doing so).
- [2] Let the key social subecologies at work in this ecology of value be organized around the three foci of the philosophi-

cal tradition emerging out of Plato and Aristotle, namely, the good, the just, and the true.

- Since, unlike Plato, for whom these ideals are transcendental abstractions, pure and stable universals descending to us from the Realm of Forms, demanding only that we learn to discern them accurately, Aristotle theorizes them as *communal* virtues—which is to say, in the terms I’m using here, social ecologies—therefore:

[2a] Let the good be what the community decides is good.

[2b] Let the true be what the community decides is true.

[2c] Let the just (or the fair, or the equitable) be what the community decides is just or fair or equitable.

[2d] Let the community decide these things through (1a) the affective-becoming-conative(-becoming-cognitive) ecology of social value: by circulating or reticulating evaluative affect-becoming-conation through the group.

[2e] Let rhetorical theory (and other social theories) emerge out of (1b) the becoming-cognitive of the affective-becoming-conative-becoming-cognitive ecology of social value.

- Since the communal determination of the good was aimed specifically at the building of good character(s), and since for Aristotle the good was therefore determined ecologically by the community, therefore:

[3] Let (2a) “the good” be a collective social ecology/entelechy of *becoming-good*.

[3a] Let *becoming-good* also mean *becoming-normal*, in the sense of gradually coming to conform to communal norms, or, in the term Behuniak (2005) takes to be the key concept in Mencius’s philosophy, *becoming-human*, in the sense of coming to embody what the community takes to represent the human (transbestial) ideal.

- [3b] Let a more inclusive term for (3) be *becoming-communal*—an apposite umbrella term for becoming-good not only because the community regulates the process but because in that process the community itself (potentially) becomes good as well.
- Since the Attic Greek word for community is *oikos* (pronounced [yikos], with tightly pursed lips on the front diphthong [yi], like the diphthong in French *nuit*¹), from which we derive our Latinized terms economy (*oikos* + *nomos* “communal law”) and ecology (*oikos* + *logos* “communal study” or “communal reason”), therefore:
- [3c] Let *ecosis* signify the entelechial ecology of becoming-good or becoming-normal or becoming-human or becoming-communal, or what Arne Naess calls the self-realization of the ecological self (ideally for Naess and deep ecology, *ecosis* would be the becoming-good/becoming-communal of the entire planet).
- Since Aristotle does not define the true or the just transcendently either, as something fixed by or in a spiritual realm, but rather as determined communally, therefore:
- [4] Let (2b) “the fair” be a collective social ecology of *becoming-fair*, and (2c) “the true” be a collective social ecology of *becoming-true*.
- Since when Aristotle writes about the communal determination of truth he tends to deal less with *alētheia* “truth” and more with *ta eikota* “the probable, the likely,” from *eikos* (pronounced [i:kos], with the initial front diphthong collapsed into a long front [i:]), which Stephen Colbert might want to translate as “truthy,” and:
 - Since Aristotle’s word for fairness or equity was also derived from *eikos*, namely *epieikeia*, and:
- [4a] Let the communal ecologies of *becoming-fair* and *becoming-true* collapse into one, comprising the commu-

nity's emerging ecotic sense of what is fair because it seems true (seems probable or plausible or likely to be true, and therefore "truthy"), and of what is truthy because it seems fair.

- Since communal becoming-fair and becoming-true are steeped in *persuasion*, or what Aristotle calls persuasivity (*to pithanon*), therefore:

[4b] Let *icosis* (Latinizing *eikos* as *icos*) be a collective social ecology/entelechy of *becoming-persuasive* and *becoming-real-seeming* or *becoming-truthy*.

[5] Let the primary affective ecology of social value take the form(s) of two closely intertwined subecologies, two collective entelechies or self-realizations: (3c) *ecosis* (moving toward the communal good or the good community) and (4b) *icosis* (moving toward the communal determination/construction of truth and fairness through persuasivity).

- Since, given their extremely similar pronunciations, *oikos* and *eikos* were often confused or punningly compared in Attic Greek, and at various times folk etymologies have been developed deriving *eikos* from *oikos*, leading Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon to pun on the two words,² and:
- Since the aural convergence that Attic Greeks heard in *oikos* and *eikos* ties each closely to the other, therefore:

[5a] Let *icosis* be ecotic to the extent that becoming-persuasive works through normalization, the circulation of affective-becoming-conative pressures to adhere to group norms.

[5b] Let *ecosis* be icotic to the extent that becoming-communal works through communication, the verbal telling-and-hearing of opinions as truths (realities, identities) or as an emerging collective sense of justice.

- Since for Aristotle (3) *ecosis* or becoming-communal is also a process of developing good character(s), and:

- Since the Attic Greek for “character” is *ēthos* (which is why a concern with the good is traditionally the concern of “ethics”), therefore:

[5c] Let *ethecosis* signify ethical ecosis, simultaneously the becoming(-individual-and-becoming)-communal of good character and the becoming-good of communal character.

- Since icosis is grounded in *doxa*, which in the Attic Greek of Plato and Aristotle means both opinion and reputation (and specifically opinion-*becoming*-reputation), therefore:

[5d] Let *doxicosis* signify the communal becoming-persuasive (becoming-truthy, becoming-fair, becoming-real-seeming, becoming-identity) of people’s opinions.

Or, to put that in simpler English: icosis/ecosis is the process by which social life is organized ecologically out of group dynamics; by “organized ecologically” I mean emerging out of situated group relationships and interactions without being overtly directed by a leader, or following a rational plan. The group dynamics that wield the “ecological” organizing power begin as interactive/shared affect, especially evaluative affects like approval and disapproval; because we are social animals who care very much about group belonging, those shared evaluative affects tend to be experienced as conative *pressures* to conform to group norms. (If the whole group disapproves of my actions, I will tend to feel shame and a determination to change my behavior in future. I can resist that pressure, and even—if the group is small enough—sometimes change their minds; but even in a small group that kind of counterpressure is extremely difficult to bring successfully, and almost impossible in a whole population.) Within that broad socio-ecological framework, then, “icosis” is the rhetorical process by which opinions are plausibilized as truths and realities, so that a socially constructed world view comes to seem like “the way things are”; and “ecosis” is the rhetorical process by which values are plausibilized as morals and laws, so that a socially constructed morality comes to seem like “God’s will” or the like.

In both Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (which I will abbreviate *TR*, for *tekhne rhetorike*) and the *Mencius* (which I will abbreviate *MZ*, for *Meng zi*), the deep ecology of rhetoric is (4b) icotic or (5d) doxicotic, and the deep ecology

of ethical growth or maturation in both writers is (3c) ecotic or (5c) ethectic. Since this book is a study of the deep ecology of *rhetoric*, my focus will be on the former, doxicosis—although, like Aristotle in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, Mencius is most often read as primarily an ecotic rather than an icotic thinker. (The question of whether Mencius can or should be read as an icotic or rhetorical theorist as well is the topic of §1.3.)

But ultimately, I suggest, it is impossible to separate the two subecologies: Aristotle is everywhere in the *TR* an ecotic thinker and everywhere in the ethical books an icotic thinker; Mencius is everywhere both as well. Issues of rhetorical persuasion, plausibility, emotion, disposition, and the verbal/communal construction of truth can only be isolated from ethical questions of character with great analytical violence.

Yet another way to think affective ecologies more deeply: in both Mencius and Aristotle scholars have discerned a fruitful and ecologically definitive tension between *disposition* (*xing* 性 in Mencius, *hexis* in Aristotle) or *character* (*dé* 德 in Mencius, *ēthos* in Aristotle) on the one hand and *circumstances* or *conditions* (*ming* 命 in Mencius, *kath' hekaston* in Aristotle) on the other. As Sherman (1989, pp. 3–4) writes, “Pursuing the ends of virtue does not begin with making choices, but with recognizing the circumstances relevant to specific ends. In this sense, character is expressed in what one sees as much as what one does. Knowing how to discern the particulars, Aristotle stresses, is a mark of virtue.” And again: “Before we can know how to act, we must acknowledge that action may be required. And this reaction to circumstances is itself part of the virtuous response. It is part of how the dispositional ends of character become occurrent” (ibid., pp. 5–6). And Behuniak (2005, p. 118) writes: “Just as the ‘force of character’ of a ruler is always in tension with the ‘mandate’ (*ming* 命) and thus, in Tang Junyi’s words, ‘a mutual giving and receiving,’ the force of character of those who perform sacrifices with integrity can also be understood as in tension with conditions (*ming* 命). Sacrifices boldly deny the finality of mortal death, an irrevocable *ming*.”

On the one hand, circumstances do condition action, form the constraining conditions of possibility within which action becomes thinkable and realizable; on the other hand, people of great force of character can often successfully resist or minimize the limiting effects of conditions. This tension implies a kind of mutual circulation of ecosis through icosis and of icosis through ecosis. In rhetorical terms, one can think of what the rhetor brings to the rhetorical situation as *strength of character and disposition*, and the doxicotic currents into which the rhetor must insert his or

her character in order to effect persuasion as the situational or ecological *conditions* under which persuasion becomes possible; but Aristotle also sees the characters, emotions, and dispositions of the rhetor’s audience as part of those conditions, as *to endekhomenon pithanon* or “the available persuasivity.” To persuade his or her audience the rhetor must muster a convincingly “good” (communally shared) *ēthos*, a character with which the audience can identify; the only way the rhetor can accomplish this task successfully is by entering into the ethecotic-becoming-doxicotic ecology of social value. S/he has to *feel* the affective ecosis of character as an affective icosis of truthiness and fairness, and both as conative pressure to become part of the becoming-communal.

1.2 Somatics

Somatic theory posits that individual members of any group (a) see, hear, remember, or imagine other people’s body language and simulate those other people’s body states in their own, and in so doing (b) circulate becoming-normative evaluative affects through the group, thereby (c) generating a group body-becoming-mind or group agency that wields regulatory power over the group but also “is” the group, and in some incompletely transpersonal sense “is” each member of the group. Because the somatic model is based on the almost simultaneous (within 300 milliseconds) neural representation and simulation of other people’s body states, I call it “somatomimetic” (see the Glossary)—as opposed to competing neurophysiological modelings of the same phenomenology that are based on chemical (pheromonic) entrainment, like that offered by Teresa Brennan (2004).

Those who know Mencius know that the driving force behind his ethecotic ecology is *xīn* 心, which in Chinese is both “heart” and “mind,” and which I argue in §2.6 might best be translated “heart-becoming-mind” or “feeling-becoming-thinking”; the primary argumentative burden of my first chapter is to show that Mencius’s key concept *rén* 仁 is specifically (c) a *group* heart-becoming-mind, or what I translate there as “fellow-feeling.” My topic in chapter 3 is the driving vitalistic force behind the Mencian *xīn* 心/*rén* 仁 ecology, namely *qì* 氣 “configurative energy”—a viral intensity that Brian Massumi (2002) would also want to associate with affect. Reading Mencius somatically, therefore, seems almost supererogatory. How else *could* one read him? (As we’ll see in §1.3, there have historically been other influential readings; and one, which dominated Chinese Confucian

scholarship for six centuries, until the eighteenth century—that formulated by Zhu Xi 朱熹—stands in stark opposition to my somatic reading, which really only seems unavoidable in the context of the last two and a half centuries of Mencius scholarship. Strikingly, however, one of the most recent translations of the *MZ*, Bryan W. Van Norden's (2008), is based explicitly on Zhu Xi's commentary.)

It may still seem odd, however, to include Aristotle too in a somatic study of rhetoric, since many scholars still read him as the cold-minded king of reductive-rationalist abstraction. To be sure, Aristotle was interested in emotion (*pathos*), especially but not exclusively in the *Rhetoric*, and famously and influentially included emotional appeals as one of three major *pisteis* (arguments, proofs, modes or means of persuasion, *TR* 1356a3), the other two being ethical appeals to the speaker's character and logical appeals based on the "words" or arguments themselves. But surely that alone isn't enough to warrant a somatic reading of Aristotle? After all, Aristotle himself seems decently embarrassed about pathetic persuasion, as a vulgar strategy unfortunately mandated by democracy, which puts deliberative power into the hands of the riffraff who can't manage the philosophical purification of their thought processes into pure reason. And as Gretchen Fleisher Moon (2003) notes, most treatments of Aristotelian argumentative *pathos* in contemporary writing textbooks still tend to brand it fallacious reasoning, with a certain uneasiness or even outright embarrassment that such a thing even exists, let alone gets theorized by the great abstract formalist Aristotle. Larry Arnhart (1981, p. 3) reflects this attitude openly in noting that "rhetoric also has a darker side. Does not the rhetorician sometimes employ emotional appeals and deceptive arguments to move his listeners to whatever position he wishes?" Arnhart is actually very balanced and fair-minded on Aristotle's psychology of the emotions, so maybe what he means here is not that emotional appeals are *necessarily* rhetoric's dark side but that they *can* be used to darker ends; but then why not ask whether the rhetor does not also sometimes employ *logical* appeals and deceptive arguments to manipulate listeners and readers?

Let me begin to flesh out what I mean by somatic theory by taking a look at what appears to be Aristotle's "idealism" about the rhetor "working from truth" rather than manipulating the audience's emotions—as summarized here, for example, by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (1996, pp. 2–3):

Ideally, the best oratory addresses the minds as well as the psychology of its audience. Aristotle chides the authors of earlier handbooks on rhetoric for concentrating primarily on techniques for

swaying the emotions of judges and legislators, instead of first and primarily considering the best modes of persuasion. Enthymemes and metaphors are most convincing when their assumptions are reasonable (1355a4–1355b7). Aristotle wryly complains that addressing the emotions of a judge is like warping a ruler before using it. The best orator does not manipulate beliefs in order to make the worse appear to be the better course, but rather presents the best case in a way that is comprehensible and moving to each type of character (1113a30 ff.). In suiting his arguments to his audience—presenting a course of action as gloriously noble to the young and as prudent to the elderly—the rhetorician need not be lying. Aristotle’s ethical words are meant to show that the best life is—in principle, under ideal circumstances, and in the long run—also the most pleasant, the most expedient, and the noblest (1140a25–28, 1142a1–11, 1359a30–1363b4). As long as his rhetoric is also constrained by what is true and what is best, the rhetorician will not “warp the ruler.”

. . . Since even a debased audience aims at the opaque objects of its desires—at the real (and not merely the apparent) good—it implicitly wants its rhetoricians to be, and not merely to seem, good. It is for these functional normative reasons that the rhetorician must know how to present himself as substantively intelligent and virtuous, rather than merely as cleverly skilled at rhetoric. He must not only convince his audience that his arguments are sound, but also that, like the physician, he has their real interests—and not merely their surface desires—at heart. (101b5 ff.)

What are we to do with this? Is Aristotle just being naïve here? Is it patently silly to assume that it’s even possible for a rhetor to present sound arguments, with his or her audience’s “real interests . . . at heart,” and *not* “manipulate beliefs in order to make the worse appear to be the better course”—*not* warp the ruler by appealing to his audience’s emotions? Is there some sense in which it is not outright contradictory, perhaps a disturbing example of bad faith, to warn against emotional appeals in *TR* 1 and then devote ten chapters in *TR* 2.2–11 to a careful study of the best ways to appeal to an audience’s emotions?

Let’s imagine a methodomachy for dealing with this set of assumptions in Aristotle, a dialectical model or myth that is grounded in the history of such methodological wranglings but here conveniently narrativized:

Thesis: moralizing/objectivizing methods. The assumption here is that there exists a moral or ethical code that is not socially constructed or maintained but objective, stable, universal, received from God, and inscribed either in a Book (the Law, the Bible) or in the minds of all right-thinking people. So far from being understood as socially constructed, in fact, this method may even be seen (and in Christian thematizations typically is seen) as oppositional to society: the right-thinking moralist obeys the objective Law even in the face of widespread social chaos or immorality, surrounded on all hands by liars and swindlers, sophists and casuists, spin doctors and snake-oil salesmen. The righteous moralist is conceived as an individual, normatively male, who is free to make rational choices in accordance with morality and other objective codes, but equally free to deviate or “fall” from those rational choices into sin and degradation.

We like to call these methods “conservative,” of course, but they are really only one of many conservativisms—as it happens, one associated in academic circles these days with a now mostly retired generation of colleagues and institutionalized in the National Association of Scholars. From this point of view, Aristotle’s method is the only acceptable one; indeed, it is one of the founding models for this approach, along with Paul’s in the New Testament epistles, Augustine’s in *On Christian Doctrine*, Thomas’s in the *Summa*, and so on. As his method is constructed by this group, Aristotle preaches adherence to moral/ethical models of truth-telling, honesty, and integrity even when all the other rhetors are lying and manipulating their audiences for personal or collective gain. Even if these various immoral rhetorics are so widespread as to dominate the scene, so that the Aristotelian rhetor actually does himself (not herself) a grave practical or political disservice by adhering to what is right, he continues to act in accordance with the true and the good.

Antithesis: discursivizing/constructivizing methods. The assumption now becomes that all such “codes” posited by moralizing and objectivizing methods are in fact ideological apparatuses that are socially constructed and maintained and discursive in nature, based on regimes of signs that impose meaning on both objects and the human subjects that are “interpellated” into them. The discursive subject is no longer an individual but a shaped functionality, what Massumi (2002, p. 2) calls “a subject without subjectivity: a subject ‘constructed’ by external mechanisms.” He also notes that bodies are radically foreclosed in this approach: “This thoroughly mediated body could only be a ‘discursive’ body: one with its signifying gestures. Signifying gestures make sense. If properly ‘performed,’ they may also unmake sense by scrambling significations already in place. Make and unmake sense

as they might, they don’t *sense*” (ibid.). The model is insistently mentalist: in it everything is organized by the abstract logic of verbal language, or more generally discursive signs, semiosis. Anything unmediated by mind and mentalized language—say, affect—is theoretically dangerous and must be either methodologically repressed or retheorized as ultimately just another discursive functionality (see Terada, 2001).

For roughly the last two decades of the twentieth century we associated these methods with a left-leaning cultural theory that we thought of as politically radical, but methodologically they too have now become another conservatism, desperately engaged in a rearguard action against the vast stretches of human experience that their discursivist doctrines cannot explain or reduce. In this approach, obviously, Aristotle becomes hopelessly naïve, an idealistic objectivist who retains a childish faith in discredited ideological abstractions like Truth and the Right and actually thinks he is an individual with free choice—and, more perversely still, presents himself as electing to use that bogus “free choice” in the service of ideological state apparatuses. For this approach, in other words—see Haskins (2004a, 2004b)—Aristotle becomes one of the leading representatives of the thetic conservatism against which this antithetic radicalism is launched.

To some small extent, as Haskins (2004a) herself admits, Aristotle can be seen as a discursivist himself, attuned to the linguistic nuances of the received opinions from which he derived his philosophical categories; from a cultural-studies perspective, however, he is such a naïve, even primitive, objectivizing discursivist that he jumps straight from “what is said” to “what is,” from *endoxa* to *pragmata*, with no lingering over “social and cultural markers” (ibid., p. 7). He is also wildly and disturbingly reactionary, uncritically supporting the exclusive rule of noble well-educated males and arguing that women and barbarians make natural slaves (ibid., pp. 9–11). Rather than seeking out and articulating the tiny opportunity for resistance that ideological apparatuses inadvertently but inevitably leave open, then, Aristotle wholeheartedly aligns himself with the state and its repressive discursive regimes, including objectivism.

Synthesis: somatizing methods. Somatic theory has one kind of beginning in the attempt to synthesize the discursivist theory of social construction with the phenomenology of objectivism—to explain the conflicting facts that human belief systems are demonstrably constructed but that one’s own belief system nevertheless typically *feels* so objectively grounded in reality as to be virtually impossible to change. The Foucauldian assumption brought to bear on this objectivist phenomenology by discursivists, that we are corporeally

trained or disciplined to believe in the reality of our own social constructs, in a sense only defers the problem: *How* are we so trained? What is it in us that is trained, what is disciplined, and how does the training or discipline take such a fierce hold on our orientation to the world that it comes to feel to us like the world itself? I say “in a sense” because the problem is really only deferred in highly selective discursivist readings of Foucault; Foucault himself, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1977) and elsewhere, is very clear: we are trained through the kinesthetic and affective programming of our autonomic nervous systems. It is only when Foucault is read through Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony”—by Judith Butler (1989), for example—to be talking about “writing on the body,” the inscribing of discursive codes on the “paper” of the skin, that it remains difficult to explain our overwhelming continuing attachments to philosophically discredited orientations like objectivism. How exactly does inscribing objectivism on my skin make me *feel* that what I believe is really real?

According to somatic theory, social construction operates much more powerfully at a kinesthetic-becoming-affective-becoming-conative level than it does at the discursive, which latter is itself in fact a corporeal-becoming-mental remapping of “ideosomatically” (group-affectively-becoming-conatively) organized/organizing feelings (see the Glossary). That ideosomatic regulation of groups is something like what Rorty (1996, p. 3) seems to be hinting at in “these functional normative reasons”: the Aristotelian rhetor has to convince his audience that he has their real interests at heart by *truly* (normatively, ecotically) having them at heart (*en* “in” + *thumos* “passion, spiritedness,” see §2.8). This is to say that s/he has to speak and feel (as Jeffrey Walker notes in 1994, 2000, pp. 173–74, and 2008, p. 85) “enthymematically” *as them*, doxicotically as them, through what Kenneth Burke calls the consubstantiality of identification (§2.2), as a member of the collective, but as an influential member whose speaking also shapes their real interests “at heart,” which is to say, *as felt*, so that, as they are persuaded, their felt-and-believed real interests *become* what the rhetor is suggesting, and also, as that (e)merging of consensus occurs, they feel themselves being affectively and cognitively persuaded. Persuading and being persuaded, in other words, are both collective activities, corporeal-becoming-mental activities performed by the group in and through the *persons* of “the audience” and “the rhetor.” The rhetor, to put that differently, is the embodied voice through which the audience discovers its real interests. Aristotle’s voice as the author of the *TR* is the supervoice through which the Attic Greek community and countless communities of rhetorical

scholars and practitioners since discover their real interests in the field of rhetoric as well. As Nancy Sherman (1989, p. 4) reminds us, “Aristotle himself urges us to take this role seriously: time (and future generations), he says, must be co-workers and co-discoverers in the development of his theory (1098a22).” Aristotle, after all, is not merely *describing* rhetoric; he is persuading us. And, as I will be attempting to show throughout the book, his persuasion operates as much through affective channels as it does through cognitive ones—or, more precisely, his persuasion is always entelechially affective-becoming-cognitive.

As I explain in §4.12, in somatic theory this group ecological (affect-homeostatic, ecotic/icotic) regulation of behavior, belief systems, language, and constructions of identity and reality is called the “somatic exchange.” It is based on the mimetic transfer of somatic response from body to body in a group, through what has come to be called the Carpenter Effect (Carpenter, 1874), the unconscious mimicking of other people’s body language in our own. This effect has been studied more recently by several groups of scholars in terms of the mimesis not merely of body *language* (the outward expressions of body states) but of the actual body states themselves. The idea, theorized and lab-tested most recently by Antonio R. Damasio’s neurological research team at the University of Iowa (see Adolphs, 2002; Damasio, 2003), is that in mimicking other people’s body language we actually simulate their body states in our own: hence, for example, the famous contagiousness of yawns, or of high (or low) spirits, or, most relevantly for our purposes here, of social approval and disapproval. Ultimately the somatic exchange regulates group realities by circulating ideosomatic (group-affective-becoming-conative) impulses of approval and/or disapproval. This circulation may be set in motion by one person, by a rhetor—a group leader, or even a disruptive heckler or bully—but often seems phenomenologically to appear out of nowhere, without an instigator, as if launched more or less simultaneously by the whole group, or by a significant portion of the group; and certainly each member of the group contributes to it, circulating approval or disapproval responses through his or her body, feeling them and passing them on, and inevitably also adding her or his own slight spin (what Derrida [1971/1988] calls an “iteration”) on them. This phenomenology may be largely preconscious: the somatic exchange very often operates regulatorily just below the conscious arousal levels of those involved, being mapped as feeling but not quite as thought.

This is not quite what Massumi (*ibid.*, 35) calls “the autonomy of affect”:

Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. *Its autonomy is its openness.* Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that *capture*—and of the fact that something has always and again escaped. Something remains unactualized, inseparable from but unassimilable to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective. That is why all emotion is more or less disorienting, and why it is classically described as being outside of oneself, at the very point at which one is most intimately and unshareably in contact with oneself and one's vitality. If there were no escape, no excess or remainder, no fade-out to infinity, the universe would be without potential, pure entropy, death. Actually existing, structured things live in and through that which escapes them. Their autonomy is the autonomy of affect.

Affect for Massumi is the vitality of the body, its “potential for interaction” with other bodies—this is specifically a Deleuzian vitalist model, with an Aristotelian entelechial concern for potentiality and actualization mixed in—but it also insistently escapes the body, and in that escape is (forever becoming) autonomous. “*Its autonomy is its openness*” in the sense of not being enclosed in the body. Affect is “captured” and “closed” in the body, and its “most intense (most contracted) expression” of that “capture and closure of affect” is emotion; but “something remains unactualized, inseparable from but unassimilable to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective,” which is to say that affect always remains partly uncaptured by and unenclosed within the individual body. Even though emotion is “the very point at which one is most intimately and unshareably in contact with oneself and one's vitality,” because it is also the captured/enclosed aspect of affect, which always escapes the body, we *experience* it as disorienting, as being outside ourselves. In that extrapersonal disorientation lies our vitality, our life, our autonomy as individuals who are not entirely trapped inside embodied individuality.

Several things bother me about this formulation, though. One is Masumi's series of binarisms based metaphorically on the prison break: capture/escape, openness/(en)closedness, confinement/autonomy, emotion/affect,

inside/outside, death/life. What he’s doing with those binaries, obviously, is underscoring the importance of the transpersonal: we only live insofar as something that we feel escapes the prisons of our individual bodies. But why the prison metaphor? Why is it necessary to trope the body as capture, (en)closure, as an imprisoning space from which life must escape?

Massumi is enough of a poststructuralist not to enforce rigid boundaries between his binary poles—his model is all about leakage or escape across the boundary between, about “excess or remainder,” and of course for him “actually existing, structured things live in and through that which escapes them”—but the very fact that his basic binary is prison/freedom conditions him to define affect as vitality as *autonomy*. This is extremely problematic. The vitality or “potential for interaction” with other bodies of affect is only autonomy, clearly, from the perspective of the individual body as the jail cell from which affect escapes. The inevitable effect of this perspective is to thematize everything outside the individual body as sheer freedom, escape-as-vitality, the prisoner’s dream of total freedom outside the prison walls, which is to say as sheer negativity, the negation of confinement—leaving us no positive image of what affect actually does outside the body that so vitalizes that body. Presumably, if “potential for interaction” is any indication, what it does is interact with other bodies—that would be the actualization of the “potential for interaction”—but Massumi insists on trapping actualization too inside the individual body, so that escape from the body (and thus autonomy) is thematized as “something remain[ing] unactualized.” Affect’s vitality, which is also the individual body’s vitality, is a potential for interaction with other bodies; but then “something remains unactualized” and affect escapes. Surely that escape *is* the actualization of the body’s potential for interaction? Surely it is an escape not into vague random freedom but into interaction?

In somatic theory, the individual body is not a prison cell from which affect escapes but the communicative (ecological) medium through which affect circulates; and it is also, recursively, the collective agency that vitalizes individual bodies affectively by *guiding* the ecological circulation of affect through the other bodies in the group. Every “transmission” of affect through a body is also an *organizing* event. The body is not merely a communicative medium through which social affects pass as through air or water, but an evaluative ethecotic agency that takes the social affect coming in—notably some form of approval or disapproval—and transforms (re-normalizes, reiterates) it slightly or significantly in the act of retransmitting it.

To put that differently, every transmission of affect through a body is a *rhetorical* event. It is an event grounded specifically in the purposeful organization of bodily-becoming-mental (affective-becoming-cognitive,

corporeal-becoming-discursive) meaning in order to have a specific impact on an audience—namely, the other members of the group. At the moment that evaluative affect is passing through any individual member, in other words, s/he is “the rhetor” who is (in Rorty’s terms) “suited his [or her] arguments to [her or] his audience,” who is “constrained by what [the group believes] is true and what [the group believes] is best,” and who “must not only convince [her or] his audience that his [or her] arguments are sound, but also that, like the physician, [s/]he has their real interests—and not merely their surface desires—at heart.”

Note here however that this rhetorical event is really only a freeze-frame moment in an ongoing process—that the somatic exchange consists of a continuous flow of such events, all interacting with all others, all generating collective guidance out of the interactions of all those rhetorical events. This is not rhetoric-as-persuasion, in other words, so much as it is doxicosis, the deep social ecology of persuasivity. It is what has been thought of as Aristotle’s communicative triangle—“a speaker and a subject on which he speaks and someone addressed” (*TR* 1.3.1, 1358b; Kennedy, 1991/2007, p. 47)—sped up and virally decentered and affectively intensified into a telling-and-hearing becoming-communal, as each member of the group cycles through all three apices of the triangle at virtually every moment of the conversation.

1.3 Mencius as a Theorist of Rhetoric

The title of this section, and of the book, may seem strange to readers who are familiar with Mencius, as he is not generally read as an ancient Chinese theorist of rhetoric—or even as an ancient Chinese philosopher who had anything at all to say about rhetoric. What little ancient Chinese philosophers had to say about rhetoric, so the usual narrative goes, was said by Xunzi 荀子 and Han Fei 韓非, not by Mencius. In my terms from §1.1, Mencius is normally taken to be an “ethcotic” thinker, concerned with collective guidance for ethical growth, not a “doxicotic” thinker, concerned with persuasivity.

To be sure, the character 說, voiced either *shuì* and translated into English “persuade” or *shuō* and translated “say, speak,” appears 21 times in the *MZ*; and in two of those occurrences, in 2A2, D. C. Lau 劉殿爵 (Lau, 1970/2003, pp. 63, 65) translates it “rhetoric”: “Zai Wo and Zi Gong excelled in rhetoric [*shuì* 說]; Ran Niu, Minzi and Yan Yuan excelled in the exposition of virtuous conduct. Confucius excelled in both and yet

he said, ‘I am not versed in rhetoric’” (Lau’s Wade-Giles romanizations pinyinized; Van Norden, 2008, p. 41 follows Lau’s lead here). The original Chinese (宰我、子貢善為說辭，冉牛、閔子、顏淵善言德行；孔子兼之，曰：『我於辭命，則不能也。』 [2A2]) would also allow a less obviously rhetorically oriented translation like “Zai Wo and Zi Gong were excellent teachers; Ran Niu, Minzi, and Yan Yuan were excellent teachers of virtue. Confucius excelled at both and yet he said he was not able [*zé bù néng yě* 則不能也].” And in any case the passage says nothing at all about what it might mean to excel at speaking, or at speaking persuasively, or at rhetoric. In two other chapters (5A7, 6B4) Lau (*ibid.*, pp. 211, 267, 269) translates *shuì* 說 as “persuade,” but again in neither section does Mencius specifically theorize persuasion. This is obviously far too desultory a terminological trajectory to justify studying Mencius as a theorist of rhetoric.

What this approach to the *MZ* misses, however, is the heavy emphasis the book places on advice to political leaders—various rulers and the high scholar-officials in their administrations—regarding how to govern. This is especially clear in what Brooks and Brooks (2002) regard as the “authentic core” of the *MZ*, namely 12 of the 23 chapters in Book 1: 1A1, 1A3:1–3, 1A5:1–3, 1A6, 1B1, a resequenced 1B16, 1B9, 1B10, 1B12, 1B13, 1B14, and 1B15. Eleven of those twelve chapters are addressed explicitly to rulers, and the twelfth (1B1) is addressed explicitly to a high-ranking minister or official, giving advice on how to advise the ruler most effectively. This means that the *entire* core of the *MZ*, the part that Mencius presumably either wrote himself or helped edit into something like its current form, consists of advice on how to govern the people. In only one of the 12 core chapters is his advice not addressed explicitly to a ruler; and in that single exception the focus is still on effective government.

Since according to Brooks and Brooks 2A2 was compiled around the time of Mencius’s death, based on extensive interviews with his disciples, and the rest of the *MZ* was compiled by his disciples many years later, it is understandable—though not perhaps the most robust example of what Ames (2002, p. 96) calls the “resolutely historicist and genealogical” thinking of the ancient Chinese—that after the 12 core chapters of *MZ* 1 the stories told about Mencius should become shorter and more aphoristic, and his sayings increasingly decontextualized:

153 (62%) of the 248 chapters that make up the later parts of *MZ* 1 and *MZ* 2–7 are addressed to no one in particular (they typically begin *Mèngzǐ yuē* 孟子子曰 “Mencius said”)

56 (23%) narrate a (probably fictionalized or reconstructed) conversation between Mencius and one of his disciples, most commonly with the disciple asking for clarification on some point of the Mencian world view (sometimes apparently seeking to catch him out in a contradiction) and Mencius responding

MZ 4 and 7 in particular consist almost exclusively of very short chapters, each for the most part made up of a single Mencian aphorism without rhetorical context. 3A6, 6A1–6, and 6B1 consist of disputations with philosophical opponents, contributing to the impression modern readers may take away from the *MZ* that it is a series of universally applicable philosophical statements.

Still, 29 (12%) of the later chapters of the book (especially the inserted chapters of *MZ* 1 and *MZ* 2, 3, and 5) retain the form of what Brooks and Brooks call the “genuine” core of *MZ* 1, with Mencius in conversation with a ruler or a high scholar-official, giving advice on how to govern. In addition, the decontextualization process that has led to the impression that the *MZ* consists entirely of Mencius giving advice to anyone who happens to read it has also left traces of the original rhetorical situations in which Mencius supposedly gave the reported advice, with 57 chapters implicitly addressed to rulers, 23 to high scholar-officials, and 7 to a small elite group potentially including rulers, high scholar-officials, and the exemplary persons from whose ranks rulers and scholar-officials were (at least ideally) recruited. If we add the numbers from the *MZ* 1 core to these, 41 (18%) of the total 260 chapters are explicitly and 87 (33%) are implicitly addressed to rulers or high scholar-officials and aimed at giving “doxicotic” advice on how to govern. Even allowing for the natural decontextualization that would have resulted from the passage of time after Mencius’s death, in other words, *more than half* of the *MZ* chapters are primarily organized around the offering of advice to governmental policymakers.³ And, since most of the chapters that are implicitly addressed to anyone who happens to be reading the book are very short aphorisms, the proportions are even clearer in a character count: chapters explicitly or implicitly offering governmental advice to rulers or high scholar-officials account for just over 33,000 characters; chapters implicitly addressed to anyone who happens to pick up the book in search of an “ethocotic” guide to virtuous living for just over 6,000.

Historically, however, this policy-wonk rhetorical situation has been problematic for scholars of the *MZ*, especially during the many centuries of despotic rule in China. As Huang (2001, pp. 256–57) notes, readings