A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF RONALD REAGAN'S 1964
"A TIME FOR CHOOSING" ADDRESS

An Honor's Thesis (ID 499)

By

Suzanne McCorkle

Thesis Director

Dr. Celia Dorris

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May, 1974
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................ iii

I. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION ................. 1

II. METHODOLOGY ........................................ 4

III. AGENT ................................................ 8

IV. ACT/SCENE ........................................... 14

V. PURPOSES/RHETORICAL PROBLEMS .................. 21

VI. AGENCY/STRATEGY ................................... 25

VII. CONCLUSION ......................................... 54

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................. 60
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the debt and credit owed to one who has been of great assistance in the formulation of this paper and who was always near with cheer and comfort—to Dionysus and his good friend Celia Dorris.
I. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

To many Americans the name Ronald Reagan may still recall images of the actor who stared in late night Grade B movies. On the other hand, to persons of a younger vintage Reagan was a man who frequently appeared in a ten-gallon stetson holding a box of 20-mule-team Borax. What he said is long forgotten, but the face, the suave manner, and the smile is long remembered. The name Ronald Reagan first conjures-up the image of an actor but secondly one recognizes that this actor is now Governor of California.

Reagan took the first and most significant move toward securing the governorship of California in the 1964 Presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater. On October 27th, 1964 via national television Reagan delivered a speech entitled "A Time For Choosing." In this one-half hour telecast Reagan achieved national recognition and laid the foundation for his 1966 victory over Governor Pat Brown in California.

"A Time For Choosing" has been widely noted as a significant rhetorical transaction. William F. Buckley called it "the most successful single political broadcast since Mr. Nixon's Checker's Speech."\(^1\) The comments of a Goldwater campaign analyst, Stephen

Shadegg, were in accordance with Buckley when he stated: "Reagan's speech was by far the most effective exposition of conservative concern for the future of the nation offered by anyone in the 1964 campaign."² In his biography of Reagan, Bill Boyarsky described the speech in this manner: "The speech was to party conservatives what William Jennings Bryan's 'Cross of Gold' Speech had been to the farmers and workers of the Democratic party in 1896, a rallying point, a promise for hope for the future."³

More important to Reagan, the speech was a major factor in catapulting him from a second-rate actor and political nonentity to a potential Republican contender for public office. In his article "The Rhetoric of Public Relations Politics," Kurt W. Ritter stated: "With this speech, Reagan rose out of a disastrous Republican defeat to establish himself as a potential candidate for Governor of California, and the 'hottest new product on the Republican horizon.'"⁴

Reagan's almost instant success story is rare in politics and thus serves as fertile ground for rhetorical analysis. But "A Time For Choosing" provides an even greater uniqueness in its unusual development. "The Speech," as it was titled by newsmen,

⁴Ritter, p. 400.
II. METHODOLOGY

In order to gain the historical perspective necessary for analysis, the organizational-critical framework of this study will utilize the concept of motivational analysis presented by Kenneth Burke. Burke's "Dramatistic Pentad" centers around the application of five areas of possible motivation or five different questions concerning points of view.

In his book A Grammar of Motives, Burke claims that any human situation can be described or analyzed by answering five questions:

We shall use five terms as generating principle of our investigation. They are: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another than names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (agency), and the purpose. . . . any complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose).1

By answering Burke's five questions of motivation, the critic is in a better position to reconstruct accurately the rhetorical transaction within the environment in which it was delivered and, thereby, obtain the perspective necessary for analysis. In fact, "Burke claims we can never arrive at valid

and realistic descriptions of the substances of messages in a rhetorical experience until we consider them from all five interrelated aspects."

The value of the pentad as a critical method is particularly clear when applied to Reagan's speech. For example, to answer the question "who was the agent," the pentad demands a much deeper answer than a mere statement that Ronald Reagan was the man who physically delivered the speech and, therefore, was the agent. The pentad calls for a much more detailed exploration into the speaker's nature and background as they relate to the other aspects of the pentad. The facts uncovered by this investigation—that Reagan was a movie-star and television celebrity, that he worked in public relations for ten years—play a vital role in the total understanding of the success or failure of Reagan's rhetoric.

The "Dramatic Pentad" also demands a much more detailed investigation of the speaker's agency—his rhetoric or how he did it. Burkeian theory has stimulated several methods by various rhetorical critics for conducting such investigations into a speaker's agency.

One such critic, Virginia Holland, advocated that a speaker's agency may be considered from a strategic viewpoint. Holland suggested:

Ordinarily, when the rhetorical critic reads or listens to a speech and attempts to analyze how the speaker said it,
he asks himself such questions as: what were the lines of argument? what were the emotional appeals?

Instead of plaguing himself with what often appears to be a confusing dichotomy of logical versus emotional appeals, why should not the critic ask the question that combines the answers to both within its answer--what were the speaker's strategies?3

In other words, first, what were the speaker's problems, and second, what was his plan of attack, or strategy to overcome those problems? Through this application of Burke's theory, the critic may use the reconstructed and interrelated aspects of the speech provided by a pentadic analysis to find the essence of the rhetoric--the basic strategy.

Holland's strategic perspective relates directly to the pentad segment of agency--how it was done. In this analysis the Holland strategic analysis is useful because Reagan did have a specific purpose in his rhetoric, a number of rhetorical problems, and a basic strategy to accomplish his goal(s).

There are other interpreters of the rhetorical philosophy presented by Burke. Rhetorical theorist Walter Fisher applied the Burkeian principles to offer a somewhat new direction for investigation. In his article "A Motive View of Communication," Fisher suggested a relationship between motives and audience-speaker perspectives. Fisher suggested that:

Not only does a rhetorical communication recommend a way of viewing a subject, it also implies a conception of the audience that attends and the communicator who presents it. One may hypothesize that rhetorical discourse will be

persuasive to the extent that the image already held by the audience, the degree to which the image it implies of the audience corresponds with the self-image held by members of the audience, and the degree to which the image assumed in the message and its presentation by the communicator is attractive to the audience.

Translated, Fisher was speaking of images: the speaker's image of his audience, the audience's image of the speaker, and the speaker's desire to change one of the two former images. Since political speakers frequently have image problems, Fisher theorized that the need to alter or reinforce an image commonly held by a group of people may be a motive in a rhetorical situation. Fisher poses four motive situations:

Affirmation, concerned with giving birth to an image; reaffirmation, concerned with revitalizing an image; purification, concerned with correcting an image; and subversion, concerned with undermining an image.

Therefore, to analyze Reagan's 1964 address, Kenneth Burke's "Dramatistic Pentad" will be utilized as the organizational framework supplemented by the critical tools of Fisher's motive view of communication and Holland's rhetorical strategy approach.

---

5. Ibid., 132.
III. THE AGENT

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to examine the agent's background because the development of the man corresponds to the development of "The Speech." In this section there are two primary goals: to provide an outline of the biography of Ronald Reagan and, from this perspective, to focus upon aspects of the agent that had particular influence upon his rhetoric.

According to Richard Olalahan and William Lambert in Life Magazine: "the political genesis of Ronald Reagan has been thirty years in the making. His boyhood, as he tells it, was poor but happy, and as All-American as a strawberry festival."\(^1\) Born February 6, 1911, in Tampica, Illinois and reared in rural Dixon, Illinois, young Ronald Reagan was the image of the ideal boy. Reagan's father was a shoe salesman in the town's general store. His family life was a blend of extreme poverty and honest hard work.\(^2\)

Biographer Bill Boyarsky described Reagan's childhood in this manner: "It was a picture-book boyhood, something out of an old Norman Rockwell cover for the Saturday Evening Post or


a Booth Tarkington novel. It was Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn without the tragedy of Nigger Jim's slavery."

In his formative boyhood in conservative mid-America, Reagan was indoctrinated with the protestant ethic, conservatism, and the ideal that all men should strive to achieve in a spirit of individualism and independence.

From his college education in Eureka, Illinois, Reagan gained folk wisdom, a distrust of the big university system, and a college degree. With this background he became a sports announcer at radio WHO in Des Moines, Iowa, until, in 1937, he and Warner Brothers accidentally stumbled into each other.

Although Warner Brothers had great expectations for Reagan, he became the king of the Grade-B movie. Reagan's tour of Hollywood movies not only provided him with a degree of stardom, but also began his political career. During 1946 he joined the American Veterans Committee, the Hollywood Independent Committee of Arts, Sciences, and Professionals, and the United World Federalists—all liberal in philosophy. As a minor Hollywood celebrity, Reagan was the guest speaker at several American Veteran meetings. However, he soon discovered that the organizations he had become associated with were communist front

---

3 Boyarsky, p. 32.
5 Ibid., pp. 49-53.
6 Ibid., p. 89.
groups. With an intense feeling of being duped and taken advantage of, Reagan publicly withdrew his membership.7

When Reagan naively joined these publicly unacceptable organizations, it was also the beginning of a change in his philosophical stance. Not only had he "lost face," but he may also have developed the beginnings of his deep and basic feelings against communism and his gradual return to a strict conservative ethic.

In his autobiography Reagan described the depression in the movie industry during the 1940's as communist inspired: "They were the cause of the labor strife, they used minor jurisdictional disputes as excuses for their schemes. Their aim was to gain economic control of the motion picture industry in order to finance their activities and subvert the screen for their propaganda."8 In his biography of Reagan, Boyarsky discussed the change in his political philosophy toward the conservative ethic and linked it to his clash with the Hollywood communists.9

After this experience, Reagan moved into the first phase of his political training. He had been active in the Screen Actors Guild since 1938 concerning wages and contracts. During the late 1940's and 1950's when he was president of the guild he learned diplomacy and the art of negotiating.10

---

8 Ibid., p. 159.
9 Boyarsky, pp. 24-26.
10 Reagan, p. 233.
Until 1954, Reagan continued his leadership in the Screen Actor's Guild and produced quick cheap movies--none of which were significant. By 1954 Reagan was tired of the petty quarrels of Hollywood politics and apparently knew his acting career was losing momentum. It was time for a change, so Reagan moved to television.

In his autobiography Reagan described the purpose of his television role: "In 1954 this General Electric Corporation was looking for a host for its new half-hour television series--a man who could act, sell G.E. products, help build the company's corporate image, and visit G.E. plants to improve employee morale."11

This stage in his career is significant for several reasons. First, it allowed him to make the transition from bad movies to television, and, thereby, reinforce the national image of Reagan--Hollywood celebrity. Sustaining his star image was important to any future career in politics, but even more significant to this career was the experience and exposure Reagan obtained through the television medium. When Reagan made his transition into the active political scene he would neither be an unknown nor a novice in the most volatile realm of big politics--television.

During this period television was a focal point of Reagan's life, but in his autobiography he admits that it was the speaking tours before General Electric employees that changed his ideas:

These employees I was meeting were a cross-section of Americans and, damn it, too many of our own political leaders, our labor leaders, and certainly a lot of geniuses in my own

11 Boyarsky, p. 99.
business and on Madison Avenue have underestimated them. They want the truth, they are friendly and helpful, intelligent and alert. They are concerned, not with security as some would have us believe, but with their very firm personal liberties. And they are moral. 12

Reagan saw most Americans as moral, independently striving for self-sufficiency, and forgotten by their politicians. It was from the culmination of his conservative youth, disillusionment with the Hollywood scene, and contact with over 250,000 General Electric employees that made the Reagan ethic equal to conservative ethic.

For eight years he toured and spoke before the working class. The ideas he presented were his own. 13 During the years on the General Electric tour Reagan's philosophy underwent a gradual change. Paralleling the change in his personal philosophy, his speech also underwent a gradual change in focus. Reagan commented on the development of "The Speech" in his autobiography:

As the years went on, my speech underwent a kind of evolution, reflecting not only my changing philosophy but also the swiftly rising tide of collectivism that threatens to inundate what remains of our free economy. I don't believe it was all just a case of my becoming belatedly aware of something that already existed; the last decade has seen a quickening of tempo in our government's race toward a controlled society. 14

Reagan's views did become more intense during those years on the General Electric tour, but the more important fact is that during these eight years of speaking he delivered essentially one speech. "The Speech," as it was known to newsmen, became a

12Reagan, p. 257
13Ibid., pp. 262-264.
14Ibid., p. 266.
reflection of the man and the time. The final and greatest cul-
mination of "The Speech" came in 1964 when "A Time For Choosing" was presented on national television in behalf of Barry Goldwater.

From this biographical data several pertinent influences on Reagan's political behavior can be observed. From his boy-
hood and disillusionment with Hollywood, Reagan gained two things: a deeply rooted belief in the conservative ethic and a long lasting hatred of communism and liberalism. As will be shown in the analysis of the speech itself, both aspects affected his rhetoric.

Further conclusions may be drawn in the area of the agent's appeal. By examining Reagan's background in some detail, it is easier to understand the nature of his image. As a small-town-
boy-made-good-in-the-big-world, he was what politicians called a "packaged candidate." He had a clean, all-American background, experience in public relations, national recognition, and was familiar with the medium of television. All of these aspects affected his political success and will be related to Reagan's rhetoric in the following discussion of scene, rhetorical problems, and strategies.
IV. ACT/SCENE

The purpose of an act/scene analysis is to reconstruct those relevant elements of situation necessary to evaluate the speech's content and rhetorical strategies. Without an understanding of these two interrelated aspects, the critic could not logically attempt to formulate conclusions concerning the speaker's success or failure.

To establish the necessary framework for analysis, the human action that was done must be established (the act). Second, the composition of persons, actions, and ideas that formed the environment—the context—of the act must be re-created (the scene).1 Thus, the act was the delivery of "A Time For Choosing" by Reagan, and the scene was the social-political environment of this speech.

Simply stated, the act was composed of a one-half hour telecast. "On October 27th, Ronald Reagan, a staunch Goldwater supporter, delivered a speech of his own composition entitled 'A Time For Choosing' on nationwide television."2 The scene could quite briefly be condensed to include the professional trappings of a television studio, several camera men, Reagan,

---


and the audience that viewed the political telecast. But an
evaluation of this brevity is obscenely bare. In the analysis of
this particular rhetorical occasion, a thorough examination of
the scene, and what may be called the scene behind the scene, is
vitally important. Only through a full accounting of scene, can
one determine the purposes motivating the speaker and the rhet-
orical problems facing him.

Perhaps the key to the scene of this address was that
Reagan did not deliver the speech in his own behalf. He was
co-chairman for the California Goldwater drive for President.
It was within this function of speaking "for" Goldwater that
the speech was delivered, and it is within the framework of the
Goldwater drive for President in which the scene was found. 3

The Goldwater movement had pledged to America that it
would represent the "great and frustrated conservative majority"
that composed the real Americans. 4 Theodore White, in his
analysis of the 1964 election campaign, described the power of
the Goldwater movement:

The wordless resentments, angers, frustrations, fears
and hopes that were shaping this force were something new
and had welled-up long before Goldwater himself took his
Presidential chances seriously. The movement was something
deep, a change or a reflection of change in American life
that qualified as more than politics—it was history. 5
Goldwater, in a sense, became a voice for the frustrated American. He succeeded in capturing the Republican nomination from the Rockefeller and Nixon strongholds. A staunch conservative bordering on the right wing radical fringe, Goldwater correctly analyzed the fever of the nation in his primary campaign appeals. Theodore White described the political climate of 1964 as one of unrest:

Across the country, from Maine to California, families and individuals, cherishing the old virtues and seeing them destroyed or ignored or flouted, were in ferment. Across the sky of politics there began to float new names like the John Birch Society, the MinuteMen, the National Indignation Convention, Freedom-In-Action and other groups. At the extreme of the frustration were madmen and psychopaths disturbed by conspiracy, Negroes, Jews, Catholics, beardies, but toward the center it involved hundreds of thousands of intensely moral people who hated and despised not only adultery but Communism, waste, weakness, government bureaucracy and anarchy.6

Although Goldwater had correctly analyzed the climate of the nation in the 1964 campaign, he had difficulty in relating his own conservative message to this audience. In other words, he was a politician with the right message but the wrong way of delivering it. Political analysts of the 1964 campaign generally agreed that Goldwater defeated himself:

In less than three weeks since he had first come to New Hampshire, Barry Goldwater had frightened the Hamp­shiremen. One picked up the echo from the mother with baby in arms who said of Goldwater, 'He's making silly statements, he's ambiguous; he's scaring everybody.' As well as from the college man who shook his head saying, 'We were for Goldwater until two weeks ago--but he's been saying such crazy things;' and from a Concord

6White, p. 89.
industrialist who had began the campaign as a Goldwater man, but: 'If he doesn't mean what he says, then he's just trying to get votes; and, if he does mean what he says—then the man is dangerous.'

The way in which Goldwater destroyed his own image was painfully well documented. According to the October Gallup Poll Goldwater was trailing Johnson sixty-five percent to twenty-nine percent. The fact remained that soon after the nomination Goldwater had erected an almost unsurmountable psychological barrier between his audience and his message. The barrier was built by the careless remarks of an inexperienced candidate and solidified by the image that television, the press, and the Democrats had promoted—the image of a hard core right wing radical who was dangerous to America. A Louis Harris survey released in July of 1964 showed public opinion and the public's image of Goldwater's opinions to be drastically in conflict. These psychological barriers were probably the greatest rhetorical problems that Goldwater faced in 1964.
As co-chairman of the California drive for Goldwater, Reagan frequently gave endorsements for him at fund-raising functions in the state. In early October the National Goldwater committee decided to buy prime television time for a last big bid for the grass-roots donations. At this point in the campaign, when Goldwater was floundering, the committee was looking for someone special to make their appeal. 10

That very special person was found in Ronald Reagan. He was a loyal Goldwater supporter. He was a movie-celebrity and, therefore, would draw a large audience. Reagan was also deeply conservative and his philosophy coincided with Goldwater's political doctrine. Because Reagan was deeply rooted in the conservative ethic, was anti-liberal, and was anti-government bureaucracy, he seemed the perfect man for the Goldwater sponsored telecast. To add to his appeal, Reagan also has a prepared speech. Instead of presenting a Goldwater written text, Reagan used his own ten year old, tried-and-true "A Time For Choosing" speech. Therefore, out of the problems of the Goldwater campaign emerged a unique opportunity for Reagan. 11

The remaining important aspect of scene to be discussed is the audience that viewed the speech. The audience was composed of the average American watching television who liked the conservative aspects of the Goldwater credo but could not

10 Shadegg, pp. 250-254.
11 Reagan, p. 6.
accept the radical overtones. But to Reagan, there was yet another audience.

Robert Cathcart in his book *Post Communication* discusses the hidden audience:

Further complicating the critic's understanding of a speech in its entirety is the fact that it may have more than one audience. Removed audiences must be considered as part of the speech situation, because the speech affects them and they, in turn, affect what the speaker chooses to say.\(^\text{12}\)

In this case, the "hidden audience" did indeed play an important role in the rhetorical situation.

Because he was an aspiring politician, a second, and somewhat obscure audience composed of the Republican leadership and financeers was Reagan's primary persuasive target. This was his first big political speech. It was his political debut, and, like the debut of his Hollywood movies, the most important viewers were the critics who would make or break a career.

In this particular case, a detailed analysis of act/scene was not only relevant but of paramount necessity. Neither the scene nor the agent's purposes in the act were obvious from a surface examination. The scene of this speech is intricately woven into the fabric of Goldwater's 1964 Presidential campaign. During that campaign Reagan was offered the opportunity to give a speech of his own composition on national television in behalf of Goldwater. In his speech Reagan had a twofold audience, the average American and a select group of Republican leaders. With

---

a perspective of scene, the next logical area of examination is the motivation behind the speech and the rhetorical problems Reagan faced in his political debut.
V. PURPOSES/RHETORICAL PROBLEMS

Every speech is a creative effort to produce that arrangement of appropriate ingredients that will best serve the speaker's purposes.¹

The speech Reagan had delivered for ten years on the General Electric Tour adapted almost perfectly to his first purpose as a fund raiser for the Goldwater drive. As a celebrity Reagan was selected to make the plea for campaign contributions. But behind the outward purpose of fund-raising, there may have been an additional reason for selecting Reagan.

At this point in the campaign Goldwater's image problems were overwhelming the effectiveness of his conservative message. The psychological barrier that faced Goldwater was nearly impregnable. It seemed logical, then, that the Goldwater committee would have selected a man who could help their candidate's problems.

Seemingly, Reagan was selected with this function in mind because his message was devoutly conservative and quite similar to Goldwater's rhetoric. The question was could another man, in this case Ronald Reagan, penetrate the Goldwater barriers and persuade the public to give him the hearing that they denied Goldwater?

Analysis of the scene would suggest that the circumvention of Goldwater's image barrier was, if not an explicit purpose in

the Reagan speech, at least a dim hope. With many movie celebrities campaigning for Goldwater, it would test the limits of coincidence to say this situation arose solely by chance. The Goldwater committee probably could have selected a more spectacular star than Reagan, but they did not. Whether an explicit intention or a chance result, the conservative rhetoric of Reagan did contain the potential to attack the perceptual barriers to messages concerning conservative doctrine.

To the Goldwater committee, Reagan's purpose in the telecast was to raise money, to circumvent Goldwater's barriers, and to deliver a strong appeal for the conservative ethic. In his attempt to accomplish these purposes Reagan faced a number of significant rhetorical problems. Robert Cathcart described rhetorical problems in this fashion:

One of the most useful approaches to speech analysis is to look upon a speech as a problem-solving process. A speaker has a problem to solve. He wants something from the audience, he wishes to attain a goal. Obstacles stand in the way of that goal, and the speaker can follow alternative paths to overcome these. How to surmount these obstacles and achieve the desired goal is the speaker's rhetorical problem.²

One rhetorical problem confronting Reagan was the public opinion of Goldwater. Cast as a dangerous right wing radical, Goldwater had so alienated his audience that his conservative message was ineffective. But would the public opinion of Goldwater carry over to another individual fostering a similar conservative doctrine? When Reagan presented his own conservative philosophy, would the public refuse to listen to him

²Cathcart, pp. 36-37.
also because of the negative association with Goldwater? Reagan would, obviously, have to design his appeals to lessen these barriers and to overcome the radical connotations of his message.

As far as the Goldwater Committee was concerned, promoting the Goldwater drive was the extent of Reagan's purpose. But Reagan used the national telecast for a very personal purpose of his own. Like Goldwater, Reagan had an image problem. The political realm was seemingly closed to him because influential leaders could not see an actor in a ten gallon hat who introduced Death Valley Days as Governor of California. If his life goal of political success was ever to be achieved, he would have to change this image. In this respect, his primary persuasive target was a very select segment of his audience—the politically powerful men in California who must be persuaded that Reagan was more than just an actor. Therefore, his major rhetorical problem centered around his own image and how to modify it. Because Reagan was attempting to change an image or to create a new form of image, his personal "motive situation" would be described by Walter Fisher as one of "affirmation," giving birth to an image. 3

In summary, Reagan had two diverse purposes tied to rhetorical problems concerning images. First, he must penetrate the hostility surrounding the Goldwater image and fulfill his function as a fund raiser. More importantly, he desperately needed to change his own image as a television cowboy in order

VI. AGENCY

The preceding examination has established the vital components in the framework necessary to evaluate a speaker's rhetoric—the context, the agent, and the agent's purposes and rhetorical problems. From this perspective, the next area of concentration focuses upon the rhetoric itself.

Kenneth Burke suggested through his Dramatistic Pentad that an examination of the agency would ask such questions concerning the speaker as "what means or instruments he used" or, simply, how did the speaker attempt in his rhetoric to accomplish his goals?¹ One means of answering these questions is through the application of the concept of "strategy" advanced by Burke. Rhetorical critic Virginia Holland elaborated on the strategy approach in describing a speaker's presentation as the:

symbolic response to a situation or problem, and is, as Burke has suggested, not merely an answer to a situation, but a strategic or stylized answer, for the speaker symbolizes his attitudes in the form of strategies with which he hopes to modify or sustain the situation. . . . A strategy may be thought of as a plan of attack, a way of meeting a problem or situation.²

In order to clarify the application of the strategy approach,

Holland further stated:

The accurate naming of the strategies obviously depends upon a careful analysis of the speaker's language pattern to determine what words most realistically name the associative groupings of ideas which the speaker makes in his language. The more accurate the rhetorical critic is in selecting the word which names what the combinations of word symbols within the sentence and paragraph are really doing, the more valid is his rhetorical judgment. Once he has named his strategy, his task is to present the language evidence he believes warrants the strategy-naming.3

Reagan's strategies, then, would be formulated to meet his particular problems of "affirming" his own image as a politician, promoting the Goldwater credo, eliciting campaign donations, and circumventing the barriers established by Goldwater to messages of conservative doctrine. His stylized answer to this unique situation resulted in the presentation of two strategies: condemnation and unification.

Condemnation

Walter Fisher in his article "A Motive View of Communication" suggested a motive situation which corresponds directly to a strategy presented by Reagan. Fisher described his fourth motive situation as rhetoric of subversion:

Subversive rhetoric is an anti-ethos rhetoric; that is, it invariably is an attempt to undermine the credibility of some person, idea, or institution. One of its chief modes accord with what is sometimes called the 'devil theory' of persuasion. The strategy is to make a man, idea, or institution consubstantial with Satanic attributes and intentions. Typical of this approach to subversion are those attacks on authority that allude the existence of a conspiracy to destroy the true will of right-thinking people.4

3 Holland, 445-446.

Reagan's strategy of condemnation* was mounted on two fronts: the attack on big government and the attack on the liberal philosophy. He apparently had four purposes in this strategy formation: he wanted to promote the conservative ethic which both he and Goldwater held as their philosophy; he needed to attack the liberal philosophy associated with President Johnson; through his attack on the liberal philosophy, he needed to promote Goldwater as the man to solve the problems of big government; but most important to Reagan, he needed to affirm his own political potential by proving that a conservative could successfully attack the Democratic liberal establishment without alienating the public.

The attack on big government presented by Reagan was the main focus of his speech. It was so systematically presented that the speech text was divided into areas for attack: "The Liberal Philosophy: Planned Economy," "Government Programs Self-Perpetuation," "How Well Does the Farm Program Work," "Social Security: Insurance Program or Tax?," and "Foreign Aid: Cost vs. Accomplishment."  

*While the meaning of Fisher's "subversive" rhetoric becomes clear in his explanation, the name itself is somewhat confusing and, perhaps, misleading when applied to Reagan's case. Subversion connotes destructive, ruinous actions intended to overthrow an established source of power. While Reagan's anti-ethos strategy corresponds with Fisher's description of the motive situation, it is not analogous to connotations associated with the name "subversion." Since Holland suggests the name of a strategy is that term which best describes a speaker's language use and ideas,
In his attack, Heagan first needed to secure a point of agreement with his audience. His initial area of attack was to establish big government as undesirable to the American people. To help him prove the undesirability of present government direction, he used traditionally valued reference points of the Constitution and great American leaders when he said: "The 'power of centralized government' was the very thing the founding fathers sought to minimize. They knew that the government cannot control things. The government cannot control the economy without controlling people."6

It would seem probable that all members of his audience could identify with the time-honored values and ideals established in the Constitution by the "founding fathers." Heagan was associating himself and his message with sources held as extremely credible by most Americans and, in so doing, was probably able to establish an initial reference point with his audience. With the original "intent" of government as a basis of comparison, Heagan showed how far government had strayed as he worked to systematically destroy the image of benevolent government. One aspect of this attack focused on revealing government to be unnecessarily large:

Government programs take on a weight and momentum of their own. Federal welfare spending today is ten times

---

greater than it was in the dark depths of the depression, when there was so much real need. Federal welfare spending in the last ten years has multiplied eight times as fast as the increase in population.

There is a seeming indestructibility to government agencies. A government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life that we shall ever see on this earth. 7

Reagan not only presented government as unnecessarily large, it was also inefficient. In keeping with his style of dry humor, Reagan commented:

Probably no one in government knows exactly what everyone does do, but one congressman found an indication. He uncovered a man whose job in Washington is to sit and scan documents that come over his desk. He reads them initials them and sends them on to the proper agency. One day a document came his way that he was not supposed to read. Nevertheless he read it, initialed it and passed it on. Twenty-four hours later it came back to his desk with a memo: 'You were not supposed to read this. Erase your initials and initial the erasure.' 8

Using example after example in areas ranging from social security to foreign diplomacy, Reagan promoted the image of a well meaning but inefficient, inept, and almost stupid government bureaucracy. In attacking the Department of Agriculture he cited another example of government bungling: "There is today in the Department of Agriculture one employee for every sixty farmers. Yet with all that help it does not know what happened to sixty-six full shiploads of grain that disappeared without a trace while en route to Austria." 9

---

8Ibid.
9Ibid., p. 6.
Through Reagan's plan of attack the government was not only inefficient but was the promoter of immoral practices:

The opportunities for unscrupulous conduct are many. In one key city in the United States a man owning a run-down section in the heart of the city sold it to urban renewal for several million dollars and then submitted his own plan for renewal. His plan was approved and the government sold him back his own land for 22 percent of the purchase price.10

Directing his attack to an area of vital interest to taxpayers, Reagan commented on government fiscal policies: "The plain truth is that Social Security today is by its own admission, $298 billion in the red. And who pays for this? Just take a look at your son."11 He further added:

We have a budget of $99 billion, we are told. But when you read the 1,600 pages of our fiscal budget you find, concealed in the fine print, some bookkeeping practices which I am sure you would all decry. You find public enterprise funds listed in the budget at $3½ billion; but if you read carefully, you discover that $23½ billion is to be used in backdoor spending. Yet we are told we wallow in luxury in the private sector of the economy while the public sector is starved for funds.12

With the picture carefully drawn for his audience of an inefficient, bungling government that willfully deceived the American people, Reagan presented his ultimate attack on big government as villain and almost enemy of the people. Interspersed throughout the speech were comments like: "It would seem that government for government's sake is wanted."13 In

11 Ibid., p. 9.
12 Ibid., p. 11.
13 Ibid., p. 9.
one of his more biting attacks Reagan accused big government of over-dominance:

In our adult lifetime we have seen the government lay its hand on health, housing, farming, industry, commerce, education and communications. In so doing, regardless of good intentions, it has created a permanent structure of government which has become so big and so complex that it virtually entraps the President and the Congress, regardless of which party is elected to power.14

Reagan's strategy of attack on big government functioned to overwhelm his audience with a mass of examples, statistics, and testimony as proof of government inefficiency and bungling. To complement his attacks, Reagan employed oversimplification, devil terms, and appeals to the American ethic tied to public fear of loss of individualism to big government. Considering the fears and frustrations that comprised the national climate in 1964 (see ACT/SCENE section IV), Reagan's appeals were probably well chosen. He was speaking directly to the moral core of the populous that "hated and despised not only adultery but Communism, waste, weakness, government bureaucracy and anarchy."15 However, the strength of these appeals endure only as long as Reagan's evidence is not examined too closely.

Irving J. Hein in his book The Relevant Rhetoric uses Reagan as a classic example of a speaker fault he called "the clarifier" and suggested that even Reagan's hit movie "Bad Time


for Bonzo was more to the point." Reagan seemed to be an expert in the use of nonsequiter with examples such as his attack on the youth program:

Because we have a problem with school dropouts and juvenile delinquents, it has been suggested that we adopt or review something like the CCC to help these youngsters. The program that is proposed prorates to $7,000 a year for each young person to be helped. You can send a boy to Harvard for $3,000 a year! Do not get me wrong—-I am not suggesting Harvard as the answer to juvenile delinquency.

Reagan's comment on Harvard has absolutely no relation to the proposed youth program, but the association did seem to provide him with an attempt at humor and to serve his purpose. Since Reagan had previously established government actions and programs as inept buffoonery, his audience was probably receptive to such comments without critical examination.

The concept of government he presented to his audience was selective and oversimplified. Reagan's attack on the Department of Agriculture functioned through essentially one example—that there was one government employee for every sixty farmers and they still lost sixty-six shiploads of grain going to Austria. His proof that foreign policy was corrupt and unnecessary was that we had a public debt and inflation. There

18 Ibid., p. 6.
19 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
was no valid correlation between the two, but to the uncritical listener, his extensive, although bogus, documentation must have presented a formidable case. Considering the timing of Reagan's attack on government bureaucracy in relation to national unrest, it seems that the public may have been willing and even eager to listen to criticism of government without examination of the evidence—as long as it was done in a tone of moderation. Presented at the appropriate psychological moment with what seemed to be the appropriate intensity, Reagan's use of non-sequiter and oversimplification were prime vehicles for his strategy of attack.

The application of oversimplification and nonsequiter was supplemented by the use of "devil terms" and "God terms." John J. Makay and William R. Brown in their book *The Rhetorical Dialogue: Contemporary Concepts and Cases*, present the Assimilation-Contrast theory of God and Devil terms. They describe God Terms as: "Individualism, freedom, equality, success, and progress—patterns or images that unite Americans at the highest level of abstraction and divide them when lower level meanings are defined." Devil terms were words with negative connotations which could also unite an audience on high levels of abstraction.

Reagan applied the Assimilation-Contrast theory skillfully

---


21 Ibid.
when he contrasted the intent of the founding fathers notion of big government to what his proof demonstrated present government to be. Government became "the closest thing to eternal life we shall ever see on this planet." Through the use of this sophisticated form of slanting, government became a "devil" word. According to Reagan, the present government "knowingly and admittedly pursues an inflationary policy as an aid to prosperity that will in the same two-year period reduce the purchasing power of the people by $27 billion." Government was associated with "control," resorted to "force and coersion," and became the great offender, invader and even perverter of public will and desire for individualism.

With government, in the form of the present Democratic administration, established as the enemy of the people, Reagan provided ample motivation for the acceptance of his conservative philosophy through the use of fear appeals. Contrasting the noble intent of the founding fathers to present government practices, Reagan offered the thesis of his speech:

I think it is time to ask ourselves if we still know the freedoms intended for us by the creators of the only true revolution that has ever taken place in man's history. Here in this country our revolution was the only one that did not merely exchange one set of rulers for another set of rulers. We lighted a torch 230 years ago that said to

---

23 Ibid., p. 14.
24 Ibid., pp. 3-15 passim.
the downtrodden of all the world, not that we had decided on a more benvolent ruler, but rather that for the first time men had decided his rights were God-given.25

Reagan fortified his attack on big government with positive appeals to patriotism on the one side and fear of the loss of individualism and freedom on the other. Indeed, government itself was taking these freedoms, and the torch was not being passed on—it was being extinguished. Reagan's strategy of attack on big government functioned primarily through one main appeal—the appeal to fear—the loss of freedom and individualism. Reagan asserted that:

You and I have lost the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, our protection against search and seizure. Today federal agents, if they suspect a citizen of violating a regulation, can invade his property without a warrant; can levy a fine without a formal hearing, let alone a trial by jury; and can seize and sell his property at auction to enforce payment of that fine.26

While proof of his assertions may have been lacking, Reagan was never at a loss for examples. He stated: "It is time we questioned what we have done to freedom. Federal agencies hold what amounts to life-and-death power over business."27 If it were not enough that government was subverting personal freedom and individualism, Reagan warned that government was also subverting the very fabric of our country's stability. Concerning the decline of American fiscal strength he stated: "Representative Weston of Washington asked an official of the

26 Ibid., p. 5.
Federal Reserve System how long we can postpone the day of reckoning by reserves. The answer was, 'We are getting close to the end of the line right now.'\(^{28}\) Reagan conveniently avoided explaining what was meant by 'day of reckoning.'

If his audience had any doubts of government as a villain after Reagan's appeals for individualism and economic growth, he had in reserve his strongest appeal. Early in the speech he stated: "We are at war with the most dangerous enemy mankind has ever known."\(^{29}\) Later in the speech Reagan made it quite clear who this enemy was when he asserted the most serious threat to freedom as:

The extent to which policy is determined by these permanent bureaus rather than by those we elect to office with our ballots. Last year, while Congress was debating whether to lend the United Nations $100 million to bail it out of its financial difficulties, the State Department, without asking anyone's permission, handed the UN $217 million, part of which was used to pay the delinquent dues of Castro's Cuba.\(^{30}\)

Reagan was implying that the government was inefficiently giving away our money and, along with it, our freedom. The patriotic taxpayers of America had paid the dues for Castro's Cuba. Considering that this speech came in 1964, only two years after the Cuban missile crisis, Reagan had dredged up as his master appeal the old fears against communism and socialism and memories of a near disaster in Cuba.


\(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 1.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 5.
The impact of fear toward communism as a motivating appeal becomes increasingly potent in the light of two factors. First, less than two weeks before Reagan delivered his speech, "communist" China test-exploled their first atomic bomb. With news of a new communist power in the nuclear elite fresh in the memories of his audience, it seems that a communist fearing public may have felt a heightened sensitivity toward this subject. Secondly, a study conducted in 1973 by Opinion Research Corporation of New Jersey tested the question of to what degree public sentiment toward Communism had mellowed with time from the polarized opinions of the late forties and fifties. Conducted through a nationwide poll, Opinion research Center concluded: "The poll shows that American attitude changed little in twenty years. It is still a firm anti-Communist attitude." If the Center's conclusion that public opinion had not significantly changed from 1952 to 1973 is indeed valid, it is highly probable that Reagan's manipulation of communism as a fear appeal in 1964 was striking a sensitive nerve in his audience.

Reagan's strategy of attack functioned through extensive but oversimplified proof supplemented with nonsuquities, devil terms, and positive appeals to patriotism fortified by fear appeals to loss of freedom, individualism, and the United States itself. Through his attack on big government, Reagan built a

strong case for the conservative ethic--one of the main purposes of his rhetoric.

Interwoven within his attack on big government was his parallel strategy of attack on the liberal philosophy. Reagan needed to attack the liberal establishment in power, represented by President Johnson, in order to provide an advantage for his candidate, Barry Goldwater. In advancing this attack, Reagan carefully avoided any direct reference to the President which could have been misconstrued. Instead, he proceeded to attack what the liberal establishment in general had done with public policy. Reagan attacked the liberal leadership and White House executives rather than the President himself. For example, he quoted Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in such a manner as to pit liberal interests diametrically opposed to public interest:

A White House adviser, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., sees the cold war disappearing 'through a peaceful transition into a not undemocratic socialism.' Another government adviser, Ted Sorensen, in his book Decisions in the White House, says that public opinion is often erratic, inconsistent, arbitrary and unreasonable; that it is frequently hampered by myths and misinformation, by stereotypes and by innate resistance to innovation. For these reasons, he says, 'the President must not only reign in Washington but he must also rule.'

Through the use of testimony from the liberal establishment, Reagan attempted to associate liberals with the overly large, inept, government bureaucracy that was subverting personal freedom and individualism. Paralleling his attack on government bureaucracy, one of the main functions of his attack on liberals was to separate liberal interests from public interests. Again,

---

using testimony from the liberal front he stated:

One of the articulate voices of the liberal philosophy, Senator Clark of Pennsylvania, defines liberalism as 'the program of meeting the material needs of the masses through utilizing the full power of centralized government.' It is disturbing when a representative of the people uses what heretofore has been a foreign term and describes you and me as 'the masses.'

To further his claim that the liberals were separating time-honored American values from current policy, Reagan appealed to pride and patriotism but then contrasted this heritage to current "liberal" practices:

By unleashing the individual genius of every man, a mere 6 percent of the world's population occupying only 7 percent of the world's land surface has created and owns 50 percent of the world's wealth. . . . We have proved man's capacity for self-government. Yet today, [sic] under the unremitting pressure of the Cold war, we have adopted contrary measures in the apparent belief that our proven system is unable to meet the challenge of the cold war.

Those in power who were advocating change from the proven, American system were obviously liberals. The development of Reagan's speech interrelated the attacks on the liberal establishment and big government to imply the first as a cause of the second. Through the combination of these two attacks, Reagan's rhetoric served to equate the negative connotations aroused toward big government with the liberal establishment.

Much like his attack on big government, the attack on the liberal establishment progressed through a series of topical attacks to systematically discredit liberal philosophy. In

---

35 Ibid.
attacking the liberal policies of taxation, Reagan claimed:

Government programs usually start with humanitarian goals and in answer to some great emergency. To question the extent of the crisis or the suggested cure is to be charged with being opposed to the noble motive. This is a dishonest evasion of legitimate debate. It is possible to fulfill our responsibilities to a needy neighbor, to be our brother's keeper, without totally replacing human compassion with the coercion of taxation.36

He later added:

The problem is not that liberals are ignorant; it is that they know so much that is not so. History tells us that as a country approaches a tax burden of 20 percent, evasion begins and breaks down respect for law and order.37

Reagan was suggesting that liberals were supressing the long held American right of dissent, succumbing to tactics of coercion, and, through their policies of taxation, adding to the downfall of the United States. Through Reagan's definition of big government and liberals as co-conspirators against the American people, it was only logical that his appeals used in the attack on big government--devil terms, patriotism, fear--would carry over negatively to the liberal establishment. To the average American voter, Reagan's appeals would create a certain incongruity if one favored the present Johnson administration, yet had accepted Reagan's first attack on big government or disliked government bureaucracy. Considering the interrelationship of the two attacks, one could not accept premises of the first attack while rejecting the second and still maintain consistent opinions. In other words, Reagan created a line of

37 Ibid., p. 11.
reasoning whereby if you succumbed to his motivating appeals concerning big government, you also had to accept his attack on the liberal establishment.

Perhaps the area of greatest intensity in this plan was the appeal to fear of socialism. Again, Reagan equated liberalism with a devil association when he said:

We cannot stop the advance of socialism by electing to office men who just happen to be taking a little longer in arriving at socialist goals. Socialist goals can be achieved without the seizure and nationalization of private property. It matters little that you hold title to your business if government can dictate policies and procedures in that business.38

If one remembers from the beginning of his speech, Reagan suggested that we were "at war with the most dangerous enemy mankind has ever known," and it seemed that he had portrayed liberals as allies of the common enemy. Reagan used fear appeals to further separate his audience from the liberal establishment when he progressed through a series of assertions using parallel phrasing:

We are told that if we avoid a direct confrontation with the enemy and pursue a policy of accommodation, the enemy will discover that his system is based on a false premise and he will move to the right, adopting more of our democracy and freedom.39

And he further added:

We are told that the enemy will mediate, that we must move to the left into a government-planned and controlled economy and that as we accept a 'not undemocratic socialism' the enemy will lose his fear and distrust. Every morning we are treated to bulletins reporting on Khruschev's smile as an indication of our safety from the threat of the bomb.40

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 15.
Reagan proceeded to disprove the intelligence of both statements and add to the strength of the fear appeal toward communism. More important, one must realize the implication involved in who "we are told" these dangerous misconceptions by. If one were to accept Reagan's rhetorical argument, the answer must be the liberal establishment. Reagan emphasized the point by accusing:

One thing our well-meaning liberal friends refuse to face is that their whole reasonable, civilized, 'let's talk this over' solution to the threat of the bombs is appeasement. Appeasement does not give us a choice between peace and war, but only between fight and surrender.41

The entire strategy of attack on the liberal establishment was closely associated with the attack on big government. Liberals were cited as the force behind big government. Like the attack on government, the attack on the liberal front functioned through overlapping appeals--the appeal to patriotism and the American myth contrasted to fear appeals pointing to the loss of individualism. The fear appeal to loss of American freedom was stronger in Reagan's second attack, as he more closely associated liberal foreign policy with the impending communist threat. By combining the attacks, Reagan mounted an attack on the liberal philosophy which he hoped would carry over to discredit implicitly the policies of the current Democratic leadership and further aid the Goldwater drive.

Reagan's strategy of attack was probably persuasive in

that he appealed to time honored virtues of the American character and established the fear that these values were being subverted. In both attacks fear and patriotism were offered as motivating forces to induce attitude change; hopefully, the change would be in the direction of accepting the conservative doctrine. Reagan also used the strategy of attack as a means of affirming his own political image.

He carefully avoided reference to his television career and movie background. While his audience obviously held an image of Reagan-actor, the speech was formulated from the viewpoint of Reagan-private-citizen. The strategy also functioned to affirm his image through the mass of evidence presented in the speech. Through the presentation of extensive proof, Reagan appeared to be a learned source of facts and information not commonly available to the public. But more important, rhetorically, his appeals worked to affirm his image by making his views con-substantial to time honored American values commonly held by his audience. His use of historical allusions, reference to the founding fathers, and praise of God, could only be accepted, approved, and commended by many portions of his audience because they were traditional, ordained American values.

Through the use of these devices within the strategy of attack, Reagan not only presented a formidable case against government and the liberal establishment, but also created a vehicle to enhance his own image as a political figure. But attack was not enough. The negative had to be complimented or balanced by a positive appeal. If he was to capitalize on any
disposition to change attitude created by his motivating appeals, Reagan needed to do more than just tear-down his opposition. From the position attained through his strategy of attack, Reagan was prepared to mount his second strategy—that of unification through motivational appeal.

**Unification**

The harsh rhetoric of Goldwater had functioned to create a psychological barrier between the public and messages of conservative doctrine. If Reagan was to succeed, he needed to re-establish the congruity of the conservative ethic and public thought as well as to attempt consolidation of various factions of his audience around the conservative doctrine. Therefore, Reagan seemed to have three purposes in his strategy of unification through motivational appeal; he wanted to increase Goldwater's appeal and present him as the leader of conservatism and consequently, the hope of the nation; and most important to Reagan, he needed to enhance his own image in the eyes of both the public and the Republican leadership.

In this sense, Reagan was attempting to correct a flaw in the Goldwater image, and his "motive situation" involved an attempt to "purify" Goldwater's image and promote conservative doctrine. Therefore, under the method of analysis presented by Walter Fisher, Reagan was attempting the rhetoric of purification in an attempt to correct an image.\(^{42}\) In addition, Reagan needed to sway potential believers to accept a new concept of his own

---

\(^{42}\) Fisher, 131.
image; therefore, he was simultaneously utilizing the rhetoric of "affirmation" in the attempt to give birth to an image. 43

Reagan's strategy of unification through motivational appeal was an innate outgrowth of his strategy of condemnation through attack and, in some ways, helped to strengthen his first strategy. The entire speech was presented in an almost apolitical tone. While Reagan discredited liberals and promoted conservative doctrine, he never directly accused the Democrats or Johnson, nor did he ever directly praise Goldwater. Because Reagan's political message was implicitly stated, his speech may have projected an aura of non-partisanship. Emphasizing this allusion with non-partisan appeals, his opening remarks comprised an appeal for a fair hearing combined with an appeal for unity:

James Madison, one of our founding fathers, said, 'We base all our experiments on the capacity of man for self-government.' The practice of self-government entails free discussion between men of good will in an effort to solve differences of opinion.

Today it seems impossible to debate legitimately the means of solving our problems. There is a growing tendency to substitute namecalling. On the one hand, a small group of people see treason in any philosophical differences of opinion and apply the terms 'pink' and 'leftist' to those who are motivated only by humanitarian idealism in their support of the liberal welfare philosophy. On the other hand, an even greater number of people today, advocates of this liberal philosophy, lump all who oppose their viewpoint under the banner of right-wing lunacy, charging that these right-wing lunatics or extremists pose the only internal threat to our national security. One has to wonder how long we can afford the luxury of this family fight while we are at war with the most dangerous enemy mankind has ever known. 44

43 Fisher, 131.

Reagan seemed to have been extremely cautious in approaching his audience—perhaps because of the radical associations Goldwater had created toward conservative doctrine. Yet, his introduction was probably well received by his audience for he allowed his listeners little opportunity to think badly of him. In effect, Reagan had presented a reference to time-honored values, slid into an appeal for a fair hearing, separated himself from radical factions, and offered a fear appeal as a motivational factor of acceptance—all in a tone of moderation. To the average listener of 1964, Reagan's approach probably appeared moderate and sensible. The appeal functioned to enhance his image and to create an inclination to listen to the conservative message.

His most explicitly stated non-partisan appeal for unification was also presented in a tone of moderation.

In this election year—regardless of the party of our choice, because this transcends party lines—we must pin down those who solicit our votes as to where they stand with regard to fiscal responsibility, individual freedom and limited government.45

This statement suggests two differing commentaries. It is interesting to note that this unification appeal for Goldwater is the closest approximation to an allusion to the Republican candidate for President. Whether necessary to maintain a climate of moderation or not, Reagan's hesitancy to directly tell his audience that, yes, Goldwater is the man to assuage all of our fears probably had a predictable effect upon his audience. It

probably served to focus attention away from, rather than toward, Goldwater. Consequently, it may be suggested that his strategy of unification through motivational appeals was focused in two similar directions, conservative doctrine and Ronald Reagan—but hardly satisfying completely to the Goldwater Presidential aspirations.

On the other hand, his stronger attempts at unification occurred through close association with his attacks on big government and liberalism tied to the motivational factors of fear appeals. This seemed to be the primary thrust of Reagan's unification attempt. Ample instances of motivational appeals were provided by reference to time-honored values and to the fear of loss of individualism and freedom. Quoting Professor Alexander Fraser Tytler, Reagan said a government cannot endure a loose fiscal policy without falling into dictatorship:

This is not a theoretical speculation on our future; it is a warning from our past, for it was written while we were a colony of Great Britain. The professor was explaining what had destroyed the Republic of Athens more than 2,000 years before. . . . Tytler's warning reminds us that democracy is mob rule unless we have some ground rules protecting the rights of the individuals and putting them beyond the vote of the majority. You and I have such ground rules providing for the most equitable and limited government ever known to man— the Constitution. 46

He further added: "One man says that to talk of the Constitution today is to talk of taking the country back to the days of McKinley. I think this is not a bad idea, for under McKinley we freed Cuba." 47 Seemingly, Reagan indulged in

---

47 Ibid.
rabble-rousing, flag waving rhetoric. However, it may have been an effective method of motivating his audience. Considering that most Americans could not easily reject time-honored values, his fear appeals were probably effective in identifying Reagan with salient values of his audience and inducing a willingness to modify opinion.

The strongest segments of Reagan's unification attempt through fear appeals emerged by his contrast of positive appeals to patriotism with the negative aspects of manipulation:

Mankind has known only a few moments of freedom in all the long climb from the swamp to the stars, and most of those moments have been ours. Strangely enough, all of them have been under a system of private ownership and capitalism. But freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. ... I think we have come to a time for choosing. Two contrary philosophies divide us in this land of ours. Either we believe in our traditional system of individual liberty, or we abandon the American Revolution and confess that an intellectual elite in a far distant capitol can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves. 48

Reagan forced his listeners into a black-and-white, either-or decision. They must either reject the liberal philosophy, represented by Johnson, or they must reject the American values of liberty, freedom, and individualism. Reagan offered no latitudes of rejection or acceptance--only polarized extremes. But considering the values he was appealing to and the strength of his anti-government, anti-liberal attacks, his audience was probably not listening critically for either-or fallacies and was fair game for the dilemma Reagan created--a dilemma that

could only be solved by the partial acceptance of Reagan's conservative credo and the protection of time-ordained American values.

Similar to the faulty logic employed in the previous appeal, Reagan presented a series of suggested changes toward conservative philosophy in his attack on liberal policies which were basically inconsequential:

It is time we questioned what we have done to freedom. . . . In addition to a reduction in taxes, we must demand that any tax reform be simplified so that the citizen of modest means need not employ legal assistance to find out how much he owes his government.49

Although somewhat vague, Reagan's comment probably appealed to many segments of his audience because of the almost universal distaste for paying taxes. Reagan later increased the motivational appeal of his taxation comments by introducing a devil association to socialism:

Let us have the courage in tax reform to look squarely, once and for all, at the myth that our graduated income tax has any resemblance to proportionate taxation. The entire structure was created by Karl Marx. It has no justification in getting the government needed revenue. It simply is a penalty on the individual who can improve his own lot; it takes his earnings from him and redistributes them to people who are incapable of earning as much as he can.50

Reagan seemed to be employing a de facto unity principle under appeals to a common cause—the salvation of time-honored American values as opposed to the corruption of government and liberal/socialist philosophy. By rationing-out to his listeners


50Ibid., p. 13.
concrete examples of what could be done, Reagan was appealing to self-interests and, therefore, was probably effective in motivating a degree of willingness to accept the conservative credo.

Despite a strong appeal for conservatism, Reagan gave his audience little concrete grounds for action. However, he provided ample motivational appeals to touch the values and needs of his audience. Once again, the two strongest appeals in Reagan's rhetoric of unification emerged with the powerful combination of positive appeals to patriotism contrasted to fear appeals:

Daniel Webster said, 'Hold on, my friends, to the Constitution of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands. Miracles do not happen. What has happened once in six thousand years may never happen again. Hold on to your Constitution, for if the Constitution shall fall, there will be anarchy throughout the world.'

It has been said that if we lose this way of life of ours, history will report that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening. And we can do something about it . . . We can no longer afford to sit on the sidelines; to practice such aloofness today is to go on feeding the crocodile, hoping he will eat you last. But eat you he will.51

Reagan masterfully colored his message with hues of pride and patriotism in striking contrast to the fear of losing all America had achieved--perhaps, even to the extreme of creating fear where no evidence was shown to warrant concern. Growing from Reagan's strategy of condemnation and surrounded by motivational appeals, Reagan's strategy of unification was probably successful. Because these appeals were hitting fears and values

held almost universally by all segments of his audience, they did, indeed, transcend party lines. The final culmination of this strategy was presented in Reagan's ending phrases as he introduced a strong appeal directed toward the responsibility motive:

You and I are face to face with our destiny. We must stand firm, or we shall trail in the dust the golden hopes of mankind for generations to come. I believe that freedom has never been so fragile, so near to slipping from our grasp, as it is at this moment, and this did not come about through an outside aggressor. It came about through our own sincere efforts to solve problems of misery and human need through exchanging freedom for security.

If we do not accept the challenge, our children may well be the generation that takes the first step into another thousand years of darkness. 'We hold the power and the responsibility; we shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of man on earth.'

Reagan's concluding challenge to his audience presented no new factors except, perhaps, the masterful touch of precise audience analysis—manipulating the values, needs, and desires of the general American public through expertly woven motivational appeals. But one must remember the purposes stated earlier for Reagan's strategy of unification through motivational appeal: the purification of Goldwater's image, the affirmation of Reagan's image and, finally, the purification of the image held of the conservative doctrine.

Considering the fever of the nation at that time, Reagan's motivational appeals were probably effective in purging from the public image the radical overtones of the conservative right, at least temporarily. It also seems probable that Reagan's

---
implicit suggestion that Goldwater, as the spiritual father of the conservative message, should reap the benefit of the aroused motivational factors. It does not necessarily follow that the public would agree.

However, one finds little in Reagan's content or organization--aside from implicit suggestions and the context itself--to suggest that Reagan seriously attempted purification of Goldwater's image. In that case, the question must be raised: what was Reagan's incentive for his extensive use of motivational appeal? The answer most likely lies in the third stated purpose of his unification through motivational appeal strategy--that of affirming the image of Ronald Reagan.

Indeed, since Reagan offered virtually no concrete suggestions to his audience, even so much as a "vote for Goldwater" plug, it seems that the person who reaped the rewards of the motivational appeals inducing attitude change was Ronald Reagan. Rhetorically, the strategy functioned to enhance his image through non-partisan appeals, appeals to patriotism, and fear appeals identifying Heagan with the values, hopes, and fears commonly held by his audience. For the purpose of affirming the Reagan image, it would seem a sound rhetorical tactic.

In his 1964 address, Reagan attempted to meet his situation by the presentation of two strategies--condemnation through attack and unification through motivational appeals. These strategies were formulated as the answer to solve his unique rhetorical problems in an effort to modify opinion, and, thereby, accomplish his purposes. In light of the social-political setting
and the analysis of the agency, the critical perspective has been constructed from which to evaluate Reagan's success or failure in overcoming his rhetorical problems.
VII. CONCLUSION

To evaluate the probable effect of Reagan's speech it would seem prudent to return first to his purposes for the address. Reagan had two diverse purposes tied to image problems: he had to penetrate the hostility surrounding the Goldwater image and fulfill his function as a fund raiser; more important, he desperately needed to change his own image as a television cowboy in order to promote a beginning for his political career.

The major rhetorical problem Reagan faced was the hostility barrier created by Goldwater. Political analyst Stephen Shadegg re-emphasized the attitudinal conflict which Goldwater had created:

Goldwater spoke of painful things. To reform society it was necessary for him to attack society. A Goldwater victory would have required the voters to make an official confession of their past failures to face reality, to deal firmly with such matters as deficit financing, non productive foreign aid, and ambivalent foreign policy and selfish self-indulgence. And in the year of Goldwater's defeat the people were in a mood to escape responsibility, not accept it.¹

Kenneth Burke suggested that you persuade through identification of attitudes proclaiming a unity among men.² Even

though their messages were identical, Reagan apparently did
overcome the conflict between his conservative message and his
audience through precise audience analysis and the strategies
of condemnation and unification. In their comparison of the
Reagan and Goldwater approaches, the *Saturday Evening Post*
commented:

> There is not the faintest discernible difference
> between Reagan's view on all major issues and Barry
> Goldwater's. But there is all the difference in the world
> in how those views are expressed. Barry Goldwater used
to say his say with a harsh cancior which often made him
sound like God's angry man, and which certainly cost him
millions of votes. Ronald Reagan is the television good
Guy come to life and his answers even to tough questions
are about as harsh as paplum. 3

Reagan's ten years of practical experience promoting the
conservative doctrine on the General Electric tour apparently
helped him to analyze correctly the intensity of attack that his
audience would accept and the degree of motivational appeal
that would stimulate them: "He not only tells his conservative
audiences what they want to hear—he does it with such pro-
fessional experience that even the three-Martinis-before-lunch
men stay awake." 4

His telecast resulted in $1 million in grass-roots con-
tributions to the Goldwater campaign. 5 Therefore, it may be
concluded that Reagan did successfully overcome the public's

---

3 Stewart Alsop, "The Good Guy," *Saturday Evening Post*,
238 (November 20, 1965), 18.

4 Ibid.
predisposition against conservative messages and, at least temporarily, reaffirm the image of the conservative doctrine.

However, there is no evidence either historically or in his text to support the thesis that Reagan helped to purify Goldwater's image. If this truly were an implicit purpose in Reagan's address, he failed. In fact, as Theodore White suggested quite the opposite effect was achieved: "Ironically enough, it was the same election campaign which destroyed Barry Goldwater as a political figure that promoted another conservative to a position of political prestige."\(^6\)

The rhetorical choices Reagan made in presenting his persuasive appeals were apparently precisely on target. Before the speech Reagan was a cowboy-actor—afterward, he became what some called "the hottest new product on the political market."\(^7\) Through his use of persuasive strategies and motivational appeals, Reagan succeeded in reaching at least one segment of his audience—he was noticed politically and later courted as a Republican candidate for Governor of California by the millionaire triumvirate of Southern California. A. C. Rubel, Henry Salvatori, and Holmes Tuttle viewed Reagan as the "hottest property American

\(^5\)Shadegg, p. 253.


\(^7\)"California: Will He Size Up?", Newsweek, 65 (June 7, 1965), 19.
conservatism possessed." Obviously, to these men, the most important segment of his audience, Reagan did affirm and create a new political image.

Reagan was also attempting through the speech to modify his image from actor to politician with another important audience—the general American public. His unification through motivational appeal strategy was directed toward accomplishing this goal. However, the assessment of attitude change in this area is more difficult. However, his style of appearance on television probably was a contributing factor in his political image affirmation. Pat Brown, defeated by Reagan for Governor in 1966, suggested:

Reagan comes across on television as totally sure of himself and his views. He rarely stammers, seldom expresses any qualifications or disclaims to his blunt black-and-white statements and never expresses a real doubt about himself. . . .

Despite his informality, he conveys a sense of strong conviction and sincerity, which is perhaps his greatest asset in the unrehearsed television program. He appears to be calm, confident, and unmarried, but also earnest, concerned, and dedicated. I would sum up his style in front of the camera as 'cool intensity'—perhaps the perfect quality for a politician in the McLuhan era of communication.  

Reagan's appearance on television, learned and refined during his host years with General Electric, was a potent compliment to his persuasive attempts to affirm his political


image. As Michael Davie noted in his political analysis of California politics: "His political ancestor, Barry Goldwater, was not reassuring but harsh—he was a divider and an evident extremist. Reagan, on the contrary, appears as a conciliator, with apparently modest aims." 10

It is difficult to assess how well Reagan's persuasive appeals in 1964 changed his public image at that time. In the long-term effect he was successful—California elected him Governor in 1966. But in the initial stages of his primary campaign in that election, professional campaign managers Spensor and Roberts still listed his actor-image as a serious liability. 11 Regardless of the depth of the change, Reagan was apparently successful in enhancing his image with this most vital audience.

Reagan's use of persuasive principles was successful in accomplishing his most important personal goal—the door-way was opened for his political ascent. As Life Magazine reported:

It was The Speech, more than anything else, that propelled Reagan into active politics on behalf of Ronald Reagan. At the end of the 1964 campaign he delivered it for the first time on coast-to-coast television as a last


minute plea for Goldwater. Nearly every objective student of politics who heard it agrees it was a starmaking performance. 12

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARTICLES


"Republicans: Reagan Rides East." Time, 66 (October 11, 1965), 42.


"Stage to Sacramento?" Time, 86 (July 30, 1965), 13-14.
BOOKS


UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS
